

# **DIVERSITY IN PHILANTHROPY PROJECT CASE STUDY**

## **EVALUATION WITH A DIVERSITY LENS: EXPLORING ITS FUNCTIONS AND UTILITY TO INFORM PHILANTHROPIC EFFECTIVENESS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Following is the fifth in a series of Diversity in Philanthropy Project (DPP) case studies that explore opportunities to achieve greater diversity and effectiveness in philanthropic governance and grant making.<sup>1</sup> This entry's focus is on the role and function of evaluation.

The report was principally prepared by Dr. Ricardo A. Millett, a senior consultant to DPP, former CEO of the Woods Fund of Chicago, and long-time Director of Evaluation at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.<sup>2</sup> As with previous entries in the series, this one reveals practical insights that can help foundations realize greater effectiveness through increasing inclusivity investments. This piece will prove particularly timely and instructive for funders embarking on the practice of evaluation with a diversity lens (EDL).

EDL is an approach to program evaluation that emphasizes the importance of incorporating diverse voices (particularly those of intended program beneficiaries) to identify problems and to engage in program design, implementation, and data analysis. As such, the piece can function as a research tool within the long-standing professional tradition and practice guidelines of social science research and evaluation. EDL is still evolving as a foundation assessment technique. At this point in time, relatively few funders are employing it as an evaluation methodology.

Attention to diversity in the corporate world demonstrates beneficial effects in problem solving, innovation, and management effectiveness. EDL's broader application by private grantmaking organizations holds potential for achieving equally beneficial effects. The case study that follows, accordingly, encourages the continued development of EDL as a useful and practical approach to evaluation. EDL can inform effective grantmaking strategies and learning opportunities that address the vexing and complex issues of social inequities in our society.

We welcome reactions from our readers regarding this and related content. We encourage readers who wish to share their own ideas and suggestions on the topic to do so by writing us at [info@diversityinphilanthropy.org](mailto:info@diversityinphilanthropy.org).

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, we draw on a very broad definition of "diversity" that includes considerations of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, class, nationality and geographical location.

<sup>2</sup> The report was additionally completed with support from other DPP consultant team members Paul Bachleitner, Jessica Bearman, Anna-Nanine S. Pond and Henry A. J. Ramos.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS**

The following summarizes key observations and findings contained in the case study:

- EDL is an evolving approach to advancing more holistic, community-centered, and diverse perspectives on institutional investment effectiveness and impact. EDL is only now finding currency in organized philanthropy.
- EDL responds to three field-wide evaluation needs: expanding the use of community input into programming and evaluation, reducing the “effectiveness gap,” and framing evaluation as a learning tool.
- EDL as an evaluation methodology is still too young and too small to have established a set of formal best practices. However, several best practices seem to be emerging from early foundation efforts to implement EDL.
- EDL’s emerging best practices include: engage in authentic exchanges with diverse grantee communities, connect EDL work to the mission, collect and increase field-based knowledge, and build the EDL practitioner pipeline.
- EDL will need to overcome a number of formidable challenges before it gains field-wide acceptance. These challenges include: establishing the connection between diversity and effectiveness, bridging the divide between programming and evaluation, investing in community relationships, and overcoming investment needs.
- EDL is a promising approach to evaluation that can help foundations increase their effectiveness in becoming more inclusive and reducing social inequities, but needs more support and refinement to overcome challenges to its broader acceptance.

## **BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

EDL is still an emerging evaluation methodology. We sought to learn what it means to frame evaluation in the context of diversity and to consider how this framing enhances philanthropic efforts to achieve effectiveness--that is, increased relevance, reach, and impact in all aspects of foundation administration and programming. We identified practitioners who are pioneering EDL to discover if and how the methodology can be useful to philanthropists committed to achieving measurable impacts from strategic grant investments. The interview respondents are experienced and highly regarded practitioners representing foundations, infrastructure organizations, and professional evaluation institutions who were willing to share their insights. We engaged respondents in 40-60 minute telephone interviews based on questions that explore the current state of EDL and associated issues and opportunities. Our questions also explored the logistical and cost considerations to grantmakers who might benefit from implementing EDL. (A list of the key interview questions is included as Attachment A.)

## **INTERVIEW SUBJECTS**

We based this case study on the insights of leading evaluation experts in and outside of the organized philanthropy sector. Our interviewees were gracious with their time and shared their experiences freely with the hope of helping to refine and evolve EDL practices and encouraging more foundations to consider its application to their grantmaking work. We are indebted to them for extending their generosity to us and the broader field through this exchange. The interviewees included the following leading evaluation and research professionals:



**Kelly Brown**, Director of Programs & Evaluation, Marguerite Casey Foundation (Seattle, WA)



**Michael Cortés**, Professor, University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work (Denver, CO)



**Jennifer C. Greene**, Professor, College of Education/Quantitative and Evaluation Research, University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, IL)



**Astrid Hendricks**, Program Evaluation Director, The California Endowment (Los Angeles, CA)



**Rodney K. Hopson**, Professor, School of Education, Duquesne University (Pittsburgh, PA)



**Lisa R. Jackson**, Former Vice President for Research, Center for Effective Philanthropy (Boston, MA)

**Susan Kistler**, Executive Director, American Evaluation Association (Fairhaven, MA)



**Cheryl Milloy**, Evaluation Officer, Marguerite Casey Foundation (Seattle, WA)

**Anne B. Mosle**, Vice President for Programs, W. K. Kellogg Foundation (Battle Creek, MI)



**Michael Q. Patton**, Evaluation Expert, Author and Former President of the American Evaluation Association (Minneapolis, MN)



**Edward Pauly**, Director of Research and Evaluation, The Wallace Foundation (New York, NY)

While the case study that follows is based on the insights of these leading evaluation and assessment experts, responsibility for its contents (including any inaccuracies or errors) is entirely that of the report's principal investigator and the Diversity in Philanthropy Project.

