



WORDS

TO

GIVE BY



Leading Voices in
Advocacy Funding



Dear Friends,

As engaged civic leaders who value the essential role that foundations play in laying the groundwork for a more interactive democracy and equitable society, we are pleased to bring you *Words to Give By: Leading Voices in Advocacy Funding*. This publication features select portions of interviews with some of the nation's leading grantmakers. It captures their candid responses to a series of tough questions, including how to address misconceptions regarding foundations' role in supporting advocacy and what best practices to employ as they engage in this work.

Alliance for Justice and the Council on Foundations have joined together to provide this compilation as a resource on advocacy grantmaking. *Words to Give By: Leading Voices in Advocacy Funding* features excerpts from 23 interviews conducted with philanthropic leaders and published in Alliance for Justice's electronic publication, the *Foundation Advocacy Bulletin*, between February 2003 through September 2008. Based on their wide and varied experiences, these experts collectively discuss lessons learned around making social change happen, identifying advocacy activities to support, and ensuring these efforts result in long-term community benefits. Many of these leaders have developed ground-breaking new ways to build strong nonprofit organizations and have worked to cultivate tomorrow's community leaders. Each of these individuals has made an indelible contribution to further foundation involvement in advocacy.

Together, their stories offer a powerful and very personal look at the importance of investing in social change.

We believe you will find *Words to Give By: Leading Voices in Advocacy Funding* both inspiring and informative. We know it will be a useful tool to you as your foundation continues its important work. For more free copies of this publication, please contact Alliance for Justice at fai@afj.org or 202/822-6070. You may also visit the web sites of the Council on Foundations, www.cof.org, or Alliance for Justice, www.allianceforjustice.org, to download this resource.

Best wishes,



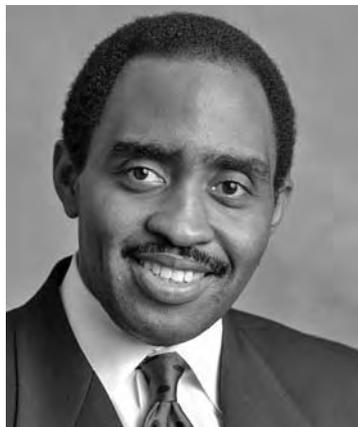
Nan Aron, President
Alliance for Justice



Steve Gunderson, President & CEO
Council on Foundations

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Emmett Carson is the former President and CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation. He is currently the President and CEO of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

The Minneapolis Foundation is a community foundation located in Minneapolis. Founded in 1915, it is one of the nation's oldest and largest community foundations, as well as the oldest foundation in Minnesota.

Q: *Given the current economic realities, what are some of the concerns of grantmakers who want to make a difference?*

A: Forty-two to 45 states are facing deficits and the national government is in a deficit. The economy is affecting endowments of foundations, both large and small. Foundations are under tremendous pressure to determine how best to address problems — by funding public policy or by funding direct services. Both are important. But, foundations cannot make up the service gaps faced by government. If advocacy can save one percent of the state budget on housing, medical care, or other services, that means millions of dollars towards those services. Support for public education, advocacy, and lobbying can have great benefits, while the same amount spent on direct services could not sustain programs over time.

Foundations have to ask, “where can we get the most leverage for our dollars?” This is an ideal time for grantmakers to consider increasing their public policy support. Even foundations that have historically focused on services might see a second purpose now in supporting advocacy consistent with their direct-service programs.

Q: *Isn't funding and engaging in advocacy viewed as risky and difficult by grantmakers?*

A: Foundations need not feel that they're putting themselves at unnecessary risk by supporting or engaging in advocacy. There's a lot of information available on the subject. Advocacy is just one part of a funder's toolkit, though. Some foundations will determine they have no role in supporting advocacy.

It is often suggested that better evaluation, including analysis of outcomes, has to be done on public policy work. Public policy work should not be held to a higher standard of success than any other work where the outcomes are difficult to measure. Measuring advocacy is messy and difficult. I could make the same case regarding mentoring a child. We know it works, but not exactly how. It depends on the kids, the mentors, and the circumstances.

We must ask what are our missions and values. What are the best measures we can find? If we avoid what is difficult to measure, we will only do the simplest things in our communities that can be counted and not do all that we can do. Racial harmony cannot be easily measured, but we know what happens if we don't have it. Cancer research is not close to finding a cure, but we still support it. People are too often driven by measurements. That is uninspired grantmaking.

Q: *The “Think Twice” campaign to combat proposed cuts to state services, which you supported, was very successful and included some highly effective advertisements in the print media. How did that work?*

A: The Minnesota Council on Nonprofits thought strategically about who we needed to educate and how to educate about looming budget cuts in the state legislature. The answer was 1) to put a face on the work of nonprofits in the communities, and 2) to reach key legislators in key communities that had not yet decided how to vote on the cuts.

One aspect of the campaign was advertisements that explained how communities benefited from the programs that were proposed to be cut. The ads and the whole campaign were very successful. We prevented budget cuts to nonprofits in the state. But it's not over. We have a \$4.6 billion state deficit. Think Twice will not be the same next time; it will be shaped for new realities in the new legislative session. We will stay involved with grantees and change gears when circumstances warrant.

Q: *We noticed that “pursues policy change to solve critical needs or increase opportunities” is one of the activities for funding listed in your grant guidelines. Why was it important to include that in your guidelines?*

A: After assessing our mission and options for engagement, The Minneapolis Foundation sees its role as a catalyst. The relatively small amount of money that we have to give in grants is inadequate to solve many problems. Our key is to think intentionally with grantees about who to engage in systems change. If [potential grantees] read our guidelines, they can consider how they fit in with our mission and role. So often, foundations do not receive advocacy proposals because the guidelines don't give any indication that they are open to those proposals. ■■

“If advocacy can save one percent of the state budget on housing, medical care, or other services, that means millions of dollars towards those services. Support for public education, advocacy, and lobbying can have great benefits while the same amount spent on direct services could not sustain programs over time.”



Edward Skloot is the former Executive Director of the Surdna Foundation. He is currently Director of the Center for Strategic Philanthropy and Civil Society at Duke University's Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy.

The Surdna Foundation is a family foundation established in 1917 by John Emory Andrus. Located in New York City, the foundation makes grants in the areas of environment, community revitalization, effective citizenry, the arts, and the nonprofit sector.

Q: *With increasing economic pressures on nonprofits, what advice would you now give foundations?*

A: It is a good time for foundations to review all their commitments and compare and contrast what is really important. It may be necessary to cut whole programs, over time, after taking care of commitments. We should not support new areas unless we are quite convinced that we will be able to continue substantial funding. One more thing: leveraging dollars from other sources is critical.

Q: *At this time would you recommend approaching the funding of advocacy any differently?*

A: Yes, with far greater attention and strategic focus. Increasingly, we will not be able to separate advocacy from program. Advocacy to change public policy is the bottomline. Without policy change, we will fund demonstration projects forever. Demonstrations are fine, but they are hardly sufficient.

And you can't do philanthropy with sterilized rubber gloves — program staff, CEOs, and even board members who may feel nervous about advocacy have to

get used to it. Whether or not you agree with Bill Gates Sr., you have to admire his willingness to consistently and repeatedly articulate the case to keep the estate tax. That's just one example.

Q: *What are the risks or concerns some funders have for taking this direction?*

A: There are different factors confronting different foundations. Some fear offending people who do not agree. For some, the culture isn't conducive to being out front. For still others, there is little familiarity with advocacy. And, of course, peer pressure can cut both ways.

“Advocacy to change public policy is the bottomline. Without policy change, we will fund demonstration projects forever. Demonstrations are fine, but they are hardly sufficient.”

Q: *Would you describe one example of a Surdna-funded advocacy project?*

A: Some time ago, we funded Housing Works in New York City to advocate, build, and provide services for housing for people with HIV/AIDS. As a result of its activism, the Giuliani administration yanked Housing Works' contracts. The organization had to go to court to get the funds restored so that it could do its job. This is a particularly nasty case. I've heard dozens of nonprofit leaders say they are afraid to advocate for fear of government retribution. Philanthropy can help diminish the reluctance by standing strong with nonprofits. ■■



Gayle Williams is Executive Director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation.

The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation is a family foundation based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Its mission is to help people and places move out of poverty and achieve greater social and economic justice.

Q: *Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation (MRBF) issued a report this year on the lessons learned from your Grassroots Leadership Development/ Public Policy Program, which reinforced your support for grantees that lobby. Is that risky?*

A: The fact is it's legal to do. It's true that under the current scrutiny of philanthropy, there is some risk that being explicit about anything, especially funding advocacy, could raise concern among the people already critical of philanthropy. But those concerns have to be considered in a broader context. Being up-front about what we are supporting and the difference that support is making is good for philanthropy. There is some risk of being criticized for funding one area or another across the political spectrum by those who don't like their political opponents to be supported. We highlight our advocacy-related funding of nonprofits working on social and economic justice issues. Foundations along the political continuum, from the conservative right to the liberal left, can do the same.

“Supporting individuals to improve their low-wealth communities through participation in public policy work complements their other community improvement and social change work. It is a logical extension of what MRBF stands for.”

Q: *How did the foundation’s board of directors react to the idea of initiating this program?*

A: They didn’t need to be convinced. In fact, the idea came from a board member. We held discussions about the project for over a year, and the board was a part of those discussions. Our board, as a whole, sees this project as a manifestation of the foundation’s purpose and values, which they have all discussed and agreed to — democracy, equity, and justice. Supporting individuals to improve their low-wealth communities through participation in public policy work complements their other community improvement and social change work. It is a logical extension of what MRBF stands for.

Q: *Evaluation of advocacy work can be challenging for foundations, but your report included significant information on the subject. What advice do you have for others?*

A: I would advise others to get clear on what they most want to know — e.g. specific policy changes and progress towards changes, or what it takes to build capacity and what reasonable progress towards change looks like; and evaluate accordingly. We are always looking at both impact and learning. Also, we need to be clear about what evaluations and data can and cannot do. They can give helpful information, but ultimately foundation boards, staff, and grantees have to use our collec-

tive, informed judgment to decide how effective the program is.

Q: *Would you share a case example demonstrating something you have learned from this project?*

A: So far, the grassroots leaders program has yielded 17 examples of policy groups and grassroots organizations working together. Some were highly successful in their work, others are building their capacity, and others are getting their sea legs. The program is going after more than just policy change. Increased grassroots participation in the policy process requires human development, which is exciting work for our foundation. We learned how hard it is to balance effecting policy change with developing leadership. Not every nonprofit group that wants to have an impact on public policy will want to do leadership development or be good at it. It takes long-term perspective and investment to achieve the dual goals to which we are committed, but we believe that public policy participation of “average” citizens in low-wealth communities is good for communities and good for democracy. ■■



Paul Brest is President of The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation was established by William Hewlett, along with his wife Flora Lamson Hewlett and eldest son Walter B. Hewlett, in 1966. The foundation focuses on education, the environment, global development, performing arts, philanthropy, and population issues including voluntary family planning and reproductive health.

Q: *In June, you co-sponsored a meeting to discuss general support grants. General support grants are a great tool for supporting advocacy. What follow-up are you considering?*

A: We are creating a working group of foundation and nonprofit representatives to continue the discussion. Lately, I've been looking at Urban Institute studies on overhead. Nonprofits' overhead typically comes out to 20 percent, at a minimum. I can't think of any reason for foundations to not pay at least 20 percent overhead when supporting nonprofits' projects. The working group will discuss this.

Q: *Hewlett Foundation sponsors The Philanthropy Workshop West to help new foundations become as effective as possible. What would you tell new grantmakers about incorporating advocacy in their grantmaking?*

A: Most important for new foundations or old foundations, like ours, is to know what the advocacy rules are. Alliance for Justice has been very helpful to the sector in describing what we can and cannot do. Many foundations stop well short of doing what they can with advocacy. There is the legal side and then there is understanding how important advocacy can be in achieving one's policy ends. But one size does not fit all. A foundation may think that advocacy can be very

effective, and nonetheless not want to go the limit of what it can do. Providing foundations with the opportunity to think strategically about what they want to accomplish and how advocacy fits into their strategy is very important.

