PRACTICE MATTERS THE IMPROVING PHILANTHROPY PROJECT

Experienced Grantmakers at Work
When Creativity Comes Into Play

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Editors' Note

When all is said and done, some of the best work in philanthropy combines a strong element of art with science. Ruth Brousseau's paper, *Experienced Grantmakers at Work: When Creativity Comes Into Play*, allows us to think about what it takes to move from the pedestrian to the profound in the way we organize and work in philanthropy. Brousseau, herself a creative grantmaker, takes us on a journey into the minds and work of the people who do it best. Based on interviews with ten recipients of the Council on Foundations' Scrivner Award, which recognizes creativity in philanthropy, Brousseau examines how creative grantmakers work, the skills that go into creative, effective grantmaking, and the personal and institutional qualities that nurture or inhibit creative grantmaking.

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Executive Summary

This paper explores how experienced grantmakers develop their craft—how they learn, deepen their skills, and become effective and creative grantmakers. The basic skills of grantmaking—how to review proposals, analyze the effectiveness of organizations, read financial statements, and structure evaluations—are reasonably well documented and taught in a variety of venues and formats. Far less is known about how the basic skills of grantmaking coalesce into a craft, how grantmakers develop the capacity to do high-quality, effective grantmaking and to make a contribution to their substantive fields and to the field of philanthropy.

This exploration of the skills and abilities of experienced grantmakers is based on interviews with ten recipients of the Council on Foundations' Scrivner Award, given each year to honor the work of a grantmaker selected as an exemplar of creativity in philanthropy. The prize honors the work of Robert W. Scrivner, who was a grantmaker at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Rockefeller Family Fund. He led those foundations into many areas of activity new to philanthropy and critical to the times in which he lived, such as nuclear disarmament and the role of Agent Orange in Vietnam veterans' health.

Central to the argument of the paper, based on current thinking in creativity research, is that creativity and effectiveness are highly linked. Creativity is not just novelty, an unexpected or idiosyncratic approach, but an approach that while initially considered novel ultimately becomes accepted. From this perspective, impact is incorporated into the definition of creative grantmaking. The sample of Scrivner awardees is assumed to exemplify and highlight skills, abilities, and qualities that many other experienced, effective grantmakers use in their grantmaking.

Questions addressed in this study of creative grantmakers and their work include:

- How do creative grantmakers work?

- What are the skills that go into creative, effective grantmaking?

- What are facilitators of and barriers to creative grantmaking?

- What are the qualities of foundations that foster creative grantmaking?

From the interviews, five common themes most central to creative grantmaking were identified in the stories of the Scrivner awardees, which are called here "the foundations of creativity." Much of this paper explicates these foundations of creativity using the stories and voices of the Scrivner awardees.

The first theme or foundation, *a motivating belief*, surfaced as each of the grantmakers talked about their work. This quality was referred to by some as core values and principles, by others as a spiritual dimension in their work, and yet by others as simply something they believed in just because it was right. Although some of the Scrivner awardees would reject the phrase because of its righteous overtones, there was often a moral dimension to the motivating belief. For each, a motivating belief provided a very basic template against which they judged themselves and their work and, often, the energy and motivation that kept them at it.

In addition to a motivating belief, the grantmakers described a range of *cognitive skills* and abilities they used in their work that enabled them to devise strategies of using grant dollars and the other tools that grantmakers have at their disposal to accomplish effective and creative grantmaking. These skills include: sifting information, translating between contexts, staying grounded, seeing patterns, synthesizing, and being flexible. While cognitive in nature, they also tie back to motivating beliefs.

The ten interviewees stressed how essential their relationships to grantees, grantseekers, and people working directly in the fields they wish to affect are to their own creativity. Several identified these relationships as the source of their own ability to be creative. Yet, there were substantial barriers to authenticity in the grantmaker-grantee relationship. To accept yet not be unnecessarily distanced by the power inequity necessitates important interpersonal skills and strategies described as the third foundation of creativity, *interpersonal competence*.

A special case of interpersonal competence has to do with working with diverse individuals and groups. To accomplish their work, the Scrivner awardees often crossed all kinds of social and cultural boundaries, working individually and in groups with people and organizations occupying very different roles and places in the social order. It takes special skills and abilities to cross these social boundaries, and the fourth foundation of creativity, *crossing boundaries and mixing worlds*, speaks to this set of interpersonal skills.

Finally, the Scrivner awardees describe the process of developing and implementing creative and effective programs as one that takes time, responding flexibly to what they learn, and changing course when necessary. As they describe their grantmaking paths, it is clear that staying the course draws upon some new qualities and intensifies the need for the skills of the other four common qualities. These are identified and discussed in the fifth foundation of creativity, a *sense of journey*.

Most of the Scrivner award winners interviewed had at least partially developed these foundations of creativity prior to entering philanthropy,

but were enabled by their institutions to develop them further and to use them to become exceptional grantmakers. Trust and flexibility were critical to their ability to experiment, pursue unconventional ideas, and change course based on learning.

