



PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS?



**A Look at Philanthropy and Progressive
Policy Advocacy in New York**

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Policy Advocacy in New York**

Democracy and Philanthropy Project
National Center for Schools and Communities
Fordham University

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> PREFACE

“The paradigm of short lived, project-oriented, often unilateral funder-to-grantee relationships needs to be replaced with a long term, collegial model in which various players – of which funders are only one group – collaborate with and support one another to advance a shared agenda for positive social change.”

Penny for Your Thoughts? A Look at Philanthropy and Progressive Policy Advocacy in New York is the third publication of the National Center for Schools and Communities that addresses the relationship between foundations and organizations dedicated to changing the way things are. In *The Midst Of Plenty: Foundation Funding Of Child Advocacy Organizations In The 1990s* examined “the role of philanthropy in supporting child advocacy organizations working to improve children’s well-being in American society.”¹ *Building Power, Supporting Change? Foundation Support of Community Organizing in New York City* argued that increasing economic polarization “undermines New York’s community fabric”; that community organizing can repair and strengthen that fabric; and that “philanthropy has a major role to play ... through support of citizen action.”²

The New York Philanthropy Initiative – a direct descendent of the Democracy and Philanthropy Project of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy – produced this and the previous report. To borrow a phrase from my predecessor Sally Covington, the NYPI is premised on the belief that a fundamental purpose of philanthropy ought to be the support of public interest advocacy organizations and other nonprofit groups dedicated to addressing and redressing the political, social and economic marginalization of low-income and other historically disenfranchised constituencies.³

Penny for Your Thoughts? looks at a cross section of the New York City policy advocacy groups that provide research and analysis, background and backup, communications and convening for the activists and organizations on the front lines of social change in New York City. This report, written by Makani Themba, provides a glimpse of the structural pressures facing policy advocacy groups and additional strains that frequently arise from aspects of the relationships they have (or do not have) with funders: organizational culture clash, deficits in cultural competency, unrealistically short time horizons, dramatically differing perspectives on conflict as a tool for change, and class bias.

We contrast the treatment of change-oriented policy advocacy organizations by the funders who share their progressive orientation with that afforded by other funders to policy advocacy organizations which provide the infrastructure for preserving and strengthening a status quo that accepts or ignores the pervasive impact of race and poverty in the richest country on earth. This contrast is, of course, not an original topic. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, *The Nation* magazine, and Phil Wilayto’s *The Feeding Trough*, among others, have provided fascinating documentation and commentary on this theme. It is, however, one whose relevance has been newly sharpened by stunning policy victories achieved by a national network of foundation-supported policy advocacy organizations – victories that include the elimination of public benefits for millions of low-income children and their caregivers, bounty payments to states to accelerate the termination of parental rights to facilitate rapid adoption, the dismantling of environmental and health and safety standards, and the use of scarce public education dollars to fund private schools.

Funders working for foundations focusing on the need to eliminate poverty, racism, and the accompanying inequities they spawn should understand that this rout funded by their more conservative colleagues of nearly seventy years of social progress is a clear object lesson in the power foundations of all persuasions have at their disposal. One message of *Penny for Your Thoughts?* is that the paradigm of short lived, project-oriented, often unilateral funder-to-grantee relationships needs to be replaced with a more robust, long term, collegial model in which various players – of which funders are only one group – collaborate with and support one another to advance a shared agenda for positive social change.

The aftermath of the September 11 attacks and the open wound they have left on the local and national consciousness drive home the need for accelerating the move to such a model. Corporate media, the business community, and many elected officials are attempting to equate patriotism with corporate subsidies, a blank check for “defense,” and uncritical support for defining away *other* peoples’ civil liberties. We – foundations, community organizations, policy advocacy groups, and other entities that make up the infrastructure for progressive social change – must not allow the commitments we have made to be derailed by the current public safety crisis and its economic and political impact. We must, in fact, be prepared within and across our work on various issues to make sure that the costs of that impact do not come crashing down on the lives of the communities we serve.

I will finish by stealing one more line from the earlier companion to this report. Paraphrasing a 1977 discussion by Tom Asher of “public needs, public policy, and philanthropy,” Sally wrote: Without the effort to organize and advance the interests of broad, non-commercially oriented citizen constituencies, public needs will be neither defined nor met in a democratic fashion.⁴

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Penny for Your Thoughts?

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> INTRODUCTION

It is now beyond dispute that left-of-center funders have made a calamitous strategic blunder by underfunding public intellectuals and policy thinkers. This mistake is profoundly ironic. Who would have ever thought, thirty or forty years ago, that the right would come to believe more deeply in the power of ideas than the left?

—DAVID CALLAHAN, *\$1 Billion for Conservative Ideas*⁵

Research. Analysis. Ideas. These are not abstract undertakings only affecting inhabitants of the ivory towers of the academy. They constitute the backbone, the foundation of public policy. Public policy is the primary venue through which resources, access, and even freedom are negotiated. Information in the form of research, media coverage, and direct communication with policymakers is a primary factor in the policymaking process. As venerable *New York Times* publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger said, “Obviously, a man’s judgment cannot be better than the information upon which he has based it.” Unfortunately, in the increasingly competitive marketplace of ideas, the better funded and better distributed information most often sways public judgment and shapes policy.

David Callahan and others have found in examinations of the role of philanthropy in policy development that progressive policy work is woefully underfunded compared to its conservative counterparts. Although it is true that there is plenty of progressive policy research being generated at non-profit organizations and universities, lack of funding has greatly affected the capacity for dissemination, strategic media work, contact with policymakers, and effective coordination of research and advocacy.

By contrast, conservative policy organizations are able to control public debate on a wide range of issues. Targeted research projects, significant funding for publishing, and large media investments are all part of the coordinated strategy to dominate key segments of the policy agenda.¹ Heritage Foundation, for example, spends nearly half of its budget on media and advertising.⁶ This influence is due, in no small part, to targeted funding and development from likeminded donors. According to the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), spending by the top 20 conservative think tanks will top \$1 billion in the coming year. According to Callahan, these organizations spent \$158 million in 1996 alone to develop and disseminate policy ideas – almost doubling their output from 1992. Trend data indicates that the budgets of conservative think tanks will continue to grow at this pace or faster. In 1996, the Heritage Foundation already had an individual annual budget approaching \$30 million. Years later, the 23 policy organizations examined in this report have combined assets of \$16 million or about ten percent of what conservative policy groups were spending annually years ago. And even this amount is deceiving – groups in this report do not get to concentrate their resources on policy development as their conservative counterparts do and must often stretch their budgets to support other program activities as well.

ⁱ See also Phil Wilayto’s book, *The Feeding Trough*, for a thorough description of these activities.

Although there has been an increase in funding over the last decade, (primarily for policy work at the state and national level) resources for progressive policy work still lag far behind support for conservative groups.⁷

Lack of policy development capacity to address the concerns of the low-income and other marginalized groups has contributed to the distortion of and even disregard for their issues by policymakers and much of the public. For example, much of the discussion around welfare reform in New York City, as elsewhere in the country, focused on job placement and moving clients out of “dependence.” The plight of children – or even the fact that children were affected by these policies – was virtually shut out of the public conversation, according to research by media group We Interrupt This Message.⁸

Efforts at progressive education reform work have also faced challenges reaching policymakers and the public. Here, too, it has been difficult to keep the focus on the needs of children and families – especially children with special needs, children and families with limited English proficiency, and children and families with low socioeconomic status. Increased use of standardized testing, school funding inequities, and cutbacks in programs are all indications of the challenges facing reform advocates who must counter conservative policies while trying to advance progressive initiatives.