Q: *How do you reconcile the increasing demand for measuring outcomes with the challenges of evaluating advocacy?*

A: I don't think that advocacy is more difficult or easier to evaluate than any other long-term strategy foundations use. It starts with having a clear model of what you are trying to achieve and each step to be taken along the way to achieving it.

Take climate change. None of us in our lifetime is going to be able to evaluate if everyone working together to reduce global warming has actually had the ultimate effect they're trying to achieve. We may not always be able to measure the final outcomes, but we may be able to measure the steps towards progress. For example, did people read what was being said, and respond to it. I think that approach is completely consistent with an outcome orientation.

I would regard us as highly outcome-oriented. If somebody says you can't be outcome-oriented unless you can measure the outcome directly, then I don't know

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how you deal with large, long-term problems like climate change.

Q: Would you share one example of effective funding of advocacy by Hewlett?

A: In the population area, we have regularly supported Northern European organizations that try to educate their citizens and parliamentarians about the importance of providing government funds for population planning work. The level of public support that now exists for family planning in that part of the world reflects the work of Hewlett, Packard, and a number of other foundations. ■■



Luz Vega-Marquis is President and CEO of the Marguerite Casey Foundation.

The Marguerite Casey Foundation is a private foundation located in Seattle, Washington and founded in 2001 by Casey Family Programs. The foundation is dedicated to strengthening the voices of low-income families and assisting them in mobilizing their communities.

Q: Tell us about the lessons you learned as you established your new foundation.

A: We have only just completed our first full year of operations. In trying to create a value-based organization, the board has instituted collaboration and cooperation as words to live by. The board’s mandate was to work with our colleagues, to build on what they’re learning and to meld our resources with everyone else’s.

We did a lot of research and listened to communities, and paid close attention to the data that already existed. From the field of early childhood education we know that the two primary indicators of a child’s success in life are the education of the parent(s) and the economic conditions in which the family lives. This is why we want to engage parents in a more tangible way. We want to help parents become leaders or change agents for systems reform. That’s really the underlying premise for our work.

We’re also deeply concerned about advocacy and interested in supporting advocacy organizations. Advocacy is fundamental to our democracy. It should not scare anybody to engage low-income families in activism. It should be an act of courage. I think that the more we engage families in the lives of their communities, the better off we’ll all be.

Q: *You've been looking at best practices. Does that include best practices for advocacy?*

A: As a new foundation, we were eager to put our resources to work for low-income families as quickly and as carefully as possible. We have accomplished that, and we know intuitively what those best practices are. That's why the majority of our grants are for general operating support, as opposed to a program-specific model. We know that general support gives grantees greater flexibility.

We're also deeply committed to connecting grantees and encouraging shared learning. One of our strategies is to eventually end up with a network of networks, which will help nurture a movement of low-income parents. That way, we can connect the many organizations and the many disciplines that impact families across regions and across issues. We cannot limit it to child welfare. It has to be about economic development, jobs, health, education, and the many other fields that impact the family. We are connecting groups from all corners of the country, from South Central Los Angeles to Jackson, Mississippi. Who knows where that will take them, but the beauty of this approach is that we are enabling and creating a forum for people to come together, and talk and share strategies and best practices for advocacy in certain areas.

Q: *Did you encounter any concerns about being out front with your advocacy funding?*

A: I have concerns, but we have taken [Alliance for Justice's] training. We are aware of the risks and rewards that come with funding advocacy; we know the legal piece of it well. And while we are a very new foundation, some of the staff members have been working in this area for a long time.

Q: *Are you afraid to be seen as confrontational?*

A: We're not trying to be confrontational. We're trying to do the right thing, to bring about change, and to live out the values we espouse. Eventually, when there is an issue of power and an issue of resources, some type of confrontation will happen at the local or regional level and then people will say: "Oh, these folks are funded by the Marguerite Casey Foundation." But I think we're ready for when that happens.

Q: *Would you give an example of some advocacy that you have funded that you think is going well?*

A: The Asian Pacific American Legal Center in Los Angeles is one of those organizations that takes a lead

“Advocacy is fundamental to our democracy. It should not scare anybody to engage low-income families in activism. It should be an act of courage.”

on several immigration issues in terms of advocacy for the legal agenda. They also have figured out how a national organization can best get connected to its local community. And they are building a base of organizations and individuals that are benefiting from the work, while at the same time learning about the issues and how to advocate for themselves. They reach out to other ethnic communities, which is another value of ours — of bringing together different ethnic communities to work on specific issues. So this organization epitomizes for me a lot of the things that the Marguerite Casey Foundation is trying to do.

Q: Any final words?

A: Families are the key; they are the most fundamental organizing point. Communities are also important because families live in communities. The theories behind our work are: people have within them the desire for change for the better; parents, regardless of their income, will make the best decisions for their children; and a collection of small victories make change possible. If we didn't believe change was possible, we might as well close our doors. ■■



Donna Edwards is the former Executive Director of the Arca Foundation. She is currently the Representative for Maryland's Fourth Congressional District.

The Arca Foundation is a private foundation located in Washington, DC. In 1952, Nancy Susan Reynolds founded the Nancy Reynolds Bagley Foundation, which she renamed the Arca Foundation in 1968. The foundation focuses on media and democracy, as well as domestic and international civic participation.

Q: Would you share your thoughts with other funders on why it's important to support election-related projects, as the Arca Foundation is doing?

A: Funders, including those who support issue advocacy, can help their grantees build organizational capacity to reach out to their constituencies by funding election-year activities. An election year provides a perfect entree to the work that's done all year long, whether it's an election year or not.

During an election, the public is particularly focused around issues of concern. We need to be careful, however, to leave the hard political work to others who are legally able to do that. Nonetheless, there is a wide range of work that we are legally able to support.

Q: What kind of political impact might your support have?

A: We have seen a tremendous decline in voter turnout, particularly in some communities that feel disengaged from the political process. Who participates correlates directly to the policy dialogue and how issues are framed. And we can't assume that the issues that people think are most important are the ones that will be raised during the election process. We need organizations that connect with communities to raise those

issues and to engage people who are left out of the process. But voting is only one step — an important one — that many nonprofit organizations must keep people engaged in before, during, and after elections. The work of nonprofit organizations is important to building a vibrant democracy. Our goal, as funders who are concerned about civic participation and engagement, is to get people into the process.

Q: What kind of projects are you supporting and can you give an example of any candidate accountability activities?

A: We are supporting organizations that are doing nonpartisan voter registration, organizations that are trying to elevate discourse on critical issues during the election year through research and the media, and organizations that are conducting nonpartisan candidate forums and issue forums. Some of the organizations are producing voter guides looking at candidates' positions on a range of issues. It's important for people to know how public office-holders vote on issues and the position of candidates on those issues.

Q: Why do you think there's hesitancy among some grantmakers to support such activities?

A: There is a lot of misunderstanding and some confusion among funders and among 501(c)(3) organizations about the kind of work they can do during an election year. We must get beyond those misconceptions. Clearly we need to understand the limitations of the kind of work we can fund, but I've discovered that there is a wide range of interesting and engaging election-related work that foundations can support during an election year.

The Arca Foundation understands the law and regulations and we review proposals in that context. We depend on our lawyers, and we ask organizations to depend on their lawyers in putting together their plans and proposed activities during the year.

Q: Do you think that it's too late in this election cycle for grantmakers to start supporting election-related activities, and if not, any suggestions on how they might get started?

A: Is it ever too late to make sure that somebody who's not registered to vote gets registered? Is it ever too late to make sure that the public is fully aware about the

“I've discovered that there is a wide range of interesting and engaging election-related work that foundations can support during an election year.”

range of issues that are going to be talked about during this election cycle? I don't think so. And the first place that funders might start is with some of the organizations that they already support. They can encourage these groups to be engaged in allowable election-related work, provide them with the resources to make sure that the programs and activities they construct are within the law, and then just support them.

Q: Have you found ways to evaluate the impact of your grantmaking for election-related activities?

A: The short answer to that is that I'm not sure. If in some communities or states voter turnout among African-American young people or among new immigrant, first-time voters increases, that tells us something. This work is difficult to measure. The raw numbers are a beginning point, not an end point. Getting somebody out that first time and then keeping them engaged over the course of the next couple of years on issues of concern for their community is a long-term prospect. We may not be able to measure those outcomes for several years. ■■



Maggie McCarthy is the former Executive Director of The Bernard and Audre Rapoport Foundation. She is currently Director of Southwest Programs at the Rensselaerville Institute.

The Bernard and Audre Rapoport Foundation is a private foundation located in Waco, Texas and founded in 1986 by Bernard and Audre Rapoport. The founders are actively involved in the work of the foundation, which includes the areas of education, arts and culture, health and human services, and civic participation.

Q: How does the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Foundation approach advocacy?

A: Well, we approach advocacy in several ways: first, we assist other nonprofit organizations by helping them tell their stories more effectively; and second, by working with other foundations to tell our collective story to the public. Also, our foundation has favored funding think tanks for a very long time. We think it is important to analyze and disseminate policy information as it relates to working families. You can't advocate about issues if you don't understand them or can't communicate in ways the average person (and elected officials) understand.

Q: What motivates your personal support of advocacy and do you think that your view is supported by other funders?

A: I became a champion of advocacy when I attended an eye-opening workshop that helped me, and some of my colleagues, come out of the shadows. I know this sounds like a commercial, but it never dawned on me that we could support organizations that lobby, or that our foundation could participate in legislative advocacy in any way, until I went to an Alliance for Justice "Worry-Free Lobbying" workshop. It was liberating because it's so often grounded into funders' minds that

lobbying is forbidden. As a result, we end up putting phrases like “you will not lobby, or you can’t even think about lobbying” into grant contracts and agreements.

This past year created a turnaround in the thinking of many in the foundation world. Many foundations opposed the “payout” proposals in Congress last session, but were able to lobby their case under the self-defense exception. They learned very quickly about advocacy just out of sheer survival. The result was that a number of funders were galvanized to support and participate in advocacy activities that they were reluctant to explore in the past.

This awareness of the strength of advocacy and how much of it is legal is important to nonprofits as well. There is a feeding frenzy of budget cuts now, and if nonprofits and foundations are not on their toes, their program interests will be elbowed off the table or worse, suffer from more severe and really debilitating cuts. It is so important that those who are new to, or unclear about, the advocacy rules educate themselves on what they can and cannot do.

Q: Can you tell us how the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Foundation uses general support and project grants to support advocacy?

A: Operating support is hard to come by. It is desperately needed among organizations but program or project support seems to make a lot of sense to grant-makers. It’s a very comfortable approach because there is at least the perception that the results are measurable. But without basic operating support there can be no program. I compare it to funding a favorite church. You don’t go to the minister and say “Okay, what kind of programs have you got lined up and I’ll see if I want to make a donation.” The truth is, if you believe in the organization in general you make the contribution.

Q: Do you have other advocacy strategies?

A: Our foundation is very focused on leverage. Where can we make a small grant that can in fact unlock a larger grant? Where can we help an organization come together with other groups to create some synergy and support? Foundations can be effective from an advocacy standpoint by using their power to convene and gather groups together that are like-minded.

For example, we are putting together a youth advisory team. Our community, Waco, has lots of youth-serving

“Foundations can be effective from an advocacy standpoint by using their power to convene and gather groups together that are like-minded.”

“We are very pleased with our Earned Income Tax Credit initiative...after our first year we had 5 percent more EITC returns, which represent \$3 million more in the hands of deserving, low-income families.”

organizations, but we don't really have a cohesive coalition. By using our convening experience and perspective, we can call together these various youth groups and they can stand together in unity on issues of concern to them. We've done similar things here with homeless and with housing groups to help them come together to apply for federal grants, and this process builds bonds among providers and helps to sort out who does what.

