

Building a Social Impact Strategy and Approach June 10, 2021

Description

Grantmaking is the fundamental element of a family philanthropy effort. The practice of grantmaking actualizes the motivations of a donor, advances their values, and accomplishes their aims and objectives. However, it requires careful planning and consideration. A family must decide on focus areas, articulate desired outcomes—near- and long-term—and identify the appropriate partners. And how you fund matters just as much as what you fund—getting input from community members, utilizing trust-based practices, and being responsive to current needs are all important elements of successful grantmaking. In this webinar, learn practical guidance for how to build or refresh your grantmaking strategy and approach.

Replay Link

View the webinar [replay here](#).

Summary and Resource List

Definitions and Key Phrases

The first step in developing a social impact strategy is to assess your [Philanthropy Framework](#). It is important to take stock of three critical aspects of your giving effort:

- **Charter:** Your charter defines how you relate to your founder(s) and your written/unwritten governance.
- **Social Compact:** Your social compact defines to whom you are accountable, which stakeholder views you incorporate, and what makes you legitimate.
- **Operating Model:** Your operating model explains what knowledge, competencies and resources (financial and non-financial) you can or will use to accomplish your goals.

The second step in developing a strategy is to design a roadmap to results:

1. Clarify who will define the problems to addressed, set goals, gather input, and make decisions.
 - Is this consistent with your charter? If not, you may need to revise it.
2. Clarify who will have input, and what kind of input will be important for decisions.
 - Is this consistent with your charter? If not, you may need to revise it.
3. Conduct a landscape scan
 - Understand the issue, and the system(s) it lives among
 - Understand who is active in these systems, including who can be partners/allies
4. Decide where in the system you will focus your resources, what level of resources, and what type of resources
5. Decide on a time horizon and an approach to assessing impact

It is important to make strategic choices about where to focus resources within a broader system and along what time horizon. One way to assess this is through the Iceberg Model, that visualizes the forces “under the surface” that lead to specific events and social issues.

- **Events:** A real event that took place.
- **Patterns:** The changes and the trends that we perceive taking place over time that will have caused this event.
- **Structures:** Rules, social and organizational norms, policies, guidelines, power dynamics...structures support, create and influence the patterns we see that lead events.
- **Mental models:** Ultimately drive behavior and keep the structures doing what they do. These are assumptions, beliefs, values, morals, expectations, values, thoughts, and processes of reasoning that need to exist to cause the structures to be the way they are.

Terms and definitions sourced from the *Building a Social Impact Strategy and Approach* webinar transcript and presentation by Melissa Berman, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Webinar Takeaways

Before developing or refreshing a strategy, giving families should assess the factors in play that inform their grantmaking effort and broader vision for social impact, otherwise there is a possibility that the strategy is unconnected to the organization and its ability to execute it.

- Families aren't giving in a vacuum, and they are bound by some practical considerations.
 - Giving families should assess what assets are available for social impact, and how they can be employed. Grantmaking strategies are often complemented by other tools and approaches for social impact.
 - They should identify what giving vehicle or operating model is being used to carry out their giving, and how they might best leverage this model for impact.
 - Family philanthropy in particular is often tied to shared values, a family history, or the legacy of the founders. It is common for families to align their giving practices with their values, or tie their social impact strategy to a broader family legacy.
 - Families should be mindful of all stakeholders when developing strategy – whether it is family members in a decision-making role, community members with expertise on the focus areas, or sector partners looking to collaborate.
 - They should also dedicate time to understand their focus area more deeply. It is important to understand the issue itself, but also the system(s) it lives in. It is also important to assess the funding landscape to gauge who is a potential partner or where there may be a gap in support.

Giving families should then choose where to focus resources and decide the scope and timeline of their work.

- In developing a social impact strategy, it is important to be explicit about what issue is going to be addressed and who gets to define it. Some important questions to consider in this phase:
 - Do you define the issue as a family and/or within your philanthropy, or do you bring others in help define? Who has input into the research or exploration on an issue area? Will the family undertake that work?
 - Who makes decisions, and how do you want that process to move forward? How many and which stakeholders will be brought in, and what does it mean for them to have input?
 - After considering these questions, often a landscape scan is conducted to understand the issue more deeply, the system the issue lives in, as well as the funding landscape and any potential partners.
- No one foundation or family can tackle the full set of systemic and interconnected issues at play. Giving families must be discerning in how they focus resources—at what level, and over what time, and how they will assess impact.

Values and family legacy may play a significant role in the approach or ethos of the strategy. The panelists each shared an example of how their foundation's shared values and founder history have played a role in their strategy development.

- Robert Dortch, Vice President of Program and Community Innovation at the Robins Foundation shared: "Our founders—Mr. and Ms. Robins—what they would do is they practiced what they preached. And so it was saying, how do we model the very things that we are asking our partners to do? How can we model that behavior? Mr. Robins would say people who are afraid to take risks rarely get anywhere...how can we be innovative, and how can we model how we're in relationship and how we're in partnership? And then how could we model the things that we are learning together in this process to try to transform, grow, and impact our community in a meaningful way."
- Kara Carlisle, Vice President of Programs at the McKnight Foundation shared: "I think the one we talk a lot about here is really around innovation. There's a discipline to innovation. I think what that looks like during different periods of time really does evolve. But this idea is that we shouldn't have everything tied up and decided, we need to be able to be responsive and adaptive to the field...And the other one I would say, which is more of a behavior one, it really is this idea of humility. And I think the family really embodies that. And I think it's then quite frankly a really big part of our discussion on what does humility mean when you do take a stand on something..."

