Case Studies

California Forward

The Issue

In 2005, several of California's largest foundations came to share the view that state's partisan politics and tangled governance processes impeded progress on many of the most important issues they each cared about, such as education reform, and the health and wellbeing of children and families.[1]

The scope and depth of the problem was so extensive that no single foundation could realistically hope to solve it alone, or even make a substantive, positive difference. What's more, there was no organization in place dedicated to improving government functions at the broad scale needed to make a significant, lasting difference statewide.

"It was desperate times," said Carol Larson, president and CEO of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. "Something had been missing from the dialogue [between the state of California and its people]. There was a crucial need for a bipartisan, long-term entity that could catalyze new thinking."

> ## Fast Facts
>
> **Type of collaboration:** Create a new entity
>
> **Established:** 2007
>
> **Funders involved:** The California Endowment, Evelyn and Walter Hass Jr. Fund, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation
>
> **Shared goal:** A nonpartisan effort to bring about fiscal, structural, and democratic process reforms to fundamentally reshape the way California government operates
>
> **Funding committed by Packard to date:** $4.9 million, including $60,000 dedicated to external evaluation

How the Collaborative Worked

Five foundations (The California Endowment, the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, William and Flora Hewlett, James Irvine, and Packard) decided to launch a joint effort to improve California's system of government.[2] Four organizations— California Common Cause, the Center for Governmental Studies, the New California Network, and The Commonwealth Club of California's Voices of Reform Project—

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1 Conversations began in 2005; initial funding occurred in fall 2007; and public launch took place in March 2008.

2 The David and Lucile Packard Foundation is a tax-exempt charitable organization qualified under section 501(c)(3) and classified as a private foundation under section 509(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. Packard Foundation funds may have been used to support some, but not all, of the activities of grantees and others described in this case study. No Packard Foundation funds were used to support or oppose any candidate for election to public office. No Packard Foundation funds were earmarked or designated to be used for lobbying or attempts to influence legislation (as defined in section 4945(d)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code).

came together to propose launching a new organization, California Forward. This new entity would operate in a bipartisan manner and would engage in policy development, coalition building, advocacy, and communications to improve the functioning of California's government.

California Forward set out to change California's political culture in two ways: by promoting governance reform and by modeling—through its own organizational make up and processes—a different way of getting work done. Specifically, the organization would demonstrate deliberative, bipartisan (or even nonpartisan) democracy.

Leaders of the five foundations helped recruit impressive bipartisan cochairs for the organization's Leadership Council, Leon Panetta and Tom McKernan. The cochairs then assembled the Leadership Council, comprised of representatives of business, labor, faith, and community organizations. In 2007, the five funders provided initial three-year grants. In 2010, the funders pledged another $15 million in grants through 2014. As these grants come to conclusion, some funders are now considering transition funding.

With high-profile advocacy efforts, pinning down an exit strategy can be difficult. While it's advisable for any collaborative to be clear about exit criteria and plans, exit discussions need to occur along the way. And as the time approaches, the specifics require careful attention and discussions. "As our current commitments come to an end, the funders are meeting with California Forward leadership to discuss their plans for future years and to develop a transition to new sources of funding," said Larson. "We take seriously how that transition occurs because we want to make sure California Forward's good work continues."

For each of the funders, the creation of California Forward required stepping outside its own comfort zone, including embracing ambiguity. CEOs were much more engaged than is typical of other grants, given the scale of the work and the power of their combined voices. Some funders made grants outside their regular grant-making programs, recognizing the cross-cutting impact this work could have. Each funder agreed to shift its standard reporting requirements to allow California Forward to concentrate on its advocacy efforts without also having to create multiple annual reports tailored to the interests of each foundation.

All of this requires tremendous trust and coordination. Said Jim Canales, former president and CEO of the James Irvine Foundation, "So much of this is about interpersonal relationships. There was no ego brought to the table. And we worked from the strengths of each funder, from Haas' and California Endowment's commitment to all Californians, to Hewlett's rigor in the development of strategy, to Packard's practical experience in public policy, especially through their successes in the child advocacy space." Added Ira Hirschfield, president of the Haas Jr. Fund, "There is a real respect among all of us. We're glad to be at the table with one another."

And the funders of California Forward continue to build on these strengths, creating leadership structures to ensure ongoing conversation and coordination. The funders formed a CEO group and a staff group (consisting of the program officers and program directors who manage the grants on a day-to-day basis). The CEO group generally has met in-person twice a year. The staff group has had periodic check-in calls and adds time as needed given the needs of California Forward at any given time.

Despite the close work among the funders, the collaboration has not been without challenges. For example, funders maintain appointing authority to name the cochairs of California Forward's Leadership Council, which has ultimate decision-making authority. As the funders reflected on the early days of California Forward, they wondered whether they should have been more active in their approach when they saw leadership challenges arise within the organization. However, each funder also notes that the situation was complicated and "experimental" in many ways.