Q: *Please describe one of your successful advocacy projects that the foundation has supported.*

A: We are very pleased with our Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) initiative. The three key points of this whole campaign were free taxpayer assistance, financial literacy, and promotion of asset building, such as home ownership. We worked with the IRS to locate populations that had unclaimed earned income tax credits. In our six-county area, that unclaimed amount of money is approximately \$23 million and that got my attention. We put the word out to the families that make less than \$34,000 and have children who were not claiming their earned income tax credits. We brought in various community agencies and about 50 organizations, including social service, housing, and government

agencies. The city got involved in a big way. The coalition organized a city hotline, put the information out in English and Spanish, in water bills, and sent it home to schoolchildren in their backpacks. Employers passed this information along to their employees and we let them know that adding it into paychecks would not cost the employer anything.

And so the net of all this, the “little coalition that could” just finished our second tax season and after our first year we had 5 percent more EITC returns, which represent \$3 million more in the hands of deserving, low-income families.

We are now thinking about putting together other demonstration project grants to work with welfare populations. Once you figure out how this distribution network works — how to reach people — you have a system in place that can be used for awareness campaigns about child care tax credits, or workforce incentives, children's health insurance, or whatever it may be.

We try to breed synergies that benefit the community. ■■



Meg Gage is President and Executive Director of the Proteus Fund.

The Proteus Fund is a public foundation that funds programs to build a more muscular democracy. Its 2006 Voter Engagement Donor Network was a virtual gathering of some 140 funders, from large foundations to individual donors, who shared information and advanced voter mobilization initiatives in a nonpartisan setting.

Q: *In this most recent election, there seemed to be more foundation support for nonprofit election-related activities than in previous years and the Proteus Fund was deeply involved. What kind of election-related activities did you see foundations supporting?*

A: It certainly seems from observation and anecdotal information that there was a much higher level of foundation support for nonpartisan voter engagement activity. I saw greater interest in supporting voter registration and voter turnout activities, particularly for youth, low-income communities, and communities of color. And there were a larger number of organizations doing that work that were quite successful. A number of grantmakers funded organizations they had been supporting previously for issue work to do voter engagement work with the same constituents, registering and engaging their members. They helped those organizations build their capacity and think about the election from the point of view of their organizations' missions. Foundations also supported nonprofit organizations' voter education activities such as candidate forums, which provide a source of policy statements that organizations can track against the candidates' actions when they become policymakers.

Q: *What were some of the lessons learned?*

A: It was hard to see grantmakers refusing to support election-related activities of nonprofit groups they fund for advocacy because both activities are related to the groups' objectives. From my perspective, the nonprofit issue groups are well oriented to holding leaders accountable, and voter and candidate education activities are part of that process. On the grantees' end, some could partner with other groups more effectively. The Center for Community Change, which is a national group, offered a great example of partnering effectively when they brought their resources to local groups already on the ground and greatly strengthened voter engagement efforts there.

An election year can be disruptive or it can be a building opportunity. You have to be intentional about it as all elections affect the issues we care about. I would start earlier next time, in the summer of the year before the election, to network among funders and to cultivate the right proposals.

“Regardless of how you personally feel about the election results, foundations must look at the huge increase in voter turnout and voter registration and recognize that their support created this surge.”

Q: What would you say to other funders who may be considering supporting nonpartisan election-related activities for the first time?

A: First, read Alliance for Justice’s legal guides to get acquainted with allowable activities and limits. The voting process is an important way to engage people but it is new to most foundations. Funding election-related activity is critical because it helps the organizations we support understand the entire political process. By not funding nonpartisan election activities, funders say that they don’t value this work. Some conservative foundations, in particular, have been very strategic about this work while many large progressive foundations have been left behind. They have limited their power as grantmakers to invigorate the democratic process through support for election work. It should be an obligation to promote more understanding about how our political system works. Funders should support voter engagement work off-cycle and look first among their current grantees to get them involved.

When funders understand the democratic process and how to influence that, how can they not support activities that encourage people to engage? And if they don’t, I would ask them what is their theory of social change and how they would see making an impact on global warming, nuclear

proliferation, and other huge social issues. More and more funders understand this and the rules of engagement, thanks to [Alliance for Justice’s] work.

Q: What was the key impact of foundation support of election-related activity this year?

A: Regardless of how you personally feel about the election results, foundations must look at the huge increase in voter turnout and voter registration and recognize that their support created this surge. We need to continue this wave to keep people engaged in the democratic process on and off the election cycle.

Q: How do you and your colleagues plan to evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts?

A: Some funders approach it with a metric analysis in terms of how many people they could register for how many dollars. Other funders take a more qualitative approach, looking at how voter engagement helps organizations build their capacity, reach new people, and reach people on a different level. I think we need to do both and we need to look at strategic networking and strategic collaborations. The Proteus Fund and the Funders’ Committee for Civic Participation are working on the Voter Engagement Evaluation Project in order to

evaluate our philanthropic activities in this election and to help inform funders' efforts in future elections. We plan to share the results of the evaluation with other funders in the spring of 2005.

Q: Did you have an “aha” moment this year?

A: My “aha” moment was when I realized how many foundations and individual donors wanted to do this work and would make a commitment with just a little encouragement. ■■



Rusty Stahl is Founder and Executive Director of Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy.

Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP) is a national funder association founded in 2001 to strengthen the next generation of grantmakers and advance effective social justice philanthropy.

Q: What new perspectives are young funders contributing to philanthropy in the current political, social, and economic climate? Please give us one example.

A: There is a level of fear and defensiveness around advocacy in the sector and a general concern about being accountable to Congress. In general, it feels like a period of reaction and entrenchment that makes it tough for funders to be bold regarding values and advocacy agendas. Young donors and foundation professionals are bringing a new sense of energy, flexibility, and pragmatic idealism to this challenging environment.

Many in this generation have become involved through local organizing and service-learning; however, there is a slow process of political awakening taking place. Perhaps this is a natural growth process for each generation, as it finds its own voice. With the changes over the last four years domestically in the United States, as well as with its role internationally, we have seen a dramatic growth in nonpartisan activities, such as get-out-the-vote or candidate education. More families with foundations are using multiple funding strategies. They use foundation funds to support advocacy in 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and personal funds to support 501(c)(4) nonprofit organizations (which have more flexibility to engage in advocacy and carrying out election-related activities). Philanthropy is not the only alternative, and

“Many emerging grantmakers want to change the way our generation and our institutions participate in the power dynamic.”

while it has great power, grantmaking has its limits. Sometimes direct political support is the most effective way to advance the power of a donor’s expressed values and goals.

Our generation will be inextricably marked by these years — they will impact us and the way we are involved in philanthropy throughout our lives. There’s a commitment by many to go beyond narrow interest areas, to engage in cross-cutting issues that are both global and local. As an example, I would cite a young Asian-American donor I saw speak on a panel. As a result of September 11 and the ensuing conflicts, he and his wife are supporting Israeli/Palestinian conflict resolution work, although they have no personal connection to such issues.

Q: *What do young philanthropists need from established funders to feel confident in doing advocacy?*

A: Broadly speaking, foundation professionals learn their trade through the old apprenticeship model — so person-to-person guidance is critical. Young grantmakers often work or operate in institutions where they have no control over the rules. The field also deprives them of historical knowledge to provide context for their work. For instance, most don’t see the repetition of ideas from

the “scientific charity” of the early 20th century in the “venture philanthropy” that was birthed at the start of the current century. So seasoned philanthropic leaders ought to be providing new staff with this kind of intellectual and historical context.

Practically speaking, experienced leaders and staff can help them learn the rules of the game: when funding advocacy is appropriate and important as a strategy, at what levels to fund, and how to support organizations that lobby. Alliance for Justice does a really good job training on the legal rules for advocacy — they can use that information too. Experienced leaders and staff ought to know how to move a program agenda within the foundation, and they can mentor emerging funders in this regard.

Now, when many funders are looking for ways to change the direction of the country, young and more experienced grantmakers need to discuss challenges and strategies with each other. For instance, how can they have long-term impact at the national level and what kind of partnerships can they form with other institutions? How can emerging foundation staff connect emerging donors to funding models that can help them grow advocacy and social change as a percentage of philanthropic spending during the upcoming generational transfer of wealth?

Q: *How would you like young funders to influence philanthropy?*

A: My organization is gearing up workshops that we hope will provide better orientation to the field, bridge philanthropic scholars and grantmakers, and establish dialogue among young nonprofit activists, donors, and foundation staffers. We will also press our members to build their own analyses of social justice philanthropy, and to engage in intergenerational learning within the funding community. Many emerging grantmakers want to change the way our generation and our institutions participate in the power dynamic. We hope these workshops will help start the process. As a result, I hope that we'll see more effective, powerful, and accountable philanthropy. ■■



Hodding Carter III is the former President and CEO of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. He is currently University Professor of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Department of Public Policy.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation is a private foundation located in Miami, Florida. Founded in 1950 by the Knight brothers, it focuses on journalism excellence, the 26 communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers, and innovative projects throughout the country.

Q: *What would you say to grantmakers concerned that visible support for advocacy is too risky while there are Senate hearings and other pressures for more nonprofit accountability?*

A: I'd say this is no time for sunshine soldiers. We ought to be speaking with conviction about those areas that we think are the most important to the people we seek to serve. We should be enabling people, through our grantmaking, to speak more vigorously on their own behalf about what is being done to further diminish the quality of their lives. It is precisely in the hard times that strong voices are needed. Waiting for the easy times to act is directly contrary to what we like to claim is a primary justification for foundations, which is to provide assistance that is not readily available elsewhere. When we start to duck, we become part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Q: *Is there anything that you see within the foundation world that has particularly caught your eye as far as supporting or engaging in advocacy?*

A: We're on the verge of a great national debate on the whole immigration question. A growing group of large foundations has chosen to speak up about both the meaning and value of immigration to American life and the meaning and value of fully integrating immigrants into all aspects of American life. Right now is the time

“One of the things that foundations ought constantly to be saying to people is, ‘Come to us with your best ideas for dealing with these commonly acknowledged problems.’ ...not, ‘Come to us with ideas that fit our preconceptions.’ ”

for those who care about this aspect of national life to speak out with vigor. I want to say that we at Knight are not tooting our own horn about this... we’re latecomers to the cause. But it’s good to see the number of foundations that are stepping up to the plate.

Q: *A funder recently told us that his board wants the foundation’s grantmaking to be as “neutral” as possible so that everyone in their area, regardless of their views, will feel comfortable coming to them.*

A: Well, that is an interesting proposition. There is a fallacy abroad that suggests you cannot be as supportive of diversity within your own portfolio as you are, rhetorically, in society at large. And what’s been done wrong by too many foundations is to leave folks with the impression that we think we have a corner on the truth, that we’re going to proscribe those who don’t follow our prescriptions. What we really ought to be saying is that there are stunning problems that face this country: lack of health-care coverage for children, inadequate education for a third of our population, inadequate housing for those who are outside the mainstream economically or otherwise, etc., which, at the end of the day, are not actually matters that should be decided by ideological showdowns. If you sat down with the average 100 people and said, “what are the problems that you think any decent society ought to try to handle,” these

would be among them, no matter whether they said the market, or government, or foundations, or churches ought to take the lead.

One of the things that foundations ought constantly to be saying to people is, “Come to us with your best ideas for dealing with these commonly acknowledged problems.” And we really are here to help support them — not, “Come to us with ideas that fit our preconceptions.”

We should work harder together upon these general assumptions — such as, it’s intolerable for children not to have adequate health care; it’s intolerable that people do not have adequate shelter; it’s intolerable, when society depends on an educated work force, to be depriving so many people of a solid education. These are propositions which truly are held by a heavy majority. If we agree with them, then we should go about the business of constructing answers and advocating for the answers. I think a thousand flowers blooming is what foundations ought to be about. If, though, you’ve put yourself into only a one-trick bag, then the concern you raised is well-founded.

