Learning from the experience of community foundations: Strategies, models and best practices for Italian banking foundations

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LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS:
STRATEGIES, MODELS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR ITALIAN BANKING FOUNDATIONS

By Thomas Bastianel
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INTRODUCTION

The Italian banking foundations were created in the early 90s through the process of privatizing Italian savings banks. With a cumulative endowment of almost 50 billion Euros (at market value) and an expenditure capability of 1.6 billion per year they are some of the biggest (grant-giving) foundations in Europe. Italian law states that foundations should operate in the geographical areas (in Italian law defined as “territorio”) specified by their statutes: this area can vary widely in size, but it generally corresponds to an Italian Province (similar to a US county). The foundations were established with the aim to foster – through their philanthropic activities – the socio-economic development and the quality of life of their communities. However, although they declare to have a strategic and interactive relationship with their citizens, 80 percent of the population doesn’t know what they are, as demonstrated by a survey conducted by ACRI – Associations of Italian Banking Foundations and Savings Banks – in 2007. Furthermore there is a general lack of trust in banking foundations and their commitment to act on behalf of their community because of the direct connection that some of them have with the original banks.

Through the analysis of the community foundations experience – as they have been developed in US, Canada and all over the world – this research paper seeks to provide some insights to help Italian bank foundations strengthen their relationships with their communities. The paper doesn’t aim to provide a theoretical framework on community foundations, but instead a list of practical examples which can be easily adapted by a bank-origin foundation in order to enhance its social action. The adoption of the following best practices could naturally lead Italy towards a more effective community foundation model.

This report is the outcome of a study conducted during my participation in the 2011 Emerging Leaders International Fellows Program at the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (The Graduate Center, City University of New York) between March and May 2011. Thanks to the program I had the opportunity to meet with some of the most recognized experts in the field of philanthropy and community foundations. This experience – along with the readings on the nonprofit historical development and next challenges provided by the Center – allowed me to better understand some aspects regarding the concept of community foundation. I realized, for example, that its success is mainly due to the ability in responding of the needs of its citizens: not only the needs met by the grantee nonprofit organizations but, first and foremost, the natural need of people to give back to their community. Thus community foundations have over the years developed services and skills to meet potential donors’ wishes and desires. However, although many of them have been established thanks to an original donation made by one person or a limited group desiring to give back to the community, nowadays
the donors’ trust is not the cause but the result of reputation and commitment built up by the foundation among the community. In other words, “you can’t be a community foundation if the community is not engaged with you”\(^1\). But how have community foundations been able to establish such an empathy with their community? Primarily through proactive actions aimed to bring the foundation close to its citizenry, strengthening its image, mission and objectives, and secondly thanks to a set of responsive strategies trying to reflect community needs and interests: the combination of these two behaviors have helped foundations attract and cultivate donors who contribute in turn to increased community engagement, nurturing what we can call a community foundation virtuous circle (Fig. 1).

**Figure 1 – Community foundation virtuous circle**

![Diagram](image)

Italian bank foundations and community foundations have essentially the same mission: to improve the quality of life of their citizens, to support the socio-economic development at local level and to act as agents of social innovation, addressing emerging community issues and needs. However community foundations seem to

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\(^1\) Jenny Hodgson and Barry Knight, *More than a Poor Cousin? The Emergence of Community Foundations as a New Development Paradigm* (Global Fund for Community Foundations, June 2010).
be more effective in fulfilling these goals as the result of the fact that they have (or have developed) characteristics which don’t belong to – or haven’t been implemented yet – by Italian saving banks. We can generally measure these features along three dimensions: **commitment**, **donors** and **representativeness**, characteristics corresponding to aspects of philanthropic work that could be developed by bank foundations that seek to move closer to an engaged community foundation model developing in the US and in many other countries. For each of the dimensions identified, the author has identified specific activities (steps) to be focused on to facilitate the transition (Fig.2).

*Figure 2 – From banking foundation to community foundation: The way forward*

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Building more community commitment to the foundation, engaging different target groups and becoming a vehicle for donors could widely help to legitimate the role of the foundation in its community. In the following paragraphs it is explained why they matter and how to achieve them by implementing the above actions.
1. BUILDING MORE COMMITMENT

Though it is noted that often people don’t know what they need - or what they want doesn’t correspond to what they need – it seems essential for a nonprofit organization to establish a good relationship with the community it serves. This is particularly true for a community-based foundation whose mission is broadly to foster the betterment of the quality of life of its citizens. The more people know about the foundation, the more they can interact strategically with it. This means for the foundation to avoid overlooking emerging needs or underrepresented issues and for citizens to see the institution as a stakeholder which can potentially support their cause. Moreover strengthening community commitment means that the foundation will look to allies against potential detractors, such as political parties, business lobbies or local government. If citizens identified themselves with the foundation they will be more likely to defend it and mobilize public opinion in its favor. And this is tremendously important in the case of Italian bank foundations whose work was attacked more than once in the recent years by the national press. In 2007 during the annual national conference of Italian bank foundations, the ACRI President Giuseppe Guzzetti said that he would like to see, one day, common people struggling to support the independence of their local bank foundation even when these institutions come under public attack. Since then, much has been done to get saving bank foundations close to their citizens, but there is still more work to be done.

Drawing upon a study of the community foundation experience, the author has identified four avenues which bank foundations could use to increase the support of their local community members:

- Strategic grantmaking
- Capacity building
- Marketing, public awareness campaign
- Site visits and grants assessing

**Strategic grantmaking: Small grants as a commitment tool**

In the last five years Italian savings bank foundations have developed a more strategic approach to their grantmaking. They have tried to narrow their focus on specific social problems by choosing those in which they can make a difference; to stimulate partnerships among nonprofits and between Third sector and government officials; and to develop assessment tools to better evaluate their grantmaking effects and outcome. In pursuing these goals, bank foundations have slowly but progressively decreased the percentage of small grants and focused their grantmaking instead on larger grants (Table 1). The decrease in small grants is due to the belief
that foundations can be more effective in addressing a social need by pooling resources for a single project rather than splitting them into hundreds of small grants. This action is based on sound strategies, but it has led Italian savings bank foundations to think that to be effective they have to be “big”, thinking of small grants as charity versus large amounts as strategic philanthropy. There are in fact no descriptions of projects funded by a small grant in the last ten ACRI annual reports, and there is no evidence of small grants programs in the major Italian bank foundations’ websites.

