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Collaborating Within to Support Systems Change: The Need For — and Limits of — Cross-Team Grantmaking

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Introduction

The challenges affecting our communities have pressed the philanthropic sector to become more organized, focused, and strategic in its grantmaking and social investing. With this shift, we have seen the rise of funder collaboratives, which help funders align their priorities; affinity groups, which help share knowledge on specific topics; and philanthropic-serving organizations, which help foundations become more effective. At the same time, many funders are grappling with how to organize their internal structures — often grouped vertically into fields such as education, health, or the arts — to support their overall mission. If done without intention, the internal organization of a foundation's grantmaking areas can lead to further silos and narrow views of how to support complex systems change.

The Kresge Foundation, like many other funders dedicated to systems change, has committed to working across sectors and has often emphasized the need for deeper and more meaningful collaboration to enable complex systems change. Kresge is not alone in proposing more collaboration. In fact, the call for greater collaboration has been a persistent drumbeat in nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. Much has been written about philanthropic collaboration, and most philanthropic organizations believe funder collaboration and coordination is important to their missions (Powell, Wolf Ditkoff, & Hassey, 2018). In a 2015 Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) survey of 637 U.S.-based, staffed grantmaking organizations, 80% of respondents said they believe it is

Key Points

- To be responsive to the many facets of communities' challenges and solutions, the Kresge Foundation works intentionally at the intersections of its seven grantmaking areas. One way it fulfills this intention is by awarding cross-team grants, which involve financial and intellectual contributions from multiple Kresge programs in order to enable cross-sector, multidisciplinary work among grantees.

- As Kresge's cross-team practice has grown and the field has increasingly expressed interest in cross-sector approaches to addressing long-standing challenges, Kresge partnered with the strategic learning firm Informing Change to explore how this approach to grantmaking and greater degree of internal collaboration is working from the point of view of Kresge staff and what enables or inhibits it, as well as whether and in what ways grantees uniquely benefit from cross-team grants.

- This article highlights key findings from this exploration, including grantees' appreciation for Kresge's cross-team approach. Nevertheless, the resource-intensive level of the foundation's internal collaboration compelled many Kresge staff to seek evidence of impact in the short term, despite the challenges inherent in measuring complex, emergent, and unpredictable cross-sector work.

Sector

Key Points (continued)

- Kresge's experience with cross-team grantmaking surfaces a deeply embedded challenge across philanthropy: the historical practice of structuring grantmaking work by program content area is often misaligned with the urgent need to work across sectors to drive complex systems change. As philanthropy seeks to support collaboration among grantees and launches new multifunder collaboratives to affect systems change, structures within foundations may need to change to actualize this ideal.

About The Kresge Foundation

The Kresge Foundation was founded in 1924 in metropolitan Detroit, Mich., to promote human progress. Today, Kresge fulfills that mission by building and strengthening pathways to opportunity for people with low incomes in America's cities, seeking to dismantle structural and systemic barriers to equality and justice. A private national foundation, Kresge employs 108 people and awards more than $160 million in grants and social investments annually in communities across the U.S. through seven programs, and operates a Social Investments Practice that augments grants with other financial tools like low-interest loans and guarantees.

important to coordinate resources and actions with other funders working on the same issue. GEO noted, "The message is clear: The scale and complexity of the problems that the sectors seek to address require collaborative approaches. A go-it-alone mentality will not result in meaningful impact" (Bartzak, 2015, p. 1). However, much of the research on philanthropic collaboration has focused on how funders can or should collaborate with one another; little attention has been paid to how funders organize themselves internally and to what extent collaboration is happening within philanthropic institutions.

Kresge's commitment to external collaboration has pushed the foundation to consider how its internal organization into seven grantmaking areas — American Cities, Arts & Culture, Detroit, Education, Environment, Health, and Human Services — helps or hinders its overall mission of expanding opportunity in urban areas. This mission is deeply rooted in an analysis of the historical and current inequities affecting communities across the country. As Kresge deepens its place-based work, the question of how a national foundation with programs rooted in traditional fields can support systems change at the local level has grown more prominent. The foundation hypothesizes that, because people experience their lives beyond the boundaries of any one sector, staff need the flexibility to work across traditional disciplines and program silos to advance comprehensive solutions.

Kresge is therefore increasingly seeking to understand when and how it can better meet its objectives by working across grantmaking teams, disciplines, and sectors (public, private, nonprofit, academic, and philanthropic). One way it fulfills this intention is by awarding cross-team grants, which involve financial and intellectual contributions from multiple Kresge grantmaking teams. Cross-team grants have added an important tool to the foundation's grantmaking repertoire and are now embedded in its operational practices.

