

SMASHING SILOS IN PHILANTHROPY



Multi-Issue Advocacy and Organizing for Real Results

By Niki Jagpal and Kevin Laskowski

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Executive Summary

The crises affecting our nation and the world have prompted philanthropists to become more organized, focused and “strategic” in their efforts. The movement toward “strategic philanthropy” has contributed to greater philanthropic effectiveness in many ways. However, the increased focus on narrow issue silos that seems integral to this approach is marginalizing an important part of the social change ecosystem. Groups that have long-standing roots in communities and that work to address multiple issues confront great difficulty in fundraising while foundations overwhelmingly direct grants to professionalized, often well-resourced, organizations working exclusively on that grantmaker’s preferred issue. This limits the ultimate effectiveness of philanthropy and undermines funders’ ability to see discernible improvements in education, health, the arts, the environment and all other issues.

Looking beyond issue silos and investing in multi-issue and multi-constituency work is one way that philanthropy can contribute to a robust democracy and help us build the social capital and develop the leadership we need to return to the America that Alexis de Tocqueville lauded for its voluntary associations. It is one of the few ways in which the space for deliberative discourse, compromise and negotiation are opened up and ideological or political differences overcome.

How can grantmakers boost the impact of their contributions to a more just society? What are the benefits of funding multi-issue organizing groups and of funding explicit strategies to build social capital and leadership? How does adjusting strategy in this way lead to greater impact for funders and the communities we seek to empower? The answers might well lie in fusing strategy and justice, by including the expertise of com-

munity-based organizations and investing in multi-issue advocacy and organizing.

There are several reasons why multi-issue organizing and advocacy for multifaceted and diverse constituencies make positive contributions to nonprofit sector and our society:

- Multi-issue organizing builds relationships and mutual accountability.
- Broad coalitions that cross issues (and class, race or geography) bring unlikely allies to the table that change the game, creating opportunities for change.
- Multi-issue grassroots organizations are essential to taking advantage of social or political moments.
- Multi-issue organizing creates constituencies and builds power and leadership for the future.

Multi-issue organizing creates a unique space for deliberation, compromise and negotiation; it is one of the few places where economic and political divisions can be bridged. Unlike single-issue campaigns in which people often bring to the table their preferred issues and solutions, successful multi-issue and multi-constituency efforts begin with the values and relationships of similarly situated people. This allows individuals and organizations to set aside ideology or the cause of the moment, if only briefly, to achieve larger shared purposes. Additionally, the nonprofit ecosystem is complex and the problems that we are trying to address are often deeply entrenched and normalized. This is why multi-issue advocacy and organizing are essential components of a truly deliberative democracy.

NCRP’s research suggests that for any foundation committed to real and lasting social change, multi-issue advocacy and organizing are among the most powerful means to achieve

its mission. The work of these leaders and organizations may not fit neatly into a chosen program area, but their efforts often prove essential to lasting success.

This report shares examples of cases in which breakthrough progress on issue-specific campaigns was made possible in large part because of the efforts of multi-issue organizations and investments in civic engagement. Much of this progress was achieved because of sustained, long-term support and cross-organization collaboration. Nonprofits have realized that without investments in our democracy, we are unlikely to achieve our goals. Just as organizing capital is essential for a robust and well-functioning economy, organizing people is crucial to building a more just and inclusive society.

This report recommends, among other things, that grantmakers add grants to multi-issue organizations to their portfolios and build on the legacy of their predecessor foundations that have invested in these organizations and communities for decades. Every foundation will be comfortable with different elements of the ecosystem, and there is by no means a “one-size-fits-all” approach to engaging in multi-issue advocacy and organizing. Strategic

philanthropy has underlined the importance of marshaling and focusing *dollars* for a cause but inexplicably stops short at funding groups that unite and focus *people and organizations* for a cause. The smart grantmaker, then, understands the limits of strategic philanthropy. It is myopic for a foundation to implement its grantmaking strategy without acknowledging the imperative to look beyond its chosen issue area and the interconnectedness of its focal issue with other causes.

Philanthropy has an opportunity to seize the moment and make tangible contributions to advancing our democracy and making positive contributions to an inclusive and equitable society. There are myriad ways in which philanthropy can experiment with multi-issue advocacy and organizing and civic engagement. It is our hope that this report and the resources provided will help more funders see the value of this work and consider it when developing strategy, so that what is just is strategic and what is strategic is just.

Note: *This report is the first of a two-part series; the second report will examine the role of leadership development in multi-issue advocacy and organizing and building social capital.*

Defining Terms

Advocacy. As noted by the Alliance for Justice, the verb “advocate” is from the Latin roots “vocare,” which means “to call,” and “vox,” which means “voice.” “Advocacy” is the act of promoting a cause, idea or policy to influence people’s opinions or actions on matters of public policy or concern. Many types of activities fall under the category of “advocacy” and are legally permissible for 501(c)(3) public charities to engage in, such as issue identification, research and analysis; public issue education; lobbying efforts for or against legislation; nonpartisan voter registration, education and mobilization; litigation; education of government agencies at all levels; participation in referenda and ballot initiatives; grassroots mobilization; testimonies before government bodies; and ensuring that underserved communities are given their rightful voice in the policy process. The power of advocacy is that it has the potential to influence policy decisions and debate in the public square. There are no legal limits on how much non-lobbying advocacy a nonprofit organization can undertake.¹

Community Organizing. One grantmaker we interviewed described it succinctly: “Community organizing is a form of *leadership* that enables a *constituency* to form an *organization* that gathers *resources* necessary to create the *power* to create *change*. It is necessary for democracy and it is American.” Community organizing comprises building relationships, leadership and power, usually among underrepresented communities, for the purpose of bringing that power and collective voice into discussions about the issues that affect those communities by engaging with relevant decision-makers. The issues raised, solutions identified and strategies developed to achieve those solutions all are defined and acted on by the leaders themselves, usually with help from professional organizers. “Community organizing” is distinguished by the fact that affected constituencies are the agents of change rather than paid advocates or lobbyists who represent the interests of such constituencies. It can and does often play a role in public policy and advocacy campaigns.²

Civic engagement includes activities that engage ordinary people in civic life, such as community organizing, advocacy and voter registration, education and mobilization. It often involves building the skills, knowledge and experience that enable citizens to participate effectively in the democratic process.

Social capital comprises the social networks that evolve among people who have shared purpose, norms and values and lead to enhanced cooperation among different communities in society. There are two forms of social capital – bridging and bonding. “Bridging” refers to the social networks that emerge from socially heterogeneous groups while “bonding” refers to social networks among socially homogeneous groups.³ As one grantmaker we spoke with stated, social capital does not emerge in a few meetings and involves a significant amount of iterative learning.

Introduction

On 23 March 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA or ACA). Behind this historic moment was the work of a national grassroots coalition known as Health Care for America Now (HCAN). HCAN brought together grassroots and community organizations, unions, advocacy groups and nonprofits focused on issues ranging from health care to immigration, including the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Americans United, Campaign for America's Future, Campaign for Community Change, MoveOn and USAction. In all, more than 1,000 national, state and local groups – each with its own identity, approach, constituency and issue focus – formed what would become the “deepest single-issue coalition in modern American history.”⁴

But while the coalition was single-issue, the groups that were essential in shaping and achieving victory were not. Richard Kirsch, HCAN's campaign director, wrote that groups with a history of cross-issue work to expand economic opportunities for working families formed the foundation of the coalition.⁵ HCAN's unique relationship with its Statement of Common Purpose – engaging its notions throughout the

management of both the coalition and the campaign – inspired the confidence of its members in the coalition and integrated them into an action-oriented decision-making process. It was this “collaborative strategic planning” that formed a “unified action-oriented coalition” despite some groups' major differences in constituencies and goals.⁶

HCAN was funded in part by a multi-year, \$26.5-million grant from the Atlantic Philanthropies.⁷ Then-president Gara LaMarche noted that health care was not even an established program area for the foundation, but that Atlantic was instead “driven by the sense of opportunity that [health care was] the biggest social justice issue in the U.S.”⁸ Kirsch recounts:

The Atlantic Philanthropies decided to invest in us because we were founded and backed by labor and community organizations ... If Atlantic, along with The California Endowment [another major HCAN funder], had provided a much lower level of funding – or decided to favor policy, advocacy and communications work rather than campaign-style organizing, as is so often done by foundations – health reform would have failed.”⁹

It is essential to note that while HCAN itself was funded in large part by the Atlantic

Coming Soon

Investing in leadership is another important way that grantmakers support change and help move their work and that of their grantees beyond silos. Part II of this report, coming in 2014, will explore the importance of investments in leadership. Stay tuned!



President Barack Obama delivers remarks on the health insurance reform bill at the Department of Interior, March 23, 2010. From left, Vice President Joe Biden, Vicki Kennedy, wife of the late Sen. Ted Kennedy, and 11-year-old Marcelas Owens of Seattle, Wash. *Official White House Photo by Pete Souza.*

Philanthropies and the California Endowment, the coalition was able to win because, for decades, other funders had invested in building the capacity of multi-issue groups by providing them with flexible and unencumbered funding that strengthened the capacity of those organizations and nurtured their staff and leaders.