Table 1 – The percentage of small grants awarded by banking foundations has been halved in 15 years

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value (%)</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number (%)</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>42.9</td>
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</table>

Source: ACRI Annual Reports (1995-2010)

Examples in the US, Canada and elsewhere in Europe suggest, however, that by focusing on large amounts Italian bank foundations may have overlooked the benefits and opportunities provided by small grants, related especially to building community commitment to the foundation’s work. To take just one example: it has been shown in the US and Canadian community foundations experience that small grants can help new and small nonprofit organizations grow and provide leverage for receipt of additional grants from other sources. Also, since these kinds of organizations often operate with limited staff and budgets, small first grants are particularly important since they could struggle to absorb larger amounts. Giving small groups the opportunity to apply for and receive grants creates accessibility for the foundation, making it closer to citizens: this connection chips away at the idea of a detached institution and a funder “to be afraid of”. Regardless of the type of small grants programs, they have usually the same structure. The following are their main features:

- **Small amounts**: the grants size can vary from 500 to 7,000 US dollars and they usually cover the total project budget (no funding match is required). Sometimes a minimum match must be provided by the organization but it may be met through in-kind donations or volunteer labor. Applicants must be small organizations with a total annual budget less than $ 50,000.

- **Simple requirements**: there are always some restrictions. Applicant organizations do not need to be a registered 501(c)(3) organization, but must prove that the grant will be used for "charitable purposes". This condition allows informal, grassroots groups to apply for a small grant which sometimes leads them to formalizing their activities. Then, if they succeed they can “source their own funds directly without
the community foundation”. Similarly, reporting requirements are flexible and a foundation’s staff can help the organization with project accountability and progress updates.

- **Neighborhoods focus**: small grants programs are designed to support community members to improve their neighborhood. They help residents use neighborhood skills, talent and resources to make a positive change at local level. Projects are to be conceived and implemented by residents or significantly increase resident involvement in the organization. Programs can be focused on moderate and low income neighborhoods or be available each year for specific geographic areas.

- **Community leadership**: small grants programs call on residents to influence and shape their own communities. Grants are to assist community-led groups and support the development of neighborhood leadership thorough building relationships between residents, associations and local governments, strengthening neighborhood’s assets, identifying community wide-vision and plans, addressing community solutions.

- **Organizational support**: In addition to grant funds for projects, community foundations often provide additional support for grantees. This support includes orientation sessions, meetings with technical assistance providers and CF’s staff, and grantee network for peer learning that address common issues and assistance with developing and implementing a self-evaluation plan. Applicants are often required to attend one or more of these activities and even when participation is not required it is strongly encouraged.

There is not a specific field of interest within which projects have to fall (such as education, environment, health or arts and culture); they can embrace different areas but they have to serve and be implemented by local residents, institutions or associations. Examples of projects supported by small grants are: designing and organizing a community-built playground, developing a membership database and website with tools for housing counselors and housing industry professionals, providing credit and money management training, working with

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local government and agencies to engage in a community wide planning project with the ultimate goal of creating a strategic plan.

Community foundations use several criteria to select a project to be awarded a grant, but preference is usually given to applications from groups that: demonstrate broad community support and participation, increase the number of residents involved in neighborhood activities and community associations, show the capacity to complete the project (within 6-15 months), build partnerships with local merchants, organizations and individuals, submit proposals that address significant community issues and can track their impact in changing neighborhood conditions (using indicators or other assessing tools).

**Implication for Italian saving bank foundations**

*Potential opportunity:* Almost all small and medium-sized bank foundations launch each year a general call for proposals for projects falling in different sectors: arts and culture, education, healthcare and social services. Grants are usually larger than what are found in community foundations’ small grants programs, varying between $5,000 to $30,000. However they can be a good starting point for developing a more strategic and community leadership oriented call for proposals. Regarding larger bank foundations, even if they don’t have small grants programs like those described above, they are still accepting unsolicited proposals from hundreds of small nonprofits. Designing a small grants program could be a means to make this activity more transparent and effective, while widening the foundation’s traditional grantee base. This may facilitate the efforts of Italian savings bank foundations to move from a banker approach (supporting proven organizations and activities with little risk and high probability for success) to a venture capitalist model (supporting new and unproven efforts and accepting the possibility of failure)\(^3\).

*Potential risk/obstacle:* Managing a large number of small grants can be a time-consuming activity which could have a negative impact on the foundation’s organizational structure. Some banking foundations could lack the staff to support this effort. Furthermore Italian bank foundations usually don’t support individuals or informal groups - because of restrictions in their bylaws – and most haven’t yet developed procedures allowing them to do so. In this case, developing an Italian model for fiscal sponsorship could be a sound solution (see inset on page 8).

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The N.E.W. Fund – Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina

**Goals**
The N.E.W. Fund was created in 1991 to provide grants, leadership development, and technical assistance to low-to-moderate income neighborhood associations. The small grants are for projects that will help improve the quality of life and develop and sustain leadership within the neighborhood. The program is also designed to build civic pride and increase the neighborhoods’ participation in the community improvement process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Outcomes</th>
<th>Sample projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Families are strong, healthy and self-sufficient</td>
<td>Parent-teacher partnerships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nutrition/diet/exercise groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Children, youth and senior activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Residents live in safe, supportive, neighborhoods</td>
<td>Community clean-ups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Health fairs</td>
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<td>• Residents take pride in and use neighborhood skills, talents and resources</td>
<td>Block festivals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighborhood arts and crafts projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Residents have the power to influence and shape their own communities</td>
<td>Voter registration drives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with local gov’t. on a specific need</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community newsletter</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Residents create and participate in a thriving economy</td>
<td>Job fairs, resume/interview workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills training (car repair, sewing, cooking...)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Eligibility**
To apply for a N.E.W. Fund grant applicants have to:
- Be based in a neighborhood that is considered low-to-moderate income and located in Charleston or Colleton County.
- Be neighborhood-based and have the support of the majority of the membership of the neighborhood organization.
- Be identified with a specific geographic neighborhood with recognized boundaries, and operate for the purpose of improving conditions for people who live in the neighborhood.

**Selection Criteria**
Preference will be given to application from groups that:
- Show a collective desire to improve the neighborhood.
- Show the capacity to complete the project within 9-12 months.
- Show how the project will involve and impact the residents of the neighborhood.
- Show an organizational structure for accomplishing the project.
- Build upon existing strengths and partnerships, such as special skills of residents and relationships with a local church, school or other community partner.
- Offer equal opportunity for participation by all persons in the neighborhood.

