LEARNING TOUR BRIEF #5
Involving Local Voices through Community Engagement – To What End?

OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Community engagement is vital for creating sustainable change in our communities. Join the Environmental Health Coalition, the Chula Vista Collaborative (Promotora Model), and Mid-City CAN in the Diamond neighborhoods of southeast San Diego to examine various models of community engagement and evaluate the most appropriate model to enhance your own foundation’s engagement and connections to the community.

As you participate in this learning tour, you’ll have chance to:
- Frame the role of community engagement as an important component of community foundation work
- Explore your foundation’s current community engagement efforts and assess different approaches to change, enhance, or increase them based upon your organization’s culture and objectives
- Consider both the financial and administrative nuances of engaging community in philanthropy

LEARNING TOUR AGENDA

Part I: Welcome and Overview of Session
Part II: Panel Discussion on different models for community engagement
Part III: Group discussion on planning and assessment
Part IV: Lunch

ISSUE STATEMENT

The Stanford Social Innovation Review reasons that “the views and experiences of the people who benefit from social programs are often overlooked and underappreciated, even though they are an invaluable source of insight into a program’s effectiveness.

Experts and crowds can produce valuable insights. But too often nonprofits and funders ignore the constituents who matter most, the intended beneficiaries of the work: students in low-performing schools, trainees in workforce development programs, or small farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. In bypassing the beneficiary as a source of information and experience, the sector deprives itself of insights into how it might do better—insights that are uniquely grounded in the day-to-day experiences of the very people the programs are created for.”
“When we dream alone, it remains just a dream. When we dream together, it is the beginning of a new reality.”
-Brazilian Proverb

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<td>Local residents and organizations are informed of issues by external organizations</td>
<td>Local residents and organizations provide input into the priorities and resource use of external organizations</td>
<td>Local residents and organizations influence the priorities and resources of external organizations.</td>
<td>Local residents and organizations work in shared planning and action with external organizations.</td>
<td>Local residents and organizations initiate and lead with external support, on issues.</td>
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**Levels of Engagement**

Adapted from Hashagan 2002 and Sydney Dep’t of Planning 2003

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<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, or solutions</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, or decisions</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution</td>
<td>To place final decision making in the hands of the public</td>
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**Promise to the public**

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<td>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</td>
<td>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</td>
<td>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible</td>
<td>To place final decision making in the hands of the public</td>
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Source: IAP2 International Association for Public Participation

Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement
WHAT DOES RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT BY COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS LOOK LIKE?

In Mississippi, the Foundation for the Mid South provided staff, research and funding to develop and roll out a community planning process in Leflore County. Residents gathered to identify and take action on four issues they agreed were important. One was development of a new community health center. The Foundation facilitated discussions between the residents’ group and a local hospital—a collaboration that ultimately secured $1.3 million to build the facility. The Foundation also provided $30,000 for a feasibility study to help residents leverage an additional $30 million, including $19 million in state and federal funds, for a project to upgrade water and sewage systems.

In Iowa, the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque brought thousands of people together to brainstorm ideas to decide on priorities for moving the city forward. From boardrooms to living rooms, community members generated more than 2,300 ideas. Informed by resident voting and opinion surveys, a 21-member committee winnowed this list to the top 10, including a passenger train service, library expansion and a public walking trail. Today, all priorities identified by the community have been achieved.

The Denver Foundation, Colorado, earmarks at least 25% of unrestricted dollars in all Community Impact areas for resident engagement, racial equity, and capacity building. The Foundation has a leadership training series for residents and a project that helps nonprofits become more inclusive and equitable. The small grants program engages residents in surveying their surroundings, identifying strengths, brainstorming ideas to build on those strengths, and implementing the ideas. An affiliated project helps emerging leaders learn how to plan and run projects, engage other volunteers, and manage grants. With other partners, the Foundation established a collaborative that brings community organizers and funders together around ballot initiatives, community change campaigns and other efforts. As a result, specific resident-led changes are evident all over the city.

The Humboldt Area Foundation, California, serves as a community convener, facilitator, mediator, grantmaker, trainer and organizer, and all Foundation staff members have at least some direct experience working with residents. Residents have influenced local and regional policymakers to: approve a controlled burn on tribal lands that reflected cultural preferences; establish recreation programs in a rural community inhabited by undocumented Latino families; expand access to broadband communications services and influence state policies governing the technology; adopt a more equitable school discipline policy in a community plagued by racial disparities; and create and implement a federal award-winning school reform plan in a county with some of the highest poverty and poorest health outcomes in the state.

