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Unleashing the Potential: Investing in Building the Capacity of Your Grantees

Wednesday, July 14, 2010, 10:45 am-12:15 pm

Facilitator:

Laura Livoti, Senior Program Officer, FACT

Panelists:

Robby Rodriguez, Executive Director, SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP)

Monona Yin, Director, Capacity Building Initiative, Four Freedoms Fund

Nikhil Aziz, Executive Director, Grassroots International



Sponsors:

French American Charitable Trust; Grassroots International

Laura Livotti: This session will discuss broad things to think about and ways other foundations have structured programs for capacity building.

Nikhil Aziz: General operating support is one way to build capacity, and requires trusting the grantee organization to use resources in the way they know best. Our relationship is not based on one specific project, but based on a belief in the overall mission and vision. Grassroots capacity building is a crucial part of our work. **Partnership approach to grantmaking; supporting social movements; capacity building**

is movement building. The process of figuring out how to support grantee partners is a very involved process of negotiation. The model of “deep and thick funding” is used to support social movements. **Fund organizations that consciously part of larger networks.** Support organizations working at the local, state, national, and global level.

One big area is research and advocacy. Aziz offered the example of an organization working in Brazil with a larger social movement organization to expose conditions of slavery on sugarcane plantations and mobilize advocacy. **Fund advocacy campaigns themselves.** Grantmakers should not just require grantees to do things like evaluation but should also support the process of them doing it.

Monona Yin: Capacity Building as Field Building

Four Freedoms Fund (FFF) aims to strengthen human, financial, and technical infrastructure, and to engage immigrants and refugees in policy advocacy. FFF was established in the wake of 9/11. Many organizations were stretched to the breaking point. Organizations were pushed to do work in that programmatic sphere by funders, but also faced pressure to minimize administrative structures. The Ford Foundation gave FFF a \$4million grant to build capacity strength.

Which types of grants make a difference? Large and multi-year grants work better. **Tight/loose management style where define certain areas of outcomes, but be extremely flexible.** Non-competitive grants, peer learning, and transparency (value in revealing what groups’ financing, hiring practices, etc. look like to each other) are valuable aspects. **Multiple peer learning opportunities, field-wide tools and indicators.** There are pros and cons to every business model that goes with non-profit advocacy.

Robby Rodriguez discussed work to ensure that poor communities and communities of color have the capacity to impact their lives. Rodriguez displayed a slideshow of a community on the outskirts of Albuquerque and on the edges of US and Mexican communities. The community lacks basic water, electricity, etc. **Pajarito Mesa’s water filling station.** It is important to concentrate on other things to help an organization do its work. The work that funders fund is important; real people’s lives depend on them doing a good job.

Rodriguez drew pictures on a flip chart to explain frameworks to help understand capacity building and organization development. The goal of organizational development capacity building is to embed it into the organization so that staff and leaders can feel and know that there is order. **simplicity to understand and feel the messiness and have a way forward**

Think of organization as three points of a triangle: mission/vision/values; org culture; and structure. When changes happen there is often a lot of anxiety from funders.

FACT strengthening organizations (Takeaways?)

Support grantees with general operating support.

Build programs on strengthening organizations on general operating support.

Develop long-term relationships with grantees.

We watched grantees grow and mature, win victories, and we also recognize that the struggles were big. **Multi-part program (times in org life cycle where they can use energy and turn it internally and build up their own internal practices)**

Four key elements:

- Non-profit tech assistant providers

- Discretionary grants
- Management Assistance Program (vetted pool of consultants to provide organizational development for up to 380 hours over a maximum of 18 months)
- Multi-year organizational development grants