Results

California Forward has been credited with helping to advance three specific reforms that have been approved by voters: independent redrawing of political districts, "top two" open state primaries, and majority-vote budgets.

California Forward also has worked to improve dialogue among various groups through transparency and nonpartisan research. In 2013, for example, California Forward, together with the California Special Districts Association, launched a first-of-its-kind portal providing data and information on more than 1,100 California special districts. [When residents or landowners want new services or higher levels of existing services, they can form a special district to pay for and administer them.] The new tool, located on California Forward's Transparency Portal, (transparency. cafwd.org/portal/), allows the public access to background information and financial data on special districts throughout the state.

California Forward has not had an unbroken string of successes. In 2012, for example, California Forward's sister organization, the California Forward Action Fund, supported Proposition 31, the Government Performance and Accountability Act that voters did not pass. But the organization's leaders and supporters are well aware that advocacy on the scale they are attempting is not simple. Said Hirschfield, "The jury's still out on the overall efficacy of the work. But there's still a need for the work." Canales concurred: "This is compelling, with great potential for impact. We know that in the absence of funder collaboration, this would be a much slower movement."

Key Takeaways

- **Big challenges require big thinking:** "A functioning California democracy is critical to getting our work done," said Larson. Each of the funders came to the work recognizing the magnitude of the challenge at hand. They worked creatively to collaborate effectively together, whether by working outside

formal grantmaking areas, modifying typical grantmaking reporting policy, or deciding how activist to be in championing the bipartisan effort. Importantly, collaboration was seen by funders as a valuable means to an end—signaling and advancing issues more quickly—but not as an end in itself.

- **Trust among collaborators is key:** Especially with a challenge of this magnitude and the real ambiguity associated with the work, each funder noted the importance of trust. "There is a real camaraderie and degree of respect among this group. It is a well-stewarded collaboration," said Amy Dominguez-Arms, program director at the Irvine Foundation.

- **Role definition is critical, including the role of foundation CEOs:** Achieving consensus among a group of peers with no clear leader is extremely difficult. Hence, California Forward's funders looked to Irvine's Jim Canales to fill this role. "For Irvine, the work of California Forward is core to their strategy, and we looked to Jim to lead. He has incredible skills as a facilitator," said Hirschfield. Additionally, the participation of foundation CEOs was critical. Said Canales: "This is a compelling idea that is more powerfully messaged through the shared brands of foundations and CEOs. There is power and movement here."

The Climate and Land Use Alliance

The Issue

Greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation, forest degradation, and agricultural production account for approximately 25 percent of global emissions. In 2009, four leading US philanthropic institutions already working together on these issues realized that much more needed to be done to address the pressures associated with deforestation and land use changes. These funders—David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Ford Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and ClimateWorks—concluded that:

- The global response to climate change will be unsuccessful without significant reductions in deforestation and forest degradation and improved agricultural practices.

- To meaningfully reduce deforestation and enhance the ability of land to store carbon, we must address the forces that drive agricultural practices and expansion into forested areas, including the growing global demand for food, fuel, and fiber.

- Protecting and enhancing the livelihoods and rights of indigenous peoples and rural communities is an essential part of the solution.

> ## Fast Facts
>
> **Type of collaboration:** Create a new entity and coordinate funding
>
> **Established:** 2010
>
> **Funders involved:** David and Lucile Packard Foundation (lead), Ford Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, ClimateWorks Foundation
>
> **Shared goal:** To harness the potential of forested and agricultural landscapes to mitigate climate change, benefit people, and protect the environment
>
> **Funding committed by Packard to date:** $12.7M direct investment plus additional significant financial support of ClimateWorks

To advance their shared goals, the four funders resolved to create a new, collaborative entity, the Climate and Land Use Alliance, more commonly known as CLUA. While the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation is not a formal member of CLUA, the foundation participates in most CLUA activities and aligns all of its tropical forest funding to CLUA's strategy.

How the Collaborative Worked

CLUA launched in January 2010 for a five-year trial. As a collaborative, the partners agreed to develop a joint strategy and coordinate funding decisions. Each partner saw an opportunity to create "critical mass" around deforestation and agricultural sustainability and work with colleagues for whom they already had deep respect. As David Kaimowitz, director of sustainable development at the Ford Foundation put it: "[Ford] alone wasn't able to put in enough resources at the beginning. . . . And we also saw a big opportunity to work with foundations that don't have the same context or vision. We viewed that as a way to have something that was complementary. We didn't see it as contradictory. And it's proven to be a fabulous experience."