Above excerpts from Engaging Residents: How Community Foundations Can Lead

Please read the Aspen Institute’s Resident-Centered Community Building: What Makes It Different? for more ideas on how to engage residents.

WHAT MAKES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

The Power of Community Engagement - The Tree Video

The Case for Stakeholder Engagement describes three important benefits of community engagement:

1. Developing a deeper understanding of the problems. Social ills such as persistent poverty, inadequate health care, and failing schools are complex issues that are difficult to understand fully. It is important for grantmakers to get the input of people who are directly involved in the issue to provide a more complete picture of the problem.

2. Creating new and better solutions. Grantmakers cannot develop practical solutions on their own. Consulting with academics and other “issue experts,” although important, is not enough. Rather, effective strategies for addressing the complicated and difficult issues at the heart of so many foundations’ work will emerge only from a concerted effort to engage the real experts – those who see these issues playing out in their communities each and every day.

3. Building more effective organizations. GEO’s Change Agent Project identified problems in the grantmaker-grantee relationship as a crucial barrier to creating effective nonprofit organizations and foundations. Nonprofits that participated in the Change Agent Project regularly expressed a desire for a stronger sense of partnership with their funders, and suggested again and again that improving the relationship would improve their ability to deliver results.
CFLeads is a national learning cooperative on community leadership and has developed a framework to help guide community foundations build community leadership as a core and enduring competency. They believe that community leadership is essential to success and recognize that community foundations need both practical tools and the practice of new skills to improve community leadership among community foundations. Please read more about the CFLeads Cultivating Community Engagement Project or visit the session during the conference.

The Diversity in Philanthropy Project was a three-year “voluntary campaign that engaged foundation trustees, senior staff and executives committed to increasing field-wide diversity through open dialogue and strategic action.” As DPP came to a close, a coalition of leading philanthropy infrastructure networks and organizations committed to a five-year collaborative effort — called D5 — to galvanize philanthropy’s work on diversity, inclusion, and equity. Founding partners include the Council on Foundations, the Joint Affinity Groups, seven regional associations of grantmakers, the Foundation Center, and Diversity Focused Funds, represented by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. D5 envisions an inclusive philanthropic sector in which foundations draw on the power of diverse staffs and boards to achieve lasting impact, forge genuine partnerships with diverse communities, and increase access to opportunities and resources for all people.

Engagement and adaptive leadership. According to Ronald A. Heifetz, addressing complex social problems requires “adaptive leadership,” which is founded in part on learning with and from others about the nature of the problems and what it might take to solve them. Heifetz explained further in a 2004 article he co-wrote in the Stanford Social Innovation Review: “The stakeholders themselves must create and put the solution into effect since the problem is rooted in their attitudes, priorities and behavior. And until the stakeholders change their outlook, a solution cannot emerge.” Heifetz is cofounder of Cambridge Leadership Associates and founder of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard’s Kennedy School.

Human-centered design. The design experts at the consulting firm IDEO believe organizations must develop a deep and intuitive understanding of client and customer needs in order to create “human-centered” products and services. In the course of its work, IDEO is increasingly applying its “design thinking” approach to develop solutions to social and environmental problems. According to the IDEO Web site, design thinking is “an inherently shared approach [that] brings together people from different disciplines to effectively explore new ideas — ideas that are more human centered, that are better able to be executed, and that generate valuable new outcomes.”
Embracing empathy. Dev Patnaik, founder and principal of Jump Associates and coauthor of *Wired to Care: How Companies Prosper When They Create Widespread Empathy*, says that grantmakers can learn a great deal from leading companies such as Nike that work hard to develop a gut sense of their customers’ interests and needs. In remarks given at GEO’s 2010 national conference he said, “The ability to empathize and have a gut connection to the people you serve allows an organization to do truly transformative work.”

Participatory evaluation. Catlin Fulwood is a longtime activist, teacher and evaluation expert who has worked with numerous organizations and movements to advance participatory approaches to evaluation and program design. In an overview of participatory evaluation research, she wrote: “[W]e are not just talking about feedback. We are talking about ownership — ownership of the questions, the process of data collection, the analysis and the application of the findings.” Fulwood’s writings on the topic are collected on the web site of the Girl’s Best Friend Foundation.