Indeed, health care reform efforts had been tried before and failed or stalled. There is an element of accretion to multi-issue advocacy and organizing; because one can never predict when a policy window or an opportunity to effect sustainable social change will arise, this work requires long-term investments, patience and critical self-reflection among funders about the relative risks and benefits of funding such work.

Here was a historic victory achieved by channeling the aspirations and resources of disparate groups working across various silos to a common purpose. Here was a major funder with no particular focus on health care jumping into the fray. Here, too, was a health-focused funder supporting civil rights groups and organizing networks, nurtured over time by myriad others for various reasons, to accomplish its goals as the political moment allowed.

Without this willingness to get beyond conventional philanthropic silos, “health reform would have failed.”¹⁰ Instead, legislation finally achieved near-universal health

insurance coverage after perhaps 100 years of such attempts.

Moving the needle and “winning” in any field of interest – such as education, health, arts and culture or the environment – must account for the social, cultural and policy environment in which it is situated. How can grantmakers boost the impact of their contributions to a more just society? The answer might well lie in fusing strategy and justice:

Figure 1. Strategic Philanthropy’s Learning Curve: Bringing Justice and Strategy Together for Philanthropy at Its Best



in overcoming the unfortunate limitations of strategic philanthropy through social justice philanthropy, particularly through investments in multi-issue advocacy and organizing.¹¹

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) has long advocated for and documented the benefits of foundation-supported advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement.¹² In this report, we explore the importance of working across issue silos to build social capital and engage diverse constituencies.

What are the benefits of funding multi-issue organizing groups and of funding explicit strategies to build social capital and leadership? How does adjusting strategy in this way lead to greater impact for funders and the communities we seek to empower?

While not an exhaustive exploration of these issues, we offer it as an examination of an area of work that popular grantmaking strategies seem to neglect. Sociologist J. Craig Jenkins found that from 1953 to 1990 “social movement philanthropy” constituted “probably little more than 1 or 2 percent of total foundation giving.”¹³ Of the funds that did support social movements, an increasing amount went to professional advocacy groups.

Hopefully, this report and the recommendations included in it will encourage foundations to not only fund advocacy and organizing in their chosen fields of endeavor but also nurture the ecosystem of the grassroots. The work of these leaders and organizations may not fit neatly into a chosen program area, but their efforts often prove essential to lasting success. The truly strategic grantmaker, then, will make some provision for these groups.

Our research suggests that for any foundation committed to real and lasting social change, multi-issue advocacy and organizing are among the most powerful means to achieve its mission. In sum, this work builds on prior research in which we contend that truly strategic philanthropy that responds to pressing community needs is what we have long called social justice philanthropy.¹⁴

Policy Window: Comprehensive Immigration Reform

The Alliance for Citizenship (A4C) is a national coalition of various types of organizations fighting for immigrant rights.” A4C seeks to build reform based on American values and the power of American voices to secure policy change that guarantees full civil, political and labor rights for immigrants and their families. Working in collaboration with progressive, faith-based, labor, civil rights and grassroots groups, networks and leaders, A4C is working toward comprehensive immigration reform that establishes a path for full citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in our country and modernizes the country’s broken immigration system.¹⁵

Other organizations, including the Center for Community Change (CCC), the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) are actively advocating for immigration reform. These are but a few examples of the thousands of organizations and their funders, including the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund,¹⁶ that saw the 2012 elections as an opportunity to hold the government accountable for promises made during the campaign about enacting legislation that fixes our broken immigration system and treats undocumented immigrants humanely and with dignity.

While the outcome of comprehensive immigration reform efforts is uncertain, this is critically important work to make our democracy more inclusive. Further, the relationships that these organizations and leaders have built will last regardless of the outcome.

The Problem of Silos

The crises affecting our nation and the world have prompted philanthropists to become more organized, focused and, perhaps above all, “strategic” in their efforts. The movement toward “strategic philanthropy” has already contributed to greater philanthropic effectiveness.¹⁷ Yet, despite important contributions to issues such as education, health, the arts and the environment, the persistence, and in some cases exacerbation, of great disparities along the lines of class, race and gender suggest that philanthropy’s ultimate effectiveness is limited.

Kristi Kimball and Malka Kopell, former program officers at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, argue, “The strategic philanthropy movement has been a positive influence in recent years by encouraging foundations to clarify their goals and regularly evaluate their progress. But it has also fueled practices that undermine the nonprofit sector’s impact, rather than amplify it.”¹⁸

As Paul Connolly, formerly of the TCC Group wrote, the last 15 years have seen a trend toward a more technocratic philanthropy, frequently seen as the diametric opposite of humanistic philanthropy. He contends that the two approaches are part of a continuum and that the best elements of each should be balanced for foundations to be more effective: the disciplined strategies and results-focus from the technocratic side along with the values and flexibility of the humanistic approach. “Staff and board leaders at foundations should articulate the humanistic–technocratic blend they desire, deliberately distill it into the organizational culture and everyday practices and hire staff who possess multiple intelligences.”¹⁹

Consider the professionalization of the sector. For instance, between 1997 and 2009, when the philanthropic field grew expo-

nentially, the number of staff employed by foundations grew by 56 percent and full-time professional staff nearly doubled.²⁰ The first foundation affinity groups were created in the 1980s and now more than 40 such groups exist. That is a tremendous amount of expertise now being brought to bear full-time on financing solutions to social problems. And these professionals are associating in new and varying ways, resulting in additional insights and better practice.

At the same time, a grantmaker can fall victim to their funding guidelines and tunnel vision. A grantmaker might become siloed: a “health” funder that funds “health” nonprofits to do work in the “health” sector.

The strategic grantmaker understands that victories in the “health” space may depend on work done in other areas by nonprofits that are not exclusively involved



in health efforts or indeed any health campaigns at all. It may depend on shaping and maintaining a favorable social or political environment. The smart grantmaker is on the lookout for all possible and even unexpected paths to success. She or he makes some provision for these opportunities and collaborates with other funders in pursuing them consistently. Indeed, many groups that advocate and organize for community needs work on multiple issues simultaneously, and while they might work on myriad issues, they will often achieve victories in one single issue area while working in coalition with other groups that focus on various issues.

After a decade of attempting to break out of silos, strategic philanthropy has actually reinforced the tendency to remain focused exclusively on one issue in isolation. But the communities that we aim to serve do not live in silos – they realize that the issues confronting them are related. This was a large part of the rationale for NCRP’s release in January 2013 of *Real Results: Why Strategic Philanthropy is Social Justice Philanthropy*. Based on a previous four-part series of reports for issue-specific funders titled “High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy,” *Real Results* noted the lack of progress across the issues of education, health, arts and culture and environment and climate.²¹

Real Results posits that systems change requires a well-coordinated and resourced nonprofit ecosystem comprising grantmakers, grantees and the communities we seek to

help and a reassessment of the components of truly strategic philanthropy:

- A clear understanding of one’s goals includes identifying the desired impact, the beneficiaries of grantmaking and how they will benefit.
- A commitment to evidence-based strategy includes the positive, tangible impact – and frequently the necessity – of influencing public policy.
- Keeping a philanthropic strategy on course necessitates the input of those who stand to gain or lose the most from grantmaking, i.e., grantees and the communities they serve, to keep a philanthropic strategy on course.

When one considers the interconnect- edness of the issues that funders are addressing, it becomes clear that our sector functions much like any system such as the human body: if one part of it changes, the entire system is affected. Indeed, many of the issues that we are attempting to resolve individually are more often than not linked to each other. We cannot view any issue in isolation because seemingly disparate issues are in fact related in the ecosystem of our world.

Because we work in a systems framework, it is shortsighted to address issues such as climate change without acknowledging their connections with poverty, health and education. An attempt to mitigate climate change in isolation might provide a short-term solution with measurable outcomes but it will be un-

Table 1. Strategic Philanthropy As Social Justice Philanthropy

STRATEGIC PHILANTHROPY	ITS LIMITS	STRATEGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
Clear goals	Narrow foci, tunnel vision, silos	Targeted universalism
Evidence-based strategy	Burdensome paperwork, short-term goals, eschews public policy	Advocacy, community organizing, civic engagement and other related activities
Feedback	Linear, technocratic view of social change	Grantees and the communities they serve drive the strategy

sustainable in the long term. This suggests that grantmakers would see more impact if they were to forego an issue-specific focus at some level of the organization.

In a recent op-ed, Phil Buchanan and Aaron Dorfman defined strategy as “a clear hypothesis about how a philanthropy will achieve its goals, including what actions it will take and how it will distribute grants.”²² They proposed that some foundations are too risk-averse to invest in advocacy, organizing and other ways to influence public policy, while others do not consult beneficiaries and still others do not understand how the problems they seek to alleviate have variable affects on the communities they are working with. Simultaneously, they note that some foundations have adopted truly “sound strategy” to nurture social movements that have assisted communities and specific populations to secure basic rights. It is this type of “sound strategy” that can lead to truly strategic and just philanthropy.

Issue-focused grantmaking is like clear-cutting a forest. By dividing the world into

the impact you care about and the impact you do not, you may get the lumber you need, but at the expense of the larger ecosystem. There is nothing wrong with logging – or pursuing education reform or combating climate change – but the ways in which we pursue our philanthropic goals matter. To the extent that philanthropy relies on movements and networks it does not nurture, strategic philanthropy may extract as much value as it adds to the nonprofit environment. The truly strategic grantmaker looks to the entire set of interactions that makes the impact she or he wants and accounts for it in developing strategy.