As Kresge's cross-team practice has grown and the philanthropic field has increasingly expressed interest in cross-sector approaches to addressing long-standing challenges, the foundation set out to explore how this grantmaking approach and the requisite increase in internal collaboration is working from the point of view of Kresge staff, what enables or inhibits it, and whether and how grantees uniquely benefit from cross-team grants.

This article highlights key insights from an intentional effort to expand and deepen cross-team grantmaking, including an evaluation of the practice that situates lessons learned within the larger questions the philanthropic sector has increasingly sought to tackle: How do we bridge the gaps that disciplinary or topical silos

FIGURE 1 Number of New Cross-Team Grants Made Each Year
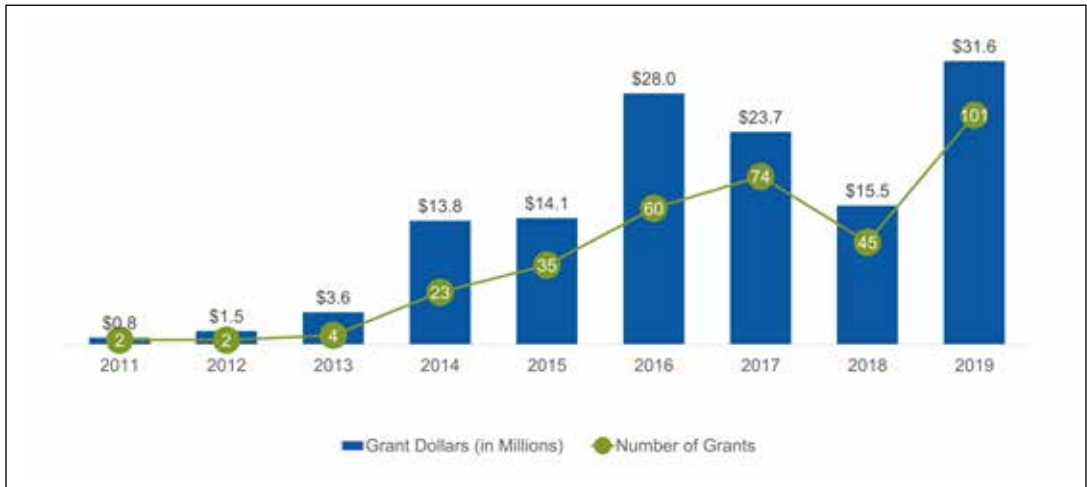
can create? What is the role of the philanthropic sector in seeding systems change? What evidence do we have that philanthropic practices, be they single-program grants or cross-sectoral partnerships, are impacting efforts to address long-standing challenges?

Background

In 2014, Kresge executives hypothesized that in order to advance urban opportunity for people with low incomes, they would need to work both within and across individual grantmaking programs. Executives took several steps to expand grantmaking norms to include cross-team efforts:

- Kresge's CEO, Rip Rapson, declared that multidisciplinary work would be one of the "four fence posts" informing how the foundation fulfilled its mission, along with a focus on cities, expanding opportunity, and using the full range of capital tools at its disposal. As Rapson wrote, "foundations may organize their activities vertically in terms of fields of interest, but people live their lives horizontally."

- The foundation established a short-term, $2 million incentive pool that provided limited matching funds to encourage program

officers to source grants that would advance multiple program strategies.

- Kresge formally tasked a senior staff member with managing this fund and finding new ways to stimulate multidisciplinary initiatives.

With these actions, Kresge's cross-team grantmaking grew from four grants totaling $3.6 million in 2013 to 23 grants totaling $13.8 million in 2014. This momentum has grown dramatically over the years, with a dip in 2018 attributable to an increase in planning and coordination activities that resulted in several cross-team initiatives in 2019. (See Figure 1.)

Ways of Working Cross-Sectorally Inside the Foundation

While cross-team grantmaking is one way to seed innovative, cross-disciplinary, and multisectoral work, Kresge staff collaborate with one another — both formally and informally — in many other ways, including working groups and funding teams. (See Figure 2.)

