



6. We Effect Positive Change by Collaborating with and Adapting to the Needs of our Communities.

We seek collaboration where it makes sense as a grounding principle of doing business, and we leverage partnerships for greater impact with nonprofits, public, private and higher education sectors, and community members with lived experience. We acknowledge and understand root causes for systemic challenges, and we take action by joining forces and allocating resources toward a common goal of addressing root causes and changing systems. We center the community we serve in informing our work and making our decisions. We value and promote a culture of humility, adaptability, and continuous learning where we encourage reflection on lessons learned, questioning the status quo, and taking risks in support of better service.

NONPROFITS

- **Embed collaboration as a core strategic value;** regularly seek community partnerships with other nonprofits and across sectors when necessary to better serve the community; invest dollars and staff time in collaborations; look beyond our own mission with a wider lens to see our role in an ecosystem and opportunities to address root causes, change systems, and improve outcomes.
- **Center the community and those most affected by our work as experts,** with meaningful roles in informing the work and making decisions.
- **Recognize and incorporate advocacy** as a collaborative tool to address root causes, change systems, and improve outcomes.
- **Commit to a culture of learning and improvement** by investing time in reviewing and understanding failures; with intention, embrace calculated risk for deeper gain, recognizing failure is how we innovate.

“One of the best things I learned from being an ED for so many years is to take more risks, have the opportunity to fail. Failure creates innovation.”
—Local nonprofit leader

FUNDERS

- **Value the unique expertise that nonprofits bring,** and prioritize collaboration with nonprofits and private and public sector actors to change systems.
- **Learn about and reflect on the root causes** of the problems we are working across sectors to solve.
- **Provide meaningful grant dollars to fund:** collaboration, systems change work, continuous learning, risk-taking and innovation.
- **Invest in projects that have a high number of variables that can affect impact and thus have risk.** Clarify internally and externally how much of the grantmaking portfolio is made of high, medium, and low-risk investments. Take time to dialogue about grantmaking failures and missed opportunities in order to strengthen future grantmaking and outcomes.

Seek opportunities to collaborate across funding sectors to better leverage your investments:

- combine resources to take greater risks than you could on our own
- inform your giving through shared learning and data
- share expertise and expand networks
- decrease the application and reporting burdens on nonprofits through aligned grantmaking
- speak collectively and raise awareness on priority issues

“**COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY** is based on the premise that all communities have their own assets (money, skills, knowledge, networks, etc.). When these are pooled together, they build community power and voice.”—Foundation Center’s *How Community Philanthropy Shifts Power*

FUNDING INNOVATION: One discussion session participant from the business community noted that innovation in technology is fueled by specifically budgeting for experimentation, risk, failure, and loss. How willing are funders to support nonprofits’ failures on the road to innovation?

“...funders have a powerful role to play that goes beyond merely supporting existing nonprofits. Private donors, foundations, and corporations have the clout, connections, and capacity to make things happen in way that most nonprofits do not. By becoming directly involved...these donors can leverage their personal and professional relationships, initiate public-private partnerships, import projects that have proved successful elsewhere, create new business models, influence government, draw public attention to an issue, coordinate the activities of different nonprofits, and attract fellow funders...All of these powerful means for social change are left behind when donors confine themselves to simply writing checks.”—Mark R. Kramer’s *Catalytic Philanthropy* in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*