The problems that our sector works to alleviate and find solutions for are multifaceted and complex. Often, there is significant overlap between and among issues but if grantmakers remain focused on a single issue, they will miss the opportunity to work collaboratively with other funders and their own grantees and we will not only miss the proverbial forest for the trees — we might just destroy it.

Foundations and Public Policy: A Lost Opportunity

Foundation investments in public policy suffer when particular parts of the ecosystem are neglected. Creating sustainable change requires a broad view of the entire spectrum of the elements that comprise our sector. What happens in one part of our sector has effects that are felt in other areas. Some organizations might be stronger or better resourced; some strategies may be preferred; some issues may have the public's attention, but as Thomas R. Oliver and Jason Gerson put it in their study of foundation support for health care policy, "The overall ecology of foundations and public policy is what matters."²³

In its *Beyond the Cause*, Independent Sector identified five strategic approaches that emerged as the common ingredients in successful advocacy campaigns and coalitions:

1. Sustain a laser-like focus on long-term goals.
2. Prioritize building the elements for successful campaigns.
3. Consider the motivations of public officials.

4. Galvanize coalitions to achieve short-term goals.
5. Ensure strong, high-integrity leadership.²⁴

Despite the fact that these are the hallmarks of successful nonprofit advocacy, grantmakers' sometimes instrumental approach works to inhibit all of them. Gene Steuerle, senior fellow at The Urban Institute, has noted that foundations are often absent from major policy shifts because of their siloed strategy: "A foundation officer working on, say, childhood development or youth gangs may care a lot about the federal or state children's budget, but it's not an effort that can be supported within a particular silo."²⁵

Working across or outside conventional silos to address a specific problem is not only feasible but also increases the chances that grantmakers and grantees will achieve their goals. It helps mitigate rigid disparities among our communities in a sustainable and



inclusive way. When philanthropy acknowledges the nexuses of various issues, uses a social justice lens in developing strategy and focuses on the most underserved among us, it is strategic philanthropy at its best.

Gun control policy cannot be separated from mental health and access to health care. An education funder might overlook the connections among public education, the economy, workforce development, geographic location and parental income and diminish the potential impact of their grantmaking. Instead, imagine the positive contributions to the education system that could arise and be sustained if foundations working on poverty, education and neighborhood revitalization saw the connections among their work and maximized their impact by working together and funding groups that work on all these issues or convening multi-issue groups to build shared purpose and mutual accountability with lasting results.

For example, Kiki Jamieson, president of the Fund for New Jersey, discussed the work of New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, an alliance of anti-execution groups. The coalition comprised seemingly disparate

groups ranging from progressives to conservatives in terms of political ideology and urban and suburban groups. The latter is often a significant dividing line in New Jersey. The alliance was successful because the politics were well-managed among the constituents and the group was able to capitalize on the windows of opportunity when they arose. The arguments and information they presented included economic, moral and social justice rationales to abolish the death penalty. It was managed by Celeste Fitzgerald, now program officer at the Proteus Fund for the Death Penalty Abolition Program. The state abolished the death penalty in December 2007.

The nonprofit ecosystem is complex and the problems that we are trying to address are often deeply entrenched and normalized. Every foundation will be comfortable with different elements of the ecosystem and there is by no means a “one-size-fits-all” approach to engaging in multi-issue advocacy and organizing. Rather, we suggest that grantmakers consider issues that intersect with their particular focus and whether or not working outside of their typical issue silo would amplify their impact within that silo.

Funding at the Crossroads: What Is Multi-Issue Advocacy and Organizing?

What do we mean when we refer to funding multi-issue advocacy and community organizing? Funders and other groups smash silos in a number of ways:

- **A single-issue grantmaker funds a non-profit seemingly working outside of its program areas.** At some stage, single-issue advocacy actually becomes multi-issue advocacy. For example, immigration is linked to jobs and workforce development, transportation, labor and civil rights, housing, health care, the environment, LGBTQ equity and language. A grantmaker may support a group that does not usually fit the program guidelines because of the campaign of the moment.
- **A grantmaker funds advocacy and organizing groups that work on multiple issues.** Many nonprofits do not work on single issues or in silos but are committed to leadership development and organizing within particular communities, whatever the pressing issue of the moment may be. Their approach is more systemic and organic, and it is this approach that a grantmaker may prioritize over issues.
- **A grantmaker supports a coalition of nonprofits working in various areas.** Often the success of a multi-issue campaign is the result of nonprofits with shared purpose coming together to tackle a social problem. This does not mean that all members of the coalition work on multiple issues; coalitions can include single-issue organizations to complement the knowledge and skills of other coalition members, strengthening their capacity and increasing the likelihood of success.
- **A grantmaker, perhaps collaborating with other funders, focuses explicitly on a program area that cuts across traditional and popular issues of philanthropic concern.**

As grantmakers develop their giving preferences and specialize, they may begin to see the connections between the grantmaking categories of, for example, poverty alleviation, health care and civil rights.

The Criminal Justice Funders Network was created for this purpose.²⁶ Several intersectional affinity groups have emerged in recent years, including Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Funders and The Health & Environmental Funders Network. Meanwhile, grantmakers may become interested in funding issues that fall between the cracks in a foundation's specialties. For example, grantmakers have been called upon to attend to the overall health of our democracy.²⁷ Levels of civic engagement and the externalities of the private sector clearly affect the ability of foundations to make change, but few foundations are focused on these areas in the way that they might be focused on higher education or medical research.

- **A grantmaker supports an advocacy and organizing infrastructure group.** Funders can expect better outcomes and more impact when they invest in training, technical support, leadership development and other forms of capacity-building. For example, the Levi Strauss Foundation provides funding to build the capacity of their Pioneers in Justice to use social media and technology. Levi Strauss worked with its technical partner, ZeroDivide, to hold skill-building workshops and foster the connections among the communications and technical staffs of the organizations led by the Pioneers in Justice. Building this "Peer Learning Community" is essential because while the Pioneers in Justice articulate their vision and strategy for how they will use social media, their staff will actually conduct this work.

This cross-issue support is related, though distinct, from John Kania and Mark Kramer's notion of "collective impact" whereby multiple sectors in a community agree to be held accountable to a set of shared results and then align resources and activities in support of those results.²⁸ While multi-issue advocacy and organizing may involve and benefit from public-private partnerships and cross-sector collaboration, it is the intersectionality of issues and not the synergy of sectors that comprises this work.

This identification and prioritization of a larger vision encompass several "issues" that distinguish multi-issue advocacy from the single-issue efforts that often punctuate it. Looking outside of issue silos allows a group great latitude – the ability to think ambitiously about what the ideal world we want to live in looks like. It permits the flexibility to consider major points of intervention to create lasting solutions to long-standing problems.

Tactics include research, public education, social media, grassroots organizing, leveraging centralized power and complementing community-level work.

Udi Ofer is currently the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of New Jersey and past advocacy director of the New York ACLU (NYCLU). He states that the pinnacle of an advocacy campaign is one that uses a range of tactics that parallel each other. "One of the greatest pleasures and challenges about working in a place like the ACLU is that we can think big picture and multi-year. We don't have to work within the context of the law because *we can change the law.*" This ability to affect policy and law in addition to addressing the root causes of systemic problems is perhaps one of the most powerful reasons to consider working across multiple issues and engaging in organizing and advocacy.

Some 200 people attended the Communities United for Police Reform press conference on February 28, 2012. More than 25 organizations sent a clear message to city hall, "We want NYPD reform." Photo courtesy of New York Civil Liberties Union.



How Much Foundation Grantmaking Supports Multi-Issue Advocacy and Organizing?

According to an NCRP analysis of Foundation Center data, “social justice grantmaking” comprised 12 percent of the grant dollars of the nation’s largest foundations in 2011.²⁹ Though 74 percent of funders support something social justice-related, the median funder provides just 2 percent of grant dollars for social justice grantmaking.

Social justice grantmaking describes funding “work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity of those who are the least well off politically, economically and socially.”³⁰ This would include such things as advocacy and community organizing as well as many other types of activities.