**Grants size:**
$500 – $3,000
Technical Assistance and Pre-Application Requirements

The Foundation will organize a session of its Leadership Series for all applicants. A requirement for receiving a N.E.W Fund financial grant is that at least two representatives of the group attend a meeting to receive additional information about executing the grant project per the standards of the Foundation. In addition, all applicants are eligible to receive technical assistance from Foundation staff to help set project goals and complete the application.

The Budget

Every N.E.W Fund grant application requires the submission of a project budget. Preparing an accurate complete budget will increase the chance of being funded and help you make clear what is needed to implement the project. Applications are stronger if the budget includes other resources that are available for the project, either cash or in-kind.

Site Visits

The Fund Advisory Committee assesses all submissions and determines finalists. Staff, members of the Board or other civic leaders will visit some of the finalists to attend a neighborhood meeting, to address questions regarding the proposal, and learn first-hand about programming.

How Grants are awarded

85% of the approved amount is provided as project start-up. Other 15% is awarded when the group completes a Progress Report. When the entire project is completed, an end-of-project report is required. Any group that fails to submit any required report will not be considered for future N.E.W. Fund grants.

For all incurred costs, report and receipt forms are required. The foundation can also make grants to informal groups using the practice of fiscal sponsorship. Organizations and groups applying for a N.E.W. Fund grant are usually small and volunteer-driven. In this case, it’s important to keep communications lines open and try to be as flexible as you can, especially in accountability reporting.

Metanoia invests in neighborhood assets to Build Leaders. “Since our inception, we have recognized young people of promise are some of the most significant assets in our community. Metanoia works with community youth year-round to give them leadership skills that build their character, commitment to excellence and ability to have the presence of a leader”.

Metanoia is one of the 2009 N.E.W. Fund grantees that are making a difference

Capacity building: Why pursue it

Not-for-profit organizations exist to improve the quality of life for citizens. However, while nonprofits’ nature is to work in the field (keeping environment clean, providing people in need with social services or making arts and culture accessible to everyone), the grantmaker’s role is to support nonprofits to achieve their goals and, in this way, to improve community life. So, if we agree that a well-managed, well-governed organization is better able to achieve its program goals, we can easily understand why investing in building the capacity of nonprofits is key for grantmakers: it’s an effective way to leverage the impact of their philanthropic activities and, ultimately, create more value. Capacity building refers in fact to activities that help an organization enhance
its performance; they can include different means (training, new equipment and staff, peer exchanges, consulting) and comprise every aspect of an organization (operations, technology, human resource, governance, communications). Organizational capacity encompasses a wide range of capabilities, knowledge and resources (see Figure 3 on page 14), and it can be affected by multiple factors (organization’s age, size and structure, financial stability, community relations). The most important factor is organizational culture: values, norms, beliefs and attitudes that shape the behavior of organization members.

Funders can choose different methods to provide capacity building support to nonprofits, often providing financial resources through grants to hire consultants, developing management tools or acquiring research data and analysis. They can also decide to provide direct management support and assistance. The following are some examples of strategies to build organizational effectiveness.

- **Using nonprofit program grants**: With this method funders do not have to create a special program for capacity building but may easily integrate it into their regular grantmaking process, while changing the terms of program grants to emphasize organizational effectiveness.

- **Offering general operation and development grants**: Foundations can design and award targeted grants to fund management costs and organizational capacity development of individual nonprofits. These activities may include strategic planning, staff training, board development, etc. and they can be achieved through the help of consulting services.

- **Providing direct management assistance**: Funders might decide (alone or in groups) to draw on the expertise of the foundation’s board and staff in order to provide knowledge and skills to build up the capacity of local nonprofits. They can decide also to provide financial capital (grants or loans) to help nonprofits grow.

- **Enlisting intermediaries**: Grantmakers may enhance organizational effectiveness by hiring groups (management support organizations, researchers, independent consultants or private consulting firms) that provide management assistance to nonprofits.

- **Investing in a long-term capacity building initiative**: A “focused initiative enables a funder to form lasting, trusting relationships with a select group of nonprofits and take them to the next level of organizational development and program effectiveness”\(^4\). Such efforts usually last several years, focus

\(^4\)Paul M. Connolly, *Deeper Capacity Building for Greater Impact. Designing a Long-term Initiative to Strengthen a Set of Nonprofit Organizations* (TCC Group with the support of the James Irvine Foundation, April 2007).
on nonprofits working in a particular area and entail a different kind of support (grants and assistance) provided in different ways: training, peer exchanges, convening, etc.

A foundation may decide to select one or more of the above strategies in order to improve grantee performance and ultimately enhance social impact. Nevertheless before selecting any capacity building approach a funder will wish to set up a plan defining carefully what they would like to work on and what kind of results they intend to accomplish. This plan—which could be more or less formal—should comprise the following steps.

Asses community and organizational needs: Which organizations need management assistance and development (arts associations, social enterprises, low income neighborhood organizations) and what kind of help are they looking for (financial management, fundraising, strategic planning)?

Check foundation’s organizational background and capability: Is capacity building a service the foundation can offer? How can this be achieved? What resources (whether financial or staff time) can the foundation allocate for this effort? In what areas would they like their grantees’ capabilities enhanced? And how can such improvements help further the foundation’s work?

Set your goals and objectives: Because capacity building is a broad activity, funders need to clarify goals, define measurable objectives and develop assessment tools helping them monitor whether objectives are being achieved or need to be redefined. For instance, if your goal is to improve a nonprofits’ financial stability, increasing financial management skills will be your objective and the number of nonprofits using budgeting tools one of your indicators.

Implication for Italian saving bank foundations

Potential opportunity: Bank foundations are slowly discovering the importance of investing in nonprofit capacity building, as shown by the general growth of grants for organizational capacity development, which increased 4.5 percent during the last seven years—from 0.4 percent in 2002 to 4.9 percent in 2009 (ACRI). Moreover, after the launch of a call for proposals, some foundations have recently started to organize meetings for applicants, explaining how to set up the application to meet the foundations’ standards and requirements. Nevertheless many program officers are complaining about applicants’ continuous requests for additional help in executing grant projects. Moving from these bases, implementing a more structured capacity building plan could represent the next step for Italian savings bank foundations: doing so can help grantees be more effective and foundations more efficient.

Potential risks/obstacles: Foundation boards and executives could see investing in capacity building as deflecting resources away from their core business (grantmaking). In addition, banking foundations have been required
since 1991 to fund the local Volunteering Services Centers (CSV) established by the Italian legislature to support and qualify the development of volunteer organizations providing them with financial, legal and management support services. In that sense, some foundations may see the provision of capacity building services as a role overlap. However, Volunteering Services Centers offer the same broad range of support services—covering different aspects (such as fundraising, administrative support, strategic planning)—to all organizations regardless of sector, age or size, and these services are usually provided through single meetings or lessons. In this context, bank foundations can play a complementary role in building organizational capacity, focusing their services on specific aspects or organizational types. From that perspective, Volunteering Services Centers could be a strategic partner for savings bank foundations and a pool of experience from which to draw.

