

WHAT'S NEXT *for* COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY



THINK GLOBAL: Eleven lessons from global community philanthropy

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Although the United States has historically been a net exporter of innovation when it comes to community philanthropy, American community foundations may actually have a lot to learn these days from their global counterparts.

The community foundation model that was invented 100 years ago in the U.S. has now spread throughout the world, to locations from Australia to Zimbabwe. There are in fact now more community foundations outside of the U.S. than there are inside the country.¹

And as community foundations have spread around the globe, the institutions have begun to change, as each institution adapts the model to fit its own unique local circumstances, legal frameworks, and community needs. As a result, community foundations outside the United States often look quite different than they do inside the country. They've begun to blur the lines between community foundations and other types of community philanthropy groups, and are often less encumbered by the "baggage" of American norms and traditions as they respond to very different types of local needs and challenges. As Halima Mahomed from TrustAfrica puts it, "Over the last several years, there's been a newer wave of community philanthropy organizations. They are organic, rooted in context, not wedded to a particular concept, and they don't tick the boxes of someone else's notion of community philanthropy."²

And in the midst of all of this global experimentation and adaptation, it is becoming quite likely that in the coming years, the U.S. will become a net importer of innovation from elsewhere in the world, rather than an exporter.

Guided by this understanding, the Monitor Institute has spent the last year researching the global community foundation movement and speaking with community foundation leaders from around the world, in addition to having more than 150 conversations with community philanthropy leaders inside the United States. With this dual lens on both the American and global context, we have identified eleven important lessons from community philanthropy outside the United States that we believe could help spur new thinking and ideas for American community foundations.

Not all of the lessons will necessarily seem revelatory. And in many cases, there are already U.S. community foundations that are also leading the way in these spaces. But understanding the ways that global community philanthropy organizations are adapting to their local circumstances can nevertheless point to powerful principles and practices that have real value when considered in the American context.

1. Revenues don't have to come from an endowment.

When Frederick Goff created the Cleveland Foundation in 1914, he was concerned about large amounts of money that were being stranded in the charitable trusts of deceased donors that had outlived their designated charitable purposes. The community foundation structure allowed him to repurpose those existing trusts into a relatively large and unrestricted starting endowment for the foundation. He aimed to establish a "community trust" that pooled the charitable resources of local philanthropists, both living and dead, into a single permanent endowment for the betterment of the area.³

Subsequent community foundations followed a similar model, mimicking the trust companies from which they were conceived and focusing on endowment building, asset management, and transactional execution—essentially developing into "charitable banks" for their communities.

And as this approach took root, the unique circumstances of the early pioneers have ended up guiding many of the core assumptions about the "right" financial model for community foundations ever since.

Global community philanthropy organizations however, operate in environments where financial resources are scarce, where the concept of endowments can be foreign to the local culture, and where immediate needs are often very pressing. So lacking a clear path to sustainable endowments, many organizations overseas have needed to explore new avenues for funding their operations and to experiment with new ways of using whatever assets are available in their communities.

Consider how underappreciated assets in your own community—like farmland or vacant buildings, for example—could be turned around to generate revenues for your organization, while also improving the long-term health of your community.

- The Mozambique Island Community Development Foundation has been exploring the use of cultural assets to support its goals. The Foundation is located on an island dotted with historic stone buildings dating back to colonial Portuguese trade routes to the Indian oceans. The buildings weren't being cared for properly and in some cases were falling into disrepair. Recognizing an opportunity, the Foundation has begun to buy and revamp the abandoned buildings and other local heritage sites in an effort to draw tourism to the island as a way to fund its operations and generate economic activity on the island.⁴
- The asset base of Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation in Ghana is being built up from profits derived from gold extraction in the Ahafo area. The Foundation emerged in 2008, out of an agreement between the Ahafo Social Responsibility Forum (a group representative of community residents, government officials, and NGOs from 10 mining-affected communities) and the Newmont Mining Corporation (a gold and mineral extraction company). Under the agreement, the firm donates \$1 per ounce of gold produced plus 1 percent of net profits from the mine to the Foundation. These funds support a range of activities, such as educating local community residents, building the region's infrastructure, and growing the Foundation's endowment, which will allow the foundation and residents to take into account the long-term health of the community.⁵

Of course not all communities will have historic buildings or mineral rights in their back yards. But the takeaway is nevertheless an important one: Consider how underappreciated assets in your own community—like farmland or vacant buildings, for example—could be turned around to generate revenues for your organization, while also improving the long-term health of your community.