Kresge is a networked organization, so staff often serve on internal work groups and funding teams that further the foundation's mission. It currently has two place-based and four issue-based work

FIGURE 2 Ways of Working Cross-Sectorally Inside the Foundation
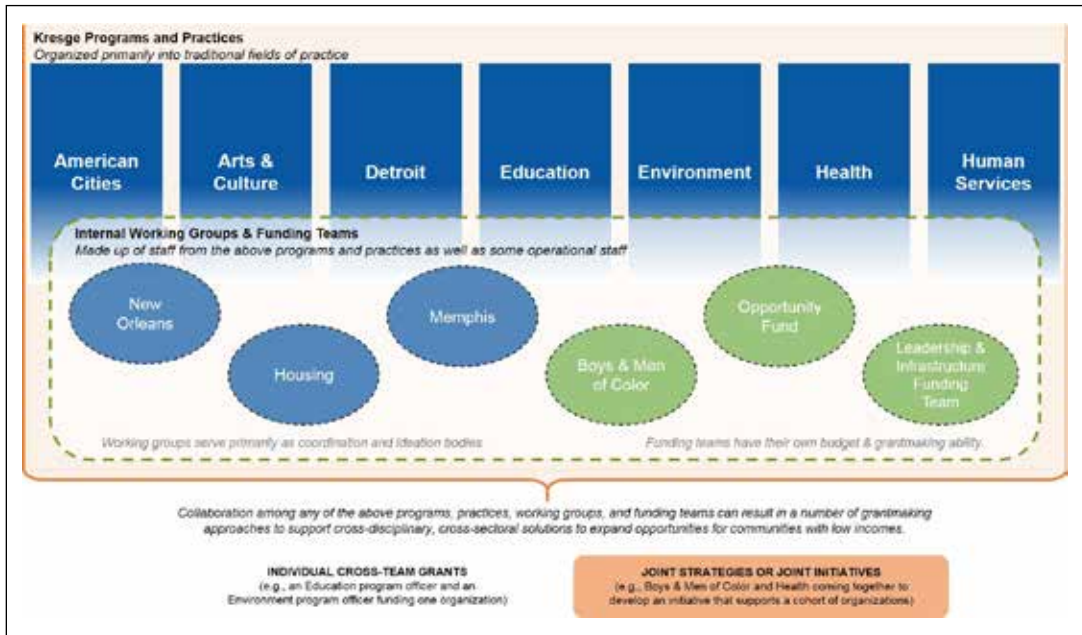
groups. Within each of these work groups, individuals from all grantmaking areas collaborate on strategies related to that place or issue and work to align their own team's resources to support those strategies. The place-based work groups are New Orleans and Memphis; issue-based work groups include Housing and Boys and Men of Color.

In addition to working groups, Kresge currently has two funding teams with their own budgets and strategies that cut across all grantmaking areas: the Opportunity Fund and the Leadership and Infrastructure Funding Team (LIFT). The Opportunity Fund aims to provide a responsive capacity to address efforts to protect and strengthen democratic institutions, advance civil rights, counteract hate and racism, support immigrant and refugee communities, serve the interests of cities, and advance civil justice to underserved communities. LIFT, a 13-person, cross-departmental committee comprising members from every grantmaking team and operational staff, focuses on:

1. providing high-quality opportunities for Kresge grantees to benefit from equity-minded leadership development programs and services;

2. supporting the field of nonprofit and philanthropic leadership development; and

3. strengthening relationships with membership associations, philanthropic affinity groups, and critical nonprofit infrastructure organizations.

Both funding teams and working groups can result in single-program or cross-team grants, and operate based on the theory that more cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral solutions to expand opportunity will be fostered when grantmaking staff from different programs of the foundation come together.[1]

In addition to funding teams and working groups, two grantmaking teams can come together to develop a strategy that results in

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[1] While this article focuses on internal collaboration, many grantmaking staff also sit on cross-funder collaboratives that seek to align Kresge's mission and resources with those of other funders, adding to the complexity surrounding cross-team grants.

some single-program grants, some cross-team grants, and/or joint convenings. These joint strategies and initiatives result in a cohort of grants with additional supports, such as technical assistance, communications support, and evaluation. Examples include the Health and Arts & Culture teams' Fresh, Local, Equitable (FreshLo) initiative, launched in 2015, and the Health and Environment teams' recently launched Climate Change, Health, and Equity (CCHE) initiative.

Designing a Meaningful Evaluation

As Kresge's cross-team grantmaking grew to 15% to 20% of its total grantmaking, the foundation acknowledged that simply tracking number of grants and dollar amounts was insufficient. Kresge had been operating on the untested hypothesis that providing communities with resources that allow them to address multiple challenges — challenges not contained to one sector or field — would enable them to be more responsive to community priorities. Kresge staff felt a responsibility to understand grantees' experience of receiving cross-team funding: Was it truly allowing them to work in new ways, or adding distinct value beyond that of a standard foundation grant? At the same time, the foundation sought to turn the evaluative lens on itself to understand what factors, practices, or structures facilitate and inhibit effective cross-team collaboration, and the extent to which cross-team grantmaking supports Kresge's overall mission.