## **WHAT IS EVALUATION WITH A DIVERSITY LENS (EDL)?**

EDL is an emerging approach to program evaluation that emphasizes the importance of funders incorporating diverse voices, particularly those of intended program beneficiaries, into their grantmaking assessments. EDL impacts problem identification, program design, implementation, and data analysis.

However, complete definitions of EDL are still evolving because the concept itself is still emerging. Relatively few funders are using EDL in their work, per se, but may be doing so or using elements of the approach using different terminology. The term “EDL” is sometimes used interchangeably with other terms that describe grantmaking or evaluation practices, such as “diversity and inclusiveness,” “theory of change,” or “racial equity.”

### **Borrowing from “Grantmaking with a Racial Equity Lens”**

In fact, possibly the most useful definition of EDL to date comes from a popular grantmaking guide from GrantCraft and the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE), *Grantmaking with a Racial Equity Lens*, (pp 2-3):

“...a ‘racial equity lens’ brings into focus the ways in which race and ethnicity shape experiences with power, access to opportunity, treatment, and outcomes, both today and historically. It can also help grant makers think about what can be done to eliminate the resulting inequities...it is about how race shapes the allocation of power and the distribution of benefits and burdens among all groups within society...one cannot know whether or not solutions have been achieved, or are even being approached, without an ability to measure racial or ethnic data.”

The guide’s definition of a racial equity lens as an evaluation and social outcome measure will also serve as this case study’s definition of EDL, with two caveats. EDL’s emphasis is on evaluation methods that address social inequities. EDL methodology is also in transition and its definition needs more refinement by the field.

### **Case Study Focus**

This case study examines EDL on a practical level more than a theoretical one. What evaluation needs does EDL respond to? What are some emerging best practices and how can the field implement them? What are the challenges? Interviews with philanthropic practitioners inform the analysis by providing insight into the current state of the field and practical examples. The case study encourages foundations to become involved in EDL’s continued evolution.

## **EVALUATION NEEDS TO WHICH EDL RESPONDS**

EDL evolved as foundations and practitioners sought to respond to their needs for better evaluation tools and to become more diverse and inclusive of communities affected by social and cultural inequalities. For foundations with diversity and inclusion as a goal, EDL can be an effective and practical tool to achieve it.

The case study found three distinct evaluation needs to which EDL responds:

1. Expanding the use of community input into programming and evaluation
2. Responding to the “Effectiveness Gap”
3. Framing Evaluation as a Learning Tool

### **1. Expanding the Use of Community Input into Programming and Evaluation**

A growing cohort of philanthropy trustees and senior executives are exploring new evaluation techniques that require community or end-user input.<sup>3</sup> Their work is encouraging more private grantmakers to adopt participatory and culturally based evaluation approaches. The aim is to achieve more durable and far-reaching effectiveness, both at the institutional and field-wide levels.

Indeed, philanthropy in recent years has made progress in democratizing foundation evaluation practices through more inclusive and constituency-driven assessment approaches, as evidenced by the emergence of the Multiethnic Issues in Evaluation Topical Interest Group (MIETIG) of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), for example. Several national and regional foundations, such as the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, have also assumed leadership roles in validating and accelerating a shift towards using community input in foundation evaluation practice.

#### **Greenlining Institute and Attention to Community Input**

Interest in gathering diversity information has assumed increased urgency due to recent advocacy efforts and public debate about philanthropic performance. Interview respondents acknowledged that the Greenlining Institute’s efforts to advance Assembly Bill 624 through the California legislature in early 2007 have had a dramatic effect on foundation diversity and evaluation practice. The legislation was ultimately tabled before becoming law. But AB 624’s early success has since inspired at least seven other states to propose similar measures.<sup>1</sup> These legislative inquiries have sparked high-profile public debate about perceived abuses in charitable giving, concepts of foundation ethics, and diversity.

Interview respondents stressed that philanthropy is making great strides to address public concerns. They cited evolving efforts of foundation evaluation professionals and field-based infrastructure organizations, like the United Way and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, to improve responsiveness to community interests and concerns. The collaboration that tabled the Greenlining-inspired legislation was another such example. California’s 10 largest foundations voluntarily agreed to direct a collective \$30 million to minority-targeted initiatives during a two-three-year period. Proactive efforts to involve community voices in grantmaking, like EDL, can help build on the momentum.

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<sup>3</sup> A number of philanthropy- and independent sector-specific studies and reports on using community and end-user input have appeared in the last two decades, including, among others, the following: Aldrich, L., et al., *supra.*, Bledsoe, K. and Hopson, R., “Conducting Ethical Research and Evaluation in Underserved Communities,” from Merten, D., editor, *Evaluation Ethics*, 2008; Auspos, P. and Kubisch, A., *Building Knowledge About Community Change: Moving Beyond Evaluations*, Aspen Institute, 2004; and Connell, J., Kubisch, A., Schoor, L. and Weiss, C. *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Context*, Aspen Institute, 1995.