It is interesting, for instance, that we are in a great national debate about whether financial support of faith-based charities ought to be a significant portion of our grantmaking strategy. The truth of the matter is that foundations have been supporting faith-based efforts

for as long as we've been around. Unless I misunderstand, the Salvation Army and the Young Men's Christian Association are faith-based. So was Martin Luther King, Jr. This area is one in which we have and can take a number of different approaches.

Q: *It's an interesting approach to look first at where we all agree.*

A: I think it would help because it really does get you out of the “we/they” business, and towards at least talking about common ground. I have to confess that after almost half a century of being out in public life, I am far less certain about my certainties, about my own prescriptions. That said, I remain unqualifiedly certain that it is unacceptable in a society this rich and this open to have such violent variations and differences in the possibilities available to our people.

Q: *Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of where our policies are going and the nonprofit sector's ability to influence them?*

A: We are in a period — and it may seem fearsome and enduring — in which the nation is easily persuaded that the first priority is security. In many ways, that proposition is not worth arguing. There's a real enemy and we have seen real people — innocents — die a violent death at their hands. But because this has become the

first priority, even an administration more supportive of public welfare legislation would find its capacity to act somewhat limited. So I think that for the middle term, we are not going to see an easy reversal of where we are. But am I pessimistic about the eventual outcome? No, because I am quite certain that over time the good sense and the basic sense of justice and compassion of the American people and their ability to reach out and mobilize around issues will prevail. But such mobilizations tend to come in waves, over time. And they're affected by such externalities as war or the threat of war. So mobilization won't come tomorrow, but it will come, as it always has, because the founding precepts and moral imperatives of this society do not allow injustice to go untreated forever.

Some of our grantees have had their brains beat in recently, but of course some of my best friends had their heads beat in from 1933 until the late 1960s while advocating for their rights. It's what happens when you're in a democratic society, and you just keep plugging at it until you get it reversed.

What do you do when you're living in a democratic society, in which there are no final innings? You wake up every morning and take your turn at bat. And the main thing is to go at each turn with the same energy as before and that's hard to keep up when you get beaten regularly. But — you know — the Red Sox won!

“I'd say this is no time for sunshine soldiers. We ought to be speaking with conviction about those areas that we think are the most important to the people we seek to serve.”

Q: *In a recent interview for this newsletter, Rusty Stahl, of Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy, said that what they need from the foundation world is more person-to-person guidance from experienced philanthropists. Do you have any recommendations?*

A: When I took over this job, and in the lead-up to it, I went around and talked to five people in the foundation world who I knew and trusted or knew of and trusted what I knew of them. I asked them for advice. I received extraordinarily useful advice, even that which, in my circumstances, was not directly pertinent. But every one of those essentially mentor/mentee conversations helped clear my head and focus my sense of direction. I think, to the degree that that can be done more systematically for people as they come into the field, the better off we all would be. I'm forever indebted to people like Steve Schroeder at Robert Wood Johnson, and Bill Bowen at Mellon, and Joel Fleischman at Atlantic Philanthropies.

I have also been quite pleased with what Dot Ridings (Council on Foundations president) has done for the new foundation executives as they come in. They counsel and provide a fairly formal setting for this kind of transfer of knowledge, perception, and precepts from veterans to new folks. ■■



Elizabeth Bremner is the former President of The Foundation Incubator. She is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Ms. Foundation for Women.

The Foundation Incubator originated in Palo Alto, California to support new approaches in effective philanthropy. It joined forces with The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University in 2005 as the Philanthropy Incubator.

Q: *How do new funders impact the field, particularly with regards to supporting advocacy?*

A: There are 3,000 new grantmaking foundations every year. The foundation field is growing, but there's so much more to philanthropy. If we limit ourselves to foundations, we are missing the market — for example, donor-advised funds are increasing at an even greater rate than are foundations. More and more donors are choosing from a variety of vehicles, a range that includes foundations, donor-advised funds, even personal checkbook philanthropy.

Many of the funders that we work with in Silicon Valley are bringing a business approach to philanthropy. They bring their experience from business and industry. They bring a problem-solving orientation as well as the concepts of scale and leverage. Because of this, public policy advocacy is attractive to them. And what Alliance for Justice does, by providing technical assistance on advocacy, is so important.

Q: *What role is The Foundation Incubator playing?*

A: We bring new funders together with other philanthropic peers to learn new approaches and ideas from each other. New funders have an appetite for learning. These are living donors that are finding their way, looking at their visions, values, and strategies. The more they are exposed to their peers, the greater yield their dollars will have in social benefits.

We did a program called “the new big foundations” and profiled CEOs from large new foundations in Silicon Valley. All of these foundations were started by tech entrepreneurs, but each had adopted a different approach to grantmaking, from investing in leaders to measurable outcomes, including counting how many salmon went up stream. What is important is that we create an intersection of ideas and best practices for new approaches.

Q: *What is the current state of philanthropy and what do new funders need from the nonprofit sector?*

A: This is the most exciting time for philanthropy in the last 20 years because it is more dynamic and changing at a fast pace. New funders are accepting an approach that includes more risk-taking. And this new wave of philanthropy is just beginning. The more the

new approaches and best practices are taken, the more the field will expand.

It’s hard, though, for new funders to access the information they need. How do they get in the loop during the early stages of philanthropy? How, for example, do they get to know about Alliance for Justice for information on advocacy? The sector needs to better communicate our resources and help to differentiate our efforts so people can get the assistance they need. We need to share clearer messages about the work we are each doing. When people get the information they need, they are better able to effectively get their money on the street more quickly and where it is needed.

Q: *Please provide us an example of something that has given you satisfaction in your work.*

A: Watching a new foundation get up and running, get certification, get its web site up, get its grant guidelines out, all in six months. The person running that foundation has already presented at an Association of Small Foundations meeting and is giving back to other grantmakers. ■■

“Many of the funders that we work with in Silicon Valley are bringing a business approach to philanthropy. They bring their experience from business and industry. They bring a problem-solving orientation as well as the concept of scale and leverage. Because of this, public policy advocacy is attractive to them.”



William Schambra is Director of the Hudson Institute's Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal.

The Hudson Institute's Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal was created in 2003 by a grant from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Bradley Center explores unexamined assumptions underlying the grantmaking practices of American foundations and supports the civic renewal of smaller, grassroots institutions.

Q: *What have conservative foundations found to be successful strategies in funding public policy advocacy? Could you start with a listing of those strategies?*

A: Here is a list: cultivation of ideas that are fundamentally new ways of thinking about public policy and that defy the orthodoxy of the moment; funding over the long-term; funding through general operating support; funding in the face of possible or even likely criticism; funding in the face of likely setbacks, and staying with it over the long haul; realizing that significant change takes time; and a willingness to think about evaluation only in the most expansive way rather than in some narrow methodological, numerical fashion.

Conservative funding was primarily involved from the '60s on in the cultivation of ideas. Conservative ideas were in the wilderness for a long time, in part because conservative intellectuals and policy analysts were not welcome in the universities then, and are not now, so the cultivation of conservative ideas had to transpire entirely outside the established intellectual framework. Conservatism has been successful, in large measure, because it built upon this prior substructure of ideas that had been developed in part with the funding of conservative foundations. Over time some of those conservative ideas ended up being brought into actuality.

My most immediate experience with that was in Milwaukee, with the Bradley Foundation, concerning school choice — that is, the funding of tuition assistance for low-income parents and seeing to it that they have the full range of choice of educational institutions, including sectarian schools. That was an idea discussed by Milton Friedman in the 1950s and which became more acceptable in the early 1980s, after the Brookings Institution published a book promoting this conservative idea. In Milwaukee, we were able to see the implementation of this idea on the ground. Milwaukee now has a publicly supported system of school choice. And I tend to agree with the studies that show that the school choice system is working well.

This is a case of moving an idea from academic journals into public policy, but the critical thing is that this takes a very long time and it involves three steps forward and two steps backward. You have moments when you think that nothing you have done has made any difference at all. There are moments of despair and moments when the people who were friends of the movement become enemies of it. You have to be able to cope with all sorts of setbacks along the way.

The work is very difficult to measure. Had we sat down at any point over the years with specific benchmarks and said that we would walk away from the project if the

benchmarks were not reached in a certain amount of time, it would have meant that school choice would not have happened, or at least that we wouldn't have been along for the ride.

You have to understand that public policy advocacy is a controversial thing. If you're going to challenge the intellectual status quo with a public policy concept, you're not going to get the grantmaker-of-the-year award. You may 20 years from now, but this year you're going to be abused and ridiculed by any and all who don't agree with the idea. The more cutting edge and innovative the idea, the more preposterous it's going to seem to the critics. In Milwaukee, the local newspaper had been an ardent opponent of school choice. Today, they are a moderately enthusiastic supporter. Everyday you're reading headlines in the local paper, the only local print outlet, deeply critical of what you are doing. That means that if you're going to get into this business of public policy advocacy, everyone — staff, board members, and everyone — has to be behind the CEO. You don't want to get into the situation where a board member calls the CEO and says, "what the hell is going on there?"

Because this is a long-term process in which there will be momentous setbacks and failures, if your approach to measurement is short-term, looking for a three to five year measurable project with flags along the way

showing progress, I can almost guarantee you're going to be discouraged and give up the notion of funding public policy advocacy. It just doesn't happen that way. You're dealing with too many factors that are way beyond the funder's and the nonprofit's control. What is important is having a thorough understanding of the social, cultural, intellectual currents that are part of any given problem. The notion that public policy is a technological problem to be solved — rather than a broad-based cultural, political, intellectual world in which you should push forward a little bit, help along some good trends, and try to diminish some bad trends — and to expect clear measurements of success is to defeat yourself at the outset. Things are swirling around out there in the world, things over which you have absolutely no control.

The way you fund in the face of uncertainty, and the long-term character of real and significant social change, is to find nonprofits that are doing good. They may not be the largest and they may not be governed by the most recent orthodoxy, and they're more likely to be fringe groups — but you fund them and you stick with them over the long haul and you give them general operating support. It's very difficult for nonprofits to lay out three years of public policy program and be effective by sticking with a plan. They have to be able to adapt to the moment, to change the way they operate. If the founda-

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tion binds them down with some kind of project funding with specific aspects such as research, a conference, and writing op-eds, it’s unrealistic to think that that kind of specificity will be able to stand up in the face of reality if you really want to accomplish something. The nonprofit has to be able to say that what they developed in the proposal as a program responding to public sentiment was one thing and suddenly public sentiment has changed. They can go on with their irrelevant conference and irrelevant research or they can change. And if the nonprofit has to come back and fill out elaborate permission forms for the funder in order to make the changes, the funder will be far less effective than if they funded a good nonprofit doing thoughtful work with general operating support.

Significant change takes time. The Supreme Court decision to uphold financial support for school choice came 50 years after Milton Friedman put out the idea. If my friends on the left think that the idea is to amass millions and millions of dollars to influence the next election, it’s not going to work. The horizon is too short. You have to be patient. And it’s good that we have to be patient — it takes time to vet ideas. The Great Society went directly from social science journals into federal law in two years. It would have been better if the ideas had been debated and tested at state and local levels. When ideas go directly from the minds of intellectuals to public policy, it’s a recipe for catastrophe. And

you have to understand that public policy is a political, cultural, intellectual, swirling sea of change. You can focus on the theories of change and how it affects what’s going on but you have to contextualize change theory if you want to effectively fund public policy.

Q: *Where is conservative funding headed, and where would you like to see foundations in general headed in the future?*

A: I think that in the future, instead of a handful of large conservative foundations leading the way, there will be a larger number of smaller players clustered around interests, much like the shift from department stores to specialty stores.

The nonprofit sector is about cultivating and preserving American democracy. It is where citizens go to mobilize to achieve what they want. The huge foundations in the center have taken a technological approach to solving problems, an approach that diminishes the sector and civil society. They have been unwilling to fund grassroots democratization activities of the right or left. Foundations are discouraging the democratized roots of the nonprofit sector. It is frustrating to see how little money is going to social change. So much more has to be done. ■■



John G. Davies is President and CEO of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is a community foundation working in the capital region of Louisiana. The foundation connects philanthropists with nonprofits and works with pivotal community change projects.

