

**SEMI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
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**Putting Grantees in the Driver's Seat: Grantees as Grants Decision-Makers**

Wednesday July 18, 2012  
2:45 pm – 5:15 pm  
Rotation 2

***Session Organizers:***

- Annie Hillar, Director of Programmes, Mama Cash
- Heather Doyle, Director, Sexual Health and Rights Project, Open Society Foundations

***Facilitators:***

- Heather Doyle, Director, Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP), Public Health Program, Open Society Foundations;
- Andrea Lynch, Independent Consultant

***Panelists:***

- Carla Lopez, Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (Nicaragua)
- Lois González, Member, Jóvenes Católicas por el Derecho a Decider (Nicaragua)
- Kyoma Macklean, Women's Organization Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA) (Uganda)
- Annie Hiller, Mama Cash - Red Umbrella Fund

***Sponsor:***

- Mama Cash
  - Open Society Foundations
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Staff from the Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM) shared their model of participatory grantmaking utilized in their young women's program, which is designed to empower young women to create a new feminist movement in Central America.

Young women's grantmaking program:

- Largest program at FCAM
- Entire grantmaking decision process take 3 months
- Average grant amount is \$5,000
- Supports innovative and creative programs

Process:

1. Open call for proposals via media alternative media and social media (radio is the most effective)

2. Review by FCAM programs department to check if proposal meets basic requirements. If meets those, the proposal moves on
3. All past grantees and all who submitted proposals vote on all proposals submitted. They base their decisions on which proposals are the most innovative and best meet the priorities of FCAM's young women's program.
4. Introductory workshop: programs department meets potential grantee partners face-to-face. This is a space to work out the details of project proposals and offer financial management and project planning workshops. These provide an opportunity for capacity building and peer exchange. Most often all of these organizations will be funded.
5. Selected grantees are given one month to rework the proposal and submit paperwork and then FCAM makes the grants.

Lois González, a grantee of the FCAM program, shared her experiences with the decision-making process. She found it a great opportunity to learn about what other young women in Central America are doing and to collectively decide what the priorities are for young women within the region. She felt as though it was a democratic and transparent process, which empowers young women within their own organizations. FCAM trusts their knowledge and provides them with space as young feminist women to be elected or to elect. It is difficult to choose because they see so many worthy projects. They try to vote for groups that fully meet FCAM's requirements. This process empowers young women as leaders of their communities to work for a more just and better society. It attracts many new groups that have never before received funding.

Q: What is the benefit to FCAM of this process?

A: Enables FCAM to "walk the talk" and encourage other donors to adopt a participatory approach.

FCAM's young women's program receives 150-170 proposals/year, 40-50% meet the criteria, and they choose 10-12. This process acts as a capacity building program as it includes workshops and involves grantees in evaluation. Once per year there is an evaluation meeting for 3 days with all grantees. This promotes accountability for all involved. FCAM also conducts site visits and conduct random audits with 15% of partners.

Q: Could you scale this model to larger grants?

A: Grantees don't vote on the amount of the grant for each project and that information is only shared with FCAM's donors. There are concerns with having such a democratic process for much larger amounts of money.

Q: What are the costs of this process?

A: It is a lot of work, but not expensive. When foundations present proposals to board members, that's a lot of work as well.

Q: The Oak Foundation tried to use this model with a women's fund in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the logistics were impossible. There was no internet, the post system was unreliable, and they couldn't convene all of the grantees in one location. How did FCAM do this?

A: Central America is a small region. Most groups do have internet access and we cover email-related expenses. Also, can use local transportation to send packages and sometimes fax.

FCAM makes a total of 85 grants per year and 10 via this process. FCAM has a total of three multi-annual grantmaking programs. Grantee requirements are similar across program.