Each organization brought something different to the table. Kaimowitz explained: "The Ford Foundation is about social justice. This collaborative had to have some social justice perspective to warrant our getting involved. ClimateWorks had a strong carbon focus. Moore had a very strong biodiversity perspective. And Packard was the glue that had a little bit of each of these." Working together, the CLUA partners have put together a joint strategy, coordinated work plans for a variety of initiatives, and agreed on plans for monitoring and evaluation.

CLUA is governed by a seven-member Alliance board and managed by an executive director and four-member staff. The board has broad oversight over unified strategy and grantmaking that supports the collaborative's five initiatives: global climate and land use, and programs in Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico and Central America, and the United States. The teams working on each initiative include foundation program officers with specific interest in the target areas. These teams help develop and oversee grants in their respective areas.

Ford, Moore, and Packard decide upon and administer their own grants rather than pooling their funds. Each of the grants that they want to be considered CLUA grants has to be discussed by the different foundations in initiative meetings. Based on those discussions, CLUA's executive director can decide if grants less than $250,000 will be considered CLUA grants. Above, $250,000 the CLUA board decides.

The CLUA board also allocates the use of ClimateWorks funds to an initiative based on a recommendation by CLUA's program director. The initiative coordinators then decide on the use of those funds. Some of the foundation partners are involved in on-the-ground decision making. For example, Ford and Packard staffs serve as initiative coordinators; other initiative coordinators are long-term ClimateWorks consultants. And, staff of all four foundations (ClimateWorks, Ford, Moore, and Packard) can serve as program officers for the ClimateWorks grants. All ClimateWorks grants smaller than $250,000 have to be approved by the CLUA executive director. If over that amount the board approves.

"The structure has worked really well because you have lots of experimentation from each of the individual funders, but also collective effort in support of one strategy," said Walt Reid, director of Packard's Conservation and Science Program and past CLUA board chairman. Moreover, CLUA brings together "people with different approaches in order to have a diversity of ideas and goals." This blending of diverse perspectives has big unanticipated advantages, added Reid. "We're constantly being forced to ask questions we don't normally ask ourselves." With diversity also comes a wide range of expertise. "If we want to understand what's going on in Norway, or with large international conservation organizations, or with climate change negotiations, all we have to do is ring up one of our CLUA foundation partners. It's been very valuable," noted Reid.

"What makes it all particularly amazing," Reid concluded, "is how different we are in our views, our history, in the grantees we support—and it all works."

Results

Since its 2010 founding, CLUA has awarded 392 grants and contracts totaling more than $104 million in pursuit of its common strategy of enhancing carbon stocks associated with land use management.

An independent evaluation conducted in mid-2012 indicates that CLUA already had made substantial progress:

> *At this point a key question for the partner foundations is whether CLUA is having, or showing the potential to have, an impact that justifies the investments being made, both financially and in terms of their staff time? Our conclusion is, that given the opportunities and constraints CLUA faced, the Alliance has so far made excellent use of the available financial and human resources in pursuit of its objectives, and demonstrated an impressive potential to deliver valuable future impacts.*[3]

The current board chairman, Guillermo Castilleja, chief program officer at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, praised his predecessor for setting the CLUA's partners on a mutually beneficial path. "Walt Reid personifies Packard's ability to establish a productive and successful collaboration," noted Castilleja, who added that his task going forward is "to ensure that the partnership is even more effective."

Key Takeaways

In studying CLUA, we observed several success factors:

- **Relationships rooted in deep respect:** Each of the four early funders had worked together in the past, and the principals of each noted a deep respect for their colleagues, despite differences in approach and focus.

- **Regular communication and a willingness to have hard conversations:** The norm across the four funders is one of strong communication: clear, constant, and candid. All of the funders noted their willingness to have hard conversations and a comfort with exploring differences candidly. This was enabled in part by preexisting relationships, but the funders also noted that the frequency of communication facilitated this dialogue.

- **Flexible governance structure:** A flexible governance structure that allowed the funders collectively to pursue a shared strategy while maintaining separate sub-strategies of interest to each funder.

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3 *Independent Mid-Term Evaluation of the Climate and Land Use Alliance*, August,8, 2012, http://www.climateandlandusealliance.org/uploads/PDFs/CLUA%20MTEval%20Summary%202012.pdf

Community Leadership Project

The Issue

In 2008, the California legislature was considering legislation that would have required foundations to report on the number and amount of grants they made to people of color and/or female-led organizations; the number of contracts to vendors led by people of color; and the number and amount of grants they made to organizations serving low-income communities, people of color, LGBT people, and other underrepresented groups. The legislation also would have required foundations to report on the racial and gender diversity of their boards and staff. Opposition from the foundation community was strong because of unnecessary government interference in grantmaking and onerous reporting requirements. Eventually, a compromise was struck that sidelined the legislation in exchange for a commitment by nine foundations to voluntarily address diversity in grantmaking.