**Figure 3 – What is nonprofit organizational capacity and how to build it?**

![Diagram of nonprofit organizational capacity]

From *Deeper Capacity Building for Greater Impact. Designing a Long-term Initiative to Strengthen a Set of Nonprofit Organizations* (TCC Group with the support of the James Irvine Foundation, April 2007).

**Marketing and public awareness campaign: It’s time for them!**
Community foundations have developed over the last twenty years various examples of marketing plans aimed at making people aware of the foundation and its value to the community. Even if the main goal of these plans is to reach (and engage) potential donors, enhancing audience awareness is crucial for all kinds of foundations whose work relies on relationships (funder-grantee, leader-partner, convener-stakeholder) with a wide range of individuals and organizations. Effective relationships depend, in fact, on effective communications and nowadays marketing is essential for helping organizations establish effective communications. Starting a marketing planning process can also become an opportunity to broadly identify and evaluate what works best at the foundation and what could be improved. It usually encompasses five steps:

1. **Gather information**: In order to assess your internal and external environment, gather information to answer questions such as: How well are we known? How are we perceived? For what are we known? How does public perception fit our desired image? From the organization’s perspective this can help identify features and functions in which the foundation excels and others that could be improved. This information can be gathered through meetings with staff, executives and board members in order to complete a S.W.O.T. analysis worksheet. From the audience’s viewpoint, it’s important to know how different stakeholders see the foundation, so that the foundation can customize its message to maximize impact for different target audiences. A historical giving analysis, personal conversations, focus groups, surveys, and published (third party) research can help provide insight into a foundation’s audiences.

2. **Develop a strategy**: Elaborating a strategic marketing plan could include identifying key messages (which could be different for each audience), objectives (usually few in number, temporally limited and measurable) and activities (describing actions and methods through which objectives will be reached).

3. **Produce tactics**: Consider new tools, events and other resources that support the objectives and activities. Coordinating tactics and their timing is very important. Here are some examples of tactics: improving general public relations (press kit, articles and news releases), buying advertising spaces (magazines, newspapers, radio, television), updating the website and using social networks, printing communications materials, organizing events, seminars and meetings (also face-to-face meetings).

4. **Implement activities**: Marketing success depends on buy in from the organization’s staff, executive and board). There will be specific tasks and different roles for everyone involved in the plan, but details count

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(from how telephones are answered to organizing an event or making a presentation). For this reason, it is important to review the marketing information, strategy and goals with the entire board of trustees and staff, asking for their support and periodically reviewing roles and responsibilities.

5. **Monitor and adjust:** Over time, you may find that some objectives have been achieved or changed, and that certain tools are more effective than others, so that the marketing plan should be adjusted accordingly. To do that, it’s important to establish a good framework for gathering information and assessing results.

In developing a marketing strategy, a foundation may decide to focus on one of the following tools: the use of a public awareness campaign, the engagement of journalists and opinion leaders, the sponsorship of a public cause. In the first case, the tool is completely under the control of the foundation, which can decide how to target and use it for reaching different kinds of audience. The risk is that the community may perceive the campaign as necessary or as self-promotion and therefore not a good use of the foundation’s money. In that sense, people may be more likely to accept an indirect and less intrusive marketing approach, such as the engagement of journalists and opinion leaders talking about the foundation and its activities in the community. Journalists and experts provide a third-party viewpoint, which may help the foundation legitimate its role in the community and that of the nonprofit sector more generally. However, establishing mutual trust with journalists and experts in the field can require time and the outcome is not guaranteed since it doesn’t depend exclusively on the foundation’s behavior. A third tool to use to promote the foundation’s image is to support a public cause with the goal of getting people involved in an issue relating to the foundation’s mission. It is most effective if the cause is not directly connected with a specific foundation program and is not a fundraising campaign. The foundation may decide, for instance, to support a volunteering day event where the community is asked to dedicate time for a local issue (such as cleaning up the parks or participating in an after-school program). This strategy can help strengthen the foundation’s ties to both the nonprofit organizations and the general public.

Whatever strategy is adopted, it is important to keep in mind that changing human beliefs and behaviors is a slow process which could require a reiteration of actions and a long-term vision.
Implications for Italian savings bank foundations

*Potential opportunity*: As mentioned above, in 2007 a survey supported by ACRI showed that almost 80 percent of the Italian population is unfamiliar with what savings bank foundations are and what they do. A majority still confuses the original bank with the foundation and views the foundation mainly as a financial institution. Moving from this evidence, Fondazione Cariplo, the largest Italian bank-origin foundation (and one of the biggest foundations in the world), has launched a local and national public awareness campaign in March 2011 that aims to provide information about the foundation’s role and improve its image to the general public. The message of the campaign has been: "For twenty years along with the nonprofits, funding the best projects. Yet we are not a bank!" To reduce the campaign’s costs, Fondazione Cariplo has asked all its grantees to help spread the foundation’s message through their media spaces (websites, newsletters, annual reports, flyers and posters). To date (that is, in under three months), more than one hundred local nonprofits have supported Fondazione Cariplo in this effort. Inspired by the Cariplo experience, other savings bank foundations may see the advantages of launching a local public awareness campaign involving nonprofits, journalists and the general public. Similar results, in terms of increasing visibility and appreciation, may be obtained by supporting civic participation at the local level through organizing, for example, events linking people with nonprofits and supporting organizations that encourage volunteering. If on the one hand it is true that in Italy there is a low percentage of young people involved in volunteering (according to a recent study, only 14 percent of those who volunteer regularly at nonprofit organizations are under 29 years of age), on the other hand the number of youth 14 to 24 years old who participate in a volunteering activity has increased by 2.3 percent in the last 10 years (from 7.8 to 10.1 percent between 1999 and 2010). Moreover Italy is ranked third (after Hungary and the UK) in the current Volunteer Commitments: Gifts of Time 2011 campaign launched by the European Commission during the European Year of Volunteering 2011. So, encouraging people to commit to do good—especially among youth—may prove to be an unexpectedly powerful tool for increasing bank foundations visibility and social legitimacy.

