



Elements of Success for Community Foundations

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Leadership: Chairperson

- Enthusiastic champion of Community Foundation concept
- Time, enthusiasm, and understanding to “sell” the concept to others
- Stature in community
- Respected by all sectors
- Ability to bridge between groups
- An entrepreneurial and optimistic outlook

Leadership: Chairperson

- Resourcefulness
- Energy
- Broad networks within the local community
- Passionate
- Creative
- Committed to transparency

Leadership: Board

- **Reflect all segments of the community**
- **Skills and knowledge**
- **Links/contacts**
- **Diverse networks**
- **Capacity to give: one or more should have ability to create a fund**

Leadership: CEO

- Energetic
- Creative
- Entrepreneurial
- Resourceful
- Opportunistic
- Articulate
- Persuasive
- Bridges multiple sectors
- Attitude more important than experience

Local Environment

- Culture of support for self-governance
- Culture of accountability
- Culture of giving (not necessarily of philanthropy in US sense, but giving within the appropriate cultural context)
- Local government supportive or at least not opposed
- History of civic participation
- Strong social capital

Local Resources

- Local money committed up-front to inspire others and demonstrate commitment, ideally by the Steering Committee or members thereof
- Long-term potential for local financial resources

Understanding the Community Foundation Concept

- **Almost 1200 Community Foundations now exist in 38 countries around the globe.**
- **Each responds to the unique needs and conditions of its own community, country, region, and time.**
- **Some characteristics, however, are common across geographies and cultures.**

Independent

The Community Foundation is a separate legally-recognized entity, operated exclusively for charitable purposes, and is independent from control of other organizations, government, or donors

Geographically Focused

The Community Foundation identifies a core geographic service area in which it will raise funds, operate and provide grants and services.

Over time, the majority of resources for the community foundation comes from the community it serves.

Cross-Sectoral and Inclusive

- **Community foundations are trusted intermediaries that enable business, NGO's, and government to work together.**
- **Community foundations broadly reflect their communities, involving into their activities people from different segments of the community as members of the Board, volunteers, donors, and grantees.**

Permanent

- **Community Foundations are forever. They seek to attain sustainability through building permanent endowments and other means of sustainable financing such as earned income and fees for services.**

Grantmaker

- **The primary role of a community foundation is as a grantmaker, providing funding to other NGO's or community groups to help them carry out their mission or projects.**
- **In general, community foundations do not operate their own projects (eg, providing social services, arts or cultural programs, etc.) but rather strengthen the civil society sector by supporting or initiating other independent operating organizations.**

Broad Mission

- **Community foundations are not focused on one, or even a few, programmatic areas. Instead, community foundations address the entire range of community needs**

Local Expertise

- **Community foundations are deeply knowledgeable about the needs and opportunities in the communities they serve, and about the organizations and initiatives working to address those needs and opportunities.**

Donor Engagement

- **Worldwide, community foundations seek to involve a wide variety of individuals, families, companies, and other organizations in their communities as donors, building a broad culture of philanthropy.**
- **Donors may place resources in separate funds whose charitable purposes they define or may contribute to community funds for specific initiatives or purposes.**
- **Community foundations provide services to donors to help them become more aware of community needs and to address those needs more effectively.**

Community Leadership

- **Beyond their grantmaking functions, community foundations serve as active community leaders.**
- **Community foundations identify community needs and opportunities, convene groups to develop consensus on action, and raise funds to address important community issues.**

Accountable

- **The resources of a Community Foundation are the resources of its community. Therefore, community foundations are completely accountable and transparent in their governance, programming and financial operations.**
- **Community Foundations establish policies to prevent conflict of interest in their operations.**
- **Community Foundations report to donors, grantees, and the community on all aspects of their operations.**

Sound and Consistent Mission

The beginning of successful community foundation is a well-governed institution with a sound and shared sense of its mission.

Importance of A Mission Statement

- Clarity
- Consensus
- Consistency
- Efficiency
- Avoid “death by opportunity.”

Sound and Consistent Mission

- **Although Community Foundations share the ten characteristics listed previously, they adapt their missions and programs to fit the unique circumstances of their communities. Within the common characteristics, it is important for the community foundation to identify a mission based on the unique opportunities in its own community.**

Sound and Consistent Mission

Community circumstance: Current needs are significant, community foundation needs to prove its worth to the community

The Community Foundation serves its community by identifying and addressing the most pressing needs, as they may change over time

Sound and Consistent Mission

- Community circumstances: There are some short-term sources of support for civil society, but no one is planning for the long-term.
- The Community Foundation serves its community by building permanent philanthropic capital.

Mission

- Community circumstance: There is no existing culture of philanthropy.
- The Community Foundation serves its community by encouraging participation of all citizens in giving to meet community needs.

Mission

- Community circumstance: There are many NGO's, but sustainability is a problem
- The Community Foundation serves its community by helping NGO's become sustainable

Mission

- Community circumstance: There is already a substantial amount of giving in the community, but it is not very effective
- The Community Foundation serves its community by helping donors become strategic and effective philanthropists

Mission

- Community circumstance: People are generous, or would like to be, but they don't know what to give to.
- The Community Foundation serves its community connecting people who care with causes that matter.

Building Public Trust for a New Institution

- Choice of Board Members
- Consistency With Mission
- Financial and Investment Policies and Operations
- Code of Conduct
- Transparency/Reporting to Constituents

“It takes many years to build public trust, and only a moment to lose it.”

