

**SEMI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE
SAN FRANCISCO
JANUARY 24-25, 2013**

**Full Speed Ahead:
Rapid Response Grantmaking for Advocacy and Policy Change**
Thursday, January 24, 2013
3:30-5:00pm

***Please note that these notes have not been reviewed
by the speakers or organizers of this session***

Session Organizer:

- Karl Horberg, Program Officer, Connect U.S. Fund

Facilitator:

- Yonaton Gordis, Managing Director and Senior Consultant, The Center for Leadership Initiatives

Panelists:

- Sarah Holewinski, Executive Director, Center for Civilians in Conflict (CCC)
- Karl Horberg, Program Officer, The Connect U.S. Fund
- Keely Tongate, Director of Programs, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF)

Sponsors:

- The Connect U.S. Fund
 - Wellspring Advisors
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Karl Horberg began the panel by discussing the Rapid Response Fund (RRF) that the U.S. Human Rights Fund (USHRF) developed. He explained that USHRF had observed a lack of ability for other foundations to respond quickly. Recognizing that its strengths were that it was a small and nimble organization, USHRF tried to capitalize on these strengths through the RRF. USHRF didn't want to tie the RRF to specific issue areas, especially since they understood that discrete policy wins in some areas could lead to success in other areas, too.

Keely Tongate explained that UAF was born out of the need identified by activists to have rapid response funding mechanisms. UAF is grounded in the movements that they support, so an advisor network helps UAF make funding decisions quickly and their Board of Directors is composed of activists worldwide. UAF is able to respond to funding requests within 72 hours and it accepts applications in all languages and through many channels. 50% of UAF's grants are made for the protection and security of grantees. For example, in Pakistan, armed gunmen broke into a women's organization, kidnapping some of the staff. They were able to use another organization's space, but requested rapid funding to move their office to another city. Keely explained that this example highlights the importance of flexible

funding and trust, because UAF gave them the maximum grant amount and they did what they needed with it. Lastly, Keely noted that a final report is due from the grantees a month after disbursement.

Sarah Holewinski said that her organization, the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CCC), has received four \$25,000 rapid response grants. She explained that these were for different purposes. Once, for example, CCC received permission to train U.S. troops in Afghanistan on civilian interactions, but they didn't have a way to travel there. She said CCC then applied for a rapid grant from Connect U.S. Fund, which was approved in three days, and then they were able to go and conduct the trainings in Afghanistan. These types of grants are helpful because it doesn't take as much time to apply for them as for regular grants, which allows organizations to get the actual work done. Sarah explained that applying for rapid response grants made her organization better at being concise and accountable.

The panelists then responded to the following questions:

- What is a rapid response grant?
 - These grants are useful when an organization has a plan and a strategy, but something unexpected happens and they need more funding than planned.
 - It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish between unexpected and unplanned – *unplanned* costs doesn't necessarily make one eligible for rapid response grants, but *unexpected* costs may.
 - Rapid response grants are discrete, timely, and measureable.
- How does rapid response grantmaking support longer, more strategic grantmaking?
 - Rapid response grants and longer term grants complement each other because they support the same aims.
 - UAF only funds short term action and interventions, but UAF staff looks at how these short term actions fit into a longer term strategy.
 - Connect U.S. Fund views rapid response grants as a partnership with grantees. Afterwards, they conduct a debrief with grantees about how the project went.
- How can we assess impact with rapid response grantmaking?
 - This is very difficult. UAF focuses on individual stories for funders. Some wins are easy to see (i.e., violence was avoided) but harder to measure.
 - An emergency grant may be easier to measure, because it's for unexpected circumstances (i.e. replacing stolen goods). An opportunity grant can be harder to assess, which is when an opportunity arises for established grantees that hasn't been seen before.
- How can funders be supportive beyond making rapid response grants?
 - Talk with other funders, collaborate, and don't duplicate strategies.
 - Try to convene grantee groups and help them share information, but be aware they won't be as candid with funders in the room.
 - Pay attention to the squeaky wheel phenomenon, which is when organizations that are more visible and attuned to funding opportunities are often able to take advantage of rapid response grants more often. It's important for funders to be paying attention to the field and identify opportunities for rapid response grants when they arise.

- Closing comments:
 - The transfer of funds can be expensive and a huge logistical challenge. UAF has sometimes traveled with cash or given money to an advisor who transfers it to groups. They sometimes use Western Union but it's expensive. Banks will sometimes hold funds.
 - Large funders can also contact local funders in country in order to disperse funds.
 - Both AWID and Frontline have online applications for rapid response grants.
 - IHRFG has compiled a list of resources for rapid response grant seekers, which will be posted on their website soon.
 - There is a real need for rapid response grantmaking in many different areas, and it often requires taking grantmaking risks.
 - Rapid response grants can energize grantees, and help to develop their messaging, leading to even better proposals.
 - Rapid response grants can also serve the same function as discretionary funds.