Fast Facts

Type of collaboration: Create and coinvest in a new time-limited initiative

Established: 2009

Funders involved: David and Lucile Packard Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Shared goal: Build capacity of grantees in low-income communities and communities of color

Funding committed by Packard to date: $4.9 million, including $200,000 for evaluation

In the wake of that legislative tussle, the presidents of the James Irvine, William and Flora Hewlett, David and Lucile Packard foundations resolved to support leadership development and capacity building among minority-led and other grassroots organizations serving low-income communities. As a first step, they embarked on a listening tour to hear first-hand the concerns of nonprofits and community groups representing diverse populations. Out of that effort came a new joint effort, the Community Leadership Project (CLP), established in 2009. CLP set out to strengthen grassroots organizations that serve low-income people and communities of color in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, the Central Coast, and San Joaquin Valley.

How the Collaborative Worked

Once the presidents agreed to an operating framework for CLP, they turned day-to-day operations over to three program officers, one from each organization. The program officers were empowered to make sure that regular foundation rules and regulations (like grant cycles or program strategies) did not get in the way to making CLP happen. From the outset, the funders envisioned a three-year commitment to build the capacity of small- and medium-sized organizations—groups typically not served by the Hewlett or Packard foundations. All involved understood the risks inherent in the project.

"I was suspicious about CLP," said Kathy Reich, Packard's director of Organizational Effectiveness Grantmaking. "I thought it would never work because of the different work styles of the foundations." Moreover, Hewlett and Packard "are not traditional social justice grantmakers," she added. "Investing in small nonprofits serving communities of color in California is not typically what we do; it's not necessarily aligned to our global strategic focus."

Given the mandate from the top to make CLP work, the three program officers lost no time figuring out how to work together. "Trust building was important because the three of us had never worked together before, though our foundations had partnered in the past," said Reich. "It was definitely a high stakes collaboration. We had media attention and groups critical of foundations watching us. There was a risk of public failure."

Phase one launched in April 2009 and was underwritten with $10 million from the three foundations. "When the three presidents are highly motivated and like working together, the process goes quickly," remarked John McGuirk, director of Hewlett's Performing Arts Program and liaison to CLP. Working by consensus, the three program officers picked 27 intermediaries—community foundations, grantmaking public charities, and funder affinity groups—to regrant funds the foundations channeled to them. The intermediary organizations, in turn, awarded grants to 100 small nonprofits. Each grantee received funds from all three foundations.

To save themselves time and work, the program officers hired an independent consultant to handle several key tasks, including coordination of report submissions from the grantees and management of an online site for grantee information sharing.

As phase one neared its conclusion in December 2012, and the foundations weighed the merits of committing to a second round of support, the program officers agreed that a number of grant administration and process changes needed to be made if the project continued. Involving each foundation with every grantee, for example, proved to be too time consuming. "Minor budget reallocations or grant extensions had to be checked with all three funders," noted Reich. "Relatively minor issues could escalate and getting everyone on the phone to get resolution was time consuming." In fact, the time commitment took everyone by surprise. "Everyone under-resourced CLP in terms of time," said Reich. "Effectively staffing a collaboration is easily twice as time-intensive as a typical grant."

Relying on a consultant for administrative support turned out not to work as smoothly as envisioned. The program officers conceded that perhaps they failed to adequately delineate the consultant's role. Nonetheless, they found that the consultant added an unnecessary layer between themselves, the intermediaries, and the community grantees.

When the evaluation results for phase one showed meaningful progress in a variety of areas, the funders agreed to another three-year, $10 million commitment extending through 2015, at which point they plan to exit the project. With the new phase, the

program officers decided to do a number of things differently. They eliminated the independent consultant position, trimmed the number of intermediaries to 10 from 27, and cut the number of grantees nearly in half to 57. To streamline decision making, each grantee now receives funds from only one foundation, not all three as in the past. While they continue to operate by consensus, the program officers found it helpful to more clearly delineate their roles. McGuirk at Hewlett took on meeting coordination, Connie Galambos Malloy at Irvine took on communications, and Reich at Packard took on measurement and evaluation. The trio also agreed to use email for frequent communication, supplemented by phone check-ins every six to eight weeks, and periodic face-to-face get-togethers.

Results

The CLP did not include a plan for evaluation when it launched in 2009. At the time, the three foundations planned to exit the project after three years. But one year in, they reversed course and hired Social Policy Research Associates to conduct program evaluations. The first evaluation effort was not well received by either the intermediaries or grantees, who viewed it as difficult and time consuming. As a result, Social Policy Research Associates agreed to simplify the measurement tools and pay grantees for their time collecting data.