The desire for continuous improvement led Kresge to engage in its first departmentwide evaluation of its grantmaking practice. It has been common practice for Kresge to support the evaluation of initiatives or programs, but this was the first time the foundation looked at its overall operations and their effect on its mission.

In order to fulfill its learning objectives, Kresge partnered with Informing Change, a strategic learning firm based in California's San Francisco Bay Area dedicated to increasing the effectiveness and impact of nonprofits, foundations, and multisector collaborations. A team from Informing Change, including the authors of this article, worked with key Kresge staff (also

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authors of this article) to scope the evaluation, develop its methodology, and customize the report. The following sections describe Informing Change's approach and key findings, and the implications of the evaluation for Kresge's future.

Five questions guided this exploration of the cross-team grantmaking experience for nonprofit grantee partners and Kresge staff:

1. To what extent and in what ways does the foundation's cross-team grantmaking contribute to or hinder nonprofit partners' ability to fulfill their missions?

2. What is the relationship between cross-team grantmaking and nonprofit partners working in cross-sector and multidisciplinary ways?

3. What are the major facilitators and barriers to effective cross-team collaboration within the foundation? What are Kresge staff learning about what it takes to be effective grantmakers who work both across teams and within unique programs?

4. To what extent is cross-team grantmaking an effective approach to further the foundation's mission?

5. What can Kresge's cross-disciplinary experience contribute to the philanthropic field?

These evaluation questions aimed to reflect Kresge staff's own assessments back to them, informed by the context and experiences of their nonprofit grantee partners. To protect the evaluation from potentially unwieldy sprawl, we used the five questions as boundaries for the research[.]

Limitations of the Inquiry

These evaluation questions aimed to reflect Kresge staff's own assessments back to them, informed by the context and experiences of their nonprofit grantee partners. To protect the evaluation from potentially unwieldy sprawl, we used the five questions as boundaries for the research and did not seek to:

- Evaluate whether nonprofit partners achieved their own intended outcomes,

- Investigate how cross-team grantmaking has affected the populations that nonprofit partners serve,

- Systematically compare cross-team grantmaking to single-team grantmaking,

- Investigate initiative- or strategy-specific collaborations, or

- Define Kresge's organizational culture and how the culture may or may not foster collaboration across teams.

As a result of these boundaries, this inquiry was therefore limited in its ability to determine whether cross-team grantmaking is a more effective strategy than single-team grantmaking, and

whether nonprofit partners' work resulted in markedly different outcomes for their communities because of their cross-team grants. These claims, while important and fertile ground for future inquiries, do not speak to the intent of the inquiry explored in this article, which was to better understand the experience of cross-team grantmaking for nonprofit partners and its functioning within the foundation.

We also acknowledge that the period of Kresge's cross-team grantmaking is relatively short term and much remains to be explored on the subject of collaborating within to support systems change. We believe that, despite the relatively short term of this evaluation, the findings will still resonate with and be useful to other foundation staff who, like those at Kresge, are continually iterating in efforts to work across grantmaking teams.

Methods

To answer the evaluation questions, Informing Change utilized a mixed-methods research design that included two phases: an exploration and design phase and a process-evaluation implementation phase. During the first phase, Informing Change conducted a desk review of grant reports, theories of change, logic models, and internal Kresge articulations of cross-team grantmaking. This desk review and interviews with Kresge grantmaking staff informed the development of a plan to guide the full process evaluation.

During the second phase, Informing Change surveyed Kresge grantmaking staff involved in cross-team grantmaking and utilized an array of qualitative methods to explore Kresge's hypothesis that "engaging in a multidisciplinary manner [through cross-team grantmaking] allows us to be more responsive to community priorities and to achieve a bigger impact." These methods included:

1. A "rich pictures" focus group, in which participants use drawing to describe relationships (Checkland & Scholes, 1990; Stevens, 2016). In this focus group, Kresge staff drew their conceptions of the

relationship between Kresge's mission and their cross-team strategies, as well as how they experience the process of cross-team grantmaking.

2. Observations of cross-team site visits and planning meetings.

3. Photo-inspired interviews with nonprofit partners. Each nonprofit partner sent the interviewer a digital photo of "something that represents to you some aspect of multidisciplinary or cross-sector collaboration supported by your Kresge cross-team grant"[2] to serve as a jumping-off point for the conversation.

