How Are Foundations Communicating Their Work on Diversity? A Case Study

The Diversity in Philanthropy Project

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Précis

The following case study from the Diversity in Philanthropy Project is designed to encourage foundations to communicate with the public and the community about their work on diversity. The report considers the views of leaders of five prominent foundations in the United States. Based on their answers, experiences, and explanations, the study describes the various methods of communicating. The presentation explains how foundations can start using new media sources and how foundations might benefit from partnerships with other organizations and community members. In the end, we hope to encourage a discussion about best practices and whether such a platform is appropriate, given the challenges that emerge through discussions with the interviewees. We welcome thoughts and reactions from our readers regarding this and related content, and encourage those who wish to share their own ideas and suggestions on the issues to do so by writing us at info@diversityinphilanthrophy.org.

We based this case study on the insights of leading communication experts at five diversity-focused foundations. Our interviewees were gracious with their time and shared their experiences freely with the hope of helping to refine and evolve 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. More information about each interviewee can be found in Appendix A.

Summary of Findings

In late 2008, we conducted a series of interviews with leaders at the Ford Foundation, The Denver Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. We gave them a list of questions that focused on their communications strategies; we were curious how the groups communicated their diversity work to the public and to other organizations. The answers gave us insight into how technology and collaborations are shaping the foundations' communications.

Mainstream & New Media

Though most foundations favor mainstream media, foundations are beginning to consider a number of alternatives to share their messages with the public: ethnic publications, local publications, and new media.

New media is emerging as the most efficient way to communicate with the public. The new media allows for user-defined experiences, whether a wiki that creates community, or a video of a presentation that the individual could not attend in person.

New media allows users to stay connected to all aspects of a foundation's work and to one another. The user-friendly media creates a community that extends beyond region.

Collaboration with Organizations, Communities, and Individuals

Many foundations are now collaborating with each other. By working together, the groups can share their messages with populations to which they otherwise would not have access.

Foundations should also try to collaborate with local non-profits and communities. Several of the interviewees used their connection with the local communities to share their messages and encourage diversity.

Communicating About Diversity

The foundations surveyed are consistently trying to communicate with the public about the diversity work that they are doing. These communications are effective methods to gain support from individuals and other organizations. Regardless of the method used, communicating the foundations' work on diversity is important.

Development of Best Practices Platform

Despite the benefits of communication, there are a number of difficulties that may preclude the development of a best practices platform. For example, there must be a method for measuring successful communications and there should be a way to update the platform so that it reflects the latest technologies.

The ideas and practices discussed in the case study can be a starting point for a discussion about the best practices platform. The discussion should address whether it is necessary and how to develop such a platform.

Disclaimer

Diversity in Philanthropy Project has represented quotes from case study interviewees and facts related to their organizations as accurately as possible. Diversity in Philanthropy Project takes full responsibility for any inaccuracies.

Intro: How Can Foundations Use Communications Effectively?

Overview: Communication Best Practices and Discussion of a Platform

When foundations talk about diversity and philanthropy, they usually focus on grantmaking principles or on board and staff compositions. But how foundations communicate about their work on diversity is just as important. What is the impact of awarding a six-figure grant or hiring a CEO from a community of color if the public doesn't hear about it?

Summary

This Diversity in Philanthropy case study explores how foundations communicate their work on diversity. Interviews with communications officers from five of the most visible foundations in the United States reveal examples of cutting-edge practices, including ideas about:

- Communicating through mainstream and outside-of-mainstream media

- Branching into websites and new media

- Contacting communities in-person

- Building partnerships

The case study concludes by asking whether and how philanthropy should construct a platform of best practices for communicating about diversity work. The object is to spark further discussion about best practices and provide communication ideas for foundations.

Diversity in Philanthropy explored the topic by interviewing communications officers from five national foundations that engage in diversity and inclusiveness work: the Ford Foundation, The Denver Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

The case study describes examples of current cutting-edge practices, some of which might become part of a best practices platform. The intention is to offer viable communications ideas to foundations and spark further discussion.

Defining the Issue: Why Focus on Good Communication?

Foundations working on diversity need to strategically communicate so that they call attention to issues and leverage support. Nonprofits and the public do not often hear about work on diversity-related issues. And when they do, messages frequently communicate pledges and ideals, not the work itself.

"So much of the work is 'let's talk about it,'" says Jon Funabiki, a journalism professor at San Francisco State University who previously worked for the Ford Foundation to promote diversity in the media. "But you earn credibility by demonstrating you've accomplished something, or even that you've had to struggle. This shows an organization has internalized the challenges diversity can bring."

Foundations need to get real about communications. But how? A number of great resources provide information about diversity. The "Race Matters Toolkit" from the Annie E. Casey Foundation helps organizations construct equitable policies and practices with a beautiful step-by-step guide. The Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity website harnesses a virtual cornucopia of resources about organizations devoted to racial justice. However, these resources focus on engaging in the work and do not guide foundations to effectively communicate about it. This case study will offer concrete insights to that end from our interviewees.

Reference and Resource Listing

On Message: Using Strategic Communications to Advance Social Change in Black and Latino Communities
Conducted by an ABFE/HIP collaboration and sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation, "On Message" highlights examples of efforts involving Black and Latino-serving nonprofits that utilize strategic communications to enhance their advocacy work and improve opportunities in communities of color. Click here for link.

Thinking Change: Race, Framing, and the Public Conversation on Diversity
Diversity Advancement Project and the Center for Social Inclusion, a Project of the Tides Center for the Kirwan Institute. 2005. Click here for link to the document and here for a link to the organization.

GrantCraft
GrantCraft provides downloadable PDF guides on grantmaking with a racial equity lens. Click here for link. Click here for the guide that discusses grantmaking with a gender equity lens.

Race Matters Toolkit
The Annie E. Casey Foundation provides a comprehensive toolkit for funders, staff, and others interested in obtaining more equitable results that address race matters. Click here for the link, or here to link to the toolkit guide that specifically discusses how to talk about race. And click here for the guide that discusses unequal opportunity within news media coverage.

The Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE)
Click here for lists, while not exhaustive, that do provide a range of resources that deal directly with the intersection of philanthropy and racial equity and/or diversity.

Changing Communities Changing Foundations: The Story of the Diversity Efforts of Twenty Community Foundations, Rainbow Research
Find highlights of promising practices among community foundations in responding internally and externally to meet the needs of communities of color by clicking here.

W.K Kellogg Cultures of Giving
For Kellogg's resource listing of grantees and their partner organizations that work to increase charitable giving, leadership opportunities, and volunteerism in communities of color, click here.

Giving Forum
Click here for an overview of the Landscape of Racial, Tribal, and Ethnic Philanthropy.

Coalition for New Philanthropy (on NYRAG website)
To link to Building Bridges to Communities of Color: A Toolkit for Engaging Donors of Color, click here.

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
Rockefeller is publishing a series of three reports on diversity and inclusiveness in philanthropy, a survey examination of the state of the field. It has published two of the three reports, click on each title for the link: Philanthropy in a Changing Society; Diversity & Inclusion: Lessons from the Field

Diversity in Philanthropy: Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative (ENII)
The Denver Foundation partnered with Community Resources Center to present Diversity and Beyond, which detailed nonprofit blueprints for diversity and inclusiveness. Click here for the link.

Could ABFE/HIP's "On Message" Serve as a Model?

The [Association of Black Foundation Executives](#) (ABFE) and [Hispanics in Philanthropy](#) (HIP) recently completed a detailed report that focused on strategic communications for social change in black and Latino communities, "[On Message](#)." Although the data for the report came from nonprofits, some of the findings -- such as crafting messages and approaching the media -- might as easily apply to foundation communications. Some of the foundations in this case study are already applying the communication practices that the report recommends. The report could serve as a model for a foundation study of best practices. It also places proper emphasis on the need for more communications resources.

> ### ABFE/HIP's "On Message"
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> "On Message" examines the strategic communications work of nine successful nonprofits that serve blacks and Latinos. The report profiles the nonprofits, identifies challenges of working with the media, and discusses a number of communications lessons, including:
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> - Surveying the local context
> - Identifying the target audience
> - Crafting messages that build alliances
> - Speaking and repeating plain, simple messages
> - Testing and adapting messages
> - Tapping all outlets for the "air war"
> - Reforming the infrastructure and system
>
> The report also recommends several action steps for grantmakers that include strategizing, grantmaking, providing nonfinancial assistance and informing others. [Click here](#) to view the report.

Defining Diversity: What Does Communicating About It Mean?

Another challenge of communicating about diversity work is defining the term "diversity." Mott's Vice President, Communications, Marilyn LeFeber, and program officer, Kimberly Roberson, who participated in the interview together, commented that they were unsure of our purpose.

"Our original response was that we weren't sure what to offer," Roberson said. "Is it how we communicate respect and belief in diversity or the importance of communicating work with diverse groups?"

Other people we spoke with viewed diversity as a polarizing force that can be positive or negative. "Diversity can be used to separate or connect us to one another," said Kathleen Baca, Marguerite Casey Foundation's Director of Communications. "Marguerite Casey celebrates diversity and focuses on what communities can do together rather than the idea that 'we're moving our own way, you move in yours.'"

In addition, diversity can be broadly or narrowly defined. One foundation might refer to diversity in terms of race and ethnicity. Others might add gender and sexual orientation. Still others might add disabled populations and religions. This case study defines diversity as broadly or narrowly as each interview subject might define the term.

A distinction between the terms "diversity" and "inclusiveness" is also helpful. The Denver Foundation's Vice President of Communications, Rebecca Arno, voices this distinction succinctly. "Diversity is having the right people in the room and inclusiveness is making sure the views of diverse communities are included in all parts of the conversation."

Interview Findings: Practices

The interviews occurred during the end of 2008. They adhered to a standard format of questions provided to the interview subjects in advance. We asked them about their communications, what worked well, and what was more challenging. Their responses provide insight into their current work and, together, serve as a starting point for further discussions of best practices in communications about diversity work. (For a listing of interview questions, click here.)

Communicating Through Mainstream and Outside-of-Mainstream Media

The media is one of the most effective communications vehicles for foundations. Mainstream media, such as big national newspapers or network television, can reach mass audiences quickly. Other media outside the mainstream, such as ethnic presses and community newspapers, are effective in directly targeting diverse communities or niche audiences.

Mainstream Media and the Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation is almost legendary for its prowess in communicating through the mainstream media. Its discourse has blazed a trail for policy debates on topics ranging from public broadcasting to AIDS treatment, and of course, diversity and inclusiveness. How has Ford become a go-to resource for mainstream media?

Building and Leveraging Relationships

Ford is great at building relationships—with its grantees and with the media.

Prerequisite: Commitment to Diversity in Mission and Values

A foundation's mission and values need to support a deep commitment to diversity so its communications (and the work itself) will engage grantees and the public with sincerity.

"It's not enough to tell people they're diverse," said Jan Jaffe, the Project Director of GrantCraft, which provides web-based guides for effective grantmaking, including guides on grantmaking with a racial equity and a gender lens. "Foundations can't skip over the values piece: How is diversity important to our organization?

"They need to have conversations about this internally and with their grantees. They need to ask what they're doing differently as a result. How is our work different from a Benetton ad?"

All five foundations in the case study connect diversity work to a deep commitment in their mission and values. References to history and mission occurred frequently.

Senior Communications Manager at the Packard Foundation, Anastasia Ordonez, said, "Packard has made a commitment, from early in its history, to diversity and inclusion. This meant a wide variety of voices, a community of voices, have been involved in shaping and helping to inform the organization."

"I can't stress enough the importance of relationships," said Marta Tellado, the Vice President for Communications at Ford Foundation. "When [the media is] covering an issue that we work on, they have the confidence to come back to us for a diverse perspective. We can use the engagement to educate them."