Resources

Resources from Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

- [The Philanthropy Roadmap](#) and a [full range of guides](#) included in the broader Roadmap, including:
 - [Making Change Happen: Creating an Outcome-Based Strategy](#)
 - [Operating for Impact: Choosing a Giving Vehicle](#)
 - [Prize Philanthropy: Benefits, Challenges, and Winning Approaches](#)
- [The Philanthropy Framework](#)
- [The Impact Investing Handbook](#)
- [The Scaling Solutions Initiative](#)

Resources about the Robins Foundation and McKnight Foundation

- [McKnight Foundation](#)
 - [Strategic Framework](#)
 - [Impact Investing](#)
- [Robins Foundation](#)
 - [Grantmaking](#)
 - [Community Innovation Grant Report](#)

Additional Resources

- [A Whole New World — Funding and Commissioning in Complexity](#) (Collaborate for Social Change, 2017)
- [Conflict as a Sign of Hope](#) (Center for Effective Philanthropy, 2021)
- [Courageous Leadership with the Southeastern Council of Foundations](#) (Philanthropy Northwest, 2021)
- [Strategy and Evaluation: The Twin Engines of Effective Philanthropy](#) (S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, 2020)

Featured Speakers



Melissa Berman is the founding President and CEO of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Inc., an innovative nonprofit philanthropy service launched by the Rockefeller family in 2002. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors' mission is to help donors create thoughtful, effective philanthropy throughout the world. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors develops strategic plans, conducts research, manages foundations and trusts, structures major gifts, coordinates donor collaboratives, and provides regranteeing and fiscal sponsorship services. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors also publishes, convenes and speaks about innovations in thoughtful, effective philanthropy. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors annually manages or facilitates over \$250

million in giving to more than 25 countries. It has offices in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and London.

Melissa has led Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors since its inception, building it into one of the world's leading philanthropic advisory, grantmaking, research and project management services. Under her leadership, RPA developed and published the "Philanthropy Roadmap" series of donor guides with support from the Gates Foundation. She developed and leads Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors' research initiative, "The Theory of the Foundation," and is the author of multiple reports in that initiative.

A frequent speaker, Melissa has been a guest lecturer at universities across the U.S., Europe and Asia including Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Duke, IMD (Lausanne), Oxford, Sun-Yat Sen, and Beijing Normal universities. As a widely-recognized expert in philanthropy, Melissa has been profiled in the New York Times and the Stanford Social Innovation Review. Recent articles she has authored appeared in the Foundation Review and in the International Family Offices Journal. Her ideas and views are featured in the Economist, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Financial Times, and the Chronicle of Philanthropy. She has been interviewed on the Today Show, NBC Nightly News, NPR, BBC Radio, CNBC-TV, and Bloomberg TV.

An adjunct Professor at Columbia University's Business School, Melissa is also a director/trustee of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, the Adrian Brinkerhoff Foundation and the Foundation Center. She serves on the Advisory Boards of the Marshall Center for Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship at the London School of Economics and the Tamer Center for Social Enterprise at Columbia University.

Melissa holds a B.A. from Harvard University and a Ph.D. from Stanford University. She's proud to have majored in Folklore and Mythology.



Kara Inae Carlisle joined the McKnight Foundation in 2017 as vice president of programs. Since joining the Foundation, Carlisle has been supporting cross-program strategy and development, in particular exploring intersections across race, equity, and democracy, aiming to drive toward greater impact across the Foundation's programs.

Previously, Carlisle spent eight years at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, MI, most recently as director of New Mexico Programs. She also served on Kellogg's Civic and Philanthropic Engagement team, developing the first manual to inform its approach to place-based grantmaking.

Before that, Carlisle held various positions in Los Angeles, including associate director at Zócalo Public Square, and director of public relations and director of the 4.29 dispute resolution center at the Korean American Coalition. She also oversaw personnel and fund development at the Koreatown Youth and Community Center, Inc. In addition, Carlisle served as president of the City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission and as chair of the Empowerment Congress. She is a former board member of the National Association for Community Mediation in Washington, DC, and in 2019 was selected to join the Grantmaker for Effective Organizations' Change Leaders in

Philanthropy Fellowship. She is currently on the boards of Living Cities and Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement for which she serves as board secretary. She also serves on advisory boards for the Center for Effective Philanthropy and the National Civic League and was recently appointed by Governor Walz to the Executive Council for the Young Women's Initiatives of Minnesota.

Carlisle holds an MBA from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management and an MDiv in urban studies and education from Claremont School of Theology.



Robert Dortch is the VP of Program and Community Innovation for Robins Foundation. His focus is in the areas of innovation, grantmaking and community collaboration. He formerly served as the Director, Community Innovation.

Before joining the Robins Foundation, Robert ran his own consulting and leadership coaching business for individuals and organizations where he served local, national and international clients. He has also served as president/executive director for three Richmond-based nonprofits. He was the president/CEO of U-Turn Sports Performance Academy and served as the director of community relations for Richmond Region

2007, a marketing and economic development nonprofit. He was the Executive Producer of the African American Trailblazers documentary and educational series that broadcast nationally on PBS stations. Robert co-founded the Ujima Legacy Fund, a giving circle designed to promote philanthropy among men of color and to provide funding support for nonprofits that serve youth through innovative education initiatives. For 10 years, he was the Senior Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

Robert is a graduate of James Madison University with a Bachelor of Business Administration in business management and a magna cum laude graduate of the Samuel D. Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University, with a Master of Divinity degree. He received his leadership coaching certification from Georgetown University.