Community input is a vital component of EDL. As such, the use of EDL, and other tools that affect diversity and inclusion, has evolved from simply an affirmative action imperative (with moral underpinnings) to one focused on the proactive, impact-oriented results of foundation social investment. As the Kellogg Foundation’s vice president of programs, Anne Mosle told us, “We are seeing diversity in philanthropy move from primarily a focus on fairness to an additional lens of appreciation on its effectiveness in grantmaking.”

## **2. EDL Can Help Respond to the Evaluation “Effectiveness Gap”**

For the first time ever, U.S. foundations are facing challenges to their historically unfettered stewardship of social investment resources. Congress has made unprecedented calls for performance that justifies philanthropy’s privileged, tax exempt position in society.<sup>4</sup> In this era of increasing public and media scrutiny, and calls for improved institutional accountability, private foundations are feeling pressure to become more results oriented. In response, several well-known foundation affinity groups and infrastructure organizations, such as the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) and others, are promoting evaluation systems that champion a core theme of “effectiveness.”<sup>5</sup> One way for foundations to be effective is through the diversity and inclusion benefits that EDL offers.

### ***The “Effectiveness Gap”***

The practice of program evaluation in foundations is inconsistent at best. Many foundations simply do not have the capacity to conduct or manage evaluation projects. Most of the 72,000 foundations in the United States have few or no staff. This shortage has led many private grantmakers to refrain from evaluating their program impacts or to do so by employing less-than-reliable assessment processes or independent consultants of varying levels of skill.

The net effect is a relative absence of field-wide rigor in evaluation. Few foundations have developed an evaluation strategy, according to CEP, although most foundations believe that having one is important to achieving results.<sup>6</sup> Program results are elusive for foundations without

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, remarks of House Ways and Means Committee member, Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA) at the 2008 Council on Foundations Summit Plenary panel entitled: “Philanthropic Impact: Achieving Diversity Through Leadership or Legislation?” Wednesday, May 7, 2008, Washington, DC, via video stream at: <http://www.cof.org/Network/summit/multimedia.cfm#>.

<sup>5</sup> Note, for example, in addition to CEP’s important work, the recent influential leadership and activities of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), an association of more than 1,700 individual members representing some 350 grantmaking organizations across the U.S.; and more recently the Council on Foundations, which issued a “Statement on Effectiveness” endorsing a vision for how foundations should operate in the future by being more purposeful in selecting clear goals, strategies, and measurable indicators of goal attainment.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Wilhelm, I., “Giving Charities a Voice: Organization Offers Foundations an Unvarnished Evaluation,” *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Washington, DC, November 10, 2005. The article identifies CEP’s efforts to assess foundation strategy and related impacts through the development of heretofore nonexistent standard measurement tools and actionable research on the relationship between strategic goals and outcomes. As CEP’s website reads, in part, at [www.effectivephilanthropy.org/assessment/assessment\\_overview.html](http://www.effectivephilanthropy.org/assessment/assessment_overview.html): “Until recently, few tools existed for obtaining impartial, confidential, comparative data related to [foundations’ strategic impacts]. CEP, guided by its Advisory Board of foundation and



an explicit strategy. Their evaluation efforts are scattershot, at best, and their program effectiveness becomes challenging to measure.

Many leading philanthropic theorists refer to this occurrence as a widespread “effectiveness gap” in professional grantmaking. Much has been written in recent years about the gap and strategies that will help to close it. Joel Fleishman’s *The Foundation: A Great American Secret*,<sup>7</sup> Joel Orosz’s *Effective Foundation Management*,<sup>8</sup> and Mary Ellen Capek’s and Molly Mead’s *Effective Philanthropy: Organizational Success through Deep Diversity and Gender Equality*<sup>9</sup>, for example, are among the more informative and widely discussed recent analyses on effectiveness issues in U.S. philanthropic work.

### ***Diversity and Inclusiveness Can Be Measures of Effectiveness***

Recent research suggests the diversity and inclusiveness of a foundation can be core indicators of effectiveness. To be diverse and inclusive, a foundation’s board, staff, grantmaking, and community relationships should be representative of communities’ cultural and social makeup. The rationale is that diversity and inclusiveness ultimately increases philanthropic effectiveness by making foundations more responsive and accountable to broader public interests.

Two recent studies support this rationale. Preliminary findings from a Grand Valley State University survey suggest that foundations in Michigan with codified diversity policies were roughly twice as likely to achieve board and organizational diversity and, accordingly, institutional responsiveness and impact as foundations without such policies.<sup>10</sup>

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nonprofit leaders, is working to build tools that provide practical, actionable data for foundation leaders - to enable higher-performing foundations.”

<sup>7</sup> Fleishman, J., *The Foundation: A Great American Secret (How Private Wealth is Changing the World)*, Public Affairs Press, NY, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Orosz, J., *Effective Foundation Management: 14 Challenges of Philanthropic Leadership—And How to Outfox Them*, AltaMira Press, Lanham, MI, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Capek, M. E. and Mead, M., *Effective Philanthropy: Organizational Success through Deep Diversity and Gender Equality*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> See *Beyond Compliance: The Trustee Viewpoint on Effective Foundation Governance*, p.19, Center for Effective Philanthropy (with Grantmakers for Effective Organizations and BoardSource), Cambridge, MA., 2008 and Unpublished Report of Researchers from Grand Valley State University, Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership, Grand Rapids, MI: Preliminary field survey findings presented at the Council of Michigan Foundations/Diversity in Philanthropy Project “Symposium on Diversity and Inclusion in Philanthropy,” Detroit, MI, May 2-4, 2009.