Innovation and collaboration. A 2008 W.K. Kellogg Foundation report described how collaboration and engagement can contribute to innovation in philanthropy. Among the authors’ words of advice to grantmakers: “Forget the normal boundaries and bring together talented people from a wide variety of fields and disciplines to work together and cross-fertilize. Look both inside and outside your existing organization for new types of innovation partnerships.”

The networked organization. Effective stakeholder engagement is founded on the idea that organizations operate within networks of other organizations (and people) that share a set of values or goals. Networks are made up of nodes and links, with nodes being those organizations and individuals that are collectively doing the work, and links referring to the relationships among them. Stakeholder engagement is about strengthening the links between people and organizations so that the network can achieve its goals more effectively and efficiently. Jane Wei-Skillern and Sonia Marciano explored the idea of the “networked nonprofit” in a 2008 article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. 

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**Promising Beneficiary Feedback Initiatives Around the Globe**

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<td>CDA Collaborative Learning Projects' Listening Project</td>
<td>The Listening Project aims to systematically survey people who have been on the recipient side of international assistance in an effort to improve the effectiveness of aid. Since 2005, the Listening Project has organized more than 20 listening exercises in Indonesia, Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kenya, Kosovo, and Thailand.</td>
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<td>GlobalGiving’s Storytelling Project</td>
<td>Teams of local scribes in Kenya and Uganda have collected more than 44,000 stories from more than 5,000 community members by asking a simple question: “Tell us about a time when a person or an organization tried to change something in your community.” Using a technology called Sensemaker, GlobalGiving turns these stories into data to guide international development efforts.</td>
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<td>Grameen Foundation’s Community Knowledge Worker</td>
<td>The Community Knowledge Worker program uses mobile phones to share agriculture tips, market prices, and weather forecasts with more than 1.25 million rural Ugandan farmers. The foundation also uses a mobile phone-enabled survey to collect feedback on the initiative from farmers and makes programmatic adjustments based on the feedback.</td>
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<td>GreatNonprofits</td>
<td>Often called the “Yelp” of the nonprofit sector, GreatNonprofits features an online database of reviews and stories submitted by clients, donors, volunteers and others who have experienced nonprofits up close. Since 2007, GreatNonprofits has collected more than 100,000 reviews.</td>
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<td>Keystone Accountability</td>
<td>Keystone Accountability focuses exclusively on cultivating beneficiary voice to advance development outcomes. It is partnering with Charity Navigator to add constituent feedback to its ratings and piloting the development of the Humanitarian Voice Index, which will rate humanitarian organizations on the basis of feedback from the beneficiaries of international aid.</td>
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<td>NeighborWorks America Success Measures</td>
<td>The Success Measures project aggregates 122 indicators and 312 data collection instruments to inform community development efforts. It has been used by more than 340 community development organizations and funders to evaluate the success of local initiatives.</td>
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*Keystone Accountability, GreatNonprofits, Stanford Social Innovation Review*
Complete Capital is a framework for harnessing all the elements needed to promote sustainable social solutions. Most social change requires a combination of financial, intellectual, social, and human capital directed towards solving a problem. In practice, however, these elements are rarely coordinated in a systematic way. As a result, social solutions are often slower than necessary, difficult to replicate, and poorly understood.

**THE COMPLETE CAPITAL FRAMEWORK**

**FINANCIAL CAPITAL: POOLING THE RIGHT KINDS OF MONEY**
Most mission-driven organizations know that money isn’t “one size fits all.” It’s a combination of the amount, restrictions, terms, and availability—among many other factors. Yet no one financial investment or structure is multifaceted enough to address an organization’s full spectrum of needs. The resources of a single funder acting alone may not always be sufficient to fully support an individual organization or solve a social problem. As a result, leaders struggle to cobble together multiple sources of funding, which adds to their management challenges and often leaves the needs of the underlying enterprise under-funded.

NFF provides a range of financial options, which include loans and grants, that can align funders and organizations around a shared financial strategy—ultimately a far more efficient use of limited resources. We also assemble different types of capital from a variety of sources, leveraging investments to maximize the impact beyond what a single grant or loan alone would be able to achieve.