2. Community voice and resident empowerment matters.

Although American community foundations have historically focused primarily on activities like grantmaking, donor services, and endowment management, a number of funders are beginning to also see resident engagement and grassroots organizing as key parts of their work. Peter Pennekamp, the former executive director of the Humboldt Area Foundation in northwestern California, refers to this work as community democracy, which focuses on “grassroots engagement where people uncover, activate, and energize their community's own assets, take responsibility for their formal and informal decision-making processes, and further their ability to work constructively with conflict and difference.”⁶

Outside the United States, there is a rich vein of learning about community democracy from places like post-apartheid South Africa and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism, where community philanthropy groups have—by necessity—had to play a role in growing civil society and helping residents come together to advance the greater good.

- When apartheid in South Africa ended in 1991, a new government and bill of rights was established, and citizens began adjusting to the new democratic system. In this context, the Community Development Foundation Western Cape emerged in 2005 and “set out to play a mediating and facilitating role by strengthening relationships and building partnerships within communities, with donors and other development players.”⁷ One of its most successful initiatives was called PhotoSpeak, in which it partnered with local organizations and residents who took gripping photos of their lived experience. Over time, the Foundation shifted the initiative to focus on specific parts of the new bill of rights, using community-generated photographs to help people understand in visual terms how language such as “everyone has the right to freedom of movement and association” related (or didn't relate) to participants' everyday realities.
- In Eastern Europe, the Trag Foundation (formally, the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund) was created in 1999 during the Kosovo conflict. Since its inception, the Foundation has worked to help Serbians form a strong civil society. A key part of the Foundation's work is to help residents adjust to democratic rule following decades of central planning. Aleksandra Vesic, the executive director, notes, “When we're working with a group of people, no matter where they're from, it's important to show them that they have the power to make the changes, to let them see that not everything rests in the hands of the authorities.” During one effort, the Foundation worked with a group of underrepresented Romas when an illegal garbage dump formed near their village. Requests to local authorities to remove the garbage were ignored, so the Foundation worked with villagers to assert their rights and helped them advocate to local decision makers. Eventually, the officials and villagers were able to agree on a process and found the budget to remove the trash.⁸

The takeaway from these types of resident engagement efforts: Consider how well underrepresented populations are included in your community and look for creative ways to help these groups find their voice and get more involved in the community. You might start by looking inward at your own organization's systems and structures such as the diversity of your board of directors, your staff, your committees, your donors, and your grantees.

3. Get young people involved.

Many U.S. community foundations are already doing an excellent job of including young people in their work, whether through Youth Advisory Councils, young professional giving circles, or participation in scholarship programs.

Outside the United States, youth engagement has become one of the crucial hallmarks of the community foundation field. As Jenny Hodgson, the executive director of the Global Fund for Community Foundations notes, “Our data suggests that community foundations globally see youth as a key stakeholder and offer a unique platform to engage youth in making decisions about their own communities. This level of engagement is quite distinct from other global nonprofits.”⁹

In many parts of the world, young people are growing up in radically different social and political systems than their parents did—whether in post-Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe, post-apartheid South Africa, or after other major regime changes in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. In these types of transitional circumstances, engaging young people in philanthropy can represent an exciting opportunity to integrate charitable traditions into the social and cultural norms of a new generation.

The lessons from these places may prove instructive to American community foundations interested in doing an even better job of connecting with young people.