When the results came in, phase one evaluation found "early indications that CLP's investments are making meaningful changes on the ground with individual leaders and organizations." Specifically, the evaluation found:

- Small nonprofit grantees are becoming more financially stable, building leadership, and becoming more resilient.

- Intermediaries are becoming more familiar with the unique issues, challenges, and strengths of small organizations serving low-income communities and communities of color.

- The three funders are learning a great deal about what it means to work effectively with small organizations.

In phase two, the funders left no doubt about the importance of continuing with evaluation. It's built into the program, and intermediaries will have an opportunity to help design the evaluation tools and get individualized training on implementation.

Key Takeaways

- **Sometimes, collaboration has to start at the top:** Without the commitment of the three foundation presidents, CLP never would have happened. It was their commitment that allowed the program officers the flexibility to make CLP work.

- **Successful collaborations may require a big time commitment:** While the time program officers devoted to the project fluctuated, in general everyone underestimated by half what it takes to make a collaborative work.

- **Adapt on the fly:** In phase one, the three program officers struggled to figure out how to work together and with the consultant they hired to manage important

administrative processes. In phase two, they made a number of adjustments to streamline decision making and clarify their own roles in the collaboration, including elimination of the consultant's position.

- **Commit to evaluation from the beginning:** Evaluation got off to a rocky start when the three funders' decided in year two of CLP to add assessment to the program. In phase two, everyone knows that evaluation is part of the program, and they can plan accordingly.

- **Set milestones, including an exit plan:** Putting a time limit on a collaboration forces the funders to step back and evaluate before proceeding—if they choose to proceed. Although the CLP funders backed into evaluation after they started, the three-year initial commitment clearly set expectations for everyone involved. The phase two commitment lays out an exit timeline, which will be designed and communicated in detail at least a year prior to the exit phase.

First Focus

The Issue

Shortly after Lois Salisbury joined the David and Lucile Packard Foundation in March of 2002 as director of its Children, Families, and Communities program, she set out to ensure a strong advocacy voice for children in Washington, DC. Child advocates in the capitol were missing a unified voice with which to advocate for children within federal tax and budget debates, where so much federal policy was set. Existing groups tended to focus on individual issues, lacked relationships with state-based advocates, and wielded little clout on Capitol Hill. Salisbury envisioned a new project, housed within an existing organization. That project would draw on the best state-level thinking about issues and priorities—and use it to inform legislative advocacy.[4] Salisbury viewed this work as critical to ensuring the overall success of Packard's Children, Families, and Communities program.

> ## Fast Facts
>
> **Type of collaboration:** Create a new entity
>
> **Established:** 2008 (formerly known as the Children's Investment Project)
>
> **Funders involved:** Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation
>
> **Shared goal:** A bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions
>
> **Funding committed by Packard to date:** $3.4 million

Salisbury and her team knew that Packard would need help testing assumptions about the need for a strong advocacy voice for children and defining the right approach to take. But other philanthropic organizations rebuffed her pitch to form a collaborative effort. "It's very difficult to get funders engaged if it's not their idea," said Salisbury. "So we got a tepid response from most when we proposed the investigation we wanted to do."

One group, however, answered Salisbury's call: The Atlantic Philanthropies. "It was a serendipitous connection—Packard and Atlantic. We hit it off," said Salisbury. Additionally, these foundations found a like-minded ally in the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Working together, the three philanthropies soon verified the need for a new children's advocacy group, which they planned to call First Focus. And they teamed up to take the next steps.

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4 The David and Lucile Packard Foundation is a tax-exempt charitable organization qualified under section 501(c)(3) and classified as a private foundation under section 509(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. Packard Foundation funds may have been used to support some, but not all, of the activities of grantees and others described in this case study. No Packard Foundation funds were used to support or oppose any candidate for election to public office. No Packard Foundation funds were earmarked or designated to be used for lobbying or attempts to influence legislation (as defined in section 4945(d)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code).

How the Collaborative Worked

Rather than launch First Focus as a stand-alone entity, the funders resolved to nest it within an existing organization dedicated to supporting young people. A competitive bidding process led them to pick America's Promise Alliance, a collaborative network founded in 1997 now comprised of more than 400 organizations that facilitate volunteer actions to benefit children and young people. With grants from the Packard Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies, the Alliance launched First Focus in 2008 and billed it as the organization's "policy affiliate." Annie E. Casey Foundation soon joined as a founding funder. First Focus describes itself as "a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions."

During the organization's formative stage, Salisbury and her partners at Atlantic Philanthropies spent a lot of time on First Focus. "I was in DC every couple of months, and we were on the phone a lot," Salisbury recalled. "It was very hands-on for a while." Added Michael Laracy, Annie E. Casey Foundation's director of Policy Reform and Advocacy, "Casey brought a very strong connection to DC. Being based in Baltimore, it was very easy for us to hop over to DC." But after time, once First Focus had established itself with grounded leaders, the funders backed off. Each funder recognized that for First Focus to be successful, it needed to have its own leadership team making strategic and operational decisions and to gain additional funding from other sources.