*Potential risk/obstacle*: As a first step of their new marketing plan, some foundations may be asked to change their name—giving up the reference to the original bank—to appear more inclusive and closer to the community. But many of the current board members of foundations come from the experience of the original savings bank: so, they could be less likely to accept that change.

Following the launch of a successful marketing plan or a public awareness campaign, a foundation could find itself embracing a broader audience and interacting with new stakeholders. This “success” could place extra demands on the Italian bank foundations, unless they think strategically in advance not only about how to design
and implement the marketing plan, but also how to absorb its potential effects. For example, it might require additional staff, space or new software to deal with significant increases in requests for information or appointments, as well as with increases in the number of grant proposals submitted.

**Timeraiser: Speed-dating for volunteerism**

**What is it?**
Timeraiser is an event connecting people to causes and causes to people. It is a silent art auction with a twist: bid time, not money on works of art by local emerging artists.

**How does it work?**
The Timeraiser helps nonprofit and voluntary organizations, large and small, connect with potential volunteers. A select number of local nonprofits (from 20 to 30) are invited at the event to illustrate their activities. Once people have found the organization which best fit their interests they can decide to give them a total amount of time. Then they can use that amount to bid on artwork. Art winners will receive their prize at the next Timeraiser event after showing they have completed the volunteer time pledged to the organization.

**What is it trying to accomplish?**
The Timeraiser aim is to generate volunteer hours in the community while encouraging skilled volunteerism. It reaches out to people (especially young professionals) who are looking for ways to get involved, but aren't quite sure how. The Timeraiser brings together local agencies which are looking for skilled volunteers, while celebrating the work of artists in the community.

**What’s the role of the foundation?**
Timeraiser artists are paid fair market value for their work. Foundations as well as private companies can be partners of the event paying for the artists’ work and any other support services (logistics, advertising and administrative expenses). A Timeraiser event has an average cost of about 30,000 dollars.

**Where are they at?**
Timeraiser is one of the two core programs of Framework (the other one being Civic Footprint), a nonprofit based in Toronto and focused on delivering high quality volunteer engagement events while innovating in other areas relating to non-profit capacity building. Started in Toronto in 2004, the Timeraiser is currently held in 8 Canadian cities: Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Hamilton, London and Ottawa. They plan to reach 10 cities by 2012 - including Montreal and Halifax.

To date Timeraiser has:
1. Generated over 83,000 volunteer hours
2. Invested $410,000 in the careers of emerging artists
3. Engaged 6,500 Canadians to pick up a cause
4. Worked with 395 charitable organizations.
**Site visits: Much more than a “formality”**

The role of site visits in the experience of Italian bank foundations is quite limited, being typically used as an **ex-post** assessing tool to monitor the grant. Yet from the US foundations’ experience, I have learned that site visits can also be “one of the most important tools you use, as a grant maker, in determining your ultimate funding decisions”\(^6\). A site visit can serve, in fact, as an interactive discussion letting the:

- funder deepen the purpose and activities of the nonprofit, and
- nonprofit better understand if its proposal is suitable for a particular grant making program.

Both the funder and the grant seeker may introduce into the conversation new elements, perspectives and ideas that help them orient their actions or improve their work. For that reason, from the foundation’s viewpoint, it could be useful to schedule a site visit to some organizations before the launching of a request for proposals, as a step to acquire more information from the field. Moreover this kind of meeting may help nonprofits understand that site visits are a continuing learning activity for the funder rather than a one-time, discrete part of the grant-making process. Some tips follow that can help ensure that site visits are a meaningful experience for foundations and nonprofit organizations alike.

In setting up a time for a visit, the funder should try to meet the nonprofit’s needs and schedule. Even if it is rare that an organization reject a foundation’s request for a meeting, staff may be in their busiest period or rushing to prepare a proposal for another funder. So for a worthwhile site visit—which allows the nonprofit to candidly talk about its programs—it is important that organizations not see it as an imposing activity that distracts staff and time from their main tasks. However, the site visit should let the foundation’s staff observe some of the program activities and experience the nonprofit going about its normal work.

Having an additional point of view can make the site visit more useful for the foundation. However if there are too many people involved in the meeting, the risk is that the conversation will be formal and restricted rather than personal, informative and relaxed.

Before attending a meeting, with a grant applicant, the foundation staff should prepare by reading the application carefully or – if they haven’t received any proposal yet – to obtain as much information as they can from the organization’s website, annual report or promotional materials. This background can help foundation staff focus on the questions that matter most: if the topics to investigate with the applicant are many, it might be helpful to send them a brief note prior to the site visit.

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For grant seekers, a site visit is often perceived as a signal that the foundation is virtually sure to make a grant. For this reason, many grant makers limit site visits to avoid raising hopes. “They make visits only after a grant is already made [as Italian bank foundations usually do], or when there is a high chance a grant will follow. (This, of course, reinforces grant seekers’ conclusions that site visits are reliable predictors of grant approvals.)”

To limit this perception, during the visit foundation staff should explain that the decision about whether to make a grant is not theirs but that they will report on the visit to the board which will make the decision on the grant. Foundation staff should also provide information about the grant process (next steps, timeline, feedback, etc.) ensuring that the organization will be advised as soon as a decision has been made.

It is worth remembering that establishing a trusting, open relationship with grantees is not automatic, but it may require time and multiple site visits to achieve.

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2. REPRESENTING DIVERSITY

Italian law states that a bank foundation’s board of trustees has to represent the community it serves. In addition, no more than 50 percent of the members may be nominated by public policy institutions or local government agencies, giving space for the remaining 50 percent to figures representing local civil society (education, arts and culture, nonprofit, voluntary, etc.). Nevertheless the board members of Italian bank foundations are a relatively homogeneous group, comprised of males over fifty years of age with a political, business or academic background. In the US and Canada, foundations are addressing the question of what it means for a board of trustees at a public foundation to “reflect” the community which it serves. Increasingly, it is believed that having a board which represents different constituencies can help the foundation better serve its community by being in a position to address the challenges that arise, especially if those challenges concern diversity, equal opportunity and social justice. For instance, if the foundation is working to promote a more integrated community setting, having minority groups represented on its board could be a plus. Nevertheless a foundation may become more representative without changing its board composition, but by instead adopting some tools to help it embrace different audiences. Some possible methods are described in the following paragraphs.