Knowing Grantees Well

Ford's prominence bolsters its reputation. And, just as importantly, Ford is reliable. The staff understands grantee organizations and the diverse communities they target, and it represents both well enough to inform reporters thoroughly.

"We strive to educate reporters on why diversity is important, and we provide a valuable and unique perspective," Tellado said. "We've watched a lot of the Civil Society organizations grow during the last 30 years. Having seeded the organizations and their networks, we know their work and try to convey it in a compelling fashion."

Example: The Dream Deferred

Ford recently launched a series of forums to educate the public. One of them, The Dream Deferred, focused on the impact of the homeownership crisis on minority communities. Ford approached a *New York Times* reporter who was covering the crisis and convinced him to moderate a panel discussion as a way to learn more about the issue.

The event was a huge success. Tellado said a very diverse audience filled Ford's 200-seat auditorium to capacity, and the panel discussion was rich and engaging for everyone involved. The reporter walked away with a deeper understanding about how the crisis has disproportionately impacted minorities -- the underlying cause was bad bank policies rather than irresponsible homeowners. This impression was greater than that of a report or a statistic. It motivated him to take the message directly to his readers.

Leveraging Relationships with Reporters

Leveraging relationships with reporters and others allows Ford to convey messages that wouldn't see the public otherwise.

"When you work with an organization that reflects diversity, the fact is not what [media] folks are writing about," Tellado said. "They're writing about the issues and problems that organization is addressing. It's very difficult to bring attention to the diversity side."

In these instances, Ford can refer back to its network for leverage. For example, Ford's Diversity Fellows Program has provided $175 million for 5,000 Latino and African American scholars as a way to diversify academia. Some of the fellows move on to become reporters. Others join Washington think tanks. Because Ford maintains relationships with its fellows, it can approach them and gain a receptive ear to its messages.

"When I hear from reporters whom we created a relationship with, it's particularly rewarding," Tellado said. When relationships extend beyond one or two stories, reporters begin viewing Ford as a go-to source on an issue and start to approach Tellado with story ideas, instead of the other way around. Longevity in relationships with reporters is essential.

Using a Variety of Media Sources: The Marguerite Casey Foundation

The Director of Communications at the Marguerite Casey Foundation, Kathleen Baca, found herself in a different position from Tellado. Mainstream media outlets were reluctant to cover Marguerite Casey's Equal Voice for America's Families campaign in 2008.

"Because the campaign happened in tandem with an historic presidential campaign, traditional media would cover our campaign events only if a national candidate was speaking," Baca said. "Fifteen thousand families attended the Equal Voice conventions, but national media outlets would not recognize families as credible spokespeople or experts on issues affecting their lives. They wanted candidates or established experts." So, she approached other media sources.

Equal Voice for America's Families

The campaign and conventions mobilized 30,000 families to address the most pressing issues facing them today. From August 2007 through September 2008, families met in a series of 65 town hall-type discussions across the nation. The families prioritized their biggest challenges and voiced them using impressive new media tools and simultaneous conventions in Chicago, Birmingham, and Los Angeles. The goal was twofold: help give families a platform to voice their concerns, and synthesize the many voices into a united message that would reach across racial and ethnic lines.

> #### Banding Together to Gain Media Coverage
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> Baca's frustration with the national media echoed that of a number of nonprofits and other organizations working on diversity. She said, "We cannot rely exclusively on mainstream media to cover the work of our grantees, especially when those voices are not viewed as experts (you can always get national media to cover things like policy papers, for example)?"
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> Working with ethnic, community, and social media is one answer. Another answer is to build coalitions across racial and ethnic lines and banding together. Baca partnered with African American groups, Latino groups, Arab coalitions and other groups for the Equal Voice campaign. Her approach increased media coverage, built new coalitions, and reinforced the campaign's message of achieving equal voices for families.
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> "Latino media might ask, 'How does this pertain to Latino families?'" Baca said. "We can always find statistics to support a specific viewpoint. The goal is to get different groups to work together. People must see themselves in each other's struggle, or we will not be successful in bridging the racial divide."

Achieving Greater Integrity

Baca pushed forward with a strategy based on Marguerite Casey's commitment to movement building and approached a wider range of media sources for coverage. She contacted ethnic media, local dailies, community newspapers, and online sources, such as the Huffington Post. She also utilized social media sources, such as YouTube and Facebook. While the campaign received some national-level coverage, it achieved an outstanding level of regional and local coverage.

"We were intentional about making families the voice and face of the campaign," Baca said. "People gave up their evenings and weekends to participate. Community and ethnic media did an

excellent job of elevating families' voices and valuing their opinion and solutions to the challenges they face."

Stories appeared in 80-100 publications and online, and they focused more squarely on the voices of families and the campaign's message that families can be leaders of change. Marguerite Casey's commitment to movement building paid off.

Adapting to New Media, an Open Question

Over the last decade, new media -- or web 2.0, as some call it -- has grown from websites with gimmicky clip-art into legitimate sources of competition for the mainstream media. Highly respected outlets, like the Washington Post and CBS News, are adapting to new technology so they do not become obsolete. However, new media also offers a brilliant opportunity for democratizing public discourse.

"It's allowing media to become a cultural experience that users are defining and not some other entity," said San Francisco State professor, Jon Funabiki.

He wonders, however, whether institutions like philanthropy, have found the best way to use new media. The user-defined nature of new media means foundations will have to give up control of the message.

"For foundations this is going to be difficult to do. Foundations tend to be very deliberate about communicating. They'll have to make it more interactive and not just send a message."

Understandably, a number of foundations have treaded lightly into new media. The interview respondents are embracing new media as a way to revolutionize communication about diversity, but are unsure about how to incorporate the institutional voice.