- Developed in the late 1990s in Ireland and the U.K., YouthBank is a particular model of youth engagement where young people control a portion of the grantmaking and direct it toward projects designed and led by young people or toward projects that address issues and concerns relevant to them. Beyond just listening to young people's concerns, programs like YouthBanks engage youth more deeply by allowing them to have control over grantmaking decisions. Adopted by community foundations and other youth-serving NGOs across the globe, there are now 216 YouthBanks worldwide in 23 countries.
- The Bucharest Community Foundation in Romania has designed several outreach programs to connect with young donors at major life events. For instance, the Foundation has worked with wedding planners to help philanthropically minded couples, along with their guests, use their wedding gifts to start a fund for the community. Birthday parties are also popular venues for community philanthropy in Bucharest, with one dance party serving as a catalyst to create an arts and culture fund for the Roma community. By reaching out to a younger population and integrating philanthropy into key celebrations, the Foundation is engaging young people in the community in unique ways.

The takeaway from the global youth engagement work: Imagine how you can meet younger people where they are, by helping them learn the practice of philanthropy and giving them agency to make their own choices about how to address community needs.

4. Don't forget your diaspora.

Immigration and mobility are now facts of life. In many parts of the world, people regularly leave their hometowns to explore career opportunities across the country and across the globe. Giving back to families, friends, and cultural organizations in their home country can be an important way for immigrants to stay connected to people they care about.

This diaspora giving is often viewed as flowing from the West to other parts of the developing world, but that doesn't have to be the case. In 2012, an American donor who was raised in Indiana but left the country to pursue a successful insurance career in the UK bequeathed his entire estate of about \$140 million to his hometown Elkhart County Community Foundation. An old high school friend who was a board member of the Foundation helped to make the connection.¹⁰ Stories like this are rightfully categorized as triumphs of hometown pride, but they also illustrate the importance for American community foundation leaders to think deliberately about their own community's diaspora giving. Fortunately, a number of global community philanthropy efforts are testing new ways of helping immigrants stay connected to charitable groups that can help the communities that they left behind.

- The Ivory Charities Foundation is a community foundation located in Butuan, Philippines, where over half of the residents live in poverty. Recognizing that a large number of Filipinos lived and worked in Southern California, the Foundation worked with local partners to create the Butuan City Charities Foundation of Southern California and created the slogan "Butuanans helping Butuanans." In the Philippines, four main initiatives were prioritized around microlending, starting rural clinics, drilling artesian wells for potable water, and creating a school library. The specific local connection helped diaspora donors in the U.S. feel connected to actual projects and when these donors returned home to the Philippines, the Foundation worked to connect them to the projects and people they helped to support.¹¹
- Diaspora giving can also be high-tech. Hispanics in Philanthropy, a U.S.-based organization that promotes Latino philanthropy, recently launched the new HIPGive crowdfunding platform that allows donors to fund projects across Latin America. This transnational online giving platform vets Latino-led and Latino-serving community organizations, provides online training to such organizations that seek crowdfunding, and provides financial incentives such as matching grants to spur giving. By connecting communities across Latin America with issues that they collectively care about, Hispanics in Philanthropy is solidifying the wide diaspora of Latino donors.

The takeaway from these types of efforts: Think about how you can find people who care about your community, regardless of where they now live, and find ways to help them feel connected and give back (especially using new technological platforms). In particular, in the coming years, the idea of diaspora giving may become especially important for rural and "rust belt" towns in the United States. As urbanization increases and these areas continue to face significant population loss, local community foundations might take a cue from international diaspora giving efforts to consider dedicated strategies for engaging former residents who still care deeply about their hometowns but have moved away.

In the coming years, there may be a lot to learn from international diaspora giving efforts, especially for rural and "rust belt" towns in the United States.

5. There is power in networks.

The traditional community foundation model emerged during a time when hyper-local economic, social, and political systems dominated daily life—the first community foundation actually debuted in the same year as the U.S. commercial telephone service. But globalization and growing connectivity now mean that local communities are increasingly affected by large-scale national and global forces beyond their control. Yet community foundations have often kept their focus locked into their own communities, making it difficult to observe and respond to the larger trends and forces emerging around them.

Outside the United States, community foundations have begun to network nationally with other community foundations in order to act at a scale that allows them to better respond to larger threats and opportunities.