How to engage different audiences

Among the current issues affecting the Italian public policy agenda, youth is doubtless an issue that is becoming more fashionable. Paraphrasing the title of one of the most famous Cohen brothers’ movies everybody knows that Italy is not a country for young men. With an increasing youth unemployment rate, an economic, cultural and political establishment led by people over fifty, and a law system that doesn’t encourage young people to become entrepreneurs, Italy is not an easy place for young people to express their full potential. To address this issue, Italian bank foundations as well as other public and private institutions are supporting scholarships, internships and professional training programs. However, there is still much more that can be done. Thinking of youth not as a problem, but as part of the solution, is a good place to start to make a change. To do that, nonprofits and public policy institutions can start to involve young people in decision-making processes. Taking inspiration from the experience of foundations in the US, Canada and elsewhere, the creation of youth advisory committees could represent also for Italian bank foundations an easy and effective way to engage young people.

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8 According to the World Bank, Italy ranks 80th among countries where it is easier for young people to start up a business.
people in philanthropy. A youth advisory committee is comprised of young people, generally between 15 and 25 years old, drawn from the community in which the foundation operates. First and foremost a youth advisory committee is a grant making committee aimed to support projects designed and run by young people that address issues and concerns of direct importance to them. The youth committee is usually in charge of awarding small grants ($1,000-10,000). The projects supported may be ones devised in schools with the help of teachers. Youth advisory committees may also help the foundation’s board assess the community’s needs, or design strategies and implement programs related to local youth issues.

A similar kind of initiative has operated in the UK since 1998 under the name of Youth Bank Initiative and has rapidly spread throughout Europe, including Italy. With the support of experts and support organizations, many communities have been able to establish grant making committees run by young people to support youth projects.

Fostering the creation of youth banks or youth advisory committees could enhance the development of Italian bank foundations, helping them 1) address the “youth problem“ in even more inclusive and effective ways and 2) build the next generation of philanthropy leaders. The creation of such committees could be a future step for savings bank foundations which could at the same time strengthen their efforts to embrace young people by designing specific grants for individuals, informal groups or school teams. To bypass the limitations on making grants to individuals or informal groups, the foundation could ask a nonprofit organization to support a team, acting as a bridge between the nonprofit world and the education system. Moreover calling it an “award program” instead of a “grant program” can be another means to overcome any normative barriers impeding a bank foundation to grant individual and informal groups.

Of course, the launch of a youth advisory committee doesn’t represent something completely new for Italian bank foundations. In 2011 Compagnia di Sanpaolo, through the project “Torinoanni20venti,” supported the creation of a committee formed by about 30 local emerging leaders (18 to 30 years old) to foster ideas and strategies for shaping the future of the city of Turin. The results of this program have been shown to the community and local policy makers in an intergenerational debate. In addition, Compagnia di Sanpaolo and Fondazione CRC are partners of YEPP – Youth Empowerment Partnership Program, a collaborative initiative of several European and US foundations focused on youth social challenges.

**Different groups, different issues**

The possibilities for engaging different groups requires that foundations have a broad overview of what is happening in their communities, to know what kind of people, if any, are likely to suffer exclusion or
marginalization, and to remain current about emerging issues affecting local citizens. This perspective can help a foundation decide what issues it can effectively address, what problems can be addressed through partnerships and what matters would best be delegated to other actors. To ensure up-to-date knowledge about community trends and issues, a foundation can support research and surveys which allow it to collect data and assess public perception on relevant matters. The Vital Signs report developed by Canadian community foundations seems to provide an effective example of both an effective way to work out this kind of analysis and an easy-to-read tool to communicate findings to the general public. The Vital Signs are brief reports providing a snapshot of the trends in a particular city, highlighting a community’s vitality, challenges and progress. For each issue addressed (housing, work, seniors, learning, etc.) they provide research findings, citizens’ perceptions and priorities, and a brief description of why that issue matters. Vital Signs are released as an annual or bi-annual free publication and often usually appear in the local press. They help foundations that sponsor them serve (and be recognized) not only as grant making institutions but also as sources of knowledge for the community. At the same time, they make local government and public policy institutions aware of the challenges that most need to be addressed in the city.

*Figure 4 – Vancouver Community Foundation’s Vital Signs*
Advocacy: What does it mean?

As an International Fellow, the author read about and had the opportunity to meet with different leaders of community foundations based in the New York area and elsewhere in the US. The information from materials and meetings emphasized that community foundations have very different approaches to advocacy activities. Some tend not to involve themselves with government at all, and generally avoid issues that could strongly divide public opinion; others, instead, have undertaken actions which have brought substantial changes in public policies, especially related to public expenditure strategies. However most community foundations tend to maintain a “safe” behavior, paying attention not to take on issues that could either damage or advantage any political party.

In this respect, their practice is similar to that of Italian bank foundations whose governance is based on a complex balance affecting different political interests. A balance that could be undermined if the foundation addresses sensitive issues. Yet, advocacy could represent an important
means for these organizations to secure significant and lasting changes, while keeping in mind that even large foundations’ resources are not without limits.

From 12 to 15th of May I attended the Community Foundations of Canada 2011 annual conference and during the last meeting luncheon I had the honor of sitting beside Monica Patten, the last president of the national membership organization for Canada’s community foundations. We were talking about the worry of community foundations to be neutral, and she told us that that is absolutely nonsense. “Can a community foundation be neutral about poverty? Can it be neutral about racism? Can it be neutral about disparity and abuse?” Certainly not. It is time for community foundations to have/to give a voice. And it seems that something has already started: The Pittsburgh Foundation in fact has recently launched an advocacy campaign called “Why cut what works” against government budget cuts of nonprofit funding. Although it is not the first time that a community foundation has gotten involved in advocacy activities, it is unusually broad in scope and approach. For the campaign they have used press releases; electronic postcards; petitions; letter templates to legislators to be used by nonprofit staff, volunteers, and board members; video stories from nonprofits about the impact of the budget cuts; and email, Twitter, and Facebook sign-ups. All of this along with the organizing of a downtown rally. It is just an example of how a foundation can make a voice be heard. I think in all communities there are issues that the local foundation can’t directly support but for which it can use its image and influence. Some case studies have shown how money spent in advocacy activities can multiply the effect on final funding assigned to a specific issue. I am sure that in all communities there are overlooked issues or marginalised people that could be engaged in advocating for their own change.

**Voices: Participation for Social Justice – Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI)**

**Background:**
CFNI is acutely aware how exclusion and marginalisation can all too quickly result in stereotyping and even conflict.

**Goals:**
Empower marginalised and excluded people to engage in advocating for their own change.
Examine those voices and issues that are effectively silenced through marginalisation, exclusion or prejudice.