Conservative policy initiatives did not gain cachet overnight. These successes were wrought by more than 30 years of coordinated campaigning. According to Callahan, progressives can expect conservatives to increase their efforts:

Following their historic victory in eliminating the federal welfare entitlement, conservative think tanks have begun a vigorous attack on the other main components of the New Deal/Great Society legacy: Medicare and Social Security ... Overall, these efforts reflect stepped-up conservative efforts to do away with universal entitlement programs that have created common cause between the poor and the middle class.⁹

Of course, ideas or policy research do not in and of themselves change things. They must be part of a larger strategy for social change. This report focuses on policy work as part of a series of reports developed by the National Center for Schools and Communities (NCSC) to examine the needs, assets, and capacities for progressive social reform. Our exploration began with the understanding that in order to advance social change effectively a certain amount of infrastructure (resources, organization, etc.) is required. Specifically, effective social change work requires implementation of an integrated model that includes:

- community organizing and training initiatives that build the capacity and power of those most affected to advocate in their own interests;
- research and analytical resources that generate solutions and critique current and proposed policies and social relations;
- effective engagement of the public conversation through mass media and other venues to move ideas and build consensus;

“Progressive policy organizations face a multiplicity of challenges that include work to counter better funded, conservative policy initiatives while they try to advance new ideas.”

- reflective space for strategic planning, priority setting, and relationship building; and
- adequate resources (staffing, knowledge, materials, technology, etc.) to implement the work outlined above.¹⁰

Borrowing a definition developed by the Tides Foundation, we focus on resources for *progressive* reform – that which creates “a positive impact on people’s lives in ways that honor and promote human rights, justice, and a healthy, sustainable environment.”

NCSC AND THE NEW YORK PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE

The National Center for Schools and Communities is committed to progressive education reform that is consistent with the Tides Foundation perspective. Quality public education for all, which is at the heart of any progressive reform effort, is an important marker of a healthy democracy. It can only be achieved with a strong and vital civic infrastructure and clear political support for policies that value equity and justice. This is why NCSC approaches education reform as an integral part of a comprehensive framework for social change.

NCSC undertook the Democracy and Philanthropy Project (DPP) as a way of assessing needs and capacities for progressive social reform in New York City. We chose New York because it offers an important microcosm of the nation’s diversity, and it is also the address for a significant part of the philanthropy world. This combination made New York an ideal laboratory for examining the relationship between philanthropy and capacity building for progressive social change. DPP began with a mapping of the New York City social justice infrastructure that includes the identification and categorization of 480 groups working to address quality of life issues in disenfranchised communities.

Our previous report, *Building Power, Supporting Change? Foundation Support of Community Organizing in New York City*, examines philanthropic support for community organizing. We followed it up with a one-day retreat of community organizers to think collectively about how the report might inform new strategies for dialogue and action.

This report, an examination of philanthropic support for policy advocacy, is the next step in our effort to assess the “infrastructure” for progressive reform. For most, moving the analytical gaze from community organizing to policy work means moving away from the grassroots and scaling up toward the ivory tower of the academy. This is not the case with progressive policy reform. Policy advocacy in this arena is often at odds with powerful interests so advancing these initiatives almost always requires some form of base building at the community level. In turn, it is the rare community organizing group that engages in advocacy without some form of policy change as a goal. As a result, the groups in each of these studies are often a kind of hybrid – organizations that conduct research and analytical work *and* mobilize constituents to advocate for policies

in their interest. At minimum, as in the case of NCSC, these groups strive to develop strong working relationships with grassroots organizations and key constituency groups. In this report, we focused on groups that lean toward analytical work and tend to focus their advocacy efforts on changing public policy.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The goal of this report is to examine the funding, governance, and fundraising challenges of a cross section of 23 New York City-based organizations. We examine the way these organizations see funders and philanthropy in the context of their work for progressive policy advocacy. It is important to think of the information presented here as bearing more resemblance to ethnographic data than to more quantitative analysis. This methodology enabled us to provide insight into the views and concerns of the organizations that must maneuver through the world of foundations in order to survive. As with *Building Power*, we focus almost exclusively on the organizational information and views of grantees.

Part One surveys the role of policy advocacy in social change and examines support and successes in what we define as conservative policy advocacy – or advocacy that runs counter to progressive values. More detailed information is provided on the project and the report methodology. Part Two provides an overview of funding, governance, staffing, and other characteristics of the sample group as well as a brief “snapshot” of the funding context. Part Three examines participant observations and common themes and findings emerging from the interviews, including respondents’ perceptions of funders and experiences with the foundation community. The last section offers recommendations for effective philanthropy to strengthen policy advocacy.

> PART ONE: THE POLICY CONNECTION

Policy is in many ways where the rubber of social change meets the road. It is the intersection of ideas and action, the most visible way in which power and governance are made concrete and the influence of various stakeholders is demonstrated. The policy arena is of particular importance to organizations working to build power among those who are marginalized and often excluded from policymaking as this is the arena where the allocation of resources, priorities, even social values is codified.

Good policies can affect a community in at least two ways. First, the policy, when implemented, can address problems that put communities at risk and help improve their quality of life. For example, successful campaigns to raise local wages and benefits have meant increased access to health care and stabilized nutrition for affected families. Second, the process of organizing a community to engage in the policy initiative can be as effective in reducing problems of social disintegration and disengagement as the policy itself.¹¹

Progressive policy work is distinguished by its focus on advancing social and economic justice issues; its commitment to enacting initiatives that not only help constituents but also build their capacity for more effective participation in the policy process; and its corollary function of countering research and information that potentially harm social justice initiatives. The best policy initiatives engage the communities that share the problem and ensure they are a part of the solution. These initiatives take into account the kind of advocacy efforts required to make policy change and look to expand the base of support for progressive policy in the future.

As a result, progressive policy organizations find themselves engaging in a variety of activities that are much broader than the typical policy group mainstays of research and research dissemination. In addition to the traditional policy activities, groups in this study undertake a significant amount of direct mobilization of constituents, training, and even direct service provision. In many cases, these organizations started off providing services or primarily mobilizing membership and grew into policy work to serve their constituents more effectively. This was especially true in the case of organizations serving specific racial and ethnic communities.

When these groups engage in policy work, they typically work in three ways:

Defensive policy advocacy. Most progressive policy advocacy is defensive by necessity. Too often government and corporate policies are made in the interest of those in power and adversely affect those who are not. As a result, those with less political power must often mobilize to prevent certain policies from being adopted that could potentially harm their constituents.

Original policy development. Although policymakers tend to ignore the needs of the disenfranchised, it is still important for progressive policy groups to do more than react to harmful initiatives. They must also develop new policy initiatives that advance their

“At its best, progressive policy work embodies the consummate combination of “outside-inside” strategies by providing opportunities for those who have been traditionally marginalized to simultaneously play the game and change the rules.”

constituents' agenda. Original policy development appeared to comprise a significant portion of the policy work undertaken by groups in this report.

Setting the context, educating the public. By serving as a resource for policymakers on key issues, generating media coverage, developing and disseminating research, and holding public forums, progressive policy organizations seek to affect the information, political, and social contexts that guide policymaking. Groups featured in this report also placed significant effort in this area.

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

“The distinctive common characteristic of the new intermediaries is that they consciously integrate the intermediary roles of policy development and regional networking with the infrastructure tasks of grassroots organizing, leadership development, and community empowerment. To put it another way, their strategies continuously link their goals for policy formation, coalition building, and constituency organizing. We identify such organizations as hybrid intermediaries ...”