4. Collective interpretation sessions with Kresge's Strategic Learning, Research, and Evaluation team and other foundation staff.

5. Focus groups with grantmaking staff to explore key issues that emerged in staff survey responses, and to elaborate on and make sense of findings.

What We Learned

Our findings had two foci: the nonprofit grantee partner experience and foundation staff's experience.

Filling Critical Needs for Nonprofits

From the nonprofit partners, we learned that cross-team grants fill a critical funding need for cross-sector and cross-disciplinary work. All nonprofit organizations that participated in this study expressed a belief that their cross-team grant helped them advance their missions due to the explicit support for cross-disciplinary and/or cross-sector approaches. The scarcity of funding for collaborative work makes these grants all the more valuable.

The grants also enabled nonprofit partners to participate in convenings and conversations,

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Cross-Team Grant Recipients: Some Examples

- An organization that integrates arts and culture into urban revitalization efforts to reduce property vacancy and build creative place-making

- A group that builds job-readiness skills and creates employment pathways through partnerships with businesses and neighborhood associations

- A city department of art, culture, and tourism that brings together local artists, cultural groups, and housing development cooperatives in communitywide arts and farmers markets

- An organization that connects urban health agencies across the U.S. to support collective and collaborative learning about the relationship between climate change and community health

- A community development finance institution working with five communities to deepen community resilience by strengthening cultural expression, the social fabric, and the built environment to better withstand and rebound from climate-related challenges

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stimulating new connectivity in the spaces where they work. As a result, organizations reported stepping into spaces between disciplines to diffuse information and innovation. A common challenge of working across sectors is lack of shared vocabulary; nonprofit partners reported that the cross-team grants allowed them to share language and lessons learned with colleagues in adjacent sectors who otherwise would not have access to that knowledge. Disseminating information in this way catalyzed better collaboration by getting more people on the same page. Nonprofit partners attributed their ability to do

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[2] Interviewees were further prompted that, "The photos can be of anything from the literal (e.g., a theory of change or a chart of collaborating teams, organizations, sectors) to the abstract (e.g., a car engine representing the complex coordination of parts), and can be serious, humorous, or puzzling. Photographic quality is not important, so long as the image is clear and you can talk about why you chose it."

Sector

The nonprofit-partner perspective illuminates a strong foundation of strengths related to cross-team grantmaking upon which Kresge can continue to build. Complicating this picture, however, was the mixed feedback from Kresge staff on the process of cross-team grantmaking.

these things, in large part, to Kresge program officers' attentive and responsive engagement with them, in addition to the critical funds the grants provided.

Informing Change also found that a cross-team grant can help shift nonprofit staff behavior toward greater internal collaboration. In the words of one nonprofit grantee partner:

> Other strictly arts funders have not required internal collaboration. The cross-team grant helped to introduce me to some other teams and forced some of those collaborations to happen. Without a cross-team grant like this, I think I'd be much more siloed off within the organization since there hadn't been a history of my position collaborating with community development projects.

Challenges for Grantmakers

The nonprofit-partner perspective illuminates a strong foundation of strengths related to cross-team grantmaking upon which Kresge can continue to build. Complicating this picture, however, was the mixed feedback from Kresge staff on the process of cross-team grantmaking. When asked whether cross-team grantmaking is "worth the effort," staff responses ranged from "Yes, absolutely" (47%), to "It varies widely and depends on the grant or situation" (30%), to "It could be, if processes were improved" (20%);

3% reported they were unsure of the relative cost-benefit ratio.

Much of this ambivalence, we believe, stems from the foundation's grantmaking infrastructure — and varying degrees of staff knowledge about how best to use it. Elements of this infrastructure include administrative support for scheduling meetings and managing team logistics, which are organized by grantmaking area; Kresge's online grants-management system, which has been adapted but not optimized for use across teams; and staffing and supervision structures, which differ across grantmaking teams and result in varying degrees of decision-making power that cross teams must grapple with and reconcile.

This infrastructure has evolved for single-program grantmaking. A majority of grantmaking staff who participated in our study (74%) say their efforts on cross-team grants are hindered by gaps in or friction created by these internal structures and processes, which leave grantmaking teams with the knotty challenge of being accountable to specific program budgets while endeavoring to combine resources to support collaborative work. As a result, many staff view cross-team grantmaking as an "add-on" to their already full workloads, rather than as a main strategy for achieving their team goals. Deepening these accountability challenges, collaborative work often muddies the distinct contributions of any one program to particular outcomes. An inability to identify their team's contribution as "effective" causes anxiety for staff who have been accustomed to still-prominent fieldwide definitions of impact. Emergent, collaborative efforts often depart from the linear pathways to measurable outcomes assumed in traditional program evaluation.