A recent CEP field survey of 546 foundation trustees found that the opportunity to influence board discussions is a significant factor in board effectiveness.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, perceptions of board effectiveness were influenced by the number of trustees of color serving on a foundation's board. Trustees of color involved in the CEP study who served on boards with only one or two other trustees of color perceived less opportunity to influence board discussions relative to non-minorities. However, when the number of trustees of color rose to three or more, the difference in perceived opportunity to influence discussions disappeared.

As the studies indicate, diversity and inclusiveness can be a significant component of foundation effectiveness. A growing number of researchers advocate EDL as a tool for increasing diversity and inclusiveness.<sup>12</sup> EDL gathers insights from marginalized people to better understand systemic underpinnings of social and cultural inequalities and responsive grant strategies that can help to address them.

### 3. Framing Evaluation as a Learning Tool

Interview respondents observed that, in general, evaluation is most useful to foundations as a learning tool that helps conceptualize how to improve programming and achieve desired results. This observation is a departure from conventional standards of evaluation based on the scientific method. Conventional standards measure statistically significant changes in program outcomes and evaluate the results of a grant by attributing a cause.

Vice President of Programs at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Anne B. Mosle,

#### A Need for More Study

EDL methodology needs more study. Interview respondents commented that, apart from the work of a small handful of practitioners and institutions, none of the emerging practices to be covered in the case study qualify as significant field-wide trends. Respondents agreed that philanthropy needs more research about the best role for EDL within the field of evaluation and models for how it should be implemented.

But potential models are emerging. Leading evaluation expert and former president of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), Michael Q. Patton, praised the Otto Bremer Foundation in St. Paul, MN for its work on evaluation models with Native American cultures. Bremer's five-year program created an institute with an original intent of increasing the evaluation capacity of rural community groups. However, the program had the most traction among Native Americans. Bremer refocused the effort on how best to practice evaluation in the context of Native American cultures. Bremer is still analyzing the findings, but it will publish a guidebook that provides replicable insights for the field later in 2009. [See [www.ottobremer.org](http://www.ottobremer.org)]

<sup>11</sup> See CEP's publication about the survey posted on its website at: [http://www.effectivephilanthropy.org/images/pdfs/CEP\\_Beyond\\_Compliance.pdf](http://www.effectivephilanthropy.org/images/pdfs/CEP_Beyond_Compliance.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> A growing practice literature highlights EDL as a legitimate evaluation practice, including Donna Mertens' book that features "Integrating Diversity, Qualitative and Mixed Methods;" ideas expressed in the work of Michael Patton, which emphasize "utilization –focused evaluation;" and ideas expressed by David Fetterman and Abe Wandersman in "Empowerment Evaluation." Another that is worth noting is Community-Based Participatory Evaluation (CBPE). For more detailed background on CBPE see Aldrich, L., et al., "Using Community-Based Participatory Evaluation (CBPE) Methods as a Tool to Sustain a Community Health Coalition," *The Foundation Review*, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Comprehensive Community Initiatives), Winter 2009, Grand Valley State University, Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership, Grand Rapids, MI.

informed us that the field is starting to “rethink the application of evaluation in foundation settings away from a priority focus on attribution toward an increased focus on contribution; a need to focus not just on impact, but also on the strategies that are likely to achieve the desired impact.”

However, most foundation programming is often not sufficiently long term to employ the scientific method and attribute causes effectively. Conventional evaluation methodology is highly complex and requires a level of evidence that is costly to amass and often fails to produce definitive answers. Most program investments are also relatively short lived and experimental in nature. They represent reasonable guesses about which applicants or initiatives are worthy of receiving limited institutional grant resources during a given moment in time.

As such, making judgments between grantmaking cause and effect are frustrating, if not inaccurate. However, EDL’s application as a learning tool can help pry evaluation methodology loose from the rigidity of its cause-and-effect analysis.

## **EMERGING BEST PRACTICES IN EDL**

EDL as an evaluation methodology is still too young and too small to have established a set of formal best practices. However, several best practices seem to be emerging from early foundation efforts to implement EDL.

The following offers a description of these emerging practices and recommendations for implementing them. Former vice president for research at CEP, Lisa Jackson, also framed a series of questions practitioners should keep in mind as they and their foundations implement EDL. According to Jackson:

“Perhaps the place to begin to really plant the seed to grow the relevance and utility of [EDL] is to urge foundation grantmakers to advance this work by addressing the following types of questions and imperatives:

- What are you trying to achieve with your grantmaking?
- What is the relevance of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and/or sexual preference to your work? Do you care?
- If you do care, then articulate to yourself and your organization why it is important to your work.
- Is your answer because it is a moral imperative?
- Alternatively, does your answer suggest an interest to better inform how you might become a more effective grantmaker?”

## **Engage in Authentic Exchanges with Diverse Grantee Communities**

Implementing EDL requires foundations to actively seek input from diverse grantee communities. Their input is critical to establishing respectful and ultimately productive

partnerships. In our consultations with the Marguerite Casey Foundation’s director of programs, Kelly Brown, and evaluation officer, Cheryl Milloy, they identified “clear communication and building trust as core principles that should inform EDL best practice.”