However, this was not always an easy line to walk. Salisbury recalls the need to provide strong feedback when it became clear to the funders that the initial leader they had helped select to run First Focus was not a good fit. As Salisbury recounted, "We had to be carefully engaged in giving America's Promise our feedback, while not interfering."

Under the leadership of current president Bruce Lesley, First Focus has achieved the independence that Packard had hoped for. The organization conducts polling and opinion research, and writes fact sheets, legislative comparisons, and policy reports to be used as resources for lawmakers and others working on behalf of children. The work spans a number of topics, including early childhood, education, health, juvenile justice, and tax and budget policy. First Focus staff members also testify in Congress as part of the organization's efforts to direct attention to how issues ranging from immigration reform to health insurance and the justice system affect children.

Today, First Focus has a collaborative of funders providing general support, including Packard, Atlantic, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Other supporters, including Goldman Sachs, have provided funding for specific projects. For its part, Packard remains involved in steering the organization's work. "In terms of level of funding, I think they're very much like any grantee in the portfolio," explained Meera Mani, Salisbury's successor after she retired in 2011. "That being said, we tend to be fairly involved in the organization's strategic direction and about advocacy in the field overall." Along with general

operating support, Packard has also provided funding for targeted purposes, such as a 2010 organizational effectiveness grant to help First Focus enhance its grassroots engagement strategies.

Results

First Focus publishes a wide variety of reports and fact sheets to serve as resources for budget-makers and other nonprofits and children's advocates whose efforts may be focused more narrowly. One example: Each year since 2008, First Focus has published "The Children's Budget," a detailed guide to federal spending on children, offering information about more than 180 federally funded children's programs.

First Focus counts among its successes the work it has done to increase national focus on issues of children's health insurance and to protect federal support for all programs that impact children and low-income families. These cross-cutting efforts benefit Packard's other efforts within its Children, Families, and Communities portfolio—part of the Foundation's original impetus in forming such an entity.

Key Takeaways

- **Ensure collaboration is truly necessary for success:** Packard initially sought out collaborators given the magnitude of the challenges at hand, but struggled initially to find a like-minded partner given its own strong point of view. In considering collaboration, ask yourself: Do we need collaborators or simply additional support? As Mani put it, "The changes we seek have complex solutions and can benefit from collective experience. That being said, one must be clear that all of the collaborators have the same understanding of what is to be achieved and be willing to make hard choices and learn from mistakes." Moreover, when collaboration works well, it sends an important message to the field. "We expect our grantees to work together, coordinate, look for efficiencies, and it's really about trying to walk that talk, even if partnering in philanthropy is hard," said Mani.

- **Explore alternative options before deciding to create a new entity:** Before establishing a stand-alone entity, funders should examine whether an existing organization can add the new role to its existing portfolio of activities. In this case, the funders solicited bids from existing organizations to identify the right one to establish First Focus.

- **Keep the ultimate purpose of the collaboration in mind:** Often, as a collaborative effort evolves, people tend to behave as if collaboration is a goal in and of itself. It's not. As Mani said, "We are conscious about asking 'what is our message, where is the value add, why Packard, why now?' " Anything the funders do ought to link directly to the outcomes they're seeking together. Otherwise, said Mani, "It's too easy for collaborations to distort the value of their coming together."

Silicon Valley Out-of-School-Time Collaborative

The Issue

Out-of-school-time (OST) programs can have an important impact on students' academic and social development, boosting their chances for graduating from high school and succeeding in college. With those goals in mind, a group of funders created the Silicon Valley OST Collaborative to improve the quality of academic skill development provided by out-of-school programs for the region's middle and high school students. In 2013, the funders agreed to add an important but often overlooked element, development of noncognitive factors such as academic mindset, social skills, and learning strategies. Many of these skills are a natural fit for out-of-school settings and, unlike traditional academic skills development, can be cultivated in young people in a variety of ways that don't depend on specific academic content knowledge among staff.

Fast Facts

Type of collaboration: Coordinate funding

Established: 2010

Funders involved: Sand Hill Foundation, Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (SV2), David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Sobrato Family Foundation

Shared goal: To develop the organizational capacity of OST providers and improve the quality and effectiveness of OST programming in the Silicon Valley

Funding committed by Packard to date: $622,500

How the Collaborative Worked

The Silicon Valley OST Collaborative, launched in 2010, supports nine local OST organizations to develop and strengthen academic skills for middle and high school students. It had three goals:

- To build the capacity of each participant organization to achieve a significantly increased level of organizational impact,

- To create a learning community focused on excellence in after-school and summer academic programming, and

- To advance the field of after-school and summer academic services, collectively aspiring to demonstrate and share models for effectiveness with others outside our regional area.