- Community Foundations of Canada (CFC), the national network for Canadian community foundations, has undertaken a wide range of national efforts to help its members act in ways that would have been beyond the reach of any single community foundation operating on its own. CFC has launched a national community foundation advertising campaign with locally tailored elements, created a Leadership Development Initiative in partnership with the Banff Centre to provide leadership training to members, and provided a mechanism for building national-level partnerships that can then be implemented across multiple local sites, as CFC has done with its decade-old partnership with paint manufacturer Benjamin Moore to support heritage restoration and community projects in more than 220 localities across Canada.
- Similarly, UK Community Foundations, the organizing body for community foundations in the United Kingdom, provides a range of services to help its members work together. The group helps to promote community foundations nationally, to broker partnerships with business and government, and to help spread best practices across the country. In addition, the UK Community Foundations has developed localgiving.com, a nationwide crowdfunding site of which the organization owns 20 percent. When a person makes a donation on the site, 2 percent of the transaction goes to the local community foundation of the person who makes the transaction, which helps support the development of the entire field.¹²

The takeaway from these networks of community foundations: Look for ways that you can work with other community foundations—at a state, regional, or even national level—to do things together that you can't do alone.

6. Concentrate on the really tough problems.

Because of their scale, most community foundations abroad don't have the option of being "all things to all people"—something that American community foundations are often accused of. Instead, a number of global organizations have begun to look at the range of interventions that are needed and to define a very focused role for themselves while thinking creatively about how they can partner with others to help meet additional community needs.

For U.S. community foundations, it can often be difficult to fund controversial issues while still being responsive to donors' wishes. While many community foundations are pushing real boundaries in their work, hot button issues like race relations, interventions for sex workers, or gay and lesbian advocacy can often be overlooked in favor of safer topics like the arts, scholarships, and early childhood education, which are often more palatable to many boards and donors.

Outside the United States, a number of community foundations are deliberately trying to find critical niches by tackling important, but often unpopular, issues.

- iCom is a community foundation based in Florianopolis, Brazil that has deliberately worked to divide and conquer local community needs with the area's business community. In the relatively robust corporate giving culture in Brazil, companies were very willing to give to address immediate community needs, especially around education (such as buying books or computers for a local school). But these corporations were much less likely to fund social justice issues such as poverty, gender equality, racism, and other social movements. Recognizing this gap, iCom deliberately uses its discretionary assets to address these issues and notes that they are often one of only a few organizations funding in these spaces.
- In Vietnam, as the country continues to transition to a more market-based economy, leaders at the Lin Center for Community Development noticed several concerns during this shift. Growing levels of inequality and mass migration from rural areas to urban centers were side effects of the country's tremendous economic growth over the years. But few organizations were addressing these issues. So the Lin Center launched a campaign called "Narrow the Gap," which allows beneficiaries to vote on grantmaking decisions, working with volunteers and young professionals to drum up support and providing free philanthropic consultation services to businesses and others to teach them about these needs as well as other more general philanthropic best practices.¹³

Among the key lessons from these organizations: Identify important, but unpopular, needs in your community and look for ways to both provide concentrated funding, as well as exploring ways you can influence donors, volunteers, and residents to think about the issues of social inequality and injustice.

7. Be prepared to step in when there's a social crisis

Violence, catastrophe, or other social crises are all-too-frequent realities in many parts of the world. But across the globe, community philanthropy organizations in places that lack other types of civil society infrastructure are stepping in to try and help their communities respond and recover. In ways large and small, these organizations are embracing the complexity of social crises, proactively engaging the community, and taking bold, sometimes controversial, actions. By acting in such a way, these organizations not only help repair a community, but also increase their stature as important and trusted institutions within the community.

Community foundations in the United States have a long history of stepping into leadership roles when environmental and national disasters strike. But much can be learned from the way community philanthropy organizations are dealing with social crises in their areas.