**HUMAN CAPITAL: ADVICE OR SUPPORT FROM THE RIGHT PEOPLE**
Mission-driven organizations need people that have specific skills, combined with a passion for social good. On the program side, organizations know the human capital required to deliver services. Internal operations, however, are often constrained by lack of money and must be supplemented by consultants with specialized expertise in finance, communications, fundraising, research, and more. In Complete Capital initiatives, we deliver and coordinate operations-related consultants that organizations need to overcome a specific business challenge. We also help staff develop new tools and skills so that they are able to sustain and enhance the work long after the initiative is over.

**SOCIAL CAPITAL: LEVERAGING & BUILDING THE RIGHT NETWORKS**
Success often requires changes beyond an organization’s direct sphere of influence. But many organizations struggle to engage beyond their existing networks. To help develop new partnerships and share expertise, NFF facilitates conversations among stakeholders and organizes events (on and offline) for organizations, community leaders, and funders. Grantees, funders, and stakeholders leave initiatives with a shared understanding of the considerations and components to organizational success and collective impact.

**INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL: UNDERSTANDING & SHARING WHAT WORKS**
Tracking the progress that participants make in realizing change is critical to evaluating the success of a Complete Capital initiative. By capturing, analyzing, and sharing data with discipline and consistency, we are better able to recommend systemic improvements and replicate what works. In Complete Capital initiatives, we also share what we learn with the public through articles, publications, online tools, webinars, conferences, and more.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following Guiding Principles are from Grantmakers for Effective Organizations.

Decide and announce

The grantmaker makes a decision with little or no input from important stakeholders. The grantmaker then announces the decision to those who will be affected and explains the rationale.

Questions to determine when this is the right approach:
- Does your interest in making a quick decision and being in control of that decision outweigh the importance of reaching out for input?
- Are you prepared to deal with possible blowback from those you have not consulted?

Gather input

The grantmaker asks key stakeholders for input (ideas, suggestions, information). The grantmaker then makes a decision.

Questions to determine when this is the right approach:
- Do you have the time and the resources to gather input and to include all whom you want to include?
- Is it clear who the key stakeholders are? Is the group large enough to reflect a diversity of opinion and input without becoming unmanageable?
- To what extent do you intend to use the feedback you gather to inform your decision making?

Consensus

A consensus decision is one that each and every member of a group is willing to support and help implement. All key stakeholders have been given an opportunity to voice their opinion and to understand the implications of various options.

Questions to determine when this is the right approach:
- Are you prepared to give up your decision-making authority to the group?
- Do you have the time and resources to devote to a true consensus process?
- Do participants have the collaborative skills needed to reach consensus?
- Do you have a plan B in case the group does not reach consensus?

Delegate decision with constraints

The grantmaker defines the decision in the form of a question or questions, clarifies the constraints on the decision (e.g., budget, time frame, quality requirements), and delegates the decision to others. The grantmaker does not alter the decision as long as it adheres to the constraints.

Questions to determine when this is the right approach:
- Are you prepared to give up your decision-making authority to the group?
- Do you have time to enable others to go through the process of making their decision?
- Do participants have the information, the skills, and the expertise they need to make a good decision?

HOW ARE ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE?

Chula Vista Community Collaborative takes the labor out of Collaboration!

The Chula Vista Community Collaborative (CVCC) as noted in its name, works to ensure collaboration among partners and stakeholders in Chula Vista. CVCC draws together all sectors of the local community to develop coordinated strategies and systems that protect the health, safety, and wellness of residents. The role of CVCC is to work with partner organizations in Chula Vista and the South Bay to share information and resources that strengthen families and communities. CVCC elevates the needs and voice of the community and works to ensure seamless access to needed services. CVCC facilitates/co-facilitates various issue-based coalitions to increase awareness and address local issues and trends that impact families.

The CVCC acts as a platform from which to launch effective new initiatives to improve quality of life. The CVCC is the umbrella for a variety of programs and committees. The most notable infrastructure of the CVCC is the network of Family
Resource Centers that have been created and sustained through a collective effort.

The CVCC currently operates five Family Resource Centers (FRCs), with each one providing a gateway to a full range of family-strengthening services. Services are available to all members of the community, regardless of their circumstances. A call, visit, or a referral from school to one of the FRCs is all that is needed to connect to the resources and opportunities that exist in the community. Services are provided onsite or through partner referrals.