—THE NEW WORLD FOUNDATION, *A New Look At Intermediaries*¹²

The groups in this report typically blurred the categories identified in our Typology of Organizations (see Table 1). Although policy advocacy is a significant part of their work, nearly all of the organizations surveyed reported some percentage of activities across the entire typology. In many ways, these organizations also reflect characteristics of the New World Foundation's “hybrid intermediary” described above.

This hybridization makes the surveyed groups difficult to categorize, a difficulty which some interviewees say makes fundraising a challenge. However, hybridization is mostly a reflection of the political contexts in which these groups work. As the New World Foundation observed in their study of intermediaries:

“... there is also growing recognition that social issues and program areas no longer fit easily into segmented, vertical categories – housing, health, education, the environment, economic development, violence prevention, etc. These silos may have applied at a time when special interest arrangements were relatively fixed; in the 1970s and 1980s, they mirrored the federal program structure and a fairly static division of the public pie.”¹³

Through the development of new formations, networks, and an ever-widening array of strategies, these organizations are garnering concrete victories that advance progressive policies. Accomplishments by organizations in this report include:

- the adoption of policies that expand resources and support for public education including after-school programs in low-income communities;
- work in coalition that resulted in the addition of 150,000 new citizens to the voter rolls;
- policies that restore food stamp and Social Security benefits for vulnerable immigrant populations;
- expanded public health insurance coverage for New Yorkers; and
- the establishment of new diversity standards for television networks.

“The promise of progressive policies developed by those most affected – living wage ordinances, school funding equity, etc. – is bounded only by our imagination and collective will.

The importance of organizational partnerships in these successes – especially in marshaling community support and mobilization – cannot be overemphasized. However, funding also played a critical role, report survey participants. Financial resources provided the staffing and increased capacity for collaboration and strategic planning that helped groups effectively mount more comprehensive initiatives.

These and other accomplishments help illustrate the importance of progressive policy advocacy in social change. At its best, progressive policy work embodies the consummate combination of “outside-inside” strategies by providing opportunities for those who have been traditionally marginalized to simultaneously play the game and change the rules. At minimum, it is an important arena where progressive organizations can ill afford to be absent. The consequences of inadequate defense against regressive policies are well documented, serious, and widespread. The promise of progressive policies developed by those most affected – living wage ordinances, school funding equity, etc. – is bounded only by our imagination and collective will.¹⁴

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The New York Philanthropy initiative is an action research project dedicated to making philanthropy more responsive to socially, economically, and politically disenfranchised constituencies in and beyond New York City. Through action research, strategic communications, cross-sector dialogues, and other activities, the project aims to maximize the capacity of non-profit organizations that seek justice for low-income people, people of color, women, victims of heterosexism, and other socially, politically, and economically marginalized groups.

Groups for this report were selected from the project’s database of nearly 500 non-profit organizations that meet our criteria for inclusion: 1) location in New York City; 2) 501(c)(3) status; 3) active foundation fundraising; and 4) commitment to influencing policy decisions in New York through one or more of the following activities – community organizing, issue advocacy, applied policy research and development, and litigation.

Initial mapping of organizations identified 107 policy advocacy groups. Of these groups, we randomly selected a core group of potential respondents from our database. NCSC staff then reviewed the list to make sure that the groups selected were diverse with

regard to constituency, leadership, and breadth of issues undertaken. As a result, groups working in Latino and Asian-Pacific Islander communities as well as groups working on education issues were added to the list bringing the total up to 30. Of these, six groups did not respond to multiple requests for interviews and one group completing an interview was eliminated from the pool due to the fact that it did not engage in much policy advocacy. The result was a final count of 23 groups that were interviewed for this report.

Note that this report is a reflection of qualitative, ethnographic research – not a large-scale survey of New York City’s independent sector. Participants took part in in-depth interviews lasting an hour or more. The interview process took place over 2000-2001 as the project took a brief hiatus while NCSC navigated through its transition to a new executive director.

Interviews were structured around a written instrument to ensure uniform data gathering. To encourage frank and open discussion, we guaranteed participants that no comments would be directly identified with any organization or respondent. We hope that the combination of representativeness and in-depth information has provided insights into grantee perspectives in the area of policy advocacy. Indeed, the focus of this report is on grantee perceptions. No funders were interviewed although a number of funder practices are mentioned as promising practices warranting further study. Background and context information was collected through research using the Foundation Center’s FC Search Database, reports from the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, and other resources identified in the reference section following this report.

TABLE 1: TYPOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONS

Applied Policy Research. Organizations that are engaged in public policy analysis and/or the generation or collection of data. In addition, the data collected must have a practical application and be shared with organizations that use the data to educate their constituencies and/or advocate for policy change.

Capacity Building. Organizations dedicated to building power and capacity of social justice nonprofit organizations through technical provision.

Legal Advocacy. Organizations that primarily seek to protect and extend the rights of disenfranchised groups through legal advocacy/litigation strategies.

Community Organizing. Organizations that are primarily focused on building the power and capacity of disenfranchised constituencies to influence public and private decisions that impact their lives, the lives of their families, and the well-being of their communities.

Policy Advocacy. Organizations that typically employ a mix of strategies – from research to public education to lobbying – for the primary purpose of informing or influencing policy decisions in one or more issue domains.

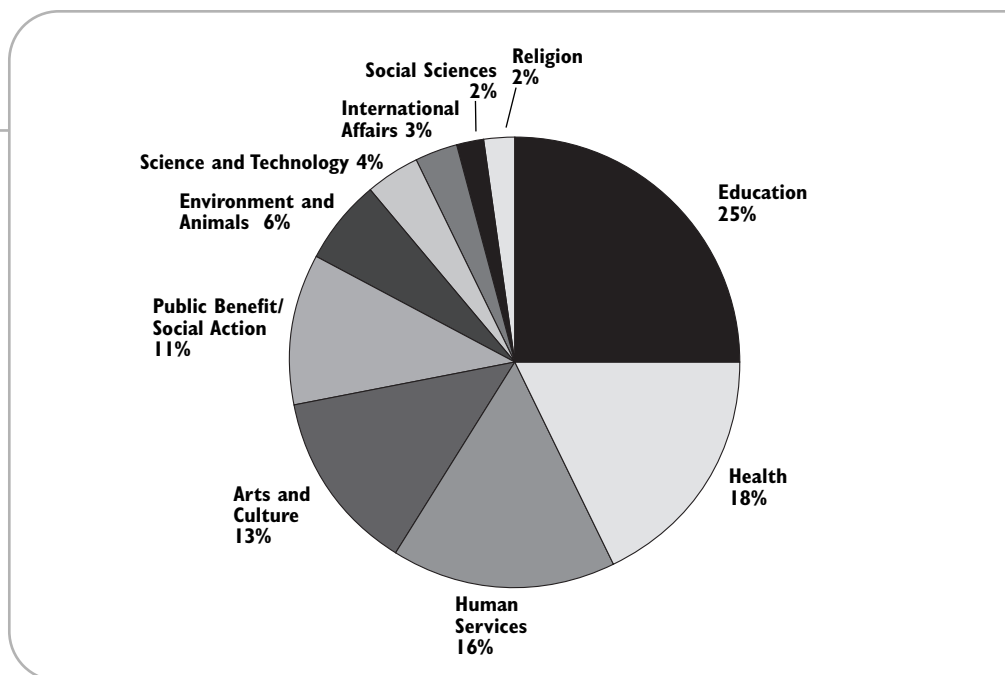
Organizational Hybrids. Organizations that combine service delivery with one or more of the following activities: community organizing, policy advocacy, capacity building, and/or litigation.

