The Funder Network Model for Impact
Developed by a Steering Committee of Funder Network Leaders,
with support from LaFrance Associates, LLC

How the Funder Network Model for Impact can be Used

This Model is a first generation “flexible description” of how funder networks contribute to outcomes at the levels of membership, philanthropy, and the social sector. An individual funder network might find its desired impacts described by one or more of the purposes listed in the first column of the Model, and consult the subsequent columns to locate strategies and tactics as well as to define desired outcomes. The second page of the model presents menus of effectiveness indicators at the levels of network membership and the field of philanthropy. The Model for Impact can assist funder networks in developing evaluation plans targeted to the outcomes their particular network hopes to achieve (see the more detailed explanation below).

Purposes, Strategies and Tactics, Outcomes and Impacts

The first page of the Model begins with the “Purposes” column, which lists specific purposes funder networks might have, e.g. to expand resources for an issue; to increase social capital and provide networking within and across organizations and networks; to increase diversity and inclusiveness, etc. A network can identify those purposes that are aligned with its own.

Each of these purposes can be achieved through a combination of strategies and tactics. Examples of these appear in the second column, e.g. grantmaking, leveraging resources, developing and disseminating knowledge and tools, and convening stakeholders.

Some combination of strategies and tactics is expected to lead to a desired change in network members. The changes, or “Outcomes,” that might result from pursuing a specific network purpose are documented in the third column on the first page. For example, as shown in the second row, a funder network pursuing various strategies in an effort to make more efficient use of existing resources would expect that its members gained greater ability to coordinate funding and create coherent strategies for impact.

By contributing to these effects among its membership, funder networks seek to achieve any of the impacts listed in the fourth column: greater philanthropic effectiveness, a more highly effective social sector, and – ultimately – optimal social impact.

Outcomes and Evidence (Effectiveness Indicators)

The second page of the model repeats the third column on page one: “Outcomes” (i.e. the desired change among network members). “Outcomes” are paired with “Evidence:” the outcomes correspond to boxes in the “Evidence” column, which provides potential indicators of effectiveness to measure each of these desired changes. The term “member” is used throughout the evidence column to show that change is measured at the network membership level; the unit of analysis is either a group of network members in aggregate or actions among a group of network members.

Effective network members can also impact the field of philanthropy. The third column on page two, titled “Outcomes: Field of philanthropy” continues the threads that began on page one with organizational purpose through to their impact on the field. Again, this set of outcomes is paired with accompanying effectiveness indicators that provide evidence that the desired impact has been achieved. This second evidence column considers the field as a whole to be its unit of measurement, which often mean funders in the aggregate; thus, the term “funder” is used in the evidence boxes.