Branching into Websites and New Media

New media refers to the variety of web-based sources through which the public accesses information in the 21st century. In addition to websites, there are social networking sites, like Facebook and LinkedIn; blogs, such as the Huffington Post or a personal site on Blogger; social messaging sites, like Twitter; video- and media-sharing sites, such as YouTube; informational forums with user-generated content, like wikis on Wikipedia; audio or video broadcasts of self-produced material that are embedded into websites, such as podcasts; and many other web applications designed to improve users' access to information and each other. Over the past few years, foundations -- including the interview respondents -- have been finding ways to join in.

Escaping the Confines of Print: C.S. Mott Foundation

"We're creating and delivering far more content online than in print and other mediums," said Marilyn LeFeber, Vice President, Communications at the C.S. Mott Foundation. "We've become increasingly conscious about how respondents want to receive information. People under 30 get information differently."

"Philanthropy tends to be an older and more traditional field," added Kimberly Roberson, program officer at Mott, who joined LeFeber for the interview. "But now it's a whole different game!"

11

An 80-Year-Old Institution's Target Audience

In the process of revamping the website three years ago, LeFeber and a planning team approached new media as a way to renew Mott's connection to the community. The foundation was 80 years old and wanted to ensure that connection to its many audiences remained strong.

LeFeber framed the issue. "How do we take all the new opportunities for communications on web 2.0 -- resources such as podcasts, Facebook, and YouTube -- and figure out how this will work for Mott?"

The solution was to go back to marketing and journalism basics: consider your target audience and how it wants to receive information. New media is good for audiences under 30, in situations when interactive feedback is needed, at times when the audience might be unable to see or hear a message in-person, or in situations when people might benefit from access to a variety of resources.

Using New Media and Tagging Information

The type of new media is important. For example, a dozen issue pages allow Mott website users to focus on specific program areas, such as Race and Reconciliation, where Mott can refer them to a BBC podcast exploring the history of race in South Africa or to another website that has samples from an Apartheid museum.

Categorizing information is also important. Interested parties should be able to find what they need quickly. "We have had to become more specific about tagging information for web searches," LeFeber said. "Now our information comes up near the top of most search engines."

Example: Truth in Translation New Media Package

Mott used new media to increase the impact of a series of grants it made to the Truth in Translation project in 2006-7. Truth in Translation is a play about human rights abuses and racism in South Africa. It tells the story of ordinary citizens who translated the testimony of abusers and victims during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in the mid-90s.

"Mott put together a package of communications around it," LeFeber said, "including video of the performance, audio, and news clips from the play, which included international performances."

Measuring Impact Can Be Challenging

LeFeber and Mott considered the campaign a victory. She said the public's response was the best way to measure how well the project informed people. Audiences that received free tickets to performances from Mott filled a 2,000-seat venue to capacity in the foundation's local community of Flint, Michigan, and many attendees stayed for interactive workshops after the performances. The show was successful enough to tour within the United States and internationally.

"We worked with a cross-section of community leaders from civic and school groups and others to organize the performances and workshops afterward," LeFeber said. "The promotion we did through the media and online allowed us to work collaboratively with the grantees, our community, and other parts of the world."

Wiki, a New Means of Feedback: The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

When the David and Lucile Packard Foundation wanted to increase feedback from grantees, it was looking for options that allowed more interactivity. It launched a wiki, an online community in which web users shape and mold content. The wiki shares information about issues related to Packard's grantmaking focus and facilitates two-way feedback with the community. In total, the wiki has over 90 members who contribute information and comments related to 10 issues, or content threads. Packard also has moderators engaged with all 10 threads. ([Click here](#) for a sample of how a wiki looks.)

"It's how our programs are building capacity in minority-led organizations," said Anastasia Ordonez, the senior communications manager at Packard. "We're curious to hear from our grantees and other organizations about how we're helping them and how we could be better at diversity and inclusion."

Interactivity and Flexibility

The wiki uses the [Wiser Earth Platform](#), which creates an online community that allows people to communicate and leave comments, either anonymously or with an account. This provides flexibility so that anyone can participate in Packard's ongoing conversation with the community.

"At the core is hearing the voices that exist out there," Ordonez said. "But it meets them where they are."

Ordonez believes that wikis or other online communities can encourage grantmakers to interact with constituents on a new level.

Nonprofitinclusiveness.org: The Denver Foundation

Another way to use new media to communicate about diversity is to develop a dedicated website. This is what The Denver Foundation (TDF) did when it launched www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org in November 2008 for its Inclusiveness Project.

"It's part of our new and ongoing commitment to make all resources accessible through the web," said Rebecca Arno, TDF's Vice President of Communications. "I'm really excited about it. It's a beautifully designed website, for one thing, and I think it'll be an incredible tool."

An Outgrowth of the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative (ENII)

The website evolved from a decision in 2007 to make permanent a program that helps nonprofits and foundations become more inclusive of people of color, the Expanding Nonprofit

Inclusiveness Initiative (ENII). TDF launched ENII in 2001 by surveying 210 nonprofit organizations and interviewing 150 emerging and established leaders from communities of color.

The research led to a series of tools, grants, and conferences designed to transform "how people connect with one another across the boundaries of culture." Effectiveness measures have shown that using a multi-step program outlined in workshops and a supplementary workbook helped nonprofits become more effective at achieving their missions and reaching out to diverse constituents. The permanent program was named the Inclusiveness Project and received ongoing funding from the foundation, dedicated staff members, and a separate website.

Communicating Through the Website, Sharing Stories

"We had the idea that we'd like to put together a social marketing campaign behind the project," Arno said. "So, we created the website where we can share stories and create an online community."

The website combines a number of new media capabilities. It provides access to the Inclusiveness Program's resources, the workbook, "Inclusiveness at Work," research reports, and a database of inclusiveness consultants. Users can search and connect with other organizations that engage in inclusiveness work and post and read comments. As more users come to the website, interactions among TDF, the community members, and nonprofits will grow.

Arno has a favorite website feature: "It's extremely searchable. If another foundation has a website like this, I'd love to see it so we can link to it."