Mid-City Community Advocacy Network

From its inception in 1982, the **Mid-City Community Advocacy Network** (Mid-City CAN) Collaborative has provided the community of City Heights with a place to have a voice. Mid-City CAN is a collaborative of over 150 organizations, governmental agencies, religious institutions, and residents (youth and adult). Mid-City CAN is not a nonprofit organization or institutional entity.

Mid-City CAN is a community collaborative or network that can be thought of as a set of concentric circles. The inner circle represents the Coordinating Council, the governing body whose members are elected annually by public community election. The middle circle represents the general membership. To become a member, an organizational representative or resident of City Heights must complete a membership form and commit to the governance guidelines (like bylaws). Upon becoming a member, one is granted the right to vote for the Coordinating Council. The third circle represents the broader community which participates in Mid-City CAN projects, events, or House Meetings. Momentum Teams, where the work of Mid-City CAN gets done, unify these circles.

The mission of Mid-City CAN is to promote a safe, productive, and healthy community through the collaborative efforts of families, youth, schools, religious and cultural organizations, businesses, and public and private agencies. Mid-City CAN is a clearinghouse for ideas, communication, coordination, advocacy, organizing, and networking in support of the Mid-City community.

The work of the Collaborative has historically been carried out in Momentum Teams; issue-based workgroups that gather to address issues of concern to those present. Their purpose is to function as centers of activity, advocacy, organizing, and coordination of services based on a community issue that has gained sufficient momentum and interest to establish a Momentum Team. Periodically, as in the Building Healthy Communities Initiative and The Partnership for the Public Health Initiative, Momentum Teams are used for planning purposes. Momentum Teams report monthly at the Networking Council (Mid-City CAN’s general meeting). When Momentum Teams achieve their goals, or momentum around an issue wanes, they disband.

Incourage Community Foundation

*Not your ordinary community foundation—because our community is not ordinary.*

Begun in 1994, the **Incourage Foundation** has a history of responding to the changing needs of the community. The evolution from traditional fund building to community building started in response to local economic hardships that began over 10 years ago.

Today, their community building efforts not only connect local and national resources but empower local people in ways that create opportunities for all. The staff and board use this strategy in community-wide efforts to transform the local economy, culture, and invigorate civic engagement in southern Wood County’s rural cities, villages, and towns.

The motivating force behind their initiatives is to offer “incouragement” to leaders and residents – through connecting people and resources. They believe in helping translate an individual’s passion for the community into a strategy-based, results-oriented approach. Main initiatives include:

- **Workforce** - Putting the Force Back into Workforce
- **Community Information** - A Brave Bridge over the Divide
- **Speak Your Peace** - Communication with a Heart
- **Adaptive Leadership** - Leading the (Adaptive) Way
- **Teen Leadership** - Young Leaders: Leading Habits

The San Diego Foundation
The San Diego Center for Civic Engagement is the only charitable organization in the San Diego region focused on getting people involved in their communities by providing civic engagement tools and training to activate opportunities and strategies to improve the quality of life. Through their civic engagement efforts in the community, their aspiration is to bring the San Diego region from 43rd to among the top 10 for civic engagement among metropolitan regions in the country.

How are they doing it?

- **Public Engagement**: Serve as a resource to regional/local governments and neighborhoods to improve citizen connection to public decision-making through innovative, civic engagement web-based technology resulting in better communication, instilling a sense of belonging, and a more “user friendly” government
- **Funding**: Issue community and government challenge grants to cultivate and promote people-powered solutions for community activation and innovation; provide actual technology, including web/mobile apps, to connect people to government, each other, and to their communities

What are the expected outcomes?

- Thousands of residents, especially in low-income areas of the region, are engaged with their neighbors and government, resulting in stronger communities
- Governments have improved their ability to make better public decisions affecting the quality of life in communities based on broader and better input from stakeholders

**RESOURCES AND REFERENCES**

Aspen Institute - Resident-Centered Community Building: What Makes It Different?
Beyond the Brink – Engagement Residents: A New Call to Action for Community Foundations
Community Engagement for Backbone Organizations
Community Foundation Leadership
Do Nothing About Me Without Me: An Action Guide for Engaging Stakeholders
From Input to Ownership - How Nonprofits Can Engage with the People They Serve to Carry Out Their Missions
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
Great Power, Great Responsibility: Grantmakers’ Role as Conveners
Listening to Those Who Matter Most, the Beneficiaries
The Case for Stakeholder Engagement