Thus, the share of foundation grant dollars going to multi-issue advocacy and organizing seems to be a mere fraction of a fraction of funds available at a time when they are needed most. Since the recession began in 2008, nonprofits have experienced shrinking budgets, government cuts and greater demand for services. Grassroots organizations have been particularly hard-hit. A survey by the Data Center and the National Organizers Alliance revealed that four out of ten organizations were depleting finances, and one-third were living month-to-month in 2010.³¹

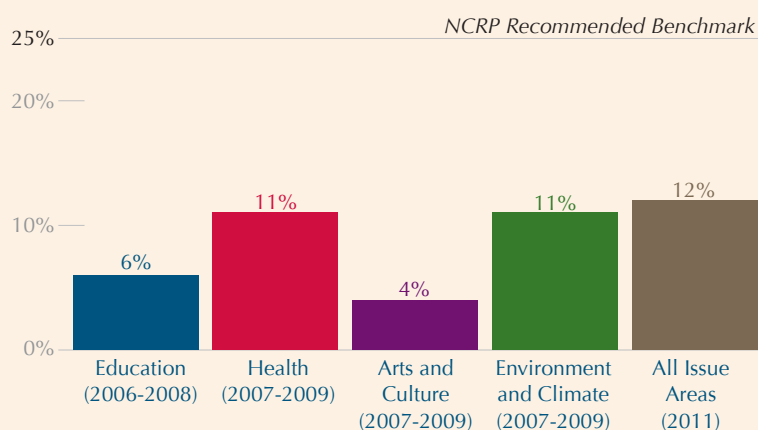
Even as some foundations embrace advocacy and influencing public policy, the broader work of constituent- and movement-building across issues and classes is comparatively neglected. The Open Society Foundations has suspended its Democracy and Power Fund that provided some \$10 million annually for this work. Simultaneously, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is reorganizing, moving away from explicitly funding multi-issue organizing that amounted to some \$3-5 million annually.³²

These two foundations provided sustained, patient capital to build the capacity of multi-issue, multi-constituency organizing for years –

the infrastructure upon which others now hope to construct the edifice of big policy wins. It remains to be seen who will step up and fund the basics: staff, board development, research, training, membership development and the mundane essentials, such as office space and utilities. Funders are essentially “free riding.”³³ Foundations simply expect others to build the capacity of these organizations, trusting that they can come in when certain successes seem more likely and find healthy organizations ready to accomplish those feats.

Where funders once shied away entirely from funding public policy-related activity, funders’ embrace of advocacy on issues of importance to them is a welcome development. However, this kind of grantmaking often takes for granted a broad spectrum of leaders and organizations working between and across the campaigns of the moment. Even within preferred issue silos, some effort must be made to support that movement because the health of the nonprofit ecosystem depends on grantmakers’ broader success.

Figure 2. Philanthropy Under-invests in Social Justice – In or Out of Issue Silos.



Source: NCRP analysis of Foundation Center data, 2013.

The Advantages of Multi-Issue Advocacy and Organizing

What are the benefits of funding multi-issue organizing groups and of funding explicit strategies to build social capital and leadership? How does adjusting strategy in this way lead to greater impact for funders and the communities we seek to empower?

There are several reasons why multi-issue organizing and advocacy for multifaceted and diverse constituencies create positive disruptions in the nonprofit sector. As one grantmaker we spoke with said, this work creates a unique space for deliberation, compromise and negotiation; it is one of the few places where economic and political divisions can be bridged. Unlike single-issue campaigns where people often bring to the table their preferred issues and solutions, successful multi-issue and multi-constituency efforts begin with the values and relationships of similarly situated people. This allows individuals and organizations to set aside ideology or the cause of the moment, if only briefly, to achieve larger shared purposes. This is why it is an essential component of a truly deliberative democracy.

MULTI-ISSUE ORGANIZING BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY.

In speaking with multi-issue advocacy and organizing groups and foundations that fund them, several common themes emerged. The first is the relationship between grantmakers and grantees: unlike the presumed power differential between foundations and nonprofits that dominates many other such relationships, both sides feel that power dynamics function very differently, resulting in a different approach to implementation. The relationship is much more akin to a partnership: they have shared purpose and often co-create strategy.

While the issues are important, the motivation to engage in this work is based on different reasons than groups that work on single issues or focus exclusively on winning policy changes.

In fact, the relationships and values that guide this work can supersede the issues in terms of prioritization. There is mutual accountability and a willingness to work in coalition with groups that are campaigning on an issue that is not one that your organization focuses on. For example, NARAL Pro-Choice America and the Sierra Club are both supporting comprehensive immigration reform. Basic Rights Oregon focuses on ending discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. It had extra capacity and collaborated with other groups to oppose an anti-immigrant ballot measure after defeating other discriminatory ballot measures.

The InterValley Project (IVP) is a New England organizing network comprising eight regional organizations. The faith-based network focuses on strengthening its member congregations, labor, community, housing and small business organizations, while helping them organize for socioeconomic justice for regional communities. The eight organizations are Berkshire Organizing Sponsoring Committee (BOSC), the Granite State Organizing Project (GSOP), Kennebec Valley Organization (KVO), Merrimack Valley Project (MVP), Naugatuck Valley Project (NVP), Pioneer Valley Project (PVP), the Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP) and the United Valley Interfaith Project (UVIP).

Ken Galdston, director and lead organizer of IVP, shared several of their members' success stories. The Naugatuck Valley Project (NVP) in Connecticut helped organize a campaign around affordable housing dating back to the 1980s when this industrial area was facing

difficult economic times. This is an area west of New Haven and Hartford that had cottage industries such as small-scale production of brass buttons in immigrant families' kitchens that grew into a major brass production industry. There were also rubber, clock and timing device and other metalworking industries. During the early 1980s, after a series of factory closings, NVP began work to address the closings with success; the economy bounced back in the mid-1980s and IBM wanted to build its new headquarters outside of the Naugatuck Valley. Numerous speculators entered the area seeking to build condominiums, driving up home prices and making affordable housing less available. NVP began to organize with local tenants after being called in by the Archdiocese of Hartford to meet with residents of Waterbury, who were being asked to pay \$80,000 for their small rental units in one privately-owned affordable housing development or face eviction.

The tenants were eager to do something about this situation and began working with NVP. They challenged the out-of-town developer, who had a bad record when it came to treatment of tenants of his other affordable housing developments, and organized a rent strike. They identified a solution to the problem: develop new affordable housing units. Working in alliance with a broad range of groups, including Co-Opportunity, the Institute for Community Economics and the Connecticut Disability Action Group, NVP worked with local residents and the state to build 102 units of affordable housing. The disability group received 10 percent of the units and the land was owned by a community land trust while the housing was owned by residents as cooperatives. NVP continues to provide a part-time organizer dedicated to keeping the cooperative strong and doing work such as pressuring local and state governments to replace the roofs and make the housing more energy-efficient. Recently, Brookside Housing Cooperatives won \$2.9 million to do this work.

Of particular note is that Brookside is the most racially and ethnically diverse permanently affordable housing in this region, if not the entire state. Nearly 350 residents benefit-



Brookside residents gather before meeting with the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority regarding funding for their redevelopment project. Photo courtesy of InterValley Project.

ted immediately and double that figure are projected to benefit over 20 years. In a recent conversation with a daughter of one of the original organizers, Galdston learned that the family still lives in the unit and that she was about to graduate from the University of Connecticut. She attributed the family's success in large part to the fact that it had stable housing. Because the Brookside Housing Cooperatives initiative involved local residents from its inception who had the shared purpose of keeping affordable housing accessible, social capital was bolstered by this work. This is all the more striking in light of the fact that the residents come from such ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds.

The California Civic Participation Funders is a collaborative effort among 10 foundations: The California Endowment; Color of Democracy Fund; Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund; James Irvine Foundation; McKay Foundation; Mitchell Kapor Foundation; PowerPAC Foundation; Rosenberg Foundation; Tides Foundation and Women's Foundation of California. In their report, *Bolder Together*, Cathy Cha, senior program officer at the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, states that these diverse funders came together "because they all recognized that it's going to take more than the same old siloed approach to achieve true progress on the issues they care about."³⁴ Each of the foundations brings a plurality of issue foci, including immigrant rights, criminal justice, women's rights, economic justice and community health. However, they have one shared purpose: work-

ing in four regions of California to bolster civic participation among communities of color and other historically underserved communities.

As opposed to continuing work in their respective silos, these grantmakers saw the value of working collaboratively with community-based organizations. They seek to develop strategies that are adaptable across various communities and locations to engage more women, young people, immigrants and African Americans to participate actively in civil and community affairs. They acknowledged the importance of working in collaboration because that is nearly universally true of how grantmakers recommend their grantees work. The report notes that, “By focusing on a common denominator that strengthens all of their work, the California funders are stepping out of their issue silos to invest in a core strategy that will contribute to the success of the movements they support.”³⁵ These foundations, which range in scope, issue focus, size and type, clearly demonstrate that working across silos without abandoning their issues actually strengthens and expands their impact in their selected issue area focus.

As Matt Leighninger, executive director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium states: “People in issue-based institutions don’t see the relevance of other issues or citizens with broader interests. Holistic, sustained networks of relationships help get past these silos.”³⁶

For the grantmaker that understands the need to invest in better public policy, it is tempting to look at the universe of nonprofits working on your chosen issue and fund those high-profile, well-resourced and well-connected organizations best positioned to achieve change. This strategy can work and is undoubtedly the default position for foundations looking to influence policy.

However, there is a danger: if you always do what you always did, you’ll always get what you always got. There is a tendency to bring together the usual suspects with little results. Funding those organizations on the frontlines of a pitched policy debate is important, but what else can you do to change the conversation?

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The power of multi-issue advocacy and organizing is that coalitions that cross issues (and class, race or geography) bring unlikely allies to the table that change the game, creating opportunities for change.

Recent research suggests that some foundations are recognizing the benefits of working across issue silos, recognizing that health, education, environment and other issues are closely connected.³⁷ Where the issues of the day intersect, there is an opportunity to bring new voices into the conversation that may just prove the difference. HCAN presents a powerful example of a broad coalition that brought not just health organizations but labor, education, arts, civil rights groups and businesses together, resulting in a significant victory.