Staff who had positive cross-team grantmaking experiences shared some common traits. These staff described themselves as able to facilitate shared decision-making processes, which often entails translating vocabularies and ways of thinking across sectors and disciplines. Those more comfortable with cross-team efforts could explain to their fellow team members how and

why nonprofit partners' work often unfolded in ways staff did not expect.

It is important to note that all of these more tangible facilitators and barriers to cross-team grantmaking (e.g., grants-management systems) are situated within an organizational culture. Concurrent with this evaluation, Kresge has been undergoing both a racial equity learning journey and an organization culture analysis. For example, in the late summer of 2019, the foundation dedicated its two-day all-staff retreat to explore issues of organizational culture as one of several approaches to interrogate the broader context of how we deploy all the tools at our disposal. One area for future exploration not covered in this inquiry is whether and how organizational culture affects cross-team grantmaking and the requisite internal collaboration at Kresge.

Integrating Evaluation Findings

In late April, Kresge's Strategic Learning, Research, and Evaluation practice held a programwide forum to discuss the primary findings of the evaluation and to invite program colleagues to share their own insights, reflections, and potential next steps. This forum was an opportunity for the program department and several adjacent departments (communications, grants management, and social investments) to reflect together on the evolution of their cross-team grantmaking processes and situate the evaluation findings within broader forms of collaboration already occurring across the foundation and within the foundation's organizational culture. A few staff reflections are worth naming:

1. *Mechanisms to fund multidisciplinary work:* Multidisciplinary and multisectoral work is funded by both single-program teams (e.g., Education, Health) and cross-team grants. As teams deepen their systems-change strategies, foundation staff are increasingly thinking about their own fields' silos and how to best position philanthropy to tackle the root causes of the most intractable problems impeding access to opportunity.

2. *Cross-team grantmaking as a tool:* Funders often talk about the multiple tools we hold (e.g., grantmaking, communications, networks, knowledge) and which tools help us tackle which problems. The forum discussion showed that program staff see cross-team grantmaking as yet another tool, so it is important to figure out what problem this tool is best suited to solve. Cross-team grantmaking should not be the end goal itself, but instead should serve a larger purpose.

3. *Staff capacity:* Given the complexity and the additional work cross-team grantmaking requires, we must consider onboarding and staff development part of codifying cross-team grantmaking practices, so that the next generation of grantmakers is well-equipped to use all of the philanthropic tools at their disposable.

The evaluation also offered several short-term operational recommendations for the foundation:

- Share learnings from nonprofit organizations back with Kresge colleagues, modeling collaborative behaviors internally. This can lead to an expanded or deeper network for both the program officer and nonprofit organizations.

- Consider assigning a staff person to provide administrative support to cross-team grantmaking efforts. This person can help track cross-team grants data and can also support the calendaring and scheduling of cross-team collaboration meetings and related events.

- Create and use a resource guide to help teams and individual staff working on cross-team grants. Contents could include internally written materials such as guidelines for launching a cross-team grant or tools to help vet ideas for possible cross-team grants.

Sector

[T]he evaluation helped the foundation think about larger questions of alignment, end goals, evolving practices, and organizational culture.

• Ensure that staff with cross-team grantmaking responsibilities have adjusted workloads or schedules to allow them more time and thinking space to utilize cross-team grantmaking effectively.

However, and perhaps more importantly, the evaluation helped the foundation think about larger questions of alignment, end goals, evolving practices, and organizational culture. It lifted up internal complexities and the ways in which Kresge's systems are or are not well set up to foster collaboration across program areas; named the evolution of the array of cross-team grantmaking practices over the past several years; and provided space for staff to step back and think about how to refine these practices in light of ongoing learning.

This evaluation, specifically the inquiry into the foundation's internal processes, has already yielded useful insights. As Kresge seeks to further improve its grantmaking practices and become a more effective organization, it must tackle the following:

1. *Measure outcomes of cross-team grantmaking:* Program staff struggle with defining the success or impact of cross-team grants, demonstrating the need for an intentional shift in staff thinking about what counts as success in cross-sector or cross-disciplinary work. Instead of looking for long-term outcomes that correspond to the long timeline and resource investment required for collaborative cross-team grantmaking (e.g., a major policy change), staff must identify more near-term outcomes (e.g., building momentum) resulting from these grants.