Q: What are the issues for the nonprofit sector regarding recovery from the hurricanes in Louisiana and how does advocacy factor in?

A: The overarching concern that many nonprofits have here is, how do we rebuild southern Louisiana, particularly New Orleans, in a way that makes it a more equitable city, more responsive to more people. New Orleans as a social structure was not equitable — poor folks lived in the lowlands, in very poor housing, and everybody seemed to be okay with that, but it's not okay. The civic institutions need to become more responsive than they used to be.

The most important role that the independent sector is facing here is not so much service provision, although I don't want to diminish that, but advocacy. The big money is coming from the federal government to rebuild this part of the world, and that's all about public policy. And the conscience of most communities is imbedded within the independent sector.

Q: Who are the decision makers that are targets for advocacy?

A: In terms of providing systems in New Orleans that work better for people who have been on the margins of society, the state and local governments mostly are incredibly important places for voices to be heard now. Now, the

“If we could focus on advocacy, you might ask, where could we have the greatest chance of success?”

question the thoughtful person would ask is, “Which of the two (state or local government) is more important?” and the answer to that is, I frankly don't know yet. I don't know if the federal money's going to flow through the city directly or through the State of Louisiana. Depending on who controls the money is where you need to be sure that you advocate for effective and equitable reconstruction. One of the core concerns is rebuilding levees to make sure that they don't flood out again. The Army Corp of Engineers has the responsibility to do that very thing, and is virtually rebuilding the levee system around New Orleans to Category 3 hurricane level. It's absurd — how did that happen? (Katrina was Category 5.) That was a federal decision. Who's raising hell about that decision?

Q: How can the voices of the people best be heard in this atmosphere?

A: We have to make sure that the vibrant independent sector participates in the conversation, and starting now. For example, some of the organizations that we have been very active with have gone up against the mayor of New

Orleans about using the toxic refuse to fill in some of the local landfills. Louisiana Environmental Action Network has filed suit to prevent that from happening anymore.

Q: What would you tell funders who want to support organizations that can represent public voices in the recovery?

A: The advocacy role is critical. If we could focus on advocacy, you might ask, “where could we have the greatest chance of success?” I would tell you it’s in the whole area of planning. We could really advance the building of more equitable, fair, and functional communities here than we’ve had in the past.

Non-governmental organizations can provide information that could inform the decisions on the physical plan. The most important piece of building an equitable community is how we construct it. If the master development plan calls for mixed-income communities, and ordinances support and encourage that, we will build back the communities we want. I’ve seen it because we are doing this in Baton Rouge.

Our foundation has all the work we can say grace over. Despite that, we would happily be a conduit or a resource for national foundations that are looking for logical partners working in the advocacy area in Louisiana. If they want to use us as a resource, they should call me. ■■

Lily Mendez-Morgan is the former Executive Director of the Access Strategies Fund.

The Access Strategies Fund is a private foundation located in Cambridge, Massachusetts and founded in 1999 by Maria and Greg Jobin-Leeds. The foundation funds nonpartisan voter engagement, nonpartisan civic leadership, electoral justice, immigrant civic participation, and civic culture change in disenfranchised communities in Massachusetts.

Q: Please tell us how Access Strategies got started and about its focus.

A: Six years ago the founders, Maria and Greg Jobin-Leeds, wanted to promote access to the democratic process. Through the many conversations they had with community stakeholders, it became clear that nonprofit organizations in low-income communities were doing extraordinary organizing work but did not have the resources to take that work to the next level — that is, to connect their work and their constituents to civic participation resulting in more grassroots power. That meant that they could not hold their public officials accountable. The decision was made that the foundation would help low-income, minority communities in Massachusetts increase their participation in the democratic process. Maria and Greg wondered if improving these communities’ low rates of civic participation would result in their receiving increased shares of public dollars in order to improve their lives.

As a result, our private family foundation supports nonpartisan mobilization of constituents to become active in their communities. We try to do all general operating support and have funded most of our grantees for over three years. We are very comfortable with longer-term funding, because we’re talking about systemic change, and that takes time to achieve.

Q: Many funders see barriers to and risks in supporting this kind of work. Some talk about a desire to remain “neutral.” How does your foundation view and handle the barriers and risks (perceived or real)?

A: You know, this isn’t about taking sides. This is about responding to the needs of a community as articulated by community-based organizations. The organizations we support have clearly said that it is very important to their ability to serve their communities to have some sort of way to hold their public officials and their policy makers accountable. We need to be responsive to that with our informed support.

The biggest barrier to supporting the work is lack of information, so the first thing funders need to do is to inform themselves about how to support advocacy. Our foundation makes sure that we have sound legal advisors reviewing our materials, and we provide training to our grantees.

We do struggle with what language to use in our communications with grantees. We struggle to ensure that we clearly understand the types of advocacy work we are permitted to fund. We never deviate from our mission, however, to stay completely nonpartisan. And there’s the fear of reprisal. Funders certainly don’t want

to jeopardize the organizations that they support by encouraging them to cross any lines that may not be legally acceptable. What we have seen, though, is that we too often err on the side of caution, which then has us erring on the side of inaction. We are not serving the organizations we support well by encouraging fears about advocacy work that may not be based in the law or reality. To this end, Alliance for Justice has been incredibly helpful in providing accurate information and materials about advocacy rules that are easy to understand — to us and our grantees.

Access Strategies, as an endowed foundation, has the luxury of getting sound legal advice, and shame on us if we don’t take advantage of that for ourselves and if we don’t take that information and share it with the organizations that we support.

Q: What kind of results are you seeing from your grantmaking?

A: We have a strong cadre of nonprofit organizations in Boston communities of color that have connected to us for funding or for other resources over the last six years. These are strong groups with great organizing components that were ready for funders to help them find the resources to take on nonpartisan civic engagement and voter education. For example, we have issues

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that impact low-income communities in Massachusetts, including the challenges of providing quality public education and community preservation, and they required intensive education and mobilization.

As a result of the organizations having the resources to be able to support their civic engagement work, we now see a highly active group of organizations that can mobilize their constituents. One result is that public officials now know they need to stop by these organizations on their way to the State House. The officials are listening more to the low-income communities. We’re also seeing more public officials that represent the ethnic compositions of neighborhoods. It’s a major shift in Boston.

Q: *How do you measure the results of your advocacy grantmaking?*

A: It is a struggle for us, as I think it is for all funders. Just as we expect our grantees to be able to evaluate their work, we should be looking at how we evaluate what we fund and how we do it. We’ve embarked on several processes. We hired a consultant to come in and evaluate our processes. They meet with our grantees to talk about whether or not we are funding what the grantees think is important.

The other thing is that when you’re talking about nonpartisan civic engagement, there are clear numbers. Although we do not fund voter registration, we do think that voter participation numbers are an indicator of how active organizations are in their efforts to educate and mobilize their constituents. In particular, we have seen the impact of our grantees’ work in Boston where there has been a large increase of voters in areas that have high concentrations of people of color.

We have other ways to measure impact. We keep track of how many times our grantees are referenced in the media and by policy makers and how many times our grantees are asked to participate in the policymaking process. Several of our grantees were key in getting the Department of Justice to come in and look at the City of Boston’s election practices. As a result, the Department of Justice reported that there were clear infractions. The mayor of Boston consequently put together an election practices task force, and four of our grantees were asked to sit at that table to help set election reform policies for the city. We think that’s a clear outcome. ■■



Barbara Masters is Director of Public Policy at The California Endowment.

The California Endowment is a private foundation created in 1996 as the result of Blue Cross of California's creation of the for-profit WellPoint Health Network. The California Endowment seeks to improve the quality of and access to health care for all Californians.

Q: *Please tell us about the innovative work that you are doing to train your staff and your grantees in advocacy.*

A: It starts with our evolution as a foundation and our increasing recognition that policy change and systems change are so integral to the foundation achieving its mission of a healthier California. We are particularly committed to helping low-income and underserved communities improve their health status.

In order to strengthen our role in bringing about a healthier California, we embarked on an internal evaluation of how we are organized to achieve our goals. Consequently, we reorganized around three main goals that we identified as essential.

Those goals are increased access to healthcare and health coverage, a culturally competent health system, and the elimination of health disparities in communities. Next, we revised our grantmaking guidelines in order to infuse a stronger emphasis on policy and advocacy work throughout the foundation's work.

We have done policy and advocacy work throughout our 10-year history, but we wanted to take a more purposeful approach to it so that it would exist in all of the work we do. The approach is built on a philosophy that communities are agents of change and should be leading the iden-

tification of what policy changes are needed to meet their own health needs.

Our philosophy about how change happens is that you need to work at the grassroots and the treetops levels, and they both need to be connected in some way. So we fund grassroots organizations and we fund statewide and national policy and advocacy organizations because all are needed to move a health agenda.

We have a lot of staff that are drawn out of community organizations and are not as experienced in policy and advocacy work. So, as we've been working to implement our new guidelines with their emphasis on policy and advocacy, we realized that we needed to provide program staff with the tools and knowledge about policy and advocacy, including what are realistic and appropriate advocacy activities to fund and how to engage in conversations about advocacy with grantees.

We are also in the process of helping grantees to improve their skills, because many have come to us and said, "If you want us to do more policy and advocacy work we need some help and resources to do that."

Policy and advocacy work require a different way of problem-solving. I think that service providers have a way of thinking about problem-solving which, understandably, focuses on organizational or programmatic

“We fund grassroots organizations and we fund statewide and national policy and advocacy organizations because all are needed to move a health agenda.”

solutions. To do policy work you have to think about solutions in a different way. And we want to help people to start thinking about how to do that.

Q: Another area of the policy work that you’re taking leadership in is evaluation of advocacy. How did that work evolve, and specifically, what do you think is the tipping point between useful and burdensome advocacy reporting requirements?

A: As we were putting more emphasis on policy advocacy work, questions came up from staff and from our board, “How do we know we’re making an impact?” It’s hard enough to assess work on grants where a grantee has control over the deliverables. With policy change and advocacy work, it’s even harder.

Working together, the Public Policy and Evaluation Departments began to think about how to develop methodologies to give us the kind of information that would be useful. We decided to first identify what the latest thinking is and how other evaluators and funders approach this issue. We commissioned a report called *The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities*.

The report recommended a different approach to evaluation which, at its heart, is about using evaluation to inform your policy and advocacy strategies and assess if progress is being made — not just a retrospective

on what worked and what didn’t work. That held out promise that grantees and advocates can think about evaluation as helpful instead of as a burden. Now we are actively working on taking lessons and recommendations from the report to the next level by translating them into workable tools, methodologies, and templates.

And the question you’ve raised is a key tension, because evaluators have certain information needs. Funders have certain information needs. Grantees have certain information needs and the individuals who have to collect the data have concerns about those needs. How much information is enough and what’s the format for collecting that information? How can you develop methodologies that would meet an evaluator’s needs but that could also be useful in semi-real time to the grantees so that they could use that feedback for modifying or refining strategy? It is important to have a dialogue about those competing needs and tensions and find solutions that would make the process work and be useful for all parties — funders, grantees, and evaluators.

As we’ve delved into this, we’re finding that the strategies and methods may be very different for a single-year advocacy grant versus a multi-year grant. And we shouldn’t think that there’s going to be just one model, just one solution, that’s going to meet all of those different demands. There are going to be lots of different approaches and tools. ■■



Deborah Bussel is Director of the Shepard Broad Foundation, Inc.

The Shepard Broad Foundation is a family foundation located in Miami, Florida and founded by Bussel's grandfather in 1956. It primarily funds educational institutions in Miami-Dade County as well as throughout Florida.

Q: *Donors Forum of South Florida recently gave your foundation an IMPACT Award for small grantmaking (grants of \$10,000–\$25,000) that has made a positive impact. What was your advocacy-related grant for, and how did you promote making it within your foundation?*

A: The specific award was for a one-year grant we made in 2003 with a subsequent commitment for two more years of funding to start what became the Women's Advocacy Project at the Women's Fund of Miami-Dade County (the "Women's Fund").