> PART TWO: FUNDING, GOVERNANCE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Research by the Foundation Center shows that direct services occupy the lion's share of foundation total giving. With all social action funding accounting for only 11 percent of grant dollars, policy work must compete with the entire array of advocacy tools – organizing, litigation, etc. – for a very limited pool of money (see Figure 1). However, fundraising for policy advocacy does fare better than community organizing initiatives. The 23 participants in this study raised about twice the total assets of the 24 community-organizing groups highlighted in NCSC's previous report. Still, groups say that there are few foundations for which policy advocacy is a clear priority.

A review of grantmakers funding in New York confirms this view. Only 60 foundations emerged from a Foundation Center data search to identify New York based funders that state an explicit interest in public policy and fund in New York or nationally (see Table 2). How many of these foundations provide support for *progressive* policy work is unclear. Moreover, this list may not be exhaustive. Funding specifically for policy advocacy is difficult to track as foundations often categorize funding by issue areas and not specific approaches to issues. Therefore, funding to change public education policy, for example, may be identified as funding for public education.

FIGURE 1:
PERCENTAGE OF GRANT DOLLARS ALLOCATED BY ISSUES



* Data is from 1999. Public Benefit includes civil rights, social action, community improvement, philanthropy and voluntarism, and public affairs. Source: Foundation Center Giving Trends 2000.

While this list may miss some funders, it is safe to say its order of magnitude is not far off. Considering that there are tens of thousands of foundations in the United States, a list of this approximate length illustrates the relative weakness of interest in funding policy advocacy. Furthermore, the dramatic drop-off in *total giving* from the top to the bottom of a list that ends up including foundations making just over \$250,000 a year in

TABLE 2: NEW YORK-BASED FOUNDATIONS WITH STATED PROGRAM FOCUS IN PUBLIC POLICY FUNDING NEW YORK AND OR NATIONALLY ⁱⁱ

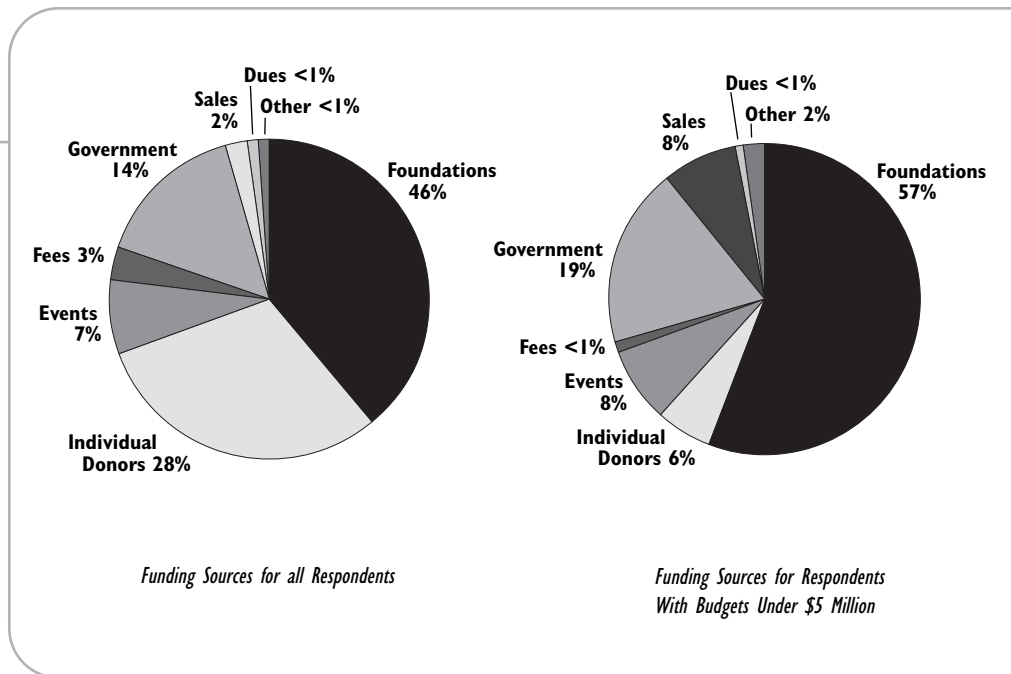
Foundation	Total Giving
The Ford Foundation	\$652,091,000
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	\$161,501,133
Carnegie Corporation of New York	\$60,803,959
The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc.	\$48,813,809
AT&T Foundation	\$39,626,024
Chase Manhattan Foundation, The	\$35,227,314
Surdna Foundation, Inc.	\$28,329,125
Metropolitan Life Foundation	\$13,186,931
Booth Ferris Foundation	\$12,449,500
The Ambrose Monell Foundation	\$12,370,500
Gilder Foundation, Inc.	\$12,169,469
William T. Grant Foundation	\$10,146,021
Charles H. Revson Foundation, Inc.,	\$9,490,041
Gleason Foundation	\$7,324,751
The Klingenstein Fund, Inc., Esther A. & Joseph	\$6,943,318
The J. M. Kaplan Fund, Inc.	\$6,718,450
The Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation, Inc.	\$6,285,500
United States-Japan Foundation	\$5,719,928
Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, Inc.	\$5,018,114
The New York Times Company Foundation, Inc.	\$4,813,993
The G. Unger Vetlesen Foundation	\$4,427,500
New York Life Foundation	\$3,825,417
The Wendt Foundation, Margaret L.,	\$3,538,865
The John and Mary R. Markle Foundation	\$3,476,122
Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Fund, Inc.	\$3,431,471
Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation	\$3,285,855
The Tinker Foundation Inc.	\$3,276,425
Bernard F. and Alva B. Gimbel Foundation, Inc.	\$3,150,600
Albert A. List Foundation, Inc.	\$2,941,435
Foundation for Child Development	\$2,921,319
Whitehead Foundation, The	\$2,375,549
Golden Family Foundation	\$2,372,783
Randolph Foundation	\$2,322,755
Norman Foundation, Inc.	\$2,051,702
Clarence and Anne Dillon Dunwalke Trust	\$1,721,250
Hickory Foundation	\$1,467,850
Weil, Gotshal & Manges Foundation	\$1,414,287
The JM Foundation	\$1,096,730
The Alice M. & Thomas J. Tisch Foundation, Inc.	\$1,061,927
The Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation	\$1,046,110
The Hauser Foundation, Inc.	\$943,175
Everett Foundation	\$893,593
Stewart R. Mott Charitable Trust	\$876,202
The Link Foundation	\$861,164
Leo Model Foundation, Inc.	\$789,927
The Bydale Foundation	\$753,000
Angelina Fund, Inc.	\$746,500
Larsen Fund	\$725,437
Task Foundation, Inc.	\$598,103
Steven L. Rattner and P. Maureen White Foundation, Inc.	\$537,350
Galasso Foundation	\$513,055
The Valentine Perry Snyder Fund	\$470,000
The Iscol Family Foundation, Inc.	\$458,387
The Abelard Foundation, Inc.	\$434,000
The Memton Fund, Inc.	\$392,400
Abraham Fuchsberg Family Foundation, Inc.	\$347,481
Martha R. Gerry Townley Foundation	\$316,000
The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, Inc.	\$278,212
The Bernhill Fund	\$256,400
Springate Corporation	\$253,368
Total	\$1,201,678,586

ii The amounts listed are total grants awarded in 2000. Please note that this list is developed from a different methodology than the foundation listing in our previous report, *Building Power, Supporting Change?* In this report, we narrowed the list to foundations giving to public policy work instead of comparing the top 100 New York funders as we did previously. Many of these foundations support a range of activities of which policy work is just one.

grants drives home how anemic funding for policy advocacy is compared to the overall U.S. foundation “economy.”