**Strategies:**
The proactive approach adopted by the Voices Programme seeks to offer a range of strategies that can avert such prospects:
- Research, community meetings, grassroots leaders, academics
- Small Grants programme
- Film/documentary
- Policy Briefs

What we learned:
- Identifying the marginalised may require research, collaboration and consultation
- Marginalisation and discrimination is often invisible but still real.
- Giving people a voice isn’t necessarily expensive but can be achieved with a small cash investment
- Giving people a voice can pay significant dividends in terms of their self-respect, increased resilience and power.
- Giving voice has much to do with communication and this can (and should) take many different forms – film, books, theatre, and media coverage.
- Media coverage is cheap (free) and readily available if the story is strong.

Forward a bylaws change

Regarding the selection of board members, community foundation bylaws are quite similar to those of Italian banking foundations bylaws, each trying to represent the different constituencies of a community (local government, educational and research institutions, nonprofit leaders, professionals, businessmen, etc.). However further analysis of board and bylaws in a comparative context might uncover useful insights for the world of banking foundations. For example, following the experience of Fondazione Cariplo, a bylaws change towards a more representative board could be implemented easily by savings bank foundations. The Cariplo bylaws currently state that approximately 15 percent of the board members must be chosen through public calls among nonprofits working in the same area as the foundation and in its fields of interest. Further research could identify other best practices from Italy and beyond.
3. BECOMING A VEHICLE FOR DONORS

The weight of bank foundation endowments means that they don’t have to look for other kinds of resources, instead obtaining the funds necessary to carry out their philanthropic activities from the return on their capital assets, which are often allocated mainly in the stocks of the original banks. However, if on the one hand the endowment of 88 Italian banking foundations—as a whole—is one of the largest in Europe, on the other hand there are huge differences among them. It is worth noting, in fact, that the net assets of the 18 largest foundations represent almost 80 percent of the total while the 18 smallest foundations hold little more than one percent. So, in light of the recent economic crisis and the subsequent uncertainty in financial markets, the opportunity to identify other resources for funding their philanthropic activities is evident for medium and small foundations. In addition, engaging donors could help a bank foundation to enlarge its stakeholder base and strengthen its relationship with the community. Engaging donors can unveil a world of opportunities for Italian foundations. A study conducted in 2009 by Fondazione Cariplo, in fact, has shown how, in Italy, there is an estimated €105 billion worth of wealth transfer which could be potentially caught by philanthropic organizations over the 16-year period from 2004 to 2020.

In a recent white paper prepared for his board, Kevin Murphy, president of the Berks County Community Foundation, highlights the freedom of community foundations to “irritate and agitate”. Thanks to their endowment, in effect, they can take on invisible or unpopular issues; issues that no donors have identified for support. Similarly, but from a banking foundation’s perspective, some issues are not addressed out of fear of invading government’s fields of interest. In the Italian case, donors could solicit the foundation to get the issue off the ground, thereby shifting the locus of responsibility away from the foundation.

Donor engagement, services and education

If at the beginning the community foundations endowment was built primarily from bequests—that is, gifts provided by individuals through their wills or other testamentary devices—today all community foundations are committed to engaging potential donors to enhance their assets. Although giving remains a deeply personal act, community foundations have developed over the last 30 years several techniques aimed at attracting and cultivating donors. They have also learned that nowadays donors want to take a “hands-on” approach. They want to be able to see, feel and touch what they are supporting and what kind of change their support is making. They want to support a cause rather than an organization, a cause that is often close to them, emotionally and physically.
Below are some of the most common kinds of funds set up by community foundations to match donors’ interests.

- **Unrestricted funds**: These funds give the board the discretion to use the donor’s gift to meet current needs and make grants in the donor’s name.

- **Field-of-interest fund**: With these types of funds, the foundation makes grants to nonprofits that tackle issues of concern to the donor, such as child and family welfare, youth, education or health. The foundation usually allows the donor to narrow the fund’s focus to the extent possible while still maintaining the fund’s stated goal.

- **Donor-advised fund**: This fund allows the donor to actively recommend organizations to receive grants from the fund. After the donor’s death, such funds usually become unrestricted.

- **Designated Funds**: This funds names specific nonprofits to receive grants, subject always to the board’s variance power, which ensures that the fund remains relevant over time. Should circumstances change that make carrying out the fund’s purpose impossible, impractical, unnecessary, or undesirable, the board can put the money to use for other important charitable activities.

During the process of bringing in potential donors to set up a fund, the foundation’s staff members help them decide what kind of tool can better serve their interests. They help prospective donors think about their charitable passions, decide when and what to give and, ultimately what type of fund to choose.

**Financial advisers from a different perspective**

Professional advisers—private bankers, estate and financial planners, investment professionals, and insurance advisers—can have enormous influence on the ways in which individuals, families and businesses perceive and practice charitable giving. For this reason community foundations work closely with professional advisers, providing them with information about the foundations’ funds and philanthropic activities, organizing periodic plenary sessions and one-on-one meetings, working together to tailor charitable funds options able to meet their clients’ needs and expectations.

Many Italian banking foundations still have a strong relationship with the original banks. This link makes them well situated to foster a partnership with private bankers aimed to engage potential donors. This could create a win-win relationship: on the one hand, banks could expand their offers with new added value services (philanthropic advisory services) and foundations could enlarge their assets with the funds provided by new donors. Compared to other philanthropic institutions, banking foundations could be even more attractive to
prospective donors. Thanks to their solid endowment, in fact, they could manage the donor’s fund without charge, making all fund income available for charitable purposes.

**Staff expertise: What we get and what we need**

Departments that typically exist in community foundations, such as donor relations or development, generally don’t exist in Italian bank foundations. However if bank foundations choose to act as vehicles for donors they will need to implement these functions. It could require the foundation to hire new personnel that should probably have specific experience in fundraising. Yet, not only the staff will be required to adopt some changes, also the board could be required to embrace a different perspective and develop new skills that would enhance their ability to attract and cultivate donors to the foundation. Regarding the financial advisers’ relations, they could be easily be implemented without any new hiring: this function could be played by existing foundation staff attached to the financial, grantmaking or planning office with the support of the secretary general or some board members.

