Learnings from Foundation Openness Work

2017 Forum Annual Conference
#ForumCon17
Supporting Foundation Openness
Sharing our practice
Harder+Company Community Research works with philanthropic, public and social-sector organizations across the United States to support learning and sharpen strategies that advance social change.

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What we know

A brief framing from our survey and other national sources
Why this work?
Purpose and methods

- Understand current practices in learning from failure, using feedback to guide foundation strategy, and nonprofit engagement/openness practices.
- Understand how dialogues and cohorts support changing openness behavior.

National Survey  Post Event Survey  BAR/AAR journaling  Virtual Focus Groups

Forum of Regional Association of Grantmakers: Foundation Openness projects

July 2017
Initial Survey’s Six Key Insights

- Foundations share their experiences, both achievements and failures, internally, with other grantmakers and peers, and with grantees, in that order.
- Collaborative spaces are more conducive to sharing and learning from failure.
- The most common barrier to openness is the inability to measure success or failure.
- Foundations frequently lack time and resources to focus on openness.
- Foundations are engaging in activities that are at least “fundamentally open”.
- Foundations feel their Regional Associations encourage and support them to increase their openness.
Barriers to openness:

- Inability to measure impact, successes and failures
- Lack of time and resources to focus on openness

National Survey: Demand for learning increased, but lack of time and resources an issue
Grantmakers are more likely to:

• share achievements and failures internally

• share failures in collaborative settings
Most reported requesting feedback and making changes based on feedback

- Foundation asks for either formal or informal feedback from others:
  - Strongly Agree: 31%
  - Agree: 57%
  - Disagree: 11%
  - Strongly Disagree: 1%

- Foundation makes changes based on feedback from others:
  - Strongly Agree: 29%
  - Agree: 64%
  - Disagree: 7%
  - Strongly Disagree: 1%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No Openness</th>
<th>Fundamental Openness</th>
<th>Courageous Openness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant applications and processes</td>
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<td>7.0</td>
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<td>Our grantees achievements – what has worked</td>
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<td>6.8</td>
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<td>Funding decisions and criteria</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
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<td>Our organizational achievements – what has worked</td>
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<td>Evaluation processes and findings</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
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<td>Our organizational misses/ failures – what has not worked</td>
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<td>5.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our grantees misses/failures – what has not worked</td>
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What we’re doing

Regional Associations in Action
Tools and approaches:

- Foundation openness self-assessment
- Openness practice ice-breaker game
- Designed interventions and changes will likely occur during the fall months
What can we do

Discuss how to support future foundation openness activities
• How can Regional Associations support Foundations to move beyond truisms and social desirability responses to authentic action?

• What specific trainings/supports can Regional Associations use to promote openness?

• What can this group do to build the field of openness?
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Thank You!
Next session begins at 5pm in the Ballroom

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