- The Waqfeyat Al Maadi Community Foundation, which is located in suburban Cairo, is an example of a community foundation responding to a social crisis. The Foundation, which had historically focused on bringing the community together through programs like an arts center for children of all socio-economic classes and a robust volunteerism initiative, stepped into a new type of leadership role after Egyptian government forces killed members of the Maadi community in Tahrir Square during the Egyptian revolution in 2011. The Foundation opened its doors and allowed its facilities to serve as a meeting point for community activists, different faith groups, and government officials. Wishing to avoid media limelight and serve as a platform for others, the Foundation quietly brokered negotiations between rival factions, organized a large interfaith funeral with high-profile speakers who focused on bringing the community together, and supported the creation of the Martyrs' Families Association, a support group that meets at the Foundation's office.¹⁴
- Moloda Gromada is a community philanthropy organization in Odessa, Ukraine whose name translates to "Young Community." In May of 2014, 42 people died in a burning building in Odessa as violence between Ukrainian and pro-Russian groups ensued in the streets. Moloda Gromada helped the community make sense of these tragic deaths by engaging with residents through a survey and structured conversations. Focused on understanding and prevention, Moloda Gromada asked people about how they viewed their own personal role in the events that led up to the violence and asked their thoughts on how future violence might be prevented.¹⁵

The lessons from these organizations: Sometimes it's not enough to sit on the sidelines, funding work from the outside. In times of crisis, be prepared to consider what role your organization could play in helping the community recover after a trauma, or in preventing another crisis from occurring.

8. Philanthropy isn't only for the ultra-wealthy.

In the United States, early community foundations began by targeting trust-holders and other wealthy individuals in their community with fundraising efforts. This focus on high net worth individuals (HNWIs) has continued to the present day, as many U.S. community foundations work to form relationships with HNWIs directly, or with leading lawyers, accountants, and financial advisors that, in turn, help their high net worth clients who want to give back. This strategy remains an important one for community foundations, but it can overlook the potential contributions of donors of more modest means, and can lead to a perception that community foundation are simply organizations for local elites.

In many parts of the world, community philanthropy organizations' donor bases tend to be limited and, largely out of necessity, these organizations have developed systems to solicit donations from larger bands of the community.

A number of community foundations, both inside and outside the U.S., are looking to broaden their donor base and, as part of that diversification strategy, are also targeting smaller gifts from larger numbers of people as a way to make the community foundation more accessible.

In many parts of the world, community philanthropy organizations' donor bases tend to be limited and, largely out of necessity, these organizations have developed systems to solicit donations from larger bands of the community. In doing this, organizations not only to build assets, but also to encourage more community residents to get involved and become philanthropists.

- The Odorheiu Secuiesc Community Foundation in Romania uses a philanthropic "rewards card" of sorts, to encourage residents to give back each time they shop. The Foundation brokered an agreement with a local network of supermarkets and other stores so that when shoppers use a specially designed rewards cards, they receive a one percent discount on their purchases and the store donates an addition one percent to local community projects or nonprofits. Volunteers from the Foundation have signed up over 13,000 donors for the program, many who come from modest means.¹⁶
- In the Ukraine, the Donetsk City Charity Foundation Dobrata deliberately added the word "Dobrata" (which means "kindness") to its title, and positions itself as a fighter against poverty in the Donetsk area. By doing so, the Foundation fundraises from and involves thousands of donors each year who know that their contributions are helping those in a more dire situation than themselves. To complete the brand, the Foundation coined a new motto in the community, "Doing good is everyone's business."¹⁷

Global community philanthropy organizations like these are helping teach an important lesson about the importance of engaging all parts of the community—not just as a way to raise critical funds, but also as a way of involving many more people in the philanthropic enterprise.

9. Be a changemaker, not just a funder.

In many parts of the world, the formal nonprofit sector isn't as well developed as in the United States so community philanthropy organizations have often begun to step in. For many of these organizations, their support for local causes extends beyond grant dollars, often teaching local groups important skills and building capacity. And when it is necessary, global community philanthropy organizations will also develop and operate new programs, often working with an array of partners. Some work more closely with government agencies to develop necessary services, others deliberately work with networks of local residents to empower them to address their own issues, while others still run their own programs when existing organizations are unable to fill urgent needs.