Moreover, foundations need to ensure the input is authentic. Grantees need to feel free to communicate their opinions safely, without fear of losing grant support. Otherwise, grantees will not risk offering input they think could upset foundations. For example, inviting grantees to provide input to frame effective programming strategies, outside of discussions of grant support, can be effective. Another example might be to enlist grantee communities in community asset mapping and needs assessment efforts, which are not directly related to grant support.

### **“Do No Harm”**

Astrid Hendricks, program evaluation director for The California Endowment, and other respondents suggested foundations build relationships with diverse grantee communities by adopting an imperative to “do no harm.” Conventional program evaluation can cause harm by failing to incorporate community input. This failure causes programs to be less effective and diverse communities to feel ignored. Foundations also miss an opportunity to gather data that can inform more effective program interventions. The “do no harm” imperative, by contrast, encourages foundations to incorporate input from diverse communities throughout the evaluation process.

### **Involve Community Leaders in Decision Making**

Our expert commentators generally agreed that foundations should frequently consult with leaders of diverse communities before making programmatic decisions. Typically, community leaders are most responsive to offering input about key strategic questions, such as:

- What challenges do you think the foundation’s programming (or its grant) is addressing?
- What do you think are the underlying causes of these challenges?
- What actions would you recommend to address them?
- What do you think should be the foundation’s benchmarks for determining success in this work?
- Why do you think your recommended approach might be more effective than others the foundation might consider?

Discussing strategy decisions with multicultural community leaders offers the potential to better inform foundation programming and also to surface, in a more publicly beneficial way, the innate but still significantly untapped wisdom that exists within diverse populations.

## **Connect EDL Work to the Foundation’s Mission**

The Council on Foundations recently stated that for foundations “effectiveness requires a focus on having specific goals, having a clear strategy, and having measurable indicators that relate to goals and strategy.” It makes sense that foundations should connect EDL work to the broader scope of their mission and desired grantmaking outcomes. Specifying the connection explicitly, respondents insisted, is an important step. The connection should also identify the foundation’s outward commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity in programming and evaluation.

Our case study respondents suggested several practical steps foundations can use to shape a mission-based strategy for building EDL into their evaluation methods. These include the following:

- Engage program staff in discussions to assess the foundation’s readiness to successfully pursue EDL in its evaluation work.
- Conduct a retrospective analysis of the foundation’s recent grantmaking history (e.g., the last 5-15 years) to consider: Is the grantmaking history optimally aligned with the foundation’s values and mission? Is it aligned with EDL principles? If not, what should the foundation do to encourage greater alignment?
- Ask program staff leaders to assess their grant record-keeping systems and portfolios over the last two-three years and consider: Does the grant record-keeping system provide practical information that aligns grantee program efforts with the foundation’s mission, values, and objectives? If not, what are the information gaps? What types of data might help improve effectiveness and efficiency in meeting desired outcomes, particularly in diverse community settings?
- Contact foundation peers who have recently designed strategies based on EDL (or related concepts, such as diversity and inclusiveness) and identify approaches that should (or should not) inform strategies for your foundation.

The principal value of these inquiries is to create the space to think intentionally about strategy that taps the potential of EDL methodologies to advance foundation programming and measurement efforts.

## **Build a Board and Staff That are Aware of Systemic Barriers to Diversity**

Foundations need to purposefully recruit board and staff members who possess an awareness of the systemic effects of racism, gender discrimination, homophobia, and other injustices on marginalized communities. Endorsement from board members is also vital to any effort to implement EDL. A mandate from the board reduces spoken and unspoken internal resistance, and implementation efforts will have a higher probability of sustained financial and

organizational support. Accordingly, staff should also endorse EDL. As several of our study respondents suggested, achieving staff diversity should be more than an “inclusiveness exercise.”

### **Collect and Increase Field-Based Knowledge**

Implementing EDL requires dedicated foundation investment in research and collaborative knowledge-building efforts. Respondents suggested several different kinds of investments.

#### **An Example of an Explicit Commitment to Diversity**

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, with its newly announced, cross-cutting emphasis on anti-racism work, may offer one notable exemplar for the philanthropic community. The foundation has committed its entire organization’s vision, mission, values, and strategic action framework to anti-racism principles and practices, including its approach to organizational assessment. In these connections, interviewee Anne Mosle told us that Kellogg is doing so in ways that reduce staff and external stakeholder anxiety. Kellogg is creating clear opportunities for dialogue and consensus that inform implementation processes where “everyone knows where we are going and how they can contribute.”

### ***Build on Existing Leadership Efforts***

Several organizations have established leadership efforts to further develop EDL as an evaluation tool. The work of these organizations provides examples for foundations that want to implement EDL, and the organizations themselves might serve as potential collaboration partners. Respondents noted the evolving work of CEP, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), the Colorado Trust, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, The California Endowment, the Council of Michigan Foundations, and GrantCraft, among others. The Foundation Center is also providing leadership in this area by collaborating with historically marginalized communities to address applied EDL research and evaluation issues.