Organizations that might not see themselves as part of a larger movement may yet find that they do have something in common. The Levi Strauss Foundation was the first corporate funder to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Today, it directs all its HIV/AIDS grantmaking to help legal and grassroots advocates connect with key influencers including lawyers, judges and policymakers – to address the stigma and discrimination associated with the disease. The foundation also invests heavily in the rights and well-being of garment workers and has funded nonprofits around the world for the past 12 years. The work evolved, with the first five

years focusing on educating workers in communities. Desiring greater impact, the foundation targeted efforts where they had the most leverage: the factory floor. It brought together the “unlikely bedfellows” of nonprofits and suppliers to help them recognize mutually beneficial programs that were good for business and workers. For example, a peer-to-peer women’s reproductive health education program led to healthier workers and substantial business improvements. By convening groups with seemingly disparate goals and values, the foundation sees many benefits from approaching social problems in a systemic way.

A report by Public Interest Projects presents profiles of several groups working in alliances across silos and makes a compelling case for funders to consider funding this work. The report notes that emergent alliances are the outcome of diverse communities coming together and finding issues that are mutually shared, ranging from civic engagement to economic justice, education reform to community development and more. The alliances profiled are not single-campaign coalitions; they represent long-term efforts to bolster impact and address entrenched social problems to achieve lasting social change through deep relational engagement. As the report notes, there are myriad reasons for the emergence of alliances: “There is a growing recognition that operating solely within the confines of one community or issue has had limited effectiveness. Working within ‘silos’ overlooks the ways in which goals and activities have an impact on other groups and sectors, and vice versa.”³⁸

The movement toward working in alliances is attributable in part to the desire to achieve real results and creates the space where goals that would otherwise not be achievable are within reach. Groups are able to build common cause and shared purpose that move beyond political differences that can stymie siloed work. The same is true for resource competition in single-issue work: it can divide groups rather than unite them. Working across silos allows nonprofits to combine resources, expertise and skills, and a plurality of perspectives that increases the likelihood of success.³⁹

NCRP’s report for environment and climate grantmakers, *Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment Funders*, documented the work of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), a 30-year-old statewide membership organization that works to advance social, environmental and economic justice at the local, state and national levels. KFTC provides technical workshops, builds alliances with other grassroots organizations in various states and trains community members in basic organizing skills.⁴⁰

As a funder of KFTC and a member of the environment report’s advisory committee, Heeten Kalan, senior program officer at the New World Foundation, explains that KFTC is “working with thousands of its members to connect issues of criminal justice to jobs to the environment to people’s livelihoods and community resilience. They make the connections, their members make the connections. Why can’t funders make those connections and start funding outside our narrow silos? We are going to need more than just the traditional environmental organizations to get anywhere, and it is time for the philanthropic community to look beyond traditional environmental organizations.”⁴¹

The PICO National Network and its affiliates often have succeeded because they are able to bring local voices to bear on public policy issues, involving those most affected by public policy decisions. Founded in 1972, a time when engaged in other efforts, PICO began exploring and developing approaches to congregation–community organizing. As opposed to bringing people of different faiths and denominations together around commonly shared problems or issues, the model focused on relationships and values as the basis for what holds organizations and coalitions together. PICO comprises a national network of community organizations including 56 affiliated organizations that work in 18 states. Formerly called the Pacific Institute for Community Organizations, it changed its name to PICO National Network to reflect this extensive growth and national scope of organizing work.

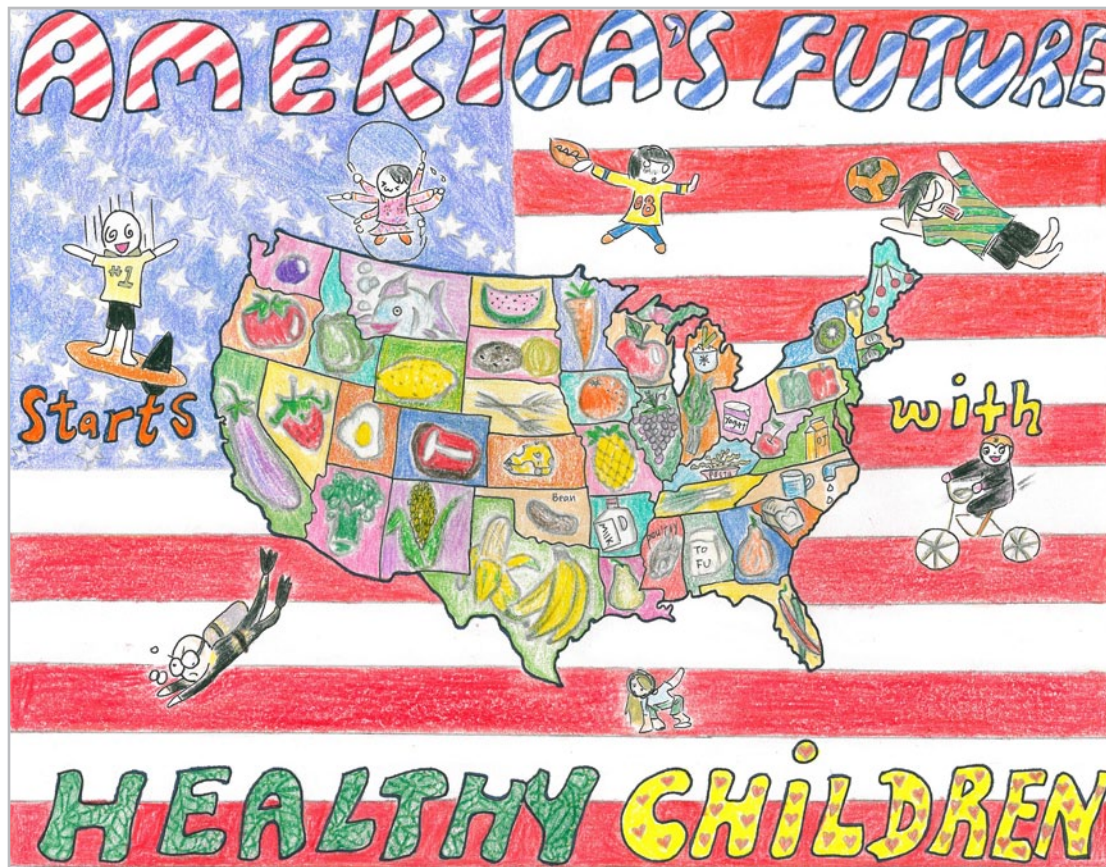


Photo courtesy of Korean Resource Center, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/krcla/3228428594/>

Monica Sommerville, director of foundation relations at PICO's national headquarters, discussed the group's work to secure federal reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP). PICO identified individuals from local organizations and developed their leadership capacity to engage at the local and national levels. At the national level, it regularly brought people to Washington, D.C., to put a human face, voice and story to the policy process. Local faith leaders encouraged ambivalent politicians, such as Rep. Charlie Dent (R- Pa.), to support S-CHIP reauthorization. PICO played a lead role in this campaign but could not have succeeded if it had not worked as part of a broader coalition. Sommerville emphasized the importance of partnerships in working on such an involved issue and noted the following as key to success: grassroots work at the local level coupled with the ability to raise funds to cover the expenses of bringing families to D.C. on a regular basis.

Multi-issue advocacy groups work with very

diverse constituencies and often build social capital and shared purpose among a range of communities. PICO's constituents are largely congregation-based but some are school-based, such as groups in Oakland and Colorado. Over the past decade, the organization has demonstrated heightened intentionality in engaging working class communities, African Americans and Asian and Pacific Islander communities. Negotiating the challenges of working within and among diverse communities takes time, but the intensity of this work pays great dividends in the long run. PICO uses a very structured approach: building on one-on-one relationships allows leaders to analyze mistakes, offer and accept apologies. PICO fosters individual and collective accountability through its organizing committee structures. Committee meetings create a culture of assessment for people to learn how peers have succeeded or disagreed in a safe space. The group's strong relationships with clergy are an asset, as they know their congregations and members and function as excellent mediators.

PICO evolved to connect its national work to its regional and local work. PICO began by providing support to local organizers. Over time, PICO came to serve as a consultant to these organizers. In the early 2000s, inspired by California-based PICO groups, the national organization saw the power of creating linkages among local and regional groups and applied the lessons learned to the entire network. The group began to think of how it could boost its impact by pooling its national organizing capacity and collaborating on national issue campaigns.

Similarly, under the leadership of national executive director Anthony Romero, the ACLU created an affiliate support department. The connections between state affiliates and the national ACLU are strong: there is constant communication and state affiliates are given a significant amount of autonomy to identify their own priorities and targets. Udi Ofer compared the ACLU to Planned Parenthood in that each organization has a robust national, regional and local presence. Though Planned Parenthood is a service provider and focuses on one issue, Ofer said they are comparable because of how powerful their presences are.

Involving service providers is another way to strengthen public policy conversations by introducing the voices of those closest to public problems. PICO views itself as engaging in community organizing and as distinct from but complementary to service providers. Service providers attend to immediate needs while organizers ask their constituents, often the same as those who service providers work with, how they want to participate in the decision-making process and what policy changes they see as important.