2. *Codify grantmaking practices:* Program staff and adjacent teams regularly collaborate with one another, and individual program teams are investing deeply in multidisciplinary and cross-sector work. As the foundation's strategies have evolved, staff have found creative ways to address the root causes impeding access to opportunity in the communities where Kresge works. However, codifying those practices has not caught up. This evaluation has provided an opportunity to begin this process as the foundation's cross-team and place-based work deepens. In the first half of 2019, Kresge developed four cross-team funding opportunities, including two initiatives. Cross-team grantmaking and its complexity is only increasing.

3. *Create ongoing learning opportunities:* The April program forum made clear that staff are hungry and ready for more reflection and learning. The Strategic Learning, Research, and Evaluation team is committed to creating more learning opportunities for staff to ensure that the lessons learned about supporting multidisciplinary work are being implemented. One way they are doing this is by writing more about Kresge's practices through teaching cases and case studies so that learnings benefit the whole philanthropic field, not just Kresge staff. In 2017, Kresge commissioned a teaching case of the FreshLo evaluation and in September 2019, in partnership with GEO and the Equitable Evaluation Initiative, the foundation shared that teaching case with other funders.

How Kresge Is Expanding Its Cross-Team Work — and Why

The ongoing work and ideation of place- and issue-based working groups, cross-programmatic funding teams, and evaluations of key cross-team initiatives has helped Kresge's cross-team grantmaking practice mature. While there was a downturn in new cross-team grants in 2018, working in a cross-disciplinary manner has become deeply embedded in the foundation's DNA, prompting it to launch several cross-team

initiatives in 2019 that exemplify its continued investment in the intersections of program areas. Together, these initiatives accounted for 56 of the 101 new cross-team grants made in 2019, totaling $31.6 million. We describe a selection of these initiatives.

Working at the Intersection of Established Fields

One way Kresge deepens cross-team work is by working "at the intersection" of established fields. The CCHE initiative, a four-year, $20 million commitment from the Environment and Health teams, is one example. It comprises three strategies:

1. building the capacity of health care and public health institutions to reduce their contributions to climate change and support climate resilience;

2. building the leadership of health care and public health practitioners to engage on climate policies and practices; and

3. strengthening community leadership to advance equitable policies and practices that build community resilience and reduce health risks.

The evolution of this initiative is a window into how cross-team collaboration often develops within Kresge. Years ago, the Environment and Health programs began making grants together within the first two strategies with no intention to develop an overarching initiative. As the work matured, grantmaking staff and managing directors began to integrate lessons from their existing cross-team grants with those emerging from other initiatives (such as the Environment program's Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity initiative). They realized that adding a component to support community-driven solutions that improve public health and climate resilience would add significant value to the field. Staff from both programs co-developed the third, community-based strategy, working through several iterations of it with Kresge's leadership and trustees prior to formally adopting the entire initiative.

The ongoing work and ideation of place- and issue-based working groups, cross-programmatic funding teams, and evaluations of key cross-team initiatives has helped Kresge's cross-team grantmaking practice mature.

Centering Individuals Who Experience the Greatest Opportunity Barriers

Teams also arrive at joint grantmaking strategies by using a person-centered lens to examine the cross-sectoral barriers to opportunity that Americans with low incomes face. For example, the Kresge Education and Human Services teams launched their first joint initiative in 2019: Boosting Opportunities for Social and Economic Mobility for Families (BOOST). The BOOST initiative will support human services organizations and community colleges working together to address the social and economic mobility of students with low incomes. After an open, competitive process, the Education and Human Services teams awarded $3.3 million to 10 community colleges and human services organizations in November 2019.

Program staff designed BOOST after realizing practice gaps between their respective sectors were producing suboptimal outcomes for low-income families. Specifically, the lack of alignment between human services organizations and postsecondary education institutions creates significant challenges for families seeking to increase their social and economic mobility. For students, juggling work, family, and school — without the critical supports that human services agencies provide — often leads them to drop their postsecondary educational pursuits. Meanwhile, many people supported by human services organizations face barriers when they try to enter higher education, or, if they are