Groups are reporting some fundraising success. In fact, much of the budget growth reported (an average of 45 percent from 1997 to 2000) was due to increased foundation giving. About a fourth reported budget increases of 50 percent or more. Although these groups are happy that funders are increasingly turning to them, grantees experiencing the most growth say increased funding is for re-granting to other, more grassroots groups with whom they work. Another fourth of those surveyed showed no growth over the last three fiscal years. Nearly half of the groups grew at a much slower rate, averaging 19 percent over the same period. Much of the growth was concentrated among organizations with budgets of \$500,000 or more. Only two organizations with budgets of more than \$500,000 experienced no growth. Organizations with budgets below \$500,000 were more likely to experience no growth or growth of less than 25 percent.

FIGURE 2:
FUNDING SOURCES



Perhaps not surprisingly, larger organizations were less likely to report difficulties with fundraising. Groups led by people of color regardless of budget size were more likely to cite institutional barriers and challenges to fundraising. White male directors were least likely to report fundraising difficulties, though some certainly did – especially at smaller organizations.

SURVEY DATA FINDINGS

FOUNDATION FUNDING

Policy advocacy groups interviewed have a more diverse funding base compared to the community organizing groups in our previous study. This is especially true for organizations with budgets of \$500,000 or more. Collective operating revenue for participating groups was reported at \$16.8 million in 2000 with \$7.7 million or 46 percent of this amount coming from foundations. Community organizing groups in our previous study raised \$7.4 million from foundations – or 63 percent of their collective revenue.

Policy groups supplemented foundation support with membership dues, publication sales, fees for services, and government grants. Still, about half of those surveyed depend on foundations for more than half of their budget. A third of policy groups surveyed rely on foundations for 80 percent or more of their funding (see Figure 2).

“Policy advocacy groups interviewed have a more diverse funding base compared to the community organizing groups in our previous study. This is especially true for organizations with budgets of \$500,000 or more.”

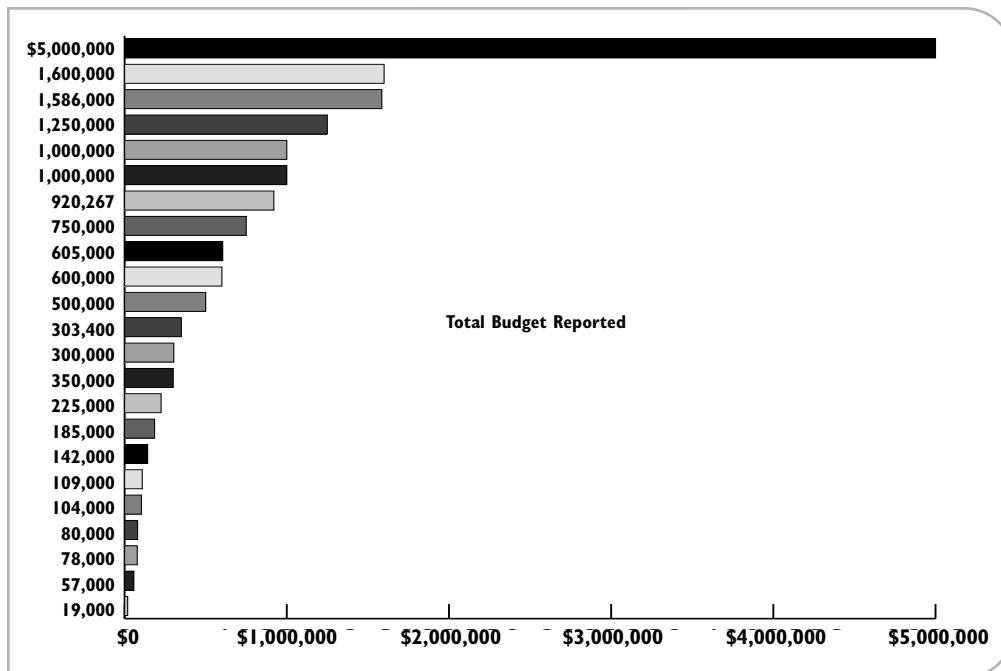


FIGURE 3:
BUDGETS OF
PARTICIPATING
GROUPS

BUDGETS

Groups in the survey ranged greatly in budget size from \$19,000 to more than \$5 million. The average budget was just over \$700,000 and the median budget fell at \$350,000. A quarter of the groups had budgets over the one million-dollar mark (see Figure 3).

GENERAL OPERATING VERSUS PROJECT-SPECIFIC SUPPORT

Groups reported that an average of 33 percent of their foundation grants were for general operating support. This is nearly double the 18 percent that foundations report nationally as average giving for unrestricted use.¹⁶ Respondents reported that unrestricted funding was the most challenging to raise, although flexible funding is critical to their ability to be responsive in perpetually shifting policy environments.

BEYOND WONKS

“Larger organizations were less likely to report difficulties with fundraising. Groups led by people of color, regardless of budget size, were more likely to cite difficulties fundraising. White male directors were the least likely to do so, though some certainly did – especially directors of smaller organizations.”

Policy organizations in the study defied the stereotypical image of white male “wonk” factories with little connection to communities. Surveyed groups reported a great degree of diversity among staff and trustees, constituencies served, and issues addressed. Almost three-quarters of staff and nearly two-thirds of board trustees were women. Nationally, 40 percent of board trustees are women. Forty-nine percent of staff and 41 percent of board trustees were people of color. The national rate for board trustees of color is 14 percent¹⁷ (see Figure 4).

More than half of participating groups had a membership base and reported a collective base of 65,405 members. Membership roles vary, according to those surveyed, with organizations reporting that they rely on members mostly for grassroots mobilization to support policy initiatives and fundraising. Groups without members also still report significant ties to constituencies. These relationships take other forms including work in coalitions, action research groups, training, and informal group affiliations or network memberships. For example, one group belonged to an informal network of immigrant organizations that met regularly for the purpose of coordinating a common direction for their policy activities.

SCOPE OF WORK

Although two-thirds of groups surveyed reported that they primarily focused on New York City, almost every organization indicated that they do some work on the local, state, and national levels in partnership with others. Groups ranged widely in terms of what issues they took on. Less than a third described their group as single-issue. Issues ranged from health, education, and transportation, to prison reform. Most organizations indicated that they worked on at least four different issue areas. The particular number is shaped by organizational goals and base of support. Organizations designed to serve particular ethnic groups, for example, might address a broader range of issues while those defining their constituency in terms of a specific set of needs (elderly, disabled, etc.) might service a more multi-ethnic membership. A group serving Latinos could, for example, deal with a broad range of service, legal, and economic concerns. Another organization serving ethnically and racially diverse seniors might choose to home in on a narrower range of services and entitlements.