Making the Most of Conventional Marketing Materials

Foundation marketing materials may need to convey a lot of general foundation information, but they still present a variety of options for communicating about diversity work, from annual reports to magazine ads.

Amplifying the Voices of Grantees

Marguerite Casey's marketing materials amplify the voices of diverse organizations and people engaging in work with communities. Its annual report, convenings, website, and quarterly newsletter focus squarely on the work of grantees. "We report on how organizations push past their base to build coalitions," Baca said. "We ask organizations to send us their news clippings. [Our quarterly newsletter] is a detailing of best practices." Using grantee voices reinforces institutional messages when a foundation supports organizations that reflect its focus on diversity. The messages are all the more convincing because they come from outside sources.

Diverse Communities as Target Audiences

Because The Denver Foundation (TDF) is a community foundation it raises money from community members. As part of TDF's commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, it seeks to increase giving from communities of color. However, only a small percentage of Denver's high-net-worth residents (the population most likely to open donor-advised funds) are from communities of color. TDF works with professional advisors from communities of color, encouraging them to refer clients, and has included these advisors in its annual "Philanthropic Leadership Awards." Arno stressed, "This is not an add-on but a part of TDF. These are the people who are serving as a connection between TDF and diverse communities." Since the outreach effort started, the number of funds from communities of color has increased.

User-Friendliness

New media can level the playing field for diversity by facilitating access to resources, but the value decreases substantially if access is slow or difficult. Arno is fond of the search feature of www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org because it allows users to quickly access the information they want. For example, users who do not want to learn more about the initiative itself can reach any of the other resources on the site easily. New media is all about user choice and user-defined experiences, otherwise known as user-friendliness.

Finding Information in a Matter of Seconds

Ford's Tellado experimented with the [annual report](#) last year. Instead of listing all of Ford's grants, as previous reports had done, Tellado placed the full grant listing on the website. She also used more visuals to communicate messages that might have taken pages. The result was a much leaner print version of the annual report and a full document on the website. Her changes allowed users to search and find a listing of grants about diversity in a matter of seconds, rather than waiting for the printed report and sifting through pages of information.

Connecting Users Directly to Grantees

Facilitating connections to grantees is a primary feature of the Equal Voice [campaign section](#) of Marguerite Casey's website. Users can search for grantee organizations either by issue or by geographic region. They can also find contact information, listings of relevant media organizations, and best practices. Baca said, "Our goal is to connect people through best practices and shared outcomes. Everything we do on the website is to connect people to each other and resources to expand their work."

Websites like this increase interactivity. They allow users and organizations to take their conversations offline and multiply messages among their networks, referred to as "going viral." When users can define their own experience, they are more likely to take up a cause or feed into it. The website is a mutual learning opportunity and, as Marguerite Casey advocates, it gives every user an equal voice.

In-Person Contact Is Communications, Too

Mott was surprised to learn that people in its hometown of Flint were not aware of the scope of its work. "Some remembered us for work done in the 40s and 50s, but had no idea of what we do now," LeFeber said.

Service Organizations Circuit

So LeFeber created a PowerPoint presentation about Mott's current work and hit the pavement. She went to the Flint service organizations -- the Lions clubs, Rotary, churches -- and talked for 20-30 minutes to explain its continued commitment to its home community. "People frequently didn't know we were involved with as many activities as we are," LeFeber said. "Or they were

confused. Many in the professional community thought the Foundation was connected to Mott Community College."

Staff Contact as Communication

The experience underscored how important in-person contact is as a communication tool. Everyone in a foundation who has contact with the public is a representative of it, even the receptionist. In fact, LeFeber found that many Flint grantees were unlikely to check the website for information because they had personal contact with management and administration staff. In the foundation's work beyond Flint, program staff was a major source of messaging to nonprofits and the general public.

The same applies to Ford and other foundations. Tellado notes that staff on the ground, nationally and internationally, represent the diverse populations Ford serves. They have to be aware of the issues and communicate effectively. "Some people shy away from media contact," Tellado said. "But we take a look at the big picture. It strengthens democracies when [diverse] populations are represented."

Communications Training for Staff

Communications training for foundation staff is increasingly important. In addition to fielding media inquiries, staff are often presenters at conferences and events. They need to know what to say, particularly when questions and comments aren't known in advance.

Mott, like other foundations, holds a training class, "Media 101," for all program staff. The class teaches staff how to interact with the media and the public and explains why staff should contact the communications department when they receive a media inquiry. Roberson found the class challenging because of the potential for misinterpretation. A simple question like, "do you live in Flint?" was tricky. Do the suburbs count as Flint? If you say no, are you removing yourself from the city's concerns? "The training taught me not to be so defensive. You can interpret it as 'do you live in this community?'"

Two-Way Dialogue: Listening Sessions and Grantee Perception Surveys

Foundations and staff must also communicate with grantees. Foundations express their perceptions of grantees through grant reviews or evaluations. But grantees should also be able to express their perceptions of foundations. "As a sector," Packard's Ordonez said, "we've been doing the work, but we're hesitant to engage the public about it."

Packard's president and CEO, Carol Larson, recently initiated a series of listening sessions with leaders of 20 diverse nonprofit grantees in San Benito County, California. "This is a big story," Ordonez said. "We're not used to having these conversations -- here are the issues and solutions to work that we need to be involved in."

Grantees spoke with Larson informally. They were free to critique Packard's work and to discuss the issues and challenges they faced. Packard is relatively new to San Benito, and the listening sessions have facilitated deeper involvement in the community.

Packard has also conducted grantee perception surveys to receive input from nonprofits. The survey results led Packard to develop its wiki and have informed its goals around diversity and inclusiveness.

Building Partnerships to Communicate Diversity

Foundations already collaborate with grantees and, in some ways, use grants as a method of collaboration. But what collaborations with other organizations should they consider?

Partnerships Among Foundations and Directly Related Organizations

Some observers joke that getting foundations to work together is like herding cats. However, foundations can, and often do, work together to communicate about diversity. But communication itself can be a challenge. Ordonez said, "We're not used to seeking the limelight because we usually take a back seat to our grantees."