TABLE 1 Network Code Principles

Principles	Showing Up at Kresge
Focus on mission, not organization: Collaboration requires prioritizing the shared goal or mission above any single organization's considerations.	Kresge's Urban Opportunity framework has helped center the foundation's mission. The foundation also recently adopted equity as a core value, which has served as an overriding "north star" for this mission.
Exercise trust, not control: Trust and shared values are far more important for true collaboration than formal control mechanisms, such as contracts or accountability systems.	Many of the foundation's cross-team structures (e.g., funding teams, place- or issues-based working groups) have helped grantmakers build trust with one another, learn about each other's work, and ideate ways to collaborate. These processes take time and can be impeded by other structures within the foundation (e.g., pace of grantmaking, siloed budgets).
Lead with humility, not brand: Grantmakers are often accustomed to being the strongest presence in the room or at the table. Using a collaborative mindset, however, requires organizations to work alongside their peers as equals and willingly take a back seat when others are in a better position to lead.	While philanthropic practitioners often don't consider themselves to be brand managers, each Kresge program has established a clear identity in the fields in which they work based on their unique approach relative to other field partners. Effective internal collaboration requires detaching oneself at least partially from this brand identity and demonstrating flexibility when entering less familiar fields.
Think like a node, not a hub: Those who embrace the collaborative mindset see their organizations as one part of a larger web of activity directed toward a cause, not as the hub of the action.	Working across teams at Kresge often involves new internal and external relationships that require more distributed responsibility and action, rather than a single line of accountability between one program officer and one grantee.

enrolled, are not connected to high-quality educational pathways that lead to family-sustaining careers. In short, a much greater proportion of underserved community college students could persist and graduate with support from human services agencies, while clients of human services could experience better mobility through post-secondary attainment.

Fostering Cross-Sectoral Work in Place

The American Cities program launched Kresge Innovative Projects: Memphis (KIP:M) in April 2019 for organizations working to strengthen neighborhoods and improve quality of life in Memphis, Tenn. Memphis is one of three priority cities for Kresge (along with Detroit, Mich., and New Orleans, La.). KIP:M is modeled after Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit (KIP:D), which since 2015 has dedicated $9.2 million to 99 neighborhood-scale projects. KIP:D contributed significant intellectual capital to the development of KIP:M. In October 2019, Kresge announced 20 KIP:M grants totaling $2 million; seven of these

grants involved financial contributions from multiple Kresge programs.

The Kresge Arts & Culture, Health, and Human Services programs each contributed grant funds to augment American Cities program funds for projects that address their respective strategies. Staff from each participating program helped review proposals and shape the recommended portfolio. Thus, KIP:M differs from the CCHE or BOOST initiatives, as the cross-team commitments are both based in place and not fully defined until program staff determine strategic fit based on applicants' submissions — a more nimble and organic approach.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Internal collaboration within philanthropic institutions can take many forms, including working across grantmaking program areas. As is the case with Kresge, cross-team grantmaking has become a way to tackle systems change in pursuit of a clear "north star" — expanding opportunity

in America's cities. However, collaboration for collaboration's sake should not guide foundations' internal organization. In Cracking the Network Code, GEO (2013) observes that organizations that are "collaboration ready" hold four key principles as values (See Table 1). While this publication focused on external collaborations, we posit that these important principles guide internal collaboration as well, including at Kresge.

While much has been published on external collaborations such as funder collaboratives and what makes them work, to our knowledge, this inquiry is the first of its kind to examine the collaboration between grantmaking programs within one foundation. As more and more funders — from small to large, from local to national — commit to systems-change work, we hope that this article spurs new thinking about how the internal organizing of a foundation can or should impact its mission. Despite the relative newness of this type of grantmaking for Kresge, we offer these insights from the foundation's experience as emerging lessons to other funders, whether working across two program areas or six, to better serve the increasingly multifaceted needs of their nonprofit partners.

Kresge's cross-team practice has grown and deepened substantially, and we also recognize the value of developing strong content expertise and networks within specific fields. Kresge, like most philanthropies, will continue to make the majority of its grants within defined fields of practice like Education or Environment. Doing so provides opportunities for strategic clarity and field influence that allows us to track movement toward long-term goals on specific issues. Cross-team grants will remain a critical tool in Kresge's philanthropic toolbox, deployed when strategies and fields naturally intersect, but — as alluded to earlier — will be used only in the appropriate contexts.

Cross-team grantmaking requires time, trust, and ongoing reflection. In addition to the values noted earlier, Kresge's cross-team grantmaking practice has benefited from a clear "north star," early activities to incentivize cross-team grantmaking, and the ongoing organizational culture work the foundation is undertaking to deepen trust among grantmaking staff. Kresge has not yet arrived at clear-cut guidance on when to undertake cross-team grantmaking — and it might never, given cross-team grantmaking's fluid and context-specific nature — but it has committed to ongoing assessment, reflection, codifying effective practices, and sharing its learnings with the field.

Sector

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