### ***Refine EDL Methodology Through Research***

Foundations that implement EDL must make a strong connection between the systemic roots of social inequities and effective foundation programming. Respondents believe that EDL methodology needs more development and refinement to adequately make this connection. Collaboration with research organizations can help. Respondents referenced the AEA, the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organization and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), and the National Science Foundation as potential research partners that could facilitate efforts to refine EDL methodology across the independent sector. Director of research and evaluation for the Wallace Foundation, Edward Pauly, also proposed that foundations work more closely with the Foundation Center, which recently completed a study of information collection, operational definitions, and methodological approaches to collecting diversity data.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See recent reports on the The Foundation Center’s growing leadership role in this area, including McGill, L., Austin, A. and Bryan, B., *Embracing Diversity: Foundation Giving Benefiting California’s Communities of Color*, The Foundation Center, New York, 2008 and *Proceedings From the First Annual Researcher/Practitioner Forum: The State of Research on Diversity in Philanthropy*, The Foundation Center, Council on Foundations and ARNOVA, 2008.

### ***Participate in a Range of Learning Approaches***

Foundations should study EDL in real-life contexts that inform more responsive evaluation work and learning. Respondents suggested peer-group learning opportunities as one example. Peer groups could bring together foundation program executives and board members to engage in mutual learning opportunities with communities and beneficiaries by evaluating program results together.

A number of respondents also suggested the field develop a range of approaches that can help implement EDL based on foundation aims, resource limitations, operational styles, and cultures. This range of approaches could help to create a community of learners that, over the long run, might inform a more heightened consensus on best EDL practices. In our discussions with former AEA president and widely read evaluation practitioner, Michael Q. Patton, he referred to such communities as learning platforms through which current EDL practitioners could document and share experiences with other interested institutional peers. “This would yield field-wide insights in a rigorous way about what is going on and what it teaches for ongoing practice,” he said. “It is not so much that there is a need for new methods. Rather, it is about using the methods that we know work and figuring out together how they can be more broadly supported.”

### ***Develop a Range of Tools and How-To Guides***

The field has produced several useful tools and how-to guides that provide help for foundations looking for practical advice about implementing EDL. Respondents referred often to the work of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) and The California Endowment (TCE). AECF’s “Race Matters Toolkit” is widely distributed in the field and provides insight into EDL-related principles, like structural inequity and culturally competent evaluation practices. Similarly, TCE and the Colorado Trust (now headed by TCE’s former program vice president) have pioneered the development of training modules and guides on multicultural evaluation, which incorporate EDL-related principles. The guide, “Grantmaking with a Racial Equity Lens,” cited earlier in this case study, is also one of the most highly regarded and widely used publications in the field.<sup>14</sup>

### **Build the EDL Practitioner Pipeline**

Few evaluation practitioners come from communities of color and other diverse communities. Philanthropy needs more diverse evaluators to be reflective of the diversity and inclusiveness promoted by EDL. However, the field is making progress in creating more training and recruitment opportunities.

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<sup>14</sup> See PRE’s website for referral information to this important resource: <http://www.racialequity.org>.

### ***Train and Recruit More Evaluators of Color***

Kellogg Foundation and the MIETIG collaborated to develop one of philanthropy's first recruitment programs for evaluators of color, now known as the Graduate Education Diversity Internship Program (GEDIP). The program is currently housed at Duquesne University, under the auspices of School of Education professor, Rodney K. Hopson. It provides training in program evaluation to masters- and doctoral-level students. The program also offers mentoring with experienced practitioners and specialized courses in evaluation in conjunction with the AEA Summer Institute Program. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is also building the pipeline through a similar initiative, the "Evaluation Fellowship Program." The initiative provides one year of intensive training to graduate-level students and also has a separate branch that trains nonprofit professionals in evaluation.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Support Comparable Work in Other Diverse Communities as Well***

Overall, our commentators for this case study agreed that building the pipeline of able EDL practitioners also means expanding foundations' capacity to engage evaluators of various diverse backgrounds to lead or otherwise participate in evaluations. Training thus needs to target diverse philanthropic constituencies including, but also extending beyond communities of color whose interests are under-represented in independent sector evaluations. Allied communities of interest would thus include women and girls, LGBT and disabled communities, low income and youth populations, and rural constituencies, among others. Our respondents also concurred that training in this area needs to focus on a diversity of problem-solving perspectives.

#### **Staying the Course**

Another EDL best practice might be to stay the course. Each respondent expressed concern that foundation leaders could consider abandoning EDL practice during tough economic times. They encouraged foundation leaders to view EDL not as an expendable novelty, but rather as a promising new way to achieve greater philanthropic knowledge and impact at a time of growing resource limitations and social inequities.

### **CHALLENGES**

Finally, as the best practices discussion above implies, foundations face many challenges to implementing EDL. The field will need to address these challenges if EDL is to become a more widely used and value added methodology. Following are some of the strategies our expert commentators offered up to encourage EDL's expanded utility for social investment purposes.

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<sup>15</sup> See for example Thompson-Robinson, M; Hopson, R, and Sen Gupta, S (Eds) (2004), *In Search of Cultural Competencies in Evaluation: Toward Principles and Practices. New Directions for Evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass



## **Establishing the Connection Between Diversity and Effectiveness**

Establishing the connection between diversity and effectiveness will not be easy, but effort must be made to do so in both scientifically and practically appropriate ways in order to give EDL greater lift in organized philanthropy assessment settings. The idea that diversity considerations should substantially inform evaluation practice is uncomfortable to many (perhaps even most) seasoned professionals in the field. Evaluation professionals consider themselves to be objective social science practitioners who can mitigate their own biases. However, the concept of diversity extends beyond evaluator bias to include ideas and experiences. Conventional evaluation methodology could provide more effective responses to social inequality if it were informed by a diverse set of ideas and experiences, instead of its tendency to operate from the perspective of the dominant culture. This rationale has led several of the AEA's top practitioners to make diversity a more compelling agenda, but the organization has experienced challenges embracing it.