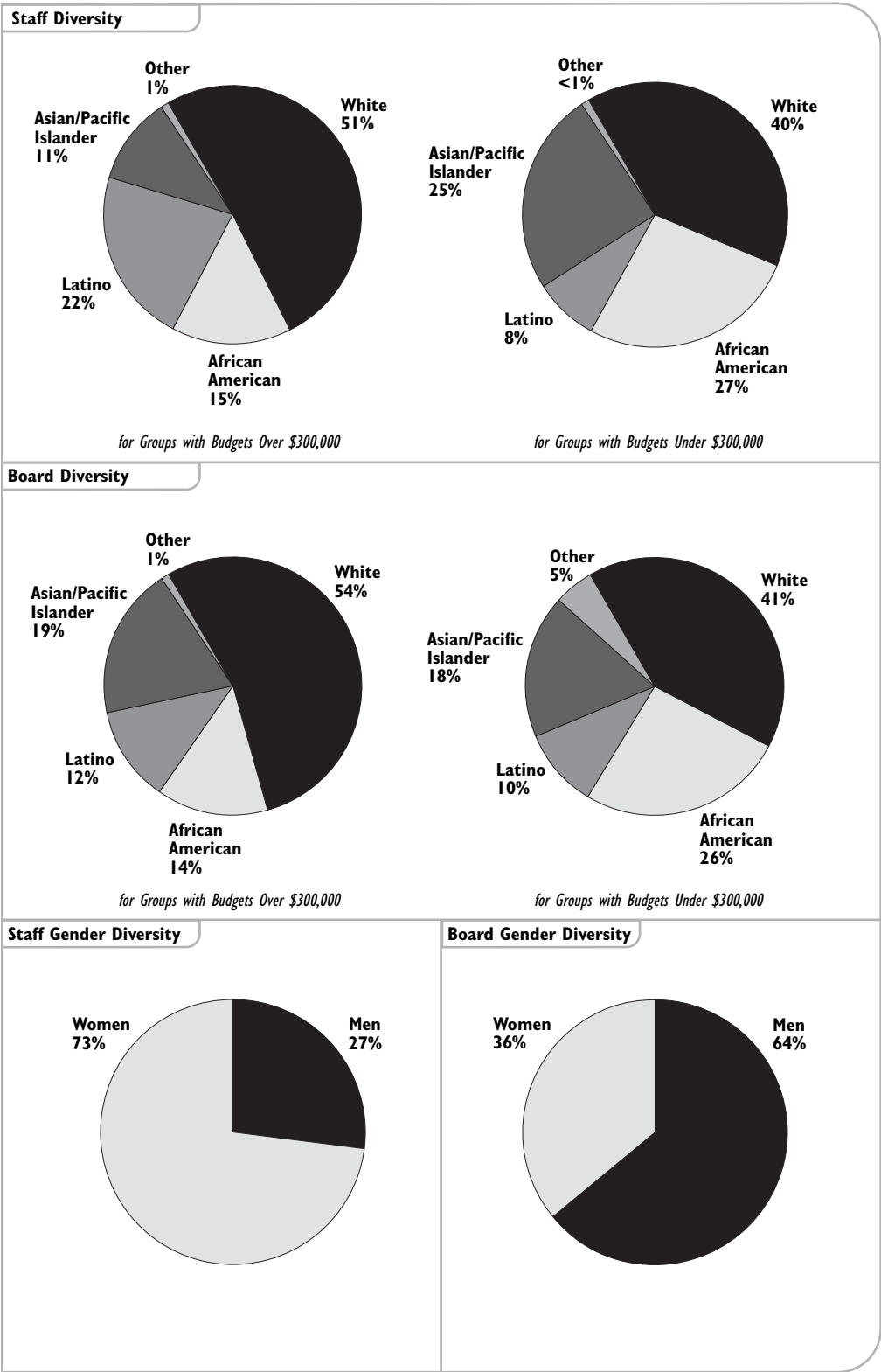


FIGURE 4:
DIVERSITY

SALARY AND BENEFITS

Respondents were asked to identify the top and bottom of their pay range for program and administrative staff respectively. Salaries for the highest paid program staff averaged just over \$64,000 for all those surveyed. Salaries for the lowest paid program staff averaged just above \$32,000. The ten groups reporting administrative salaries had an average budget of one million or about 25 percent higher than the budget average overall. Of these groups, the average top and bottom pay range for administrative staffers was \$48,650 and \$28,000 respectively. The actual range between organizations was much higher. In the program staff category, the top wage earner in the lowest paying organization made \$40,000 annually and the top wage earner in the highest paying organization made \$120,000 annually.

Without exception, the bigger the budget, the bigger the director's salary. Bigger budgets also meant bigger gaps between the highest and lowest paid staffer within organizations. The largest gaps were found among program salaries with one organization reporting a gap between highest and lowest paid staff of \$90,000. The gap between highest paid and lowest paid program staff overall averaged \$29,905 among groups surveyed. For administrative staff, the largest gap between highest and lowest paid reported by a single organization was \$50,000. The average gap in administrative salaries overall was \$18,682. The higher the organizational budget, the more likely the gap between and highest and lowest paid administrative staff was over \$30,000.

Everyone in the participating group had some form of health benefits regardless of budget size. However, only a few groups had any retirement or pension plan. Those that did either had an operating budget of nearly a million dollars or more or a university or college for their fiscal agent (and consequently, as their official employer) with all the accompanying benefits.

ORGANIZATION AGE

Groups surveyed ranged widely in this category with one organization boasting continuous operation for more than 157 years to the youngest organization with only four years in existence. The vast majority of groups hovered near the 15-year mark with only three organizations in existence less than ten years. Clearly, this is a relatively stable cohort. These data are in stark contrast with findings from the community organizing group study where two-thirds of groups surveyed were founded within the last decade (see Table 3).

CONSTITUENCY BASE

Groups surveyed reflected a diverse range of constituencies with nearly every group focusing significant resources on low income New Yorkers. Some organizations, particularly those working on consumer protection issues, had constituencies that stretched across class lines. Several groups focused on certain racial and ethnic communities, and

therefore their constituency base reflects more diversity within officially accepted racial/ethnic designations than across these designations. For example, an organization serving Asian and Pacific Islanders might have a constituency base of more than 50 ethnic and linguistic groups within the Asian-Pacific Islander population group. By contrast, a consumer group might have a base that spans all of the official racial/ethnic designations but is comprised of only seven ethnic or linguistic groups. Notably, very few organizations explicitly named Native Americans, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, or transgendered people among their constituencies though some groups named “all New Yorkers” as their constituency.

PARTICIPATION IN COALITIONS

Every organization reported investing significant time in coalitions. These coalitions ranged from single-issue initiatives around a single piece of legislation to more comprehensive, multi-issue campaigns like one initiative involving several groups around immigrant rights. As one respondent put it, “Try doing this work by yourself, you won't get very far.”

TABLE 3: ORGANIZATION BIRTH YEAR

Organization	Year Founded
Correctional Associates of NY	1844
Citizens Committee for Children of New York	1944
NY State Abortion Rights Action League	1969
Environmental Action Coalition	1970
Institute on Latino and PR Studies	1973
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)	1973
Brooklyn-wide Inter-Agency Council of the Aging	1976
Friends and Relatives of the Institutionalized Aged	1976
Straphanger's Campaign	1979
PRLDEF-Inst for PR Studies*	1982
NYC Coalition Against Hunger	1983
Asian America Coalition for Children and Families	1986
Center on Law Social Justice/Parent Advocacy Ctr	1987
New York Immigration Coalition	1987
Public Policy and Education Fund	1987
Family Health Projects	1989
Asian American Federation	1990
New York Jobs With Justice	1990
Commission on the Public's Health System	1991
NYC Environmental Justice Alliance	1991
Metro NY Health Care For All	1995
Greater NY Labor Religious Coalition	1996
Citizens Action of NY	1997

*The Institute merged with PRLDEF in 1998

> PART THREE: THE VIEW FROM THE GROUND

Fundraising for policy advocacy is an uphill battle. Many funders are leery of legislative work because of legal restrictions on lobbying. Some even balk at policy activities that are well within the limits of the law. Policy advocacy also often requires a certain amount of comfort with controversy and a commitment for the long haul – characteristics that respondents say are at odds with many funders’ short-term focus and avoidance of conflict. Respondents’ reflections on funder practice in supporting policy advocacy fell into four main themes:

- Lack of understanding or appreciation of policy advocacy as a viable strategy for change.
- Incoherent or inconsistent approaches to social change work.
- Fear of funding policy work that is controversial.
- Challenges around cultural competency.