The nine grantees varied in terms of program type (e.g., after-school, summer school, charter school), program focus, grades served, organizational size, and the tenure of their executive directors. But all nine shared an explicit academic focus in their OST programming. Each organization received a $45,000 annual grant, an opportunity for some additional funding, and important nonfinancial supports: five "learning community" meetings per year that brought all nine executive directors and the four funders together; one to three seminars with national experts; access to Taproot Foundation grants; and a one-to-one mentorship between each executive director and a funder.

In the first year of the collaborative, funders met regularly outside of the learning community setting to plan and share responsibilities. Concerned that their consensus-style governance process was cumbersome and time-consuming, at the end of the first year the funders asked Ash McNeely, executive director of the Sand Hill Foundation, to take the lead. Each of the other funders ended up with supporting roles: the Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (a donor circle) acted as fiscal sponsor; Packard brought strong experience with learning communities as well as knowledge about OST programs in other parts of the country; and the Sobrato Family Foundation, which came in later, contributed funds to provide for evaluations in the second and third years.

Mixing grantees and funders in an intensive series of learning community sessions is a very unusual feature of the Silicon Valley OST Collaborative. "I had initially been skeptical of learning together with funders and grantees, since this was not our typical way of operating" said Irene Wong, director of local grant making for the Packard Foundation. "But there's been real value in having both groups in a room learning together. It's built greater trust among everyone and given each of us stronger appreciation and understanding of each other's work." Sand Hill's McNeely agreed: "It's given grantees a relationship with funders that most of them don't have." She also emphasized that the time spent working together has led to an unusual degree of candor. "As funders, we've ended up being transparent about what we don't know, about what we want to learn, and about our own foundations' weaknesses."

Results

A three-year evaluation, conducted by Learning For Action Group, looked at the extent to which the Silicon Valley OST Collaborative succeeded in its goals of strengthening the grantee organizations and increasing program reach, quality, and effectiveness leading to better student outcomes. Among the findings:

- All grantees reported they improved their evaluation capacity, and at least two-thirds reported some or significant progress in each of the other areas of capacity.

- All grantees expanded the reach of their programs and the number of students they serve, for a collective increase of 27 percent. Many grantees achieved this by establishing new partnerships with other nonprofits or launching their programs in new school sites.

- All grantees expanded their programming to meet their students' needs, many by adding college prep supports to their curricula and a few by expanding the grade levels they covered in order to provide more continuous support to their students.

- Some grantees had evidence that student outcomes improved during the course of the initiative, while others have seen early signs of improvement.

- All grantees found the initiative's non-financial supports to be of even greater value than the financial support.

- For the funders, the initiative improved their practice by strengthening their commitment to funding capacity and operating support, providing multiyear grants, engaging deeply with grantees, and working in collaboration with other funders.

- Funders also deepened their knowledge of the OST field and strengthened their relationships with the local leaders.

Key Takeaways

Several success factors emerge from this work:

- **Clarify funder roles:** While the OST funders learned a tremendous amount in working by consensus, the collaborative became more efficient and effective once it asked one funder (the Sand Hill Foundation) to take the lead. The other funders also sought to differentiate roles so they, too, could focus on what they brought to the table.

- **Use external consultants selectively, especially when leanly staffed:** The funders relied on external consultants both to facilitate the learning community sessions and to help develop the overall strategy. The consultants brought a valuable point of view and important skills to the work.

- **Learn together as funders and grantees:** The evaluators helped the initiative define "moving the needle" in terms of community impact rather than focusing solely on organizational capacity. The evaluation also provided important information about which types of capacity building had contributed most to organizational change. Further, the executive directors and funders found substantial value in the amount of time they spent learning together, building trust, and helping each learn more about the other's work and perspectives.

- **Unrestricted funding provides needed flexibility:** Packard made an extra $25,000 available in 2013 to advance the funders' exploration of adding non-cognitive skill development to the OST programs. As McNeely observed: "Every collaborative budget needs flexible, unallocated funding that can be brought to the table at an opportune moment to take advantage of group ideas and momentum."

Working to Institutionalize Sex Ed (WISE)

The Issue

Since 1997 the federal government has invested more than $1.5 billion in abstinence-only sex education programs. These programs exclude important information that could help young people protect their health and have little or no evidence of effectiveness. Comprehensive sex education (CSE), on the other hand, stresses abstinence but also provides information about contraception and condoms. There is evidence that CSE programs can delay the initiation of sexual activity and reduce sexual risk.