As AEA's executive director, Susan Kistler told us, "One thing the AEA is not doing as well as we would like is selling to our [membership] the value of diversity in the practice of evaluation. We spend a lot of time trying to recruit [diverse] members, trying to design programs specifically for them. But if we want to make a cultural change... we need to make sure that the average member sees the value of having diverse membership and alternative viewpoints." In these connections, Kistler informed us that the AEA's leadership is deeply committed to a diversity agenda and is investing considerable effort to promote evaluation methods that align with EDL practices.

The respondents we interviewed for this case study generally expressed optimism that foundations will eventually be committed to advancing the connection between diversity and effectiveness through EDL methodologies. But securing that change in field standards will require a concerted effort between multiple funders to develop support for EDL's broader use. Along those lines, several of our respondents suggested that interested foundations should collaborate with CEP and the Foundation Center to mine data that could provide more solid evidence for the connection between diversity and effectiveness in various social investment contexts.

### **Making Changes and Becoming More Public**

The philanthropic sector is generally well-shielded from pressure to change. As the Wallace Foundation's Edward Pauly informed us, "The only constraints that really bear on the foundation world are [relatively passive] tax regulations, and that is not enough to incentivize [a stronger] foundation leadership, board, and staff focus on diversity and effectiveness."

Use of EDL positions foundations to be more visible and accountable by inviting communities to provide input about their evaluation measures, by lifting up the systemic causes of social inequalities and by assuming a larger public advocacy role in general.

## **Bridging the Divide Between Programming and Evaluation**

The interview respondents with whom we spoke concurred that implementing EDL requires programming to be integrated with evaluation because EDL is a learning tool that operates as a function of effective grantmaking. “Those who take [EDL] seriously build it into what they do; that is, they integrate it into their grantmaking processes,” former CEP evaluation executive Lisa Jackson told us.

But, for most foundations still, evaluation serves a separate and distinct function from programming. This division can frequently lead to tensions about management and decision making across departmental lines. Programming usually takes priority over evaluation. The conventional wisdom is that a dollar spent on evaluation is a dollar less for grant recipients. Staff may also fear evaluation efforts will measure their job performance and not just the results of the foundation’s programming. In some extreme cases, tensions have become so exacting around these concerns that foundations have abandoned altogether or substantially downsized their investments in field evaluation.

Notwithstanding these challenges, our expert consultations revealed an emerging view that, in many ways, successful use of EDL on a more widespread basis could naturally complement more established assessment approaches intended to enhance philanthropic sector knowledge. According to Lisa Jackson, for example, “the Robert Wood Johnson, W. K. Kellogg, and Annie E. Casey foundations all make an effort to identify the problems their grants are intended to affect and to think about the program implications for targeted populations [from a common grants strategy and evaluation perspective].” As Jackson sees it, therefore, early problem identification and broad purpose specification, both noteworthy EDL practices in how best to align programming and evaluation, are tools that already fit quite consistently with what many leading foundations are already doing to advance organizational learning and accountability.

## **Maintaining Community Relationships**

Another challenge to implementing EDL is the need for meaningful community engagement over time, a requirement that implies substantial direct and indirect costs to achieve.

“EDL is an approach that requires physical presence in diverse grassroots communities and cannot be done long distance,” according to Jennifer Greene, a nationally recognized evaluation practitioner and professor at the University of Illinois. “[EDL’s] credibility relies on its usefulness, on social relations...and this takes a certain kind of person with certain kinds of skills who sometimes must challenge authority and institutions, and raise challenges in ways that people can hear. So in terms of logistics, [EDL] takes a lot of face time, a lot of showing up.”

Overall, our experts agreed that EDL requires an unusual degree of interaction with diverse communities in the settings where they live, work, and play. This fundamentally calls for a level of community engagement, relationship building, cultural competency, and investment that is not

typical for many private funders. On this point, Kelly Brown and Cheryl Milloy shared with us the Marguerite Casey Foundation's evolving experience and approach relative to encouraging active stakeholder engagement in its evaluation work, noting that, “We spend more time providing organizational support to community organizations than most other foundations; so a lot of our investments are in building relationships with people...not only understanding local organizations, but [also] the community context in which they operate.”

This level of relationship- and information management inevitably requires special effort and skill. EDL evaluators must obtain a more nuanced understanding of communities based on practically informed observations, active knowledge of target audiences, and a more holistic view of communities. In short, EDL requires a high degree of technical expertise and staying power that significantly departs from more customary practice.

### **Overcoming the Increased Investment Needs of EDL**

According to most of our interview respondents, the foundation community as a whole is not investing sufficiently in EDL, despite its potential to increase evaluation effectiveness. In addition, given current poor performance in the investment markets that inform foundation giving and general administration revenues, none of the experts we consulted were optimistic about future funding prospects for this work. The current and prospective lack of support has surely slowed development of EDL best practice and challenged its evolution and promise in the private foundation world. As such, according to several of our commentators, given current and projected demographic trends, organized philanthropy’s failure to develop this methodology more fully could negatively affect the entire foundation and nonprofit sector in the years to come. As the University of Illinois’s Jennifer Greene told us, for example, “The cost of not investing in this work is the risk of continued failure of program interventions to reach their intended purpose.”