Put differently, the problems and solutions are articulated and developed in partnership with the community in organizing while direct service provision responds with already-developed solutions to problems these groups see in their communities. But charity and services often complement organizing, and there are organizations that blend the two approaches without abandoning one for the other. PICO offers another example of this blended approach: its health care work comprises service provision by building knowledge among constituents about how to take advantage of the Affordable

But charity and services often complement organizing, and there are organizations that blend the two approaches without abandoning one for the other.

Care Act. The goal is to improve access in the short term but the long-term hope is to have them become organizers and advocate for themselves. Similarly, when the organization decided to expand into immigration issues, it hosted events seeking to identify potential community leaders who had the capacity to take on the issue of immigration reform.

The ACLU also understands the limitations of narrow program area foci. As with other groups that work across issues, they are always prepared to work on additional focal areas because often, the constituencies being served are the same. For example, the ACLU's stop-and-frisk work, immigrants' rights advocacy in Newark and advancing the rights of LGBTQ communities demonstrated that many of the people and groups they are working with are interested in all three issues. People seeking protection from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention requests are also concerned about stop-and-frisk. This is where looking beyond one's silo is imperative and leads to an approach informed by systems thinking. The issues and the constituents being served have significant overlap and are connected, demonstrating the need to think about communities and individuals in a more holistic way.

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION AND MOBILIZATION ARE ESSENTIAL TO TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SOCIAL OR POLITICAL MOMENT.

Another element of success is finding the right balance between elite expertise and grassroots mobilization. Both are necessary for multi-issue advocacy and organizing to succeed, and

success is contingent on the ability to organize and mobilize ordinary community members. As Kiki Jamieson, president of The Fund for New Jersey notes, “One thing that experts can bring to the table is the question: ‘What do you think you know but don’t have evidence for?’ Grassroots organizations often understand things they cannot yet prove; expert resources can help them do that.”

The Merrimack Valley Project (MVP), a member of the Intervalley Project, used multiple strategies and tactics to address the foreclosure crisis and worked on jobs and job training in the Greater Lawrence, Lowell and Haverhill areas of Massachusetts. MVP won job improvements and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for 1,000 temporary immigrant workers at Gillette’s packaging facility and secured \$1.5 million from Gillette/Procter & Gamble and the New Balance corporations to fund an ESOL and Career Ladders program benefitting 1,500 community members. Using a multipronged strategy, MVP worked in collaboration with allies across the state to organize a response to the devastating foreclosure crisis that was destabilizing local communities. From door-to-door outreach and education to getting laws passed in collaboration with allied groups, MVP benefitted a significant number of tenants and homeowners. Working with partners, it won passage of a 2012 state law

that permits MVP to partner with Boston Community Capital, a collaboration that allows homeowners in foreclosed properties to buy their homes back at current market value, impacting 600 families across the state. A 2010 law passed in partnership with allies protects tenants in foreclosed buildings from unjust evictions and has benefitted 780,000 tenants statewide. Blending grassroots organizing with litigation, MVP was able to succeed in protecting and improving the lives of Massachusetts residents.

Udi Ofer believes that the ACLU should play the role of a “bridge maker” because elevating historically disenfranchised communities is a strategic priority. While the organization does not do grassroots community organizing, it elevates the voices of organizers to be part of the media and the government policymaking process. It leverages its power as a multi-issue organization with numerous strategies to build the connections across and between underserved communities and government. Building on already strong organizational capacity, the ACLU brings a blend of expertise, ranging from litigation to organizing to grassroots support to lobbying. As an issue-advocacy group, the ACLU represents a mix of different types of power, including the capacity to leverage relationships with legislators as well as grassroots organizations.

The Sierra Club joins hundreds of people on a march from Olvera Street to City Hall. Protestors demanded action on climate change from President Obama and the rejection of the 1700 mile Keystone XL pipeline. *Photo by flickr/charliekjo.*



As grantmakers typically do well in funding the larger, more elite public policy organizations, funders would do even better by increasing the proportion of grant dollars supporting the grassroots. Sustained support for local community organizers was essential to striking down New York’s stop-and-frisk policies.

The New York Police Department’s (NYPD) practices show racial profiling with disparate impact on the African American and Latino communities. It raises concerns about privacy rights and illegal stops. Although young African American and Latino men between the ages of 14 and 24 comprise only 4.7 percent of the city’s population, they represented a disproportionate number of stops by the NYPD in 2012. More than 90 percent of those stopped were innocent.⁴² The campaign against the NYPD policies had gone on for several years, supported closely by several foundations, including \$2.2 million in grants from Open Society Foundations and Atlantic Philanthropies.⁴³

Communities United for Police Reform brought together advocates and organizers to make decisions about the goals and tactics regarding the NYPD’s stop-and-frisk procedures. The process began in 2010 and the New York City Council passed two pieces of legislation to reform NYPD practices, a significant issue in the city’s mayoral election. The campaign fostered significant unity among the advocacy groups involved about how to identify problems, goals and tactics when working in collaboration.

Communities United for Police Reform included the Justice Committee, Make the Road-NY, the NYCLU, Picture the Homeless, Bronx Defenders and the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York. Ofer was the first chair of the campaign and described this work as an exemplar of how effective it can be when advocates take the time to put together a campaign strategy with short- and long-term goals. Communities United for Police Reform secured a significant victory when federal judge Shira Scheindlin ruled on August 12, 2013, that the NYPD’s practice of stop-and-frisk is unconstitutional. The NYCLU was there from the inception of the campaign and the social capital that developed among the groups

is evident in their continued work on this issue and the manner in which they operate. As Ofer said, “We are not just a law firm. We are an issue advocacy organization. We have vigorous communications and organizing staffs. We have lobbyists. What’s really important to know is that we will bring a multi-year, multi-tactical and multi-strategic commitment to an issue. And we will stick with that issue, even when it’s not the ‘hot’ issue.”

Hugh Hogan, executive director of the North Star Fund, noted the vital support to this effort by numerous smaller organizations: “Had it not been for the grassroots activists and financial support from a few courageous foundations and many generous individuals, such a blatantly racist and discriminatory policy would still be fully in place.”⁴⁴

MULTI-ISSUE ORGANIZING CREATES CONSTITUENCIES AND BUILDS POWER AND LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE.

How do you raise the probability of success in cross-issue advocacy and organizing? The grantmakers and grantees profiled in this report raised a range of issues when probed about some of the essential components of this work, such as coalitions that involve a broad spectrum of expertise, working at various levels from local to national, blending service delivery and advocacy, grassroots and grass-tops advocacy and systems thinking.

Systems thinking is imperative to being able to work outside of a specific issue because it allows those engaged in cross-issue work to identify areas of overlap with peers and form alliances. It also allows for an adaptive lens through which to consider the complexity of problems being addressed and provides a means for grantmakers and nonprofits to find an entry point into the ecosystem of this work while not abandoning their primary issue focus. It provides a new framework in which to consider how one’s focal area is connected to a broader range of issues and boost one’s impact. And social capital and leadership development are included from the outset to ensure sustainability and build the nonprofit infrastructure needed to carry out this work.

Focusing on systems thinking and policy engagement naturally raises the challenge of the time needed to effect hoped-for change. These groups do not abandon the work simply because it is no longer prominent in the public square.

Not every campaign is going to be successful; the goal is to build a constituency, a movement of interested, capable leaders who will carry on the work until the next opportunity arises.

The public may have lost some of its focus on growing surveillance after 9/11 once President Obama came into office, says Ofer, but then refocused its attention on this issue following Edward Snowden's disclosure of top-secret U.S. and British mass surveillance programs. The ACLU and many other organizations were working on National Security Agency spying well before Snowden's latest revelations. This is likely an outcome of authentic leadership development that allows leaders to anticipate issues in consultation with each other and their staffs and to address issues as they arise.

Paul Speer's evaluation of California-based PICO leaders' public policy leadership skills compared them to citizens who attended church and those who do not attend church. In analyzing the three groups' knowledge of public policy and cognitive understanding of power, Speer found statistically significant differences among the three groups. PICO leaders had more skills, knowledge and experience in the public policy process. They were more adept at being able to effect change in policy and felt more confident and able in leadership roles. PICO leaders also ranked higher in terms of their understanding of collective power versus individual actions. Among the PICO leaders surveyed, California PICO's leaders' knowledge of the public policy process was significantly higher than that of other local PICO leaders.⁴⁵

Identifying what issues to work on as a cross-silo advocacy and organizing group is another key to success. This means having to be strategic about how to select and approach each issue. The decision-making process must be clear: Is the work duplicative? Can the organization play a specific role? If the people

need to be mobilized, can the message be framed in a way that the general public will want to engage? These are questions any organization involved in cross-sector work must grapple with to decide when to engage in a strategic advocacy campaign. And importantly, the criteria must include the voice of the communities served. Responsive advocacy organizations look for patterns in terms of what the community members are saying about what influences their lives and also whether it aligns with their mission and vision of a more just and equitable society.