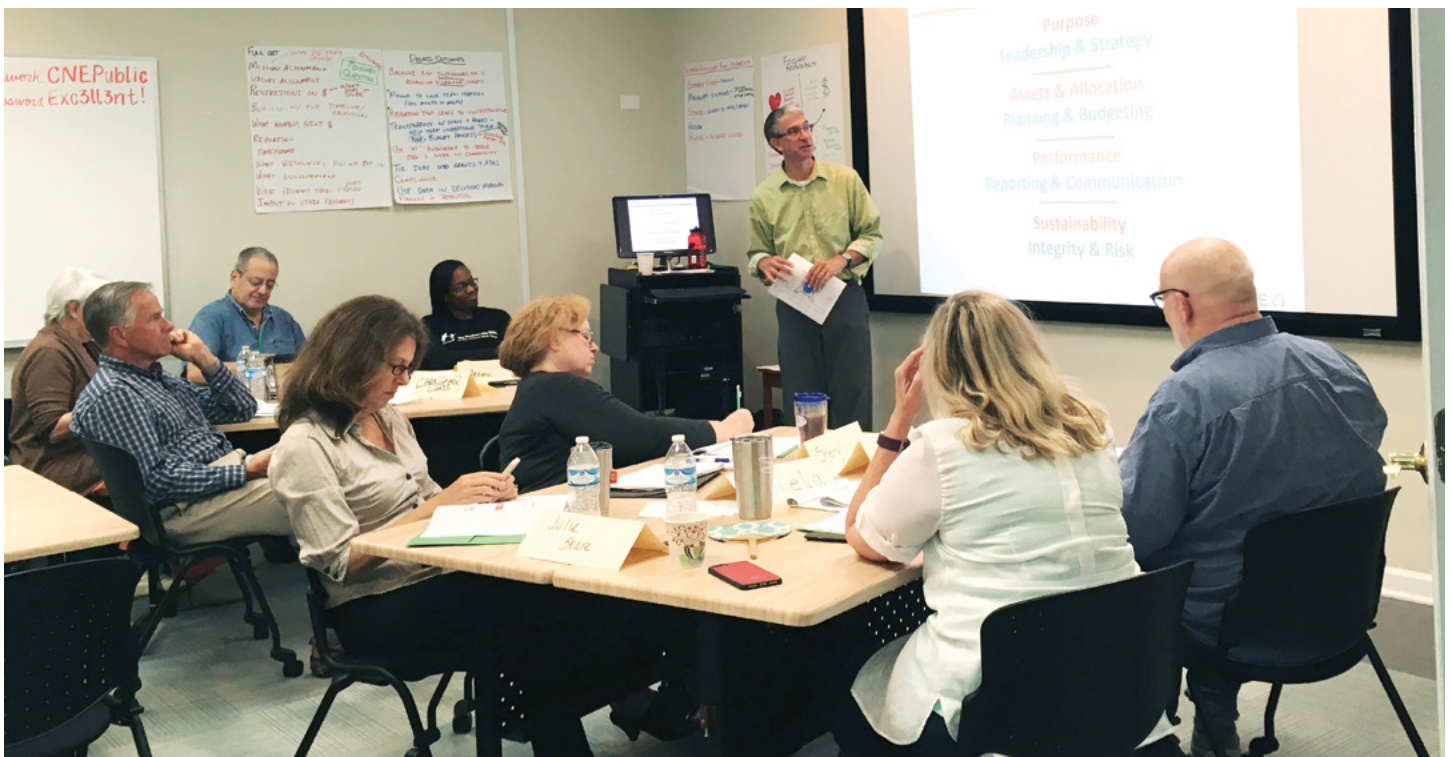
MYTH: Let go of the myth that your organization has nothing to gain from collaboration. Collaborative partnerships are important because they increase the likelihood that partners will focus on the overall needs of the community, create more holistic approaches, and create synergistic benefits. At the same time, collaborations are not always what’s needed and must be thoughtfully crafted—there are different and valuable ways organizations work together.

REALITY: We can do more together.

MYTH: Let go of the myth that your organization or your funding expertise are all that’s needed to create responsive, effective programs. **REALITY:** Good answers are found most often with people, communities, and organizations closest to the issue, and adaptation and growth require humility in how and with whom you identify challenges and craft solutions.

Learn More

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Do we collaborate with nonprofits, funders, and other sectors when needed to achieve positive change, recognizing the unique expertise each brings?

___ YES ___ NO ___ NOT SURE ___ N/A PRIORITY: High Medium Low

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Do we dedicate time and resources to engage in ongoing learning and adaptation as funders, including educating ourselves on the root causes of the issues we are funding nonprofits to address?

___ YES ___ NO ___ NOT SURE ___ N/A PRIORITY: High Medium Low

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Are we willing to fund organizations to develop the ability to collaborate, to fund the management and infrastructure of a collaboration, and to educate ourselves about when collaboration makes sense and when it doesn't, given the costs in time and money required to collaborate?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Are we willing to fund organizations for ongoing learning, experimenting, and innovating?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Are we willing to fund organizations' systems change work?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Are we willing to invest in projects with a high number of variables that can affect impact and therefore carry risk? And do we discuss grantmaking failures and missed opportunities to strengthen future outcomes?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Are we willing to collaborate with other funders to strengthen our sector and the nonprofits we fund?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps

Are we willing to participate in funder networks to leverage our grantmaking, share knowledge, and reduce the burden on nonprofits?

YES **NO** **NOT SURE** **N/A** **PRIORITY:** **High** **Medium** **Low**

If so, HOW? If not, WHY?

Brainstorm: How Do We Improve? Ideas, Learning, Next Steps