Our foundation had been giving the Women's Fund money to make grants to organizations that were providing services and programs like health care or ballet classes for underserved kids. But the Women's Fund had come to a point where they needed to build their organizational capacity.

The Women's Fund wanted to have a forum on immigration, and the foundation agreed to provide funding for it. The Women's Fund pulled together six service-providing organizations who were working with immigrant women and children. After holding the immigration forum, the Women's Fund came to us and asked if we would be willing to support hiring staff for a coalition of these groups to follow through on recommendations

from the forum's participants. And that is what led to the creation of the Women's Advocacy Project.

From my point of view, this kind of work at the grassroots level to organize people around issues has real impact. It's building a base for long-term advocacy and the voices are coming from the communities that are affected by the various policies and issues. If you want long-term change, advocacy funding can help make sure that people who need to be at the table are there.

Q: *How do the women use the Women's Advocacy Project?*

A: I will give you an example from last month. The women, knowing that there was a May Day/Immigrant Rights Day event, came together and talked about how they wanted to participate. They decided to take a bus up to Orlando where the big state rally was taking place. They took about 50 women, some service providers and some women in communities that were interested in the issues, to Orlando. They had advocacy training on the bus ride to Orlando and on the way back — four hours each way.

We wanted to start to encourage real impact through social change funding so that we are not constantly doing the band-aid approach. So, we put funding in this organization that, through capacity building, had

“If you want long-term change, advocacy funding can help make sure that people who need to be at the table are there.”

gotten to a point that it could really take on some social change work.

Q: Please talk about any resistance to advocacy funding you might have met in the foundation from the older generation, and related suggestions you might have for other young foundation trustees.

A: I met some initial resistance but since the first advocacy grant I was seeking wasn't a lot of money, the family let me do it. Later, they saw that the small grant had impact. And the fact that sophisticated funders judging the Donors Forum of South Florida grant-making IMPACT Awards chose us was great. It wasn't "Debby's little quirky thing" anymore. Because the Women's Fund produced, it made it easier to go back and say, "Look what they did with that \$5,000 for the immigration seminar! We can't get this kind of impact from some of the several hundred thousand dollar grants we give to institutions."

The groundwork for our advocacy grantmaking, though, had actually been laid earlier. You can trace that back to Hurricane Andrew in 1992. The hurricane took the lid off of south Dade County — we started seeing more of the needs of the migrant farmworkers, and others. As a community funder, we were exposed to how rebuilding

over the long-term takes place, and the importance of getting money to the ground level in order to make social change over the long haul. Big organizations came in and left, leaving the locals holding the bag. Since we directly had suffered in this storm with my mother's home heavily damaged (she was displaced for 18 months), and we recognized that we were in a more fortunate position to rebuild than were low-income families, we were sensitized to the plight of the most marginalized in our community. The personal experience helped us understand the need to get money out on the ground quickly and to keep that money flowing so that grassroots organizations could have their voices heard through the many years of rebuilding.

Q: Do you have any suggestions for other young trustees in family foundations?

A: A lot is made of this generation gap in funding and I really don't think there needs to be a wedge there. In many cases, not all, the values underlying the giving are probably more aligned than everyone might think.

I think it is critical that the younger generation respect and honor the giving of the older generation. They need to acknowledge the spirit of generosity of those that came before them and then take the time to understand why they gave they way they did. This interest

and respect begins a dialogue with the older generation and often can lead to their interest in what the younger generation is thinking and caring about. The giving of each generation is a window into their respective worlds and in understanding their respective giving, they will understand each other better.

Q: Were your trustees concerned about funding advocacy?

A: Well, we range across a political spectrum on this board, from right to left. And, to get anywhere with our funding, we have to take it out of this political framework and say, “It’s not left, it’s not right.” It’s saying, “This is what’s going on in this community. These are the resources we have. How do we start to make a difference in people’s lives?” Ultimately, we all want to do that, although we may come at it with a different philosophy. ■■



Sherece West is the former CEO of the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation. Currently, she is President of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

The Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation is a grantmaking public charity established in 2005 in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita using donations from around the world. The foundation supports nonprofit organizations engaged in economic development, housing, civic engagement, and policy and advocacy.

Q: Why do nonprofit groups need to do advocacy on behalf of their constituents in post-Katrina Louisiana?

A: Advocacy on behalf of our constituents is essential to ensure that public funds, which will dwarf the amount of private resources in scope and amount, are used effectively and applied towards the needs of displaced residents and communities that historically have had access to the fewest resources.

Governor Blanco launched The Road Home program through which eligible homeowners affected by Hurricane Rita or Katrina may receive up to \$150,000 in compensation for losses suffered. In addition, The Road Home will loan funds to restore and construct thousands of rental properties.

There are policy concerns associated with The Road Home that nonprofit advocacy must address. For example, the nonprofit Louisiana Housing Alliance is pushing the Louisiana Housing Finance Authority to make the most hurricane-devastated areas of the state the priority for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits allotted to Louisiana. There was no priority for communities most in need of reinvestment like New Orleans. Some additional policy concerns include: (1) cultural insensitivity by requiring applicants to be fingerprinted; (2) ensuring that all displaced citizens of Louisiana

“If we have the wherewithal, we should fund the advocacy in parallel with services because the advocacy comes into play immediately when a storm hits...”

have the right to return; (3) providing services and support to displaced citizens with little to no money or resources to return; and (4) providing services and support to help those homeowners that would be considered “hard cases.”

Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation (LDRF) is particularly interested in ensuring the involvement of those who traditionally have had little voice or are in danger of losing their voice in the public decision making process. That is why supporting groups that do advocacy is important to our foundation.

Louisiana needs to strengthen its nonprofit infrastructure for effectively influencing public policy decisions at the state and local level. And now is the time to build that capacity. In this instance, capacity building is not a vague or abstract concept. The groups need capacity to collect data for policy research, analysis, and advocacy; develop effective communication strategies to educate and influence the public on certain issues; organize and mobilize constituents; attract high level staff; hire consultants; purchase software, state of the art technology, and more.

Q: *Is there a need for more money from foundations for advocacy?*

A: There’s absolutely a need for more money from foundations for advocacy. As previously discussed, nonprofits need money to respond to and initiate policies, programs, and legislation that will impact hurricane-affected areas of the state and the future of displaced citizens. Money from foundations for advocacy can help with ensuring equity and inclusion in the recovery and reform processes.

Consider that advocacy represents the “voice” that is most affected but missing from the process and you will understand why foundation money is needed for: advocacy strategies that communicate the need and attract money for mental health services desperately needed in the state; creating a school system that provides quality education to our young people; promoting equitable development; and I could go on.

Here’s our opportunity in philanthropy to promote equity and inclusion through supporting policy and advocacy work — and to work together to do it.

Q: Steve Gunderson, Council on Foundations President, has suggested that foundations might set up a pool of money that will be immediately available for dispersal following future disasters. How would you advise Mr. Gunderson or any funder to treat advocacy in post-disaster spending?

A: If we have the wherewithal, we should fund the advocacy in parallel with services because the advocacy comes into play immediately when a storm hits — advocating and pushing for state and federal resources to help curtail the disaster and to provide immediate relief. Maybe if there had been a strong nonprofit advocacy agenda here, FEMA and the Red Cross may not have committed the many mistakes that they did.

Q: You're working in a post and, one could say, a current emergency situation. How are you evaluating your advocacy grants?

A: We know that supporting public policy advocacy is working. For example, ACORN won approval from the New Orleans City Council in June to designate the Lower Ninth Ward as a hardship case, which allowed residents to successfully petition for a later gutting deadline (if you don't put your home on a list to be gutted, you risk your home being demolished and your prop-

erty seized). Gaining the time extension was a valuable outcome. There are many examples where LDRF and others support policy and advocacy that are positively influencing the recovery process to date.

And when advocates lose, that's fine too. You can't apply bean counting and other traditional evaluation methods to this type of work. So we have to design what is appropriate. And oftentimes if the environment is inhibiting, there are other ways to measure progress. The progress could be determined by advocacy capacity built; by how far the advocates were able to get a bill or regulation; and by how far they were able to build public awareness around the message — because if you keep doing the advocacy work, eventually it'll catch on and change will come. ■■

“...Maybe if there had been a strong nonprofit advocacy agenda here, FEMA and the Red Cross may not have committed the many mistakes that they did.”



Larry Kressley is the former Executive Director of the Public Welfare Foundation.

The Public Welfare Foundation is a private foundation incorporated by Charles Edward Marsh in 1949. The Foundation is located in Washington, DC.

Q: *What has been most satisfying to you during your tenure at the Public Welfare Foundation in relation to advocacy work that your foundation has supported?*

A: Over my tenure — and I was at the foundation for almost 25 years, the past 15 as executive director — we've really advanced our commitment to advocacy and pursued it in the context of empowering advocacy by service organizations, which I think is important to achieving effective public policy.

At Public Welfare we wanted to support advocacy based on the agenda of marginalized communities. We worked with the environmental justice movement in communities of color, supporting efforts in marginalized communities to promote community development in favor of the community that exists, and not to displace people.

I believe that one of the key issues in American philanthropy today is this tension between supporting communities' advocacy agendas versus supporting the traditional role of the expertise elite. I think most grant-makers fund issues and the experts who work on issues; they feel more comfortable with that. Although the comfort level with supporting communities' agendas has improved, there is still a tension in American philanthropy around the two approaches.

Q: *Now that you're leaving philanthropy, at least for right now, would you comment on ways that philanthropy could improve what it's doing as far as supporting advocacy?*

A: The answer to how to improve philanthropy is simply to support unpopular causes that are right and that are right from the perspective of the funder. The conservative movement has virtually destroyed public education and undermined the role of government in meeting basic human needs. They've widened the gap between rich and poor, with fewer people in between. They've excluded whole groups of people from fully participating in American life. And they've done it strategically. Why can't other funders do the same kind of work with the same kind of strategies when it comes to making sure that everyone in this country gets good, quality, public education?

Q: *Why haven't the moderate and progressive organizations been able to do the same thing?*

A: Philanthropy is rooted in some basic liberal principles. One of those principles is an almost obsession for neutral, unbiased research and action. We always have to hear the other side. The right doesn't care about the other side. They just want to advance their point of view.

Someone once said that liberal foundations are liberal not just in their belief in social and economic justice, but also in their belief in the possibility of neutrality. It makes them uncomfortable with making grants that seem too political or ideological. And I think the key to the conservative foundations' success is that they broke the liberal taboo that governs American philanthropy, and that American philanthropy is rooted in, by being more openly ideological.

Q: Tell us your views on evaluating advocacy?

A: Well, I think it goes to one of the things that the conservative foundations have done so well. That is, in addition to sticking with groups for the long-term, they understand that change doesn't happen overnight. You have to use different models of evaluation, and that includes not focusing on the numerical results as indicators of success.

Here is a troubling example of bad evaluation of advocacy work. An influential foundation in the area of criminal justice supported groups that were working in North Carolina and those groups came within a few votes in the state legislature of approving a moratorium on execution last year. That funder stopped funding it because they said it didn't meet their evaluation standard.

Evaluation of advocacy has to be longer-term. You benchmark it. You evaluate strategies. To back out based on some arbitrary evaluation criteria doesn't make sense. How could coming so close to reaching a moratorium on execution not be seen as success? There are, unfortunately, lots of stories like that.

There's a line from an e.e. cummings poem that obviously isn't about grantmaking, but it's priceless. He said, "Our work is in the doing. The rest is none of our business." That's my view of evaluating our work, especially when you support work in communities that don't get much of a chance at resources, or even organizations like Alliance for Justice that have limited access to resources.

You're up against such great odds these days. Let's be together on what the end results are, just as the conservatives were, and then let's support each other.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to say to the readers of this newsletter who are interested in funding advocacy or already do?