Foundation Partnerships with Projects, Affinity Groups, and Associations

Foundations often act together by funding separate entities that communicate messages about diversity. Diversity in Philanthropy Project (DPP) is one example. According to Roberson, Mott supported DPP because it believes that diversity will strengthen its wisdom and impact. Working with DPP also presented an opportunity to collaborate with other major national funders, like Kellogg and Rockefeller, on expanding diversity and inclusion at foundations. DPP develops messages independently and foundations support them.

Another option is to support affinity groups, like [Native Americans in Philanthropy](#), [Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy](#), [Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy](#), and the [Joint Affinity Groups](#). Affinity groups channel the voices of diverse foundation staff members and the constituencies they represent. The ABFE/HIP report, "On Message" is one such example. Although affinity groups may not always convey the messages foundations want, they ensure foundations maintain their commitment to diversity and inclusiveness.

Foundations also collaborate with local or regional groups. Roberson referenced the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF), a regional association of grantmakers, as an example. "It's important to understand CMF has family foundations, community foundations, private funders, small and big funders. CMF offers more than financial support. It offers peer learning and general outreach on issues of diversity in staffing and grants."

Collaborations with Communities and Individuals

Collaborating with communities and individuals may not make front-page headlines, but it builds a grassroots basis for foundations' diversity work and strengthens communication with target audiences.

Bilingual Collaboration: The Neighborhood Leadership Development Program

Through the [Neighborhood Leadership Development Program](#) (NLDP), TDF provides leadership development training for grassroots leaders who live in the 10 partner communities served by its Strengthening Neighborhoods program. [Strengthening Neighborhoods](#) is a grassroots grantmaking program that directly supports residents' efforts to make their neighborhoods better places to live.

All NLDP instruction and materials are in Spanish and English because many residents in the communities only speak Spanish. Many of the Spanish-speaking program participants are women who act as leaders in their children's schools by, for example, working on creating plans for traffic safety on the streets surrounding the school buildings. Once they complete the program, they participate in a graduation that brings the community together. Participants, their families, friends, supporters, and other community residents attend the graduation to show their support.

"Many of the women hadn't graduated from high school, but were able to graduate from the program," Arno said. "Their children were there. Their families used video cameras to record the event."

The program communicated the level of TDF's commitment and a broader message of inclusiveness to community members. Arno said, "Participants learned they can go into the halls of power and they can make a difference."

30,000 Equal Voices

Marguerite Casey successfully collaborated with 30,000 families in its Equal Voice campaign, mentioned above. The collaboration included the staging of 65 town hall-style meetings and

three simultaneous conventions, which were also accessible by an additional 5,000 families who watched online. The work required a significant commitment from Marguerite Casey, its grantees, and families, as well. Participation was so strong that new collaborations between organizations and among families continued after the campaign.

"The campaign brought together families and organizations from diverse backgrounds and disciplines who were able to unite around a single message relevant to everyone," Baca said, "that you don't give up anything by expanding your networks."

Whether and How to Construct a Best Practices Platform

As mentioned in the introduction, few resources explicitly address best practices for communicating foundation work on diversity, and the resources that do exist are difficult to find. Compiling a best practices platform would, seemingly, benefit philanthropy. The platform would provide guidance on improving communications to

> ### *Resourcing and Being a Resource for Grantees*
>
> All interview subjects emphasized that communicating about diversity and inclusiveness work requires nonfinancial exchanges of resources. Foundations benefit in a number of ways.
>
> For instance, TDF brings in key leaders from diverse communities to help create communications strategies. Marguerite Casey amplified the voices of its grantees, who contribute best practices and other useful information for its website. Packard's listening sessions and grantee perspective surveys solicit critiques of its work and ideas to improve its outreach.
>
> Grantees also benefit from nonfinancial exchanges of resources. They can gain expertise they wouldn't learn on their own. For example, Mott works with grantees on their communications. It assists by drafting press releases, preparing grantees for media interviews, developing print material, and working on ideas for websites and e-newsletters. Roberson said, "We're helping grantees communicate in ways that affect diversity by helping them be mindful of their audience."
>
> Ford provides nonfinancial support for grantees that struggle with their diversity goals. For example, a Washington think tank supported by Ford had a lot of talent, but wasn't achieving enough diversity. To fix this, Ford helped set up an internship program as a recruitment tool, and soon the think tank's diversity began to grow.

foundations working on diversity, especially those without the resources to explore best practices. The platform could also serve as a clearinghouse to make resources easier to find.

Despite the benefits of having a best practices platform, the interview subjects suggested a number of challenges that complicate the question of whether to construct a platform.

Challenges

Need for Concrete Objectives

Tellado questions whether a platform would be beneficial. If one were created, the objectives would need to be concrete. "What are we trying to accomplish? What's the audience? What would success look like? We would have to discuss this, then determine if there's a need and what the next steps would be."

Measurement

The objectives would need to have an adequate measurement system in place, but measuring the impact of communications can be difficult. "How you measure outcomes and impact is a very big issue right now," LeFeber said. "Outcomes take years, if not decades. So it's difficult measuring the impact of strategic communication."

Consistent and Frequent Updates

A platform would need to keep up with advances in communications technology and techniques. "In communications, changes are faster and more immediate," LeFeber said. "You have to be open to changes in the tools available." An organization or entity might be designated to provide continual updates. However, this could be labor intensive and require frequent contact among a number of communications professionals across the country.

Inclusiveness

Another challenge is ensuring the right organizations and people have access and can provide input to the platform. Roberson noted that smaller entities or valuable people who are not well connected are often left out of social change affiliations. Constructing a platform should offer inclusive criteria for input, incorporation, and open access.