It was for precisely this reason that shortly after President Obama's reelection, leaders from some of the most powerful organizations, including Sierra Club, National Education Association, Communications Workers of America, Greenpeace and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, came together to identify top priorities for movement building and formed "The Democracy Initiative." This coalition of labor activists, environmentalists, immigration reformers and civil rights advocates identified three goals for the organizations to campaign for: expanding the number of registered voters and fighting restrictive voter identification laws, getting big money out of politics and rewriting Senate rules to reign in use of the filibuster to block legislation. The groups committed to invest millions of dollars and organizers to campaign as a united coalition on these issues. As Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club, stated: "It was so exciting. We weren't just wringing our hands about the Koch brothers. We were saying, 'I'll put in this amount of dollars and this many organizers.'"⁴⁶

Many funders have adopted a similar non-siloed strategy when they support leadership development. Fellowships, sabbatical programs and professional development of various kinds support current nonprofit executives and nurture those coming up, creating a new generation of advocates, organizers and other leaders. In this way, the nonprofit ecosystem is renewed. The Barr Foundation's fellowship program has been particularly successful in networking

The Barr Fellows Program

An initiative of the Boston-based Barr Foundation, the Barr Fellowship has proved an innovative, disruptive exercise in leadership development and authentic network-building.

Barr knowledge officer Stefan Lanfer contends that contemporary approaches to philanthropy “gloss over a vital ingredient of effective organizations and collaborations: namely, great leaders. As a result, we pay a lot of attention to program models, collaborative processes or ways to measure impact. We pay a lot less attention to what it takes to help great leaders deepen their individual and collective potential.”⁴⁷

“Organizations are important,” says Kimberly Haskins, senior program officer at the Barr Foundation. “But the real changemakers are the people who do the work.”

“One of the hardest jobs around is running a nonprofit,” adds Lanfer. “It can be boundary-less and demanding of all one has to give. We gave a lot of thought about how to create a space for reflection, rejuvenation, and connection beyond the isolation of one’s own demanding job.”

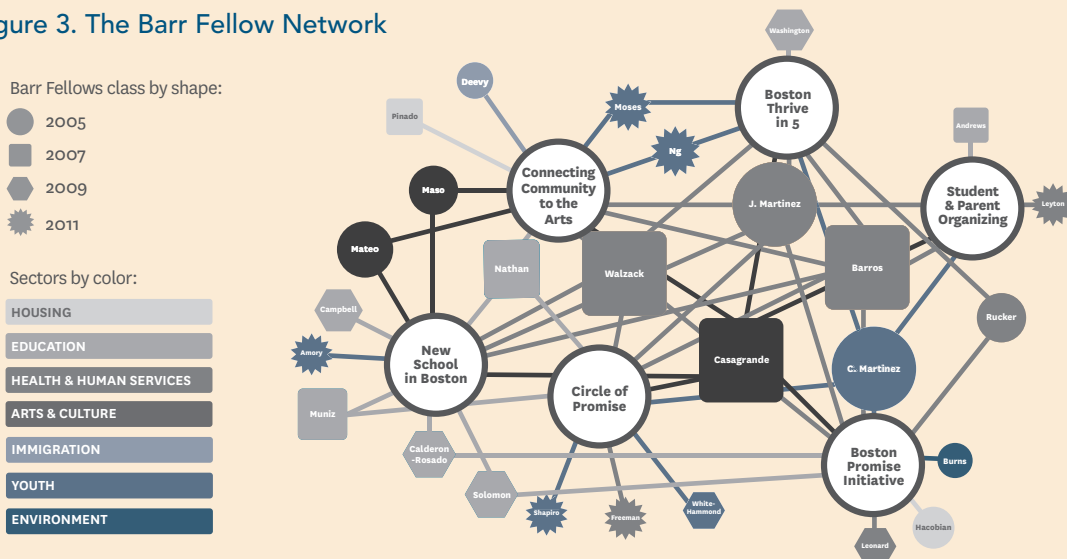
The fellowship begins with group travel to the Global South and a three-month sabbatical. These intentional radical disruptions to

the day-to-day are deepened via semiannual retreats for every class over the next three years. Some fellows take advantage of the option to work with an executive coach in this time. The selected leaders of nonprofits also have the opportunity to join the larger Barr Fellowship network. Gatherings are held annually for the entire network and these convenings sometimes include travel.

Support is not limited to the leaders themselves; healthy leaders need healthy organizations and vice versa. The fellowship includes \$40,000 in flexible funding for each fellow’s organization to use while its leaders are on sabbatical. The Barr Foundation also convenes interim leaders twice during the sabbatical phase.

By getting a diverse group of leaders out of their silos to share a common experience, the fellowship creates a space for authentic relationships, the stuff of trust, social capital and social networks. Barr trusts in the creation of these relationships, leaving the ultimate agenda to the 48 Barr Fellows themselves. The result is something the *Boston Globe* once called “a web of collaboration rippling through the non-profit community with increasing effect.”⁴⁸

Figure 3. The Barr Fellow Network



Boston’s nonprofit leadership, providing a platform for trust and collaboration that would not have been possible otherwise.

When nonprofits and grantmakers go beyond silos, they are not measured solely by policy wins but by the overall health of a movement of like-minded people upon which those wins depend.

PERCEIVED CHALLENGES IN MULTI-ISSUE ADVOCACY AND ORGANIZING

Multi-issue advocacy and organizing are not without challenges. Difficulties naturally arise in any enterprise that brings disparate people and groups together. Organizations have seen these obstacles and found ways past them (see Table 2).

Table 2: Perceived Challenges to Multi-Issue Advocacy and Organizing, and What to Do to Address Them

CHALLENGE	POSSIBLE RATIONALE	SOLUTION
Cultural differences between or among organizations	Different issues and focus on multiple/diverse constituents can create distinct organizational cultures that might not work together without intentional effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify common ground and shared values. Focus on similarities and confront differences directly. Identify issue and constituent overlap among organizations. Ensure that leadership acts as bridge builders. Acknowledge limitations of working in silos and benefits of collaboration.
Time horizon for building alliances and coalitions can be long and delay work	Overcoming differences, identifying common ground and agreeing on overall strategy and tactics is time-consuming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more long-term flexible support to grantees to allow for an organic developmental phase to ensure sustainability and increase the likelihood of success.
Power dynamics: presumed top-down relationship between funder and grantees	Grantees rely on foundations for capitalization leading to a deferential relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grantmakers become less risk-averse and partner with funders outside their silos to provide shared purpose grants. Trust them to carry out the work. Work collaboratively with them without micromanaging; ceding control does not imply a lack of accountability.
Resource competition among coalition group members	<p>Organizations bring their individual group funding to the collaborative and each owes variable accountability to its funders.</p> <p>Grantmakers want to fund the coalition but determining which organization receives and manages the money can be difficult.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide pooled philanthropic resources to coalitions doing cross-issue work. Coalition members should be clear from the outset about what resources each can contribute and how any new funding for the collaborative will be allocated and managed.
Inability to demonstrate impact or evaluate the status of work	Multi-issue work often takes longer than single-issue advocacy or direct services for a desired outcome to be achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use interim evaluation indicators to assess impact that don’t overburden grantees. Look beyond policy wins to measure success. Social capital and leadership are bolstered and developed at the organizational and community levels that might not be quantifiable but proxy indicators can be used.⁴⁹
Thinking about issues in a systemic way is abstract and difficult; it’s easier to focus on one issue exclusively.	Some literature and the discourse used in systems thinking comes across as too academic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that issues and constituents/communities overlap across silos. Acknowledge that there are benefits to working together and that you will see greater impact from funding and working collaboratively. Recognize that you might diminish your own impact if you do not look outside your issue precisely because it is interconnected with other issues.

Recommendations for Funder Consideration

The smart grantmaker understands the limits of strategic philanthropy. Foundations would be myopic to ignore the possibility of contributing to sustainable changes that positively impact society.

In their 2008 book *Money Well Spent*, Paul Brest and Hal Harvey, after having explained the necessity of clear goals and sticking to them, note circumstances when it makes sense to depart from those goals in various ways.

As noted throughout this report, grantmakers benefit from the actions of multi-issue advocacy and organizing nonprofits, and foundations' success depends upon the health of the non-profit ecosystem. In Brest and Harvey's words, "it makes sense to use your philanthropic funds to sustain and strengthen them."⁵⁰

The issue-focused strategic grantmaker divides the world into the impact she or he cares about and the impact that matters less or not at all. Truly strategic grantmakers look to the entire ecosystem of interactions that makes the impact they want possible and find a way at some organizational level to experiment with it.

How can you best support the entire non-profit ecosystem that makes success possible?

BEGIN WITH YOUR VALUES AND WORK FROM THERE.

Identifying hoped-for outcomes guided by values can help you understand the power dynamics at play and which groups or foundations to partner with to achieve them. According to one grantmaker, this can lead to a less siloed approach to your work and multiply your impact. Often, it is social justice and a focus on underserved communities that leads funders to this consideration, though it is not exclusively social justice funders that engage in multi-issue work.

One example is how the Levi Strauss Foundation was the first corporate foundation to fund HIV/AIDS work at a time when stigma and discrimination associated with the disease were severe. Its grantmaking was a reflection of the corporation's core values of empathy, originality, integrity and courage.

As one grantmaker stated, movement building is founded on passion and anger but one cannot achieve one's goals by staying focused on those emotions. She notes that a good collaborator working on multi-issue advocacy and organizing takes specific leadership skills, adding that social change requires focus and accountability.