A: I think that if foundations make significant progress just on increasing general support, that could make a tremendous difference. And then in doing that, foundations should think about longer-term evaluation. I

“The answer to how to improve philanthropy is simply to support unpopular causes that are right and that are right from the perspective of the funder.”

went to a meeting a few summers ago about general support. People around the table said to me, “We don’t like general support because we can’t take enough credit for the work done like we do with projects.” Well, I take credit for all of the work done by an organization when we give general support. I think it’s actually easier if you’re looking for credit or if you’re looking for things to evaluate, because you get the whole organization. ■■



Gara LaMarche is the former Vice President and Director of U.S. Programs of the Open Society Institute. Currently, he is President and CEO of The Atlantic Philanthropies.

The Atlantic Philanthropies are dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Atlantic focuses on four critical social problems: Ageing, Disadvantaged Children & Youth, Population

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Q: *What reasoning might help persuade more funders to increase their general support funding to grantees?*

A: The most persuasive reason to increase general support funding is that people and organizations do their best work when, once you have determined they are aligned with your mission, you show the confidence in their expertise and judgment by giving them room to exercise it.

Q: *Is being bold often missing among funders because of a desire to please the powers that be? Can you, for example, imagine a few large funders pulling together a press conference to discuss income disparity in America?*

A: It is very rare for any foundation, and certainly for the larger foundations, to raise its voice or act collectively except with respect to issues critical to the foundation itself. You get some collective action, for example, when Congress attempts to raise the payout rate. When it comes to the greater inequities in society, even questions about things like the estate tax, there tends not to be much outspoken, collective action. There have been some exceptions to that in some places in the last two years — but not many.

Q: What kind of leadership is needed in philanthropy now?

A: Foundations, like any institutions, should not squander whatever credibility they have. You shouldn't, for example, speak out every week on topics discussed in op-ed columns. But there's a lot of room for foundations to do much more than they have done before about carefully chosen, large policy questions such as affirmative action, fair tax policy, and immigration reform.

Foundations represent power and money but they don't necessarily have, nor should they have, credibility just for that reason. Yet many of the people who lead these institutions are people recognized in society, whose voices would be listened to by policy makers and others. In my own experience, when George Soros or even I spoke out from time to time on criminal justice or civil liberties issue, we found enthusiastic support from the community of grantees who felt that a foundation like OSI or figure like George Soros can greatly buttress what grantees and other nonprofit advocacy organizations are trying to do.

As a funder, though, you have to speak out so that raising your voice supports and complements the grantee instead of drowning it out. That can be done. But it requires some sensitivity to the relationship between funders and their grantees, a point that Susan

Berresford (Ford Foundation) and others have well articulated over the years. As a funder, you don't want to compete with your grantees. This is particularly true concerning the trend of more foundations running their own programs and in effect competing with their grantees.

Q: Please tell us about some OSI grantmaking that you were involved in and of which you are proud.

A: There are a lot of them in the advocacy realm but to reach a little bit into the past? In the late '90s we had the Emma Lazarus Fund, which we set up after Congress cut off benefits for legal immigrants in 1996. George Soros felt Congress's action was unjust and wrong so he set up the \$15 million Lazarus Fund to do something about it. A lot of that fund went to providing services for immigrants so that they could be assisted with naturalization and legal assistance.

A significant amount of the funding also went into advocacy to support human rights coalitions around the United States and to support legal and policy advocacy organizations in key parts of the country. The fund supported the documentation of stories of the hardships that were wrought by the bill on legal immigrants who were denied the protection of the

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Health, and Reconciliation & Human Rights. Programmes funded by Atlantic operate in Australia, Bermuda, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States and Vietnam.

“The most persuasive reason to increase general support funding is that people and organizations do their best work when, once you have determined they are aligned with your mission, you show the confidence in their expertise and judgment by giving them room to exercise it.”

social safety net and the advocacy to bring those stories to the attention of policy makers, ultimately to Congress. That resulted in a restoration of most of the \$16 billion of benefits that had been cut out of the welfare bill.

Q: *How do you know that what you funded was part of the reason for the change?*

A: We commissioned a report to study the interplay of the services and the policy advocacy. We were able to show a number of places — in key states or with key legislators — that OSI’s funding could have made a difference. But I’m tempted to say, like the right wing funders do, is that all we had to do was open up the newspaper, see how Congress acted to restore benefits, and make the connection between that and our grantees promoting restoration. This work, though, requires some humility. Any significant public policy achievement has a number of players who combine to make it effective. It’s very, very rare that one organization or one individual or one funder can or should claim credit.

Q: *How have you arrived at the leadership role you are taking on with The Atlantic Philanthropies and what would you recommend to emerging leaders in philanthropy who want to be successful in this field?*

A: For some strange reason, I have gotten here by being myself, speaking out when I feel moved to, trying to stay honest and real by surrounding myself with staff, nonprofit colleagues, family, and friends who aren’t afraid to say what they think. It’s a course I would recommend to everyone who wants to maintain self-respect, though I can’t promise it will lead to the presidency of a large global foundation. ■■



Bill Roberts is President and Executive Director of the Beldon Fund.

The Beldon Fund is a private foundation focusing on health and the environment that will close, as planned, in 2009.

Q: *Not long ago, the Environmental Grantmakers Association talked about doing more to incorporate other issue areas into work on the environment. How is that going?*

A: That's a work in progress. There has been more integration across issue sets, but we need to do a lot more. For example, we work as a foundation on environmental health, exposure to chemicals, and other things in the environment that cause illness. You would think and hope that there would be a lot of coordination between environmental funders who care about these concerns and health funders who have focused on illness and cures. Forging those alliances and relationships, honestly, has been halting. On climate change, it's more of an overlap rather than integration, and it's not a huge overlap, between advocacy funders within the environmental funding world and the Funders' Committee on Civic Participation, which is a collection of funders that wants to promote more active involvement in a nonpartisan way in elections and election-related activities. It has been fascinating to watch over the last 10 years a pretty steady progression of recognition by environmental funders that a lot of the issues that they care about and fund can be shaped through the electoral process as much as through the policy making process. There's a growing interest among funders in trying to

figure out how to be more helpful to efforts to shape the atmosphere in which these issues are debated.

Q: *Can you give an example of your support for advocacy that has been satisfying?*

A: We have had a number of different things that we've supported that we've been glad we supported. We've also had some that have flamed out. But to be honest with you, and this is a tribute to our board more than anything else, the fact that we have been willing to fund things that have the risk of flaming out as well as succeeding has been a critical cornerstone of our funding.

If you come at the exercise with an unwillingness to fail, or intolerance for failure, then you circumscribe the kinds of opportunities where your support can blossom into some sizeable success. The willingness to embrace a higher degree of risk is an important prerequisite for experimenting with work that has the potential to succeed.

When the new administration came into Washington in 2001, there was a great deal of trepidation and fear about what would happen to a lot of long-standing environmental policies. It was unclear at that time where those threats, if they were to materialize, would come from or be directed at. Would it be a challenge to the

“If you come at the exercise with an unwillingness to fail, or intolerance for failure, then you circumscribe the kinds of opportunities where your support can blossom into some sizeable success.”

Clean Air Act? Would it be a challenge to the Endangered Species Act? Would it be regulations to curtail Superfund cleanups? Nobody knew. So for foundation funders it was unclear how you should be invested. After a convening of funders in early 2001, a set of foundations agreed to create a pool of funds for grantees.

The money was organized and managed by a set of groups within the Green Group, the informal association of national environmental organizations. Those groups could use the money on an as needed basis for advocacy when outside unexpected challenges occurred to environmental policies. And the people who kicked in resources at the start of it couldn't answer what is usually a common question at any foundation board meeting — what exactly will the money be used to do?

Our answer was — we're not sure, but we think the grant should be made anyway because we want the groups to be in a position to spring into action if they need to, and not worry about finding the money to do so. The groups will make the judgment calls about which issues to work on. We put two constraints on the process — one was that they could only work, at most, on two or three things because as funders, we recognized that groups can, out of comity to their colleagues, choose to spend funds on 10, 12, or 14 priority campaigns. The second thing was that we had to stay in

regular contact with them to understand how their decisionmaking was going. They reported into us by conference call once a month or so.

The collaboration proved to be enormously helpful because the groups could, from an advocacy perspective, do polls, conduct phone banks, send mail to their members, even prepare ads for commercials, without having to take out time to get into foundations' grant-making cycles to get money to do the work. The money was already there. That was an interesting experiment for us because we were doing something funders rarely do, which is provide resources to the groups to let them decide how to spend — and it worked.

Q: Can you provide some general advice about supporting advocacy?

A: Yes, I think that in some ways you make your own luck. Issues come and go pretty much outside of the control of any of us. For example, the Bhopal chemical plant disaster in 1984 rallied the environmental community behind a sweeping community “right to know” act passed by Congress within a year and a half of that tragedy. The advocacy community was ready to seize the moment and act. If you invest a portion of your resources in capacity to create some musculature for the advocacy community then, when that issue that you

or your foundation cares about comes to the top of the queue, the machinery is in place to actually take advantage of the opportunity.

So by providing general operating support, foundations make it possible for advocacy organizations to invest in building advocacy infrastructure and a readiness to respond to the opportunities or threats that emerge. If foundations can only marshal their resources to focus on specific issues or campaigns, then they should at least ask themselves and their grantees whether or not what they are funding can have a broader purpose and use beyond that one issue. For example, if you're supporting organizers in a state to promote action on climate change, ask yourself if after that portion of that campaign is done: Can those organizers be put to other use? Do you have a way of raising resources for them to be around for the long term? It requires thinking more broadly about how an investment in that one issue and campaign can actually be stretched further.

Q: *Is there anything else you'd like to say about advocacy funding?*

A: We spend an enormous amount of time trying to work with colleague funders. As a result, I recognize that some foundations limit their interest or ability to provide advocacy support while other foundations, like

ours, are much more interested and willing to fund in that area. To the extent that those two sets of funders can sit down and work things out together, in the context of an overall campaign and the costs involved in running it, some funders can take on advocacy pieces that are more consistent with their philosophy and guidelines. Other funders can pick up different pieces of the puzzle. There is a lot of value actually in some of these broader campaigns for funders to be more collaborative, not so much for the spirit and sake of collaboration alone, but to actually make more efficient use of resources.

I don't think that the end all, be all, is to convince every funder to fully embrace aggressive advocacy support. It is, instead, trying to figure out how you mix in advocacy funding from various foundations or individuals to help round out what is necessary to put together the resources to be effective. ■■

“The willingness to embrace a higher degree of risk is an important prerequisite for experimenting with work that has the potential to succeed.”



Heather Arnet is Executive Director of The Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania.

The Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania is an independent community-based foundation serving eleven counties in Southwest Pennsylvania. The foundation's mission is to achieve equality for women and girls in the region.

Q: *Please talk a little bit about your advocacy role as an organization that is both a grantee and a grantor.*

A: It was very important to our board from the beginning that being a public advocate was in our mission statement. So the mission is to achieve equity for women and girls in the region, and then the next sentence says that through grantmaking, coalition building, and public advocacy we will achieve this mission.

Very early on in our foundation's development, we did a lot of research on our rights around lobbying and advocacy, both as a foundation and as a nonprofit. Once we realized that there really isn't any down side to filing the "h" election, and that it provides our board with insurance and protection to engage in these activities, we submitted the "h" election form with the IRS and we talked to our auditors and our accountant who do our 990 reporting so that they'd know what we would be doing internally and how to track expenses. When we did our strategic plan as a very new organization, we involved 150 stakeholders. They were a combination of people who would be donors for the Women and Girls Foundation, potential grantees of the foundation, and other funders and leaders of women's work. We kept asking, "We're this new foundation in a town that's very rich in philanthropy, and we're a new nonprofit in

a town that has tons of nonprofits. So what would be the unique role that this new entity could play?"

We kept hearing that "one of the most important things you can do as a new entity in this town is to be a voice for this issue and to be a coalition builder." As a community foundation we have more knowledge and information about who is working in a sector. So a domestic violence agency knows a lot about its agency, but it doesn't necessarily know that there are 20 other agencies just like it throughout our county. So they don't talk to one another as much.