These themes, in many ways, echo findings from organizations surveyed in our *Building Power, Supporting Change?* report where community organizing groups lamented funders’ lack of understanding of community organizing, fear of organizing’s goal of challenging current power relations, and the need for more transparency in the funding process. The fact that both sets of respondents have similar feedback certainly heightens the priority that should be placed on examining the issues they raise.

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OR APPRECIATION OF POLICY ADVOCACY

Respondents say that their funding comes mostly from a few funders who really understand the work. Most foundations just do not “get” the relationship between progressive policy advocacy and improving the quality of life in traditionally marginalized communities. Observes one director:

“It is harder for us to get money because we don’t offer direct services. There’s no bloody rag we can wave and say, ‘Here’s what we’re doing.’”

Advocates argued that policy work not only results in expanded direct services for communities but that it can also help address root causes of problems that direct services only assuage temporarily. They expressed concern about funding criteria and funder attitudes that falsely dichotomize direct services and policy advocacy and obscure important synergies between the two:

“They cannot see the forest for the trees. They just don’t see that you will not have to fund all these services if they funded more policy advocacy. There should be a component for social change with all their service funding.”

“Policy advocacy requires a certain amount of comfort with controversy and a commitment for the long haul -- characteristics that respondents said are at odds with many funders’ short-term focus and avoidance of conflict.”

INCOHERENT AND OR INCONSISTENT APPROACHES TO SOCIAL CHANGE WORK

“We always have to be better, different each year. The ante goes up on deliverables. Instead of creating something new each year, I’d like to get support for the ongoing work that’s absolutely necessary. Each year we rename what we do, when it is really just building or expanding on a campaign.”

Related to lack of understanding was the sense on the part of respondents that many foundations do not have a clear social change model that guides their funding. This makes their funding haphazard and based more on mercurial factors like their relationships with potential grantees than on a strategic plan for change. Groups find it challenging to raise support for long-term projects and pitch their particular strategies to funders who do not have a clear idea of *how* to approach social change work and *where* policy advocacy fits within it. These problems translated into barriers in at least five ways:

DIFFICULTY IN ACQUIRING LONG TERM SUPPORT

“Foundations are looking for discreet projects,” observes one respondent. “They just don’t support, they don’t build institutions that will make long-term change.”

For organizations working in communities of color, these challenges are even more acute. Such groups must work hard to penetrate funder networks, adapt their work to guidelines that are not always relevant to the ways in which they work, and spend a great deal of time educating foundations about their communities. Groups say they would like to see some attention to building lasting institutions in communities of color – something that short-term funding cycles simply cannot accomplish.

“They need to be more flexible about how they fund things,” says one director. “They need to think in terms of institutional development as opposed to funding projects and activities. There’s a real need to develop infrastructure in Latino, African American, Asian Pacific Islander, Native American, and other communities. This puts funding in a particular kind of framework ... It requires much more than putting Band-Aids on problems.”

Two respondents made observations shared by the majority of groups surveyed: that there is also little money for the unglamorous but critical long-term work of relationship building:

“There’s no [funding] category for building solidarity between people, and no money for linkages.”

“You don’t ‘achieve’ outreach. You have to constantly do it. So, even though we have been successful mobilizing families ... we still have to put out resources to

maintain strong connections with people. Foundations don't understand this. They see it as a one-time campaign."

LACK OF FUNDING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Interestingly, the majority of respondents expressed concern that foundations' lack of clear strategic priorities challenges efforts to build capacity within policy advocacy organizations. The groups felt that if foundations had a cohesive model for moving ideas and making change, then convincing them to support staff and other operating costs would not be as difficult. One respondent, while trying to raise support for a media person, was confronted with what he thought were mixed signals from funders:

"There's a clear relationship between affecting public policy and affecting the media but it has been particularly difficult to find funds to support a press person. This person would be the linchpin for how our message gets out, yet foundations told us they fund organizing – not staff. There's no specificity or thinking as to what organizing entails."

Other infrastructure needs that groups say are often ignored are computer upgrades, volunteer maintenance, and most ongoing programs. Says one respondent:

"We have a hotline, which is the first way that people hear about us, and it is the first way that we meet people who will be our future volunteers and activists. Funders tell us that they've called our hotline, or their staff has called our hotline, and they've been really impressed with the help that they've received ... But they don't want to fund it because it is an ongoing activity."

SEEMINGLY ARBITRARY FUNDING DECISIONS WITHOUT CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK TO THOSE WHO ARE DENIED

"When we don't get money, funders are unwilling to tell us why, even though we do the follow-up to find out. That's unhelpful."

Without transparent criteria, groups that are denied funding are often left second-guessing. Unarticulated or unexamined biases that favor large organizations, groups working with certain populations, or groups using certain strategies can obscure the real criteria for gaining support. For groups on the outside of these criteria, investing time in cultivating relationships that will not likely result in funding is not an efficient use of their time. When foundations have clear guidelines and operating procedures, grantees can focus on building partnerships with institutions that share their mission.

FEAR OF FUNDING POLICY WORK DUE TO ITS CONTROVERSIAL NATURE

One arena where progressive groups face almost constant attack is around the right to advocate on policy issues. Over the past 20 years, tax laws have increasingly eroded nonprofit organizations' political rights. Foundations often contribute to the problem by setting lobbying and advocacy rules that are even more restrictive than the law. Of course, funders are often naturally risk averse as part of their effort to be good stewards of their institutional resources. However, these restrictions and the accompanying fear of funding policy advocacy that may stray into the realm of proscribed lobbying have had a chilling effect on the work.¹⁸ Those funders willing to be creative and leverage the available opportunities can make a real difference:

“All we do is policy work, really. Funders who are not afraid of the political dimension are supportive – provided we don't use their funds. They support components of our work like research and education instead.”

CHALLENGES AROUND CULTURAL COMPETENCY

One widely used definition of cultural competence is “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.”¹⁹

A large number of respondents felt that foundations often operated without an awareness or sensitivity to issues related to culture and diversity. Groups felt that lack of diversity on foundation staff and inattention to key demographic trends have rendered many funding initiatives outdated and inaccessible. Respondents indicated that without an understanding of how cultural issues affect traditional funding priorities, the needs of newer, less established communities simply would not get addressed.

“Every funder should learn who lives here,” urges one director. “Fifty percent of births are to foreign born women. It is stunning that in welfare, for example, people are wondering why Latinos are last to come off welfare and not looking at the fact that there's no support for them to learn English. Bengali and Urdu are the top languages in public schools besides English [*sic*] but there's no support for work in these communities ... They [funders] just don't know how things are changing.”

Some respondents observed that foundations will need to undergo major changes if they are to address issues facing communities of color effectively. “There has to be some fundamental rethinking of policy agendas,” asserts one director. “This will require [foundations] to look at who's on their staff, their board, etc. Many foundations are these little reserves of white privilege. They have to change their mode and understand that they have to do more learning, more listening. Much of the work and priorities are disconnected from the reality.”

“Respondents say that their funding comes mostly from a few funders who really understand the work. Most foundations just do not “get” the relationship between progressive policy advocacy and improving the quality of life in traditionally marginalized communities.”

WHAT'S WORKING

Groups also enthusiastically heaped praise on those foundations they felt had done an excellent job of supporting policy advocacy. Among the effective practices that respondents say some of their funders are implementing:

- Long term, flexible funding with a goal of institution building.
- Grantmaking process that is transparent to prospective grantees.
- Funder flexibility and in-kind support – including the provision of meeting space, funder introductions, and consultants. These are all important resources that provide added value to cash grants.
- A clear model for program development and social change.

