Community foundations as community voice: influencing a more locally responsive and effective allocation of resources.

Emily Fuller
Community foundations as community voice

National Community Foundations Forum 2014
Funders need to hear from communities
Communities aren’t being heard

People are allocating a certain amount of money to us, but the people who control that money don’t live here, have never been here, and to some extent at least their jobs depend on our problems never being solved.

Mick Williams, Policeman, Bourke NSW
Community foundation as community voice
One month
Two questions

Are community foundations an effective voice for their communities?

How do other funders support their aims?
Are community foundations an effective voice? How?
Look global, act local
‘Community philanthropy has moved on from the North American fixation on donor needs and is much more flexible. The innovation is coming from Africa, Asia and Latin America.’
Making things happen – many different roles

- Start the hard conversations
- Keep a finger on the community pulse
- A champion of local community organisations
- A grant-making intermediary
- A first responder
Start the hard conversations – Berks County, USA

‘We would never move the needle on community needs if we only looked at ourselves as fundraiser and grantee.’

Tools and traits

- Look beyond the money
- Look for leverage
- Find your role in the ecosystem
- Convenor and networker

Convening a meeting led to $100m for farmland preservation
Keep a finger on the pulse - Florianopolis, Brazil

TOOLS AND TRAITS

Own the data to get a seat at the table
Bring others with you
Bravery to think bigger
Be conciliatory not combative with local council

Vital Signs lead to legislation for government accountability
Be a champion of local organisations - Cluj, Romania

Sport – creating healthy fundraising competition and new donors for local organisations

TOOLS AND TRAITS
Aggregate for greater exposure
Support not competition
Cover your costs
Patience
With *information, imagination* and *initiative* – community foundations are making things happen

- Set their horizon beyond the grant
- Find their role and build their credentials tangibly and purposefully
- Are brave and brainy in what they do and how they do it
- Chase knowledge, not donors (the donors tend to follow)
- Aim for outcomes, not sub-funds (the donors tend to follow)
- Make friends and work with others for bigger outcomes
- Grab the opportunities of being part of a growing network
How do other funders best support the aims of community foundations?
When they work together – community foundations are really making things happen

‘The network effect – it’s what happens when we pool knowledge, resources and passion with others to bring breakthrough solutions to more and more communities. It’s the power of more minds, more resources and more reach working as one for bigger, wider impact.’

Community Foundations Canada
Support organisations – the network effect

Clear vision
Sound strategy
Resources to act

Value-add to community foundations
'Fairly quickly, the Foundation recognised that support organisations could be excellent tools for spreading and strengthening the community foundation field, and Mott’s strategies began to reflect that, with grants being made to various organisations at home and abroad that could help develop and unify the field.'
Towards a unified community voice

1. Strategic planning and operational support for the network

2. Common research platform (ie. Vital Signs)

3. Coordinated communications campaign
Thoughts?

Do you see yourselves as a voice for the community?

Do you aspire to more effective local services and funding allocations?

Are you willing to go into bat together for this outcome?

Are the roles and tools relevant and applicable? What others do you use?

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