Accepting the Risks of Becoming More Visible

A best practices platform would call foundations to step out of their comfort zones and communicate more visibly about their work. Arno mentioned this could entail some risks. TDF is excelling in its diversity and inclusiveness commitment and is proud of its record, but with the commitment comes the perception that other foundations do not need to commit as strongly to their own diversity and inclusiveness work. Fortunately, the Colorado funding community has recently added a question about diversity and inclusiveness to its common grant application to inspire a broader commitment from other foundations.

However, foundations must be committed to diversity and willing to risk putting their reputations behind their work. The work needs to stem from a foundation's mission. "TDF is focusing on race because of the limited resources available and relative intractability of race as an issue," Arno said. "Inclusiveness is an essential part of who we are."

Additional Suggestions

If a platform were created, any of the practices that emerged through the interviews would serve as fine starting points. The discussion would, of course, need to address the challenges listed above and the other suggestions that emerged through the interviews and background research.

"On Message"

As mentioned in the introduction, the joint ABFE/HIP strategic communication paper offers excellent insight into communicating work on diversity, although the focus is on nonprofits, not foundations. Foundations should consider whether to adapt the lessons and recommendations of "On Message" for their own platform. Alternatively, foundations might use "On Message" as a model to study best practices tailored for philanthropy.

Involve Affinity Groups and Diverse Communities

Similarly, foundations should invite affinity groups and leaders of diverse communities to any discussion of best practices. Affinity groups' involvement would add expertise and legitimacy to the effort; the leaders of diverse communities can provide inroads to their communities.

Framing Public Discourse

An effective component of the platform could be a broader effort to frame public discourse on diversity. The suggestion is from the Diversity Advancement Project and the Center for Social Inclusion in their paper, "Thinking Change: Race, Framing and the Public Conversation on Diversity." It reports that successful communications about diversity operate "on multiple levels, including medium and long-term cognitive framing and public education campaigns which influence the behavior of public opinion leaders and others." Although a best practices platform would not necessarily include a call for a united diversity campaign, it should be part of the discussion. The discussion should also consider how foundations frame their own communications on diversity work.

Defining Diversity

The platform should clear up confusion surrounding the term "diversity." Should diversity refer only to racial and ethnic diversity? Should it include gender, sexual orientation, national heritage, disabilities, religion, and/or other groups? Does diversity also refer to inclusiveness? What other terms referring to diversity work might need clarification?

Borrowing from Corporations

"Corporate America is ahead of philanthropy because it has understood the need for diversity for a long time," said Ordonez, a comment the other respondents might have echoed. "Without diverse voices we won't get far." Foundations could approach corporations for models of how to communicate about diversity work. Corporate communications professionals might be willing to participate in a discussion of best practices and offer suggestions from their experience that apply to philanthropy.

Training and Skill Building

Arno suggests the platform include some form of a training program. Consideration of hands-on skill building should be included. This would be particularly important for smaller foundations that have less resources or staff to devote to the effort.

Conclusion

Would it be helpful for foundations to collaboratively construct a best practices platform to communicate diversity work? This case study has presented a number of ideas of practices and tools that might be included, as well as challenges and other considerations affecting a platform. However, ultimately the field will need to discuss and decide the issue.

Diversity in Philanthropy would like to help facilitate the discussion. We encourage and invite your feedback about the case study, your ideas for and against a platform, and your thoughts on the practices that might be included. Please e-mail us with your comments. We plan to keep you informed as the discussion evolves.

Appendix A: Biographies of Interviewees

Marta Tellado

Position: Vice President for Communications

Foundation: Ford Foundation

Background: Tellado arrived at Ford after serving as Vice President for
Communications at the Partnership for Public Service in
Washington, DC. She previously founded the organization and public policy
consulting group, MLT Strategies, where her clients included the Pew Charitable
Trusts, the Aspen Institute, the Funder's Committee for Citizen Participation, the
Open Society Institute, and The Center for Policy Alternatives. She sits on the
boards of Hispanics in Philanthropy and the Latino International Theater Festival of
New York and on the advisory board of the Prague Institute for Global Economic
Development. She holds a Ph.D. in political science from Yale University.

Personally
Rewarding: Tellado loves the trail-blazing nature of Ford's work, being at the forefront of
change. "It's being seen as a catalyst for social change. If community work reflects
this, it's rewarding for me on a personal level and for our organization." Tellado also
enjoys building relationships with the nonprofit world and seeing diversity and
inclusiveness work reflected in the public landscape, particularly through the Civil
Society initiative. "The grantees have been doing the work that reflects the
populations we serve during the last 30 years," she said. "It's been very gratifying to
see this change."

Rebecca Arno

Position: Vice President of Communications

Foundation: The Denver Foundation

Background: Arno has worked in the nonprofit and foundation sectors in
Denver and the San Francisco Bay Area, with responsibility
for communications, donor relations, and fundraising. Prior
to her work with The Denver Foundation, she was communications manager for
Peninsula Community Foundation in San Mateo, CA and Vice President of
Communications for The Daniels Fund, a private foundation serving the Rocky
Mountain region. She currently serves on the boards of the Colorado Nonprofit
Association and the Communications Network.

Personally
Rewarding: Arno really loves working on diversity and inclusiveness. "I have a vision of a
               community I'd like to live in, where everyone's voice matters," she said. She has
               worked on a number of diversity and inclusiveness initiatives, including a project
               with the Colorado Regional Association of Grantmakers to revise the [Colorado
               Common Grant Application](#) to include questions about diversity and inclusiveness.
               "There are so many times I've been fortunate to be in the room to hear people
               speaking to each other about their experiences and hearing how systems have been a
               help or a hindrance to overcoming barriers. It's been transformative for me."

Kimberly Roberson

Position: Program Officer

Foundation: The C.S. Mott Foundation

Background: Roberson is a program officer who co-manages the Mott's
               national U. S. Civil Society grantmaking in philanthropy and
               the nonprofit sector. Within her portfolio, she focuses on race and ethnic diversity in
               philanthropy and capacity building. She has worked at Mott since 1998, including
               work on race and ethnic relations and grantmaking in Mott's Flint-area
               programming. Prior to joining Mott, she was director of social services for the
               Salvation Army in Genesee County.