- The Tomorrow:Today Foundation in rural Australia, for example, decided to incubate a yearlong teenage parenting program to provide teenage mothers with additional training and support under its small grants program — for less than \$300. To do this, the Foundation bought a large toy collection; brokered connections with local doctors, teachers, and others who would volunteer their time to give young mothers helpful tips about toddler health and education; and marketed the program as a play session for toddlers of teenage moms. Three years in, the Foundation transitioned the management of the group (now called the Young Parents Group) to a local youth service provider.¹⁸
- In South Korea, The Seoul-based Beautiful Foundation is working to promote organized philanthropy in a country where the concept isn't well-established. It created a number of initiatives to develop a culture of giving in the region, even if the sizes of the gifts were modest. One approach that caught on was the donation of used items like clothes and furniture. In 2002, the Foundation created a subsidiary called the Beautiful Store which resold these donated goods and also furthered a charitable mission that included regular profit sharing with the foundation and charities, a recycling and sustainability initiative, reselling fair-trade products from other parts of the world, and employing former convicts, the homeless, and other vulnerable members of the society. The stores, which have now grown to over 100, have since spun off from the foundation to become South Korea's first social enterprise.¹⁹

Although many American communities are fortunate enough to have a robust nonprofit sector already in place, in certain rural communities and other areas where the existing nonprofit infrastructure is not able to provide necessary services, the recognition that community foundations can also manage critical programs is an important lesson. This type of role won't always be appropriate, particularly in areas where local capacity already exists, but it is an important approach to explore in places with a more limited set of service providers.

10. It's important to build bridges.

Community philanthropy organizations are often well-positioned to bring diverse groups within a community together—touching both rich and poor; reaching across political, racial, ethnic, and religious divides; and serving as a launching point to connect different types of people—to promote collaboration and create meaningful social change.

Outside the United States, community foundations, by necessity, have often played a critical role as a peacemaker, serving as a neutral convener that can build important bridges, both between populations that are in conflict, and between disenfranchised groups and the broader mainstream.

- Following the violence and subsequent peace in Northern Ireland, the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland has worked to build social ties among those affected in order to build a stronger community. The Foundation focuses on reconciliation and bridging divides as part of a number of initiatives like Prison to Peace, which helps former political prisoners transition back into society as smoothly as possible. The Foundation also runs a Peace Impact Program which increases dialogue between formerly opposing groups and works with them to create new solutions to contentious issues. And the David Ervine Fund, named after a peacemaker during the conflict, supports young people working on peace building, conflict transformation, or community development.²⁰
- The Community Foundation of South Sinai in Egypt works to build bridges between the traditionally excluded Bedouin community and other parts of Egyptian society. The Foundation sponsored research, which was the first of its kind, to show that members of the Bedouin community face severely limited employment opportunities and that 8 out of 10 experienced food poverty (more than double the national rate). The population is disenfranchised from mainstream society: few are registered to vote, and many were not even registered as Egyptian citizens. So the Foundation pursued a range of different strategies to connect this group with the broader Egyptian economic and political system. It created an economic development plan focused on agriculture, a staple in the community, that led it to help build an olive press so that farmers could make and sell their own olive oil and to purchase a portable drill so that farmers could deepen their wells in an area that is chronically short on water. Politically, the Foundation worked to register thousands of Bedouin voters and held meetings explaining the political system, after which a dozen young Bedouins decided to run in local elections.²¹

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There are important takeaways for community foundations that are working to better build bridges across community divisions: Look for tensions within your community and use the unique positioning of the community foundation as a way to create opportunities to bring together people across critical divides to weave social ties, build trust, and explore solutions together.

11. Be transparent.

The culture of philanthropy is more established in the U.S. than in many other parts of the world. Laws such as the charitable tax deduction and organizational structures like 501(c)(3)s are often taken for granted. In some parts of the world, philanthropy is more regulated and organizations are subject to much closer public scrutiny. In other places, where corruption is often an issue, transparency can be a necessary ingredient for building the trust and relationships necessary for philanthropy to happen. In either case, community foundations in these areas are often very deliberately making sure that their assets and finances, as well as those of other NGOs and local organizations, are open and visible to the community.