We know the agencies, though, because they all come to us for grant money. We have been able to take a unique approach around coalition building in order to do advocacy because we could gather all those agencies together.

An example of something we've been doing in the last year is hosting, with other funders, what started out as a daylong retreat and has become a regular monthly round table of all the domestic violence and sexual violence agencies in our region. They meet with one another and talk about developing and pursuing a common public policy agenda. In addition to each of them doing their own separate advocacy, which was mainly around their own individual appropriations, they are now encouraged

to do a collaborative public advocacy strategy around domestic violence issues. We support that collaboration with a grant.

Q: What do you do when you encounter fears in the community about doing advocacy or funding advocacy in Pennsylvania?

A: I literally carry Alliance for Justice's 501(h) election FAQ pamphlet, *Worry-Free Lobbying*, in my briefcase. It infuriates me when I talk to people in our sector about the work we do or about engaging others in advocacy and lobbying and they say that we can't do that, that no foundation can do any advocacy. I pull the FAQ and say, "Read this. Then if you have any questions, call them or call me."

The top tips on our web site are, "Know your rights" and "Get your Board on Board." I can be so out there with advocacy because I have my board's buy-in. I know if someone says to a board member of mine after I have had a meeting with the mayor, "Is that allowed?" or "Why was she doing a press conference at city hall? Is that allowed?" I know that every single one of my board members has my back and that they know that we're doing what we need to do to make sure we're within our legal rights. We encourage all of our nonprofits to file the "h" election too.

Q: Some foundations pulled away from supporting advocacy because they thought they couldn't evaluate it. How do you deal with evaluating both your grantees and your advocacy work?

A: It would be nice to be able to quantify more advocacy work, but it's not always easy to do. For us, the question is around which advocacy goals have been achieved and how. The second question is about how the project has impacted the status of women's rights in Southwest Pennsylvania. If grantees can answer those questions, we pretty much call it a success.

One of our best successes to date, where grantees could answer those questions, is with an organization here in Pittsburgh called Lydia's Place. They applied to us for a grant to advocate on three human rights violations they knew were going on at the local prisons against pregnant women.

Pregnant women who were in the county prison system were being shackled to their hospital beds when they went into labor. That's a practice that's unfortunately not uncommon in this country. We made a grant to Lydia's Place and they advocated to change the sheriff's deputy's manual where the policy lived that dictated the practice. Through consistent advocacy with the warden and

"It infuriates me when I talk to people in our sector about the work we do or about engaging others in advocacy and lobbying and they say that we can't do that, that no foundation can do any advocacy."

others, and a media effort which resulted in the issue being discussed on the front page of the newspaper, they were able to get that policy changed. For us, that's a huge success.

Q: Who started the foundation?

A: A group of about nine women started it here. Many of them are still on our board. They had attended a Women in Philanthropy conference in Philadelphia in the '90s. Theresa Heinz was the speaker at that conference and she talked about how there were women's funds throughout the country, but not one where she was from in Southwest Pennsylvania. She inspired the founders — they were not women of wealth. Nine women had house parties and asked friends for \$1,000 here and \$1,000 there. It's truly a grassroots foundation. ■■



Dave Beckwith is Executive Director of The Needmor Fund.

The Needmor Fund, a family foundation based in Toledo, Ohio, is known for supporting organizations throughout the country that engage in community organizing.

Q: What kind of funding do you do?

A: We support community organizing work and give out only general operating support. Our funding cycle is aimed at longer-term work. We make a commitment to a grantee for four years, then ask them to sit out the funding process with us for the next two years, and after that they can apply to come back for another four years of funding. For some organizations it can be a 10-year cycle, and it's generally preceded by one year of conversation with us.

Q: Why should foundations evaluate the effectiveness of their community organizing grantees?

A: Sometimes they shouldn't. They shouldn't if the purpose is to punish the weak. When one does evaluate community organizing work, it should be done with an understanding of the community organizing process. If you were to measure the work quantitatively, and on a monthly basis, the outcomes would not be stellar. Community organizing is a long-term process. For example, if you were to look at a group organizing around early childhood education in a community with a failed system and expect an organization to change that system in a few months or a year, you would most likely be disappointed.

Q: Tell us about your process for evaluating grantees.

A: At The Needmor Fund we ask people to set reasonable, aspirational goals. We don't ask them to end poverty. It is important that our grantees assess their own achievement. We insist that they have an evaluation process of their own in place, and that it is being used to improve their work. Their evaluation work has to be connected to change and to learning.

We want to know if grantees are doing the right work and if they are working hard. Important things to measure are around building leadership, engaging members of the community, building alliances, and achieving outcomes.

Also, if grantees can say what they have won and cost that out in value by dollars, that is very helpful. We are very pleased when our grantees achieve tangible victories, but we understand that victories could be longer-term in coming — organization building takes time. Therefore, we ask them to have an internal process of setting interim targets, such as holding neighborhood meetings and getting a significant number of community members to attend the meetings.

Our grantees' work should include failures. If it does not, they're not doing a good job.

Q: The Needmor Fund has done significant assessment of its own grantmaking. With that information on hand, how will you move forward and what will you ask of future grantees?

A: This year, like every year, we are focusing our funding on organization building as that is what leads to positive achievements. We want the organizations to grow and to expand their agendas, and to let us know where they are going and how they will get there given the political and economic environments they are working in. They need to provide a clear description of their analysis of the climate and put their work into that context. In other words, we want to know their theory of change.

Q: What do you say to people who maintain that there is no way to account for the benefits of advocacy work, and in particular, community organizing work?

A: We fund effective community organizing work and we can prove it. We looked at a representative sample of 20 groups who we supported over a 10 year span. Over that time we gave them collectively \$2.6 million — all general operating support. Those organizations in turn obtained \$1.3 billion for their communities from both public and private resources.

“We fund effective community organizing work and we can prove it.”

Q: *What's the best way for foundations to learn how to effectively support community organizing work?*

A: Site visits. Funders have to identify places where organizing groups are preparing for the events and other actions, and foundation staff have to attend preparation meetings, events, or other actions to learn firsthand what the work is about and how these groups are doing it. In addition, groups like Alliance for Justice (AFJ), the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), the Neighborhood Funders Group (NFG), and Changemakers can help with guidelines, models, and systems from experienced community organizing funders. ■■



Linetta Gilbert is Senior Program Officer at the Ford Foundation.

The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grantmaking organization. For more than half a century it has been a resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide, guided by its goals of strengthening democratic values, reducing poverty and injustice, promoting international cooperation, and advancing human achievement.

Q: *Please give us an example of successful advocacy grantmaking you have done.*

A: The example that resonates most for me is the Equity and Inclusion Campaign in the Gulf Coast. This campaign was launched in 2006 with support from the Ford Foundation and the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation (LDRF), and is now supported by a diverse group of funders through a collaborative known as Gulf Coast Funders for Equity.

I lived in New Orleans for 20 years, until 2001, and I know that structural inequities — long-term persistent poverty, and laws and policies that impede the ability of women, people of color, the young, and the poor from having a voice in shaping their communities — have been in place in the Gulf Coast region for a long time. Hurricane Katrina opened up a clearing for people to articulate these issues and take action around them. In many cases, the issues were exacerbated by the storm but they existed long before it hit.

While funders from outside the Gulf Coast talk about issues facing “the region,” people in that area of the country really didn’t think collectively of themselves as a region before the storms of 2005. As such, when it came to public policy like economic development and tourism, most had not been

working collaboratively or tackling problems from a nationwide perspective.

We set out to change that. The Equity and Inclusion Campaign started about 16 months ago when Living Cities, a funder collaborative, loaned LDRF an executive to help it shape a strategy to influence state and federal policies that are key to transformation in Louisiana. Most of the nonprofits in the area were social service organizations, and very few of them had the tools they needed to do advocacy work. Working with grantees, LDRF crafted a plan to engage local nonprofit organizations in policy advocacy and to collectively identify a set of innovative policies that would help move Louisiana toward a better quality of life for all who reside there.

A critical part of this strategy has been to strengthen the resolve and capabilities of local nonprofits and community leaders to talk to policy makers about what is happening in their own communities. Through technical grants and convenings, the campaign has helped these leaders act as policy advocates, giving them the tools they need to meet effectively with policy makers and suggest how specific policy changes — in housing, economic development, and other areas — can make a tremendous difference in their communities.

The campaign has now really taken off across the region, working with groups and individuals from along

the coast in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, as well as in some of the interior of Mississippi and around Baton Rouge. It has hosted legislative days for leaders of nonprofits and individual community-based leaders from the region in Washington, and organized meetings with Gulf Coast mayors and with the National League of Cities.

Participants are doing an excellent job of educating members of Congress and other elected officials about systems and practices in place before and after the storms, the absence of federal dollars, and what policies are still needed. Ordinary people, as well as some nonprofit organizations, are now much more engaged in policy advocacy. While previously they had trusted that leaders understood the impact of policies, they now know the value of keeping elected officials informed.

By bringing together a constituency of people who are living through this experience — people who are able to say, “Here’s where things are not working,” and “Here’s where we need you to help” — the campaign is closing the chasm between policy makers and the local residents who depend on them for systemic changes that will improve their lives.

“Funding advocacy is funding a strategy for hope.”

“I really think it is because people [in New Orleans] became advocates for themselves and their communities that you see the revitalization that’s occurring in the region today.”

Q: *You go to the region frequently. What do you see there now?*

A: I visit every four to six weeks, and when I’m there now I see some very strong organizations that were either not in place before the storm or were very weak before the storm. They are involved in the dialogue about their community. And it’s not just that they want what they had before. They want it to be better.

On my last trip, it was great to see that New Orleans East, part of the Ninth Ward, is really coming back. Last year at this time it was a heartbreaker to see neighborhoods like that, almost totally vacant.

Right after the storm, there was no intention of rebuilding New Orleans to again make it a city where people of different races and classes could live and work. The rebuilding focus was on tourism. However, when Mayor Ray Nagin rejected the plan from the Urban Land Institute — which would have closed some of the poorest and hardest hit areas to redevelopment — and said it was residents who would decide, through their actions, which neighborhoods come back, he sent a real signal. It was the first time in 25 years that I could remember a political leader saying to the community, “We want your help.” He knew he had to have the energy and the ingenuity of individuals in order to save the city.

But the residents needed some help in getting organized. They needed resources to keep their organizations going so they could participate in the larger conversation while they got their houses rebuilt. And they needed help making connections with members of Congress who were coming in and out of the region and didn’t know who they should talk to — so they used to just talk to their peers.

We were able to help build that advocacy capacity. I really think it is because people became advocates for themselves and their communities that you see the revitalization that’s occurring in the region today.

The lessons of the Equity and Inclusion Campaign are also very exciting for funders. Recently I heard presenters from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama talk at a New York Regional Association of Grantmakers (NYRAG) event about what they were learning from doing focused advocacy together around rights and justice issues as well as access and opportunities for low-wealth people in the Gulf Coast region.

Advocates from the region are now ready to build on their successes. It was amazing to hear how a group of 65 organizers (some grassroots, some more formally trained) are now working together on five common issues to promote equity and inclusion in the whole region. The areas they have chosen are housing;

environment and infrastructure; economic development and workers' rights; healthcare; and education. More and more people understand that by making some broader changes, everyone in the region can benefit.

Q: *Any last words?*

A: There are many issues facing the nation today. I would suggest the most critical one is whether 10 or 15 years from now we will have a country that lifts up and enacts the values of democracy. Advocacy in the United States can be an effective tool in helping refresh and redefine our democratic principles. American philanthropy can play a critical role to make sure it does.

Funding advocacy is funding a strategy for hope. All of us can do our part by engaging with many groups and individuals to identify critical issues that contribute to the apathy and disappointment among Americans today. Effective advocates can highlight root causes and opportunities for policy changes that can integrate needs and hope of communities into resources and systems that will better implement a vision of democracy for our country for the 21st century. ■■



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