When funders have a clearly identified change model, they can make important interventions that can have a lasting effect on organizational practice. The result, respondents say, is more effective grantmaking and more effective grantees. One respondent recalled a particularly helpful funder intervention that both clarified the group's organizational planning and helped them develop a change model of their own:

“They asked us ‘where's your base? Are they visible and mobilized? Do you have access to litigation? Can you get the research done? Do you have a strategy for media? What's your model for change?’ We had a funder who really made us think about this. They made us really look at what kind of partners we'd need.”

PART FOUR: MOVING FORWARD <

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“The stakes are huge: We are in a monumental struggle over the very future of governance and public policy as we know it. If progressive philanthropists insist we play whiffle ball while our opponents play hardball, we're destined to lose ...

Progressive funders must be prepared, as their conservative counterparts were over the past generation, to invest in serious intellectual exploration – in books, journals, magazine articles and conferences – without expecting an instant return. And if we want this work to be relevant, it must be carried on alongside, and together with, grassroots organizing. Intellectual work can no longer be separated from organizing or campaign work.”

—MICHAEL SHUMAN, *Why Progressive Foundations Give Too Little to Too Many*²⁰

The marvels of the conservative public policy machinery are well documented. Much, too, has been written on the need to bolster support for progressive policy advocacy, yet many funders committed to progressive social change are hesitant to marshal the resources. Some progressive funders, as documented in Shuman's seminal article, are even dividing their resources among progressive and conservative institutions as a way of demonstrating their “objectivity” and lack of partisanship.

Unfortunately, these times require an undiluted commitment to the interests of society's most marginalized and vulnerable communities. Many of the policies enacted today – like welfare reform, program cutbacks, youth criminalization – consistently target these communities. Such policy initiatives are part of a comprehensive attack to dismantle social programs that once provided the safety net for those left out of the mainstream economy. What is at stake is no less than the breaking and remaking of the social contract.

Clearly, issues of access, voice, and even economic survival are in play in the public policy arena. Developing adequate infrastructure to defend against draconian policies *and* advance more progressive initiatives will be critical to our success. Doing so will require a clear and comprehensive strategy with social change as its goal, increased collaboration and education among funders, and a real long-term investment strategy.

In spite of the challenges, progressive policy advocacy has managed to reap some impressive victories. Thanks to the work of innovative funders and grantees, we now have a body of knowledge and a set of promising practices that can guide investment in the future. Some initial findings:²¹

- Initiatives that bring together organizing and policy advocacy are often more successful than when these strategies are separated. The more policy initiatives threaten current power relationships, the more important grassroots advocacy is to advancing them. Furthermore, bringing organizing and policy work together helps

ensure that policy initiatives reflect the needs, aspirations, and ideas of those most affected.

- Effective media and other communications strategies are critical. Increasingly, media – especially news media – are primary shapers of public conversation.
- Strategies should incorporate approaches that build the capacity and voice of traditionally marginalized communities so they can effectively participate in the policy arena.

Using these and other lessons as a springboard, foundations can build on any successes and lessons learned to retrofit progressive policy advocacy for the intense battles ahead. What follows are recommendations for moving forward based on respondent interviews and other research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Allocate more funding and longer-term funding to building progressive policy infrastructure.

These groups have tremendous staff needs as many of these organizations have few researchers, media professionals, or adequate administrative support. Few groups have staff dedicated to the care and maintenance of their coalition relationships. There are also needs for long-term research and monitoring, better information dissemination, and strategic planning.

Addressing these and other needs will require a significant infusion of additional resources if progressive policy advocacy is to confront effectively its current challenges with funding, coordination, dissemination, and public impact. Initially, this means significant investments over a substantial period of time with attention paid to building institutions and the networks that connect them. Without support for both, we build cells without synapses resulting in highly isolated, vulnerable institutions with limited effectiveness.

Fund projects that connect policy work to real constituencies.

Related to the need to support institutional connections are funding practices that help institutionalize collaboration between policy groups and the constituencies affected by their work. As discussed above by our respondents, this work is enhanced by collaboration but is hard to do without adequate resources and attention to relationship building and maintaining relationships. Policy advocacy groups need support, including funding, to develop a common language, build trust, and learn effective ways of working together. It is important that these collaborations be funded in ways that ensure equity among partners and that do not force groups to pull resources from other important work. Foundations can help support this process by structuring dedicated

funding initiatives and developing funders' collaboratives that focus attention and resources in this area. Funders can also support the development of user-friendly case studies or other venues for disseminating lessons learned to improve the practice around these collaborations.

Fund more “nontraditional,” community-based groups doing policy advocacy.

Good ideas and good policy initiatives are not the sole purview of academia or even professional policy research organizations. Community-based organizations are also a vital source of policy development. Foundations can help break down false distinctions between “those who think” and “those who organize” by valuing the intellectual work of community groups and building credibility for their ideas. Of course, grants and other resources that encourage community-based research and action research projects would make a real difference. However, support for this work need not be limited to cash grants. Foundations can harness their information dissemination mechanisms, contribute to the development of research guidelines and case studies, and create space at conferences and other venues for these groups to participate in policy discussions from which they would be otherwise excluded. Ensuring that community groups are engaged in this way not only strengthens policymaking, it strengthens democracy.

For funders concerned about legislative and other lobbying work, convene joint strategy sessions to inform the development of appropriate guidelines.

Funders have legitimate legal concerns that must be addressed with regard to work in the policy arena. What is appropriate and legal communication on legislative matters? What are legitimate public education activities and what is lobbying that crosses the line? By convening strategy sessions with experienced funders, grantees, and legal advisers, effective guidelines can be developed that take into account the concerns of grantmakers and grantees working in public policy. The Council on Foundations provides excellent resources in this area and would be a great place to start the information gathering process.

Engage in more dialogue, discussion, and learning about what policy is, how it works, what it can and cannot do.

Foundations committed to social change cannot afford to ignore the public policy arena. For those foundations that are new to this work, it will be important to take time to identify a way to support policy advocacy that fits within their institution's mission and values. Foundations with strong track records in this area can provide mentoring to newer funders by forming affinity groups and learning circles that allow candid exploration of the issues.

For veteran funders, learning and discussion are also important. Like nearly every facet of life, public policy and the communities that are affected by it are undergoing rapid changes. Effective philanthropy will require increasing attention to trends, planning, evaluation, and even skills building if the sector is to meet these challenges. Grantees, when appropriate, should help inform this process of education and planning. We have much to offer.

Often, such attention to trends and internal development by foundations leads to a comprehensive framework for progressive change. This framework or model can help funders better conceptualize the social change process and determine the best way to affect this process. It is important to remember that any model should be expansive and take into account a wide range of approaches to social change, of which policy work is only a part.

CONCLUSION

“Always bear in mind that people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children.”

—AMILCAR CABRAL

Progressive policy work is grounded in a reality that is about more than the selling of ideas. This work is making a material difference in the lives of so many by bringing to the policymaking arena the voices of the disenfranchised, the voices those in power often choose to ignore. Creating just and equitable public policy is an important part of the work of democracy. It requires more of participants than casting a ballot every two or four years. The communities served by policy advocacy organizations seek a deeper engagement with their government. They seek full partnership in the policymaking process.

As economic indicators continue to worsen and more people in the United States find themselves worried about their well-being and even their survival, we see an even greater need for progressive policy work. Given the incredible tenacity and resources of conservative policy organizations, more must be done to bolster progressive policy advocacy and strengthen its impact on the lives of everyday people. Funders have played and continue to play an important role in this regard. The coming days will likely require increased and increasingly strategic support. It is our hope at the National Center for Schools and Communities that this report will encourage the kind of partnerships that will help us all meet these challenges successfully.

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