- In an area where some are distrustful of NGOs, the Brazilian community foundation iCom (mentioned earlier) has dedicated some of its resources to creating greater transparency and trust in the social sector. Most notably, it created a “transparency portal,” which provides free information to the public about NGOs operating in the region. NGOs submit information about their work, their management, and their governance to the portal and then have the right to display a badge on their website showing their commitment to transparency. iCom now requires every nonprofit that receives a grant to commit to transparency and share their information publically on the portal.²²
- During the period of communism, civil society was generally thwarted in countries like Russia as the State was viewed as the entity that met the needs of the citizenry. Since the fall of communism, community foundations in Russia and other parts of Eastern Europe have grown, but they often need to operate in a very open way as the concept of civil society is still relatively new for residents and government alike. The “Civil Unity” Foundation in Penza, Russia shows its transparency in a number of ways. The Foundation created a discussion center for residents to talk about issues in the community and how the foundation is responding. The Foundation also creates an annual report showing the state of civil society in the region and maintains a detailed website of local information.²³

While these organizations may be forging a new, transparent path out of necessity, as the cost of collecting and sharing information continues to decline and expectations about access to that information continues to rise, organizations everywhere will have to deal with the fact that donors expect to being able to “kick the tires” on organizations they support and are becoming accustomed to having information at their fingertips when making giving decisions.

The most important lesson

As American community foundations have grown into powerful vehicles for mobilizing financial and human resources on behalf of their communities, some have developed a set of somewhat rigid assumptions—about how they earn revenue, how they engage donors and the community, and what roles they should and should not play. Many of these assumptions are still valid and will help community foundations thrive in the years ahead. But others are less productive in today’s rapidly changing community context, making it important for funders to thoughtfully question whether all of their current activities still make sense, while at the same time creatively imagining new possibilities for the future.

As U.S. community foundations begin to adapt, the work of global community philanthropy organizations can serve as a useful source of ideas and inspiration. Under very different conditions, these organizations have continuously evolved to fit their specific circumstances by taking advantage of unique assets, filling key gaps in local civil society, and connecting with the community in new ways. The organizations have often borrowed heavily from the traditional community foundation model, but have been willing to abandon the parts that don’t make sense in their particular contexts and to imagine new approaches that better address local needs. Adaptation has been one of the cornerstones of their success. And for many U.S. community foundations, this adaptability may be the most important lesson of all.



Discussion Ideas

In a rapidly changing world, it will be more important than ever for community philanthropy organizations to look beyond the usual suspects to find promising new ideas from wherever they might emerge. Community philanthropy outside the United States represents an important potential source of inspiration, as local organizations around the globe experiment with new strategies and adapt existing models to new circumstances. While not all of the lessons and examples in this essay will be a good fit for your organization, consider whether some adaptation of one or two of them might make sense for you.

Share the essay with staff or board members as a way to start a conversation about new ideas that might be worth exploring. A few questions to get the conversation started include:

- Which lessons or examples feel most relevant to you and your organization?
- How would you need to adapt those lessons or examples to better fit your community's unique circumstances?
- Who in your community is already pursuing work that is similar to these global examples? How can you partner with those organizations?
- Would your donors be interested in giving globally? If so, how could you partner with existing global community foundations to ensure that global giving is effective, transparent, and locally rooted?

If the conversation surfaces new ideas that feel promising, try using the self-guided *What's Next Generating New Ideas and Prototyping Solutions* workshop designs to help turn the new ideas into reality.

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The What's Next toolkit aims to help community philanthropy organizations apply innovation and design methodologies to think creatively about their business models and the broader future of the field. The research for this toolkit involved nearly 200 interviews with leaders of community foundations and other community philanthropy organizations, as well as more than a dozen interactive workshops and user feedback sessions.

Visit monitorinstitute.com/communityphilanthropy to learn more about the What's Next toolkit and research methods.

SOURCES

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