DIVERSIFY YOUR PORTFOLIO.

A fundamental principle for building any investment strategy is diversification. Success in any area of charitable work requires a number of actors each playing their own role: service providers, advocates, organizers, researchers and infrastructure groups.

Philanthropic freedom allows grantmakers to experiment across a range of strategies and issues. Learning from failures is crucial and often leads to success in the long term. What kinds of work does your own strategy require? Is that diversity sufficiently supported to make your desired outcomes possible? Is there a knowledge gap at the foundation about what is legally permissible to fund?

FOCUS ON NURTURING THE GRASSROOTS, INCLUDING SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Those interested in lasting policy change must take care that the roots, the base of social movements, are nurtured. Professionalized advocacy has its place and importance, but movements,

“must be driven by the people who are most affected.”⁵¹ As Jenkins has argued, “Grassroots groups have longer-term staying power and can make stronger claims to public support than professionalized groups can.”⁵²

Grantmakers in service provision can capitalize on these groups’ abilities to organize and mobilize the constituencies they serve. Philanthropists also can supplement service provision grants with advocacy and organizing grants. Several groups combine both approaches and the Building Movement Project has resources on evaluating the capacity for advocacy.

PROVIDE GENERAL OPERATING AND MULTI-YEAR SUPPORT.

Foundations play a unique funding role in multi-issue advocacy and organizing. Groups such as the InterValley project and the ACLU do not seek out government funding because they want the freedom to take up issues that they otherwise would not be able to. During the recent recession, many groups that relied on public funds lost significant revenue; this underscores the case for philanthropy to invest in this work because grantmakers have a measure of independence and stability that government funding does not provide today. PICO gets some 90 percent of its funding from private foundations. It is for this reason that general operating support is considered the “holy grail.”⁵³

Across almost all the nonprofits we spoke with, the need for flexible, unencumbered support in the form of core and multi-year funding was raised as an area in which foundations could be more helpful. Numerous surveys have noted that the biggest barrier to nonprofit advocacy and organizing is a lack of resources.⁵⁴

Nonprofits often find themselves in the position of having to demonstrate results from the very work they need funding for before a funder will give them a long-term grant. While core support seems to have improved over the last few years, multi-year support is an area that was identified as in need of serious improvement. Fully 89 percent of funders reported no multi-year grants in 2011.⁵⁵

Another option is to add general operating support, multi-year funding or leadership development on top of program grants to help build the relational power of leaders, communities and organizations.

ADD MULTI-ISSUE WORK GRANTS TO YOUR PORTFOLIO WHILE CONTINUING TO FUND WITHIN YOUR PREFERRED ISSUE FOCI.

Providing funds to a group that engages in multi-issue advocacy and organizing, even for an issue-specific campaign that aligns with the foundation’s focus, is one way to test out whether this is something that a grantmaker could consider in the future.

Regranting through social justice funds provides another means through which funders can consider adding this work to their portfolios without abandoning their issue focus. Use of intermediaries can provide a level of privacy. Use social justice-oriented funds such as Tides Foundation, Liberty Hill Foundation and Headwaters Foundation for Justice to direct dollars to multi-issue organizations working in preferred issue areas.

Grantmakers and nonprofits alike have infrastructure needs that are going unfunded. One funder noted that it is now supporting faith-based organizing because the structure of groups such as PICO, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) and Gamaliel provide already-existing connections between local groups and national trends.

Providing monies for nonprofit staff to be trained in culturally appropriate technical assistance is another means to find an entrée point into this work without abandoning your issue focus. This severely underfunded area is imperative to have, given the changing demographics of our society and the constituents that we serve.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE: MODEL THE COLLABORATION YOU FUND AND HOPE TO SEE.

The grantmakers we interviewed agreed unanimously that there is a need for foundations to break down silos within their own

institutions if they hope to see the same happen in the work that they fund. Trustees often are motivated by the sense of possibility, so program staff must have the appropriate tools to demonstrate the kinds of successes that multi-issue advocacy and organizing could lead to. Some options for identifying like-minded colleagues include holding systematically combined conferences and mutual events, building a coaching circle and convening regional funders with shared visions. This would require relational organizing among funders, possibly through new and existing affinity groups.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR GRANTEES AS TRUE PARTNERS.

For grantmakers that want to support movement building, it is essential to think outside of traditional program silos, be comfortable allowing grantees to take more control and be willing to remain involved for long periods of time.⁵⁶ Having funders who work collaboratively with their grantees is essential to success in multi-issue advocacy and organizing work.

Foundations can bring a great deal of knowledge, relationships and technical capacity to the table to ensure that their grantees will succeed in this work. Some help their grantees identify other funders; most meet and discuss strategy regularly and sometimes foundations may know the right people for a specific campaign who must be included

if the grant is to achieve its stated purpose. However, the key point here is to let grantees take the lead and treat them as partners, with funders letting go of control.⁵⁷

It is about having trust that your grantees have the capacity to deliver on agreed-upon strategies and staying with them because of the time horizon of the work involved. Bringing the community voice to the decision-making table is crucial; grantees are closer to the constituents that foundations seek to serve and can play the role of an essential conduit of knowledge about the problems that communities want addressed.

Developing a grantmaking strategy should be an iterative process on equal footing because nonprofits are often far more attuned to the needs of the communities served. As the Levi Strauss Foundation states, “Our experience has demonstrated that [the] ‘connective tissue’ of networked collaboration is trust. The Pioneers [in Justice] describe the program as a deeply appreciated space for learning and strategizing – and their engagement with the foundation as ‘refreshingly honest’ and valuable to their organizations and movements. Organizations recognize the value of collaboration, but are often stymied by lack of resources, time or other barriers. Funders can remove these obstacles by providing funding, dedicated time and space, guidance and coordination.”⁵⁸

Conclusion: Philanthropy Can Contribute to Our Democracy

Our democracy is at a crossroads. We face the highest levels of economic inequality on record. Recent Supreme Court decisions such as *Citizens United* and *Shelby County vs. Holder* have left ordinary citizens in a precarious position. With the recession appearing to recede, it is time for the civic sector to return to our historic role of complementing and supplementing government to help rebuild the American dream and instill our values squarely in the public discourse where they belong.

People are mobilized and ready to engage. The Occupy movement heightened awareness of growing inequality. The Keystone XL pipeline has galvanized environmental concerns. The 2012 election saw increased voter turnout. As one grantmaker said, “There is strength; there is power, real power in bringing people together. People may not think they have power, and they may not alone, but as a group they do.”

Multi-issue advocacy and organizing are among the most effective tools that philanthropy has to contribute to this movement. Just as globalization has led to an overwhelming sense of interconnectedness and necessitated consideration of numerous factors in the social and economic spheres, the same applies to issue-specific work in the nonprofit sector. Sadly, despite the great work of the groups documented in this report, this work remains underfunded.

Nonprofits have realized that without investments in our democracy, we are unlikely to achieve our missions. As one grantmaker said, “Why do we think that organizing capital is good for us as a society but that organizing people is dangerous?” Strategic philanthropy has underlined the importance of marshaling and focusing *dollars* for a cause but inexplicably stops short at funding groups

that unite and focus *people and organizations* for a cause.

Looking beyond issue silos and investing in multi-issue and multi-constituency work is one way that philanthropy can contribute to a robust democracy and help us build the social capital and leadership we need to return to the America that Alexis de Tocqueville lauded for its voluntary association. It is one of the only ways in which the space for deliberative discourse, compromise and negotiation are opened up and ideological or political differences overcome.

Philanthropy has an opportunity to seize the moment and make tangible contributions to advancing our democracy. Every grantmaker will have a different level of comfort with funding the fragile ecosystem of our sector and each will find its own entrée point without having to abandon one’s preferred issue focus. There are myriad ways in which philanthropy can experiment with multi-issue advocacy and organizing. It is our hope that this report and the resources provided will help more funders see the value of this work and consider it when developing strategies, so that what is just is strategic and what is strategic is just.

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SMASHING SILOS IN PHILANTHROPY

Multi-Issue Advocacy and Organizing for Real Results

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As philanthropy continues to grapple with ways to become more effective and strategic, *Smashing Silos in Philanthropy* reminds us of a time-tested strategy that grantmakers cannot lose sight of: a holistic and systemic approach that unites diverse communities and fosters shared purpose and mutual accountability. This report provides our sector with an essential tool to build social capital and civic engagement while finding sustainable solutions to structural problems and crises that our country and the world face.

— Luz A. Vega-Marquis, President & CEO, Marguerite Casey Foundation

Smashing Silos in Philanthropy is a much-needed call to action for all of us involved in grantmaking. In a changing America, with increasingly diverse constituencies working across issues and identities, foundations should seriously consider the recommendations included in this report as we develop strategies to invest in multi-issue advocacy and organizing that contribute to meaningful civic engagement for the 21st century.

— Vivek Malhotra, Director for Equality and Justice, Ford Foundation

Although single-issue, “strategic” philanthropy promises greater efficacy and accountability in the near term, it also threatens to undermine broader goals such as diversity, coalition-building and creating social capital. In this sobering report, NCRP makes a compelling case for how grantmakers risk losing the forest by focusing on just one tree.

— Michael Brune, Executive Director, Sierra Club



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