Personally
Rewarding: Roberson is intimately involved in Mott's race and ethnic diversity work. Her interest
               has led her to speak at a number of conferences and events, including a recent
               appearance on Kellogg's panel for Culture's of Giving grantees. She finds diversity to
               present a variety of stimulating challenges. "It is important to call out racial and
               ethnic diversity from other forms of diversity, especially because of our work across
               regions of the world, such as Bosnia and Serbia, which have had ethnic
               confrontations for decades."

Anastasia Ordonez

Position: Senior Communications Manager

Foundation: David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Background: Ordonez manages the day-to-day operations of the Packard's
               communications department and helps Packard's leaders build
               and refine an organizational communications strategy. She previously honed her
               communications skills in the labor movement, nationally and internationally. She was

the director of communications and media relations for the California Labor Federation (AFL-CIO) and served as director of communications for UNITE HERE. She also served as the co-executive director of the Sidney Hillman Foundation from 2004 to 2006. She holds a degree in English literature from Rutgers University and a master's degree in women's studies from Rutgers University.
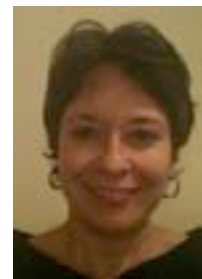
Personally
Rewarding: Ordonez is new to philanthropy. She came to Packard only eight months before our interview with her. But she has spent most of her career working for underserved communities. Her work with the labor movement inspires her to take a stand on issues. "Packard is a place that applies the same passion but also has real resources to direct towards problems—it's a perfect blend of resources and my passion for advocacy." She hopes to encourage the foundation community to come forward and engage the public more about diversity and inclusiveness. "We need to adapt and understand the importance of being articulate and visible."

Kathleen Baca

Position: Director of Communications

Foundation: Marguerite Casey Foundation

Background: Baca is responsible for the strategic development and management of communications with the press, grantees, and other key stakeholders. She has more than 20 years of experience in media, public affairs, and public relations. For over ten years, she was a reporter in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she covered local communities. She headed her own public relations firm in San Francisco, held the position of Public Information Officer for the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department under Governor Bill Richardson, and has worked extensively with community groups to develop and execute effective media strategies and campaigns. A native of New Mexico, she holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and English from the University of New Mexico.

Personally
Rewarding: Baca is passionately devoted to Casey's Equal Voice campaign. Although her attempts to gain attention from the national media were frustrating, she felt rewarded by finding new approaches with community and ethnic media. "We moved beyond regions and ethnicities to create coalitions for change." She also enjoys uniting people from different viewpoints, races, and ethnicities. This is a central focus of Casey's work and is at the heart of her interests, too. "I'm rewarded by beginning to see movement in the direction that brings people closer, working collectively. We're really not so far apart."

25

Marilyn LeFeber

Position: Vice President, Communications

Foundation: C.S. Mott Foundation

Background: LeFeber has led Mott's communications efforts for 15 years. Previously, she was vice president of The Retirement Research Foundation (Chicago); vice president for communications of the Frank E. Gannett Foundation in Rochester (New York); and president of her own consulting firm, Stein Communications, Inc. She has also worked in a senior development capacity for the Brookings Institution (Washington, DC) and the University of Rochester (New York). Throughout her career, Ms. LeFeber has served on the boards and/or advisory committees of The Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, New Ventures in Philanthropy, The Donors Forum of Chicago, the Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, and the Council of Michigan Foundations. She holds a master's degree in management and organizational behavior from Benedictine University (Lisle, Illinois) and an undergraduate degree in journalism from Ohio University (Athens, Ohio).

Personally
Rewarding: Lefeber has spent a career working in communications and on a variety of projects involving diversity and inclusiveness. "I've been in this kind of work for 30 years. I've found it great to work with extraordinary grantees and individuals who are doing remarkable work in challenging circumstances. I've always found working with them rewarding."

Appendix B: Interview Questions

The following is a set of questions that will form the basis for each interview:

1. Why does your foundation care about diversity?

2. How do your foundation's diversity communications align with its motivation to engage in diversity work, as well as its mission and values?

3. Which people, groups, and/or organizations are the target audience(s) for your diversity communications?

4. What formats or vehicles (e.g., websites, annual reports, forums) does your foundation use to communicate the results of its work with diverse communities?

5. What have been the desired outcomes of your foundation's diversity communication efforts, and what strategies were most beneficial?

6. What process did you use to identify and develop your foundation's desired outcomes and strategies?

7. What has been the impact of your foundation's diversity communication efforts, using specific examples involving impacted people and organizations, wherever possible?

8. What have been the biggest challenges to your foundation's diversity communication efforts, and what lessons did you learn?

9. What are some of your foundation's communications practices that are distinctive, unique, or unconventional?

10. What are the next steps philanthropy should take to develop and implement a set of best practices for developing a common communications platform?

Follow-Up Questions

As time and circumstance permit, interviews may include one or more of the follow-up questions below, as well as other questions that might occur during a given interview. The rationale is to allow freedom within the format to pursue themes that emerge during interviews. Several, one, or none of the following questions may be asked:

11. How do you incorporate the knowledge of content experts and collect and communicate data about diversity work to communicate impact?

12. How does your organization develop language that appropriately communicates diversity and inclusiveness to all constituencies?

13. What collaborations and partnerships help your foundation communicate?

14. How have you incorporated technology into your foundation's diversity communication strategy?

15. How important is alignment of your foundation's mission and value statements with its diversity communication efforts, and what work was/is necessary to achieve alignment?

16. How does your foundation communicate its message via its board and staff members?

17. What capacity does your organization need to implement its diversity communication strategy?

18. How does your foundation use its diversity communication efforts to provide leadership to the community?

19. What diversity communication practices do other foundations use that you admire?

20. What is personally rewarding in your communications work?