### ***Justifying Funding for Training***

Foundations often resist supporting costs to train evaluation practitioners in EDL because its methodology has yet to gain sufficient currency in organized philanthropy to be considered a mainstream practice. Michael Cortés, a professor at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work, shared with us his view that foundations are reluctant to invest in EDL training, in part at least, for fear that trainees would be unlikely to remain in the field for sufficiently long periods of time to justify the expense. But, according to Cortés, the prospective value added to the social investment profession offered by new EDL practitioners is so promising that it may warrant a shared investment by multiple funders. “The foundation community could collectively invest in producing [new EDL pipeline capacity],” Cortés argues, “thereby spreading the costs and increasing the benefits to the field as a whole.” This kind of investment would reduce the financial risk to any single funder to take EDL to a next level of currency in foundation and nonprofit sector assessment practice.

### *Addressing EDL's Additional Data Collection Logistics and Cost Requirements*

Owing to its public engagement-intensivity, EDL also typically requires more data collection than do conventional evaluation methodologies – yet another factor that contributes to conventional skepticism about its broader application by foundations. EDL evaluators collect robust information about race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and changes to the demography of diverse communities over time during the course of their work in the field. The experts we interviewed for this report told us that this additional level of data collection can pose substantially increased costs to foundations, in large measure because good practice entails compensating grantees (above and beyond their grants) to report pertinent diversity-related evaluation data. This is yet another important challenge for EDL to overcome in the next stages of its development.

## **CONCLUSION**

Considering the obvious, inexorable demographic and economic trends we face in the U.S. and internationally looking ahead – trends that assure us societies across the globe (including our own) will continue to become even more substantially diverse and resource-challenged, the call to develop evaluation practices that better address the systemic causes of inequity is bound to increase, rather than decrease in the years to come. There can be no doubt that the world is becoming more diverse and that social inequities are increasing. Foundations that believe in a just and equitable society must do more to address diversity and equality issues or risk failing in their missions.

As the report herein makes clear, EDL warrants greater field attention and support leading to its broader application and refinement as a useful tool for foundation leaders facing the challenges ahead. It constitutes a promising approach to evaluation that can help foundations increase their prospects to become both more inclusive and more effective in their efforts to address social inequities. This case study will, hopefully, serve as a platform, accordingly, to encourage deeper field-wide discussion about EDL's still-untapped potential to enhance philanthropic impact and benefits in the challenging future that awaits us.

## RECOMMENDED READING ON THIS AND RELATED TOPICS

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- Page, Scott E., *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, Princeton University Press, 2007.
- GrantCraft: *Practical Wisdom for Grantmakers: Guide on Grant Making with a Racial Equity Lens*, prepared in partnership with the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity. New York, 2007.
- Center for Effective Philanthropy, *Proceedings on ‘Foundation Effectiveness’*, 2003. See the Center’s website, [www.effectivephilanthropy.org](http://www.effectivephilanthropy.org) for several relevant reports on the subject.
- The Greenlining Institute, *Investing in a Diverse Democracy: Foundation Giving to Minority-Led Nonprofits*, Fall 2006.
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- Heath, Chip and Heath, Dan, *Made to Stick: Why some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, 2007, Random House.
- See *Voices from the Field: Health and Evaluation Leaders on Multicultural Evaluation; Multicultural Evaluation Literature Review and Critique; Story Telling Approaches to Program Evaluation; and Commissioning Multicultural Evaluations: A Foundation Resource Guide’*, The California Endowment, Los Angeles, CA.
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- Bledsoe, Katrina and Hopson, Rodney, “Conducting Ethical Research and Evaluation in Underserved Communities,” in Merten, Donna, *Evaluation Ethics*, 2008.
- Egon, Guba and Lincoln, Yvonna, *Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results Through Responsive and Naturalistic Approaches*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA, 1981.
- Connell, James, et al., *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Context*, Aspen Institute, New York, 1995.

- Auspos, Patricia and Kubisch, Anne, *Building Knowledge About Community Change: Moving Beyond Evaluations*, Aspen Institute, November 2004.
- *Connecting Legacy to Future: Strategic Direction a Framework for Action*, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, MI, December 2007.
- See Alliance Magazine ([www.alliancemagazine.org](http://www.alliancemagazine.org)) report: Fleishman, Joel and Schambra, William: *Competing Views on the Role of Philanthropy in Society*, Vol. 13, April 2008
- “Attitudes and Practices concerning Effective Philanthropy” Urban Institute, research report by Francie Ostrower ( <http://www.urban.org/expert.cfm?ID=FrancieOstrower> )

## **ATTACHMENT A**

Following are some of the key questions we directed to the interviewees whose feedback helped to inform the contents of this case study:

- What is the current state of play in philanthropic evaluation through a diversity and inclusiveness lens?
- What are emerging and promising practices?
- What are the challenges?
- What are the logistical, organizational or cost considerations to applying evaluation with a diversity lens in foundations?
- Who is doing this work? How are they being trained? And how ‘diverse’ are they?
- Are there evaluation methods that are more applicable to documenting the relationship between ‘diversity’ and foundation ‘effectiveness’?
- Are foundations applying this evaluation approach? If not is there a ‘cost’ to them and/or the field for not investing in evaluation along these lines?