By the second half of the 2000s, the tide was turning against abstinence-only programs. In 2007, 10 states declined federal abstinence-only funding; by 2009, nearly half of the states chose not to accept the funds. Many states and localities were also passing new laws that supported CSE. And there was public support as well. One survey found that 82 percent of adults polled favored programs that teach students about both abstinence and other methods of preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

However, in site visits across the country, the eventual leaders of WISE found that gains in CSE advocacy were not being fully realized because too few resources were used for implementation. In many places, having a favorable policy climate did not lead to schools actually delivering comprehensive sex education programs to their students.

How the Collaborative Worked

In 2009, four foundations—Grove, Ford, William and Flora Hewlett, and David and Lucile Packard—stepped up.[5] They supported the WISE Initiative to provide focused funding to states and localities where there was a favorable policy climate and where a public-private collaborative was poised to significantly improve CSE programming in K–12 public schools. The initiative supports state and local implementation efforts and seeks to expand the field's knowledge about best practices for institutionalizing CSE. Initially, it made investments in seven state and local partners. Today, its work has expanded to 11 states. For the first two years, WISE encouraged grantees to test multiple strategies to get CSE into schools. By the third year, it had codified a five-step CSE implementation model called the WISE Method.

> **Fast Facts**
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> **Type of collaboration:** Create a new entity
>
> **Established:** 2009
>
> **Funders involved:** Grove Foundation (lead), David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Ford Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, with additional funders joining in 2011
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> **Shared goal:** Provide public school students with access to comprehensive sex education
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> **Funding committed by Packard to date:** $1.3 million

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5 Hewlett stopped funding WISE in 2012.

The Grove Foundation leads the collaboration, and the foundation's Rebekah Saul Butler is the WISE program director. "Rebekah really had a vision in mind, and she was the lead funder and conceptualizer. We at Packard saw a real opportunity to partner with and lean on Rebekah's expertise," explained Lana Dakan, Packard Foundation program officer for population and reproductive health. Packard provides Grove with flexible, multiyear funding, and Grove, in turn, makes grants to subgrantees.

Governance is quite informal. The funding partners meet once a year, but otherwise, said Dakan, "There aren't any memoranda of understanding or specific structures. Rebekah leads it, and then there's a key consultant." Initially, the partners formed an advisory committee, but over time the committee was dismantled, and now WISE relies on a set of informal advisors.

What helps to keep WISE on track despite the informal collaborative arrangements among the funding partners? "Having a clear evaluation plan and metrics is really important," said Dakan, "because then you are very clear about what the initiative is trying to achieve and the progress you're making towards those outcomes. It helps guide conversations and means there are no big surprises." Even without a highly formalized governance structure, the partners often communicate with each other. "Communication doesn't have to be formal or lengthy," said Dakan. "Rebekah shoots off quick emails, and it keeps us all engaged."

Results

In the first three years of the initiative, all of the WISE sites made significant progress toward their objectives. WISE-supported activities have reached over 500,000 students; more than 700 teachers have been trained; and hundreds of schools have either implemented sex education where there was previously no sex education or significantly improved their program. As of 2014, 11 states and localities are participating in WISE.

Dakan also points to the impact that WISE has had on its funders. "We've built a relationship and shared trust among the foundation project officers involved," she said. "We're able to check in with each other—and not just about WISE, but about low-cost ways to train teachers to teach comprehensive sex ed and ways to reach kids outside of school. We're all working on this together."

Key Takeaways

We observe several success factors in this work:

- **Partner with a motivated lead funder with subject matter expertise:** With growing support for CSE in states and localities, and among the public, and with a new administration in Washington, Grove, Packard, and the other foundations in the initial group of WISE funders were able to take advantage of a much improved climate in which to spread CSE. With this timely opening at hand, Packard saw an opportunity to learn from the Grove Foundation's expertise in this area.

- **Consistent communication and clarity on shared goals can lessen the need for formal structure:** Packard and Grove generally see eye-to-eye on WISE's goals and strategy. The relationship among all the funders is not defined so much by formal arrangements as by informal communication and trust in the leadership that the Grove Foundation is providing.

- **Start with a clear evaluation plan and learn from metrics:** From the start, WISE has engaged Learning for Action Group as its evaluator. The initiative has made major decisions based on what it has learned from evaluation. For example, results from the multiple strategies tested during the first two years led to development of the WISE Method that now guides the initiative. Clarity about metrics and the evaluation plan has also helped keep the funders aligned with each other and with the overall initiative. In fact, all foundations have agreed that LFA's work fulfills their individual evaluation needs.

- **The sum is greater than the parts:** Each funding partner brought a particular expertise to the table, and the group worked collaboratively to learn from and deploy those individual assets to enhance the quality of the program. Working together in this way served to create funder buy-in and a sense that "we're all in this together."