**Legal incentives: Thinking of a new reform**

Italian politicians, researchers and nonprofit professionals are debating the possibility of adopting a tax policy that is more favorable towards and encouraging of philanthropic giving. However, as has happened in the US, there was a vehement protest in Italy some months ago against a proposal by the Italian minister of economy and finance to reduce the percentage of the income tax to dedicate to nonprofit organizations. In the end, the percentage remains the same but the total amount has been subject to a “slight” reduction (from €500 to €400 million). Anyway, the Italian fiscal system does not strongly encourage philanthropy: the incentives for giving are few while the fiscal system allows the wealth to transfer without substantial barriers. For Italian banking foundations there is also an additional challenge to attract donors: the Italian legal system doesn’t allow donors to deduct donations to bank foundations from their income. The reasoning behind this was clear: legislators didn’t want to allow rich banking foundations to compete with small nonprofits in attracting donors. However, if we now assume that donations to former banking foundations can be used as a leverage to enhance donations to local small nonprofits, fiscal reform facilitating this shift could be more easily accepted.
4. FROM A BANKING FOUNDATION TO A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: THE CASE OF THE BROOKLYN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The origin and features of Italian banking foundations make them a unique case in the experience of global philanthropy. This is the reason why I was really surprised upon learning that the Brooklyn Community Foundation has a history quite similar to that of Italian bank foundations, it being a foundation of banking origin too. In 1998, the Independence Community Bank decided to devolve about 10 percent of its stock to foster the creation of the Independence Community Foundation, a private foundation dedicated to serving low- and moderate-income residents in Brooklyn neighborhoods, the area in which the bank operated. Independence Community Foundation (ICF) began with a stock asset valued at more than $56 million. Diversifying and investing its assets, over a period of 11 years, the Foundation distributed more than $70 million in grants and became the largest private foundation in Brooklyn. Approximately two-thirds of these grants were awarded to Brooklyn-serving programs, a ratio that fully honored the intentions of its founders. The Bank—the source of the Foundation's start-up funds and a partner on a number of initiatives—closed its doors in 2006. But the Foundation's work continued. Over time, the Foundation's work with the Brooklyn nonprofit community continued to grow and deepen. Its leaders and staff observed an acute and growing need—particularly during difficult economic times—to focus more resources more intensively on a host of issues facing the network of Brooklyn organizations with which the Foundation works. After extensive consultation and research, the ICF board of directors elected to transfer its entire endowment to create the Brooklyn Community Foundation, a public charity, and to raise additional funds to increase the pool of resources available to local nonprofits.

In October 2009, the Brooklyn Community Foundation celebrated its official launch as the only community foundation dedicated exclusively to the people of Brooklyn. Dedicated to improving the lives of people in Brooklyn by strengthening communities through local giving, grantmaking and community service, the Brooklyn Community Foundation encourages all who live in or care about Brooklyn to invest in its future. And, thanks to the Independence Community Foundation's generosity and foresight, there are no administrative or fundraising costs charged to donors. Every dollar raised goes directly to Brooklyn nonprofits and projects.

During the meeting organized by the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society’s staff at the Brooklyn Community Foundation, I realized how this organization has faced – or is still facing – many of the challenges that Italian banking foundations are struggling with, including: 1) the board’s reluctance to remove references to the bank’s name from the name of the foundation (even when the original local bank was already incorporated in a national group), 2) the difficulty of raising community commitment to the foundation, because of the
previous link with the bank, 3) the attempt to spread the Foundation’s (new) image throughout Brooklyn neighborhoods, using effective marketing strategies. Regarding the last point in particular, in 2010 the Foundation launched the “Do Gooder” initiative, which was an innovative campaign giving the audience the possibility to choose their “local nonprofit heroes” and play an active role over the period of the campaign (to learn more, see the case study below). Moving from a bank foundation to an actual community foundation required a change for the foundation’s staff and board who were now charged with managing both the assets inherited from the bank and the funds provided by donors. In that sense, “having donors made us more responsible to the community. It helped the foundation strengthen the relationship with its citizens” (Stuart Post, Senior Program Officer, Brooklyn Community Foundation).

**The Brooklyn Do Gooder Awards**

With the *Brooklyn Do Gooder Awards* the Brooklyn Community Foundation wanted to celebrate its motto “Good Right Here” giving all Brooklynites the possibility to nominate and vote for those who they “believe embody the highest value of community service and philanthropy; exceptional individuals who display an outstanding sense of giving back locally—with time, talent and/or charity.” Through a web-based platform all the community could firstly identify their favorite and then vote for them. At the end of this step, a shortlisted group of 20 finalists was selected for the final round where a special commission chose the five winners, one for each Brooklyn Community Foundation’s field of interests (Arts for All, Caring Neighbors, Community Development, Education and Youth Achievement, Green Communities). The five winners were honored during the 2010 Brooklyn Does Good celebration (November 3, 2010) where they were awarded with a 5,000$ prize to re-invest in a Brooklyn charity or public institution. Thanks to this initiative more than 300,000 Brooklynites could vote their favorite candidate (the teacher of their children, their neighborhood’s social worker, the local theater’s director) but, first and foremost, they have learned to know their foundation. Given the success of the first edition, the Brooklyn Community Foundation is now working to launch a second edition of the initiative in 2011.

**Chinita Pointer (2010 All for All Winner)**

Chinita Pointer, wife of the late, award-winning violinist Noel Pointer, has a vision of creating a string orchestra for children in Brooklyn and connecting them to higher education. Her work as the Executive Director of the Noel Pointer Foundation helps give youth in Central Brooklyn an opportunity to excel in the arts and beyond. The program provides young people a place to hone their craft and be surrounded by positive role models. "If we can change their lives, it's a snowball effect," she says.
5. MORE ON SOCIAL CAPITAL

In a recently published study, Professor Fabio Ferrucci released the results of research aimed at investigating the creation of social capital through partnerships among private, public and nonprofit sectors. In particular he chose the relatively new experience of Italian community foundations as the main case study for his research. His findings show that neither the presence of an institutionalized network among partners or the partnership's effectiveness and efficiency in pursuing its goals are sufficient conditions to give rise to social capital, which is instead the result of an intentional act undertaken by partners. On this issue, Italian foundations could get some sound ideas from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation project “Social Capital. Better Together”, which provides some practical examples of how to build social capital. Below are suggestions for ways to strengthen community connections, build neighborhood trust and get people involved. (For further details, please visit “100 Things You Can Do to Build Social Capital” at www.bettertogethernh.org.)

What you can do...

- Go for a walk, invite a neighbor.
- Visit a local nursing home, day care center, or group home.
- Start a children’s story hour at your local library.
- Organize a community garden.
- Give to your local food bank
- Talk to your friends and family about social capital

What your organization can do...

- Invite local government officials to a lunchtime discussion with your staff and volunteers.
- Provide release time to employees for volunteering.
- Provide meeting space for local community organizations.
- Establish a matching grants program; match charitable contributions by your employees.
- Invite school groups to have a field trip at your site.
- Hold staff and/or volunteer discussions about social capital, and what you can do to help increase it.
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