While the creative grantmakers studied were able to make a difference in their program or issue areas, their skills and abilities do not seem to have had a broader impact on the field of philanthropy. The paper concludes with discussion of how the kind of creative or effective grantmaking described among the Scrivner award winners could be developed more widely. Changes in philanthropic practice suggested in this concluding section include:

- Providing more ways of sharing experiences that get to the heart of the grantmaking enterprise;

- Offering professional development opportunities to grantmakers that are consistent with intentional, long-term career choices;

- Understanding more about the occupational hazards of philanthropy and, in particular, developing effective methods of countering isolation and inundation;

- Paying more attention to the personal qualities and institutional conditions that foster high-quality, effective grantmaking; and

- Using methods of hiring and supervising grantmakers that recognize some of the subtle yet important qualities of individuals and foundations that foster high-quality grantmaking.

Introduction: From the Personal to the Field Perspective

The genesis of this paper about grantmaking and creativity was largely personal. After a dozen years of grantmaking, seven at the San Francisco Foundation and then at the California Wellness Foundation, I felt the need to step back and reflect on what I was doing. I began to wonder where my work fit into the larger picture of philanthropy, how my grantmaking style compared to others in the field, and, significantly, how I could keep growing and improving in my grantmaking. Although still deeply engaged in my work, I felt the need for renewal.

My first step was to join the professional development committee of Northern California Grantmakers (NCG), the regional association of grantmakers that had been instrumental in my professional growth early in my grantmaking career when I learned the fundamentals of grantmaking through participating in an AIDS funding partnership. There, I knew I had friends and colleagues who could help me answer the questions I was asking about reflection and growth.

Having become a member of the professional development committee, I soon realized that its focus was exclusively on people entering the field. While NCG offered an excellent series of seminars and trainings for those just joining philanthropy, there was no systematic focus on the development of people who have been in the field for a while. The basic question I brought to the committee was whether what I was experiencing—the need to reconnect with others working in philanthropy, to reflect on my work, and to continue learning—was shared by others in the field.

The committee was very responsive to these questions. Our first step to address them was to sponsor a series of focus groups among grantmakers in Northern California who had been in the field for five or more years. There was an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response to these focus groups, and the more than sixty participants expressed a strong desire for professional development opportunities geared to experienced grantmakers. To our surprise, we learned that feeling isolated was a strong theme among these grantmakers' responses. A session that I led at the 2002 Council on Foundations annual meeting validated both of these findings among a group of national funders—a common sense of isolation and a desire for professional development opportunities addressing the issues of experienced grantmakers.

The focus group findings kicked off a number of other activities aimed at addressing the professional development needs and desires of experienced grantmakers, including a survey whose development I led that the NCG professional development committee undertook with two other regional associations of grantmakers in California. In this survey, we asked 822 California grantmakers to rate a series of reasons for wanting professional development.[1] For the 361 grantmakers who responded, the desire to expand the creativity with which they approached their work was highest on a list of seven possibilities.

This finding intrigued me and raised some interesting questions. What is creativity in grantmaking? Who are creative grantmakers? What are the skills that go into creative grantmaking? How do creative grantmakers work? How do they stay fresh and creative? How can foundations foster environments for creative grantmaking? Is creativity something that can be increased through professional development experiences? What are facilitators of and barriers to creative grantmaking? I decided that my personal contribution to the welter of questions surrounding the professional development of experienced grantmakers would be to try to better understand creative grantmaking. I thought that using creativity as a lens on grantmaking might offer insight into my questions about my own work at this stage in my grantmaking career.

Study Design and Methods

Fortunately, there was a ready-made sample for this study among individuals who have received the Scrivner Award, given annually by the Council on Foundations for creative grantmaking. The sample of Scrivner awardees is assumed to exemplify and highlight skills, abilities, and qualities that many other experienced and effective grantmakers use in their work.

Among eighteen recipients of the Scrivner Award through 2002, I interviewed the first ten with whom I could schedule face-to-face interviews. I listened carefully as these ten award recipients recounted their experiences conceiving, developing, and implementing grantmaking programs, and I used their words as much as possible in the text that follows. Because the purpose here is to focus mostly on how these grantmakers go about and think about their work, the sketches of their work included here do not do justice to the individuals, the complexity of their projects, the richness of their ideas about creativity, or the organizational contexts in which they were able to be creative and be recognized for this achievement. Particularly missing is a lot of the detail about the content of their grantmaking projects and the impact they achieved.

To help me understand what I was hearing from the awardees, I interviewed an additional five grantmakers who were recommended as being especially thoughtful about philanthropy and its practice. These individuals include Hugh Burroughs at the Berry Gordy Family Foundation, Jan Jaffe

at the Ford Foundation, Sal LaSpada at the Rockefeller Foundation, Cole Wilbur at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and Jae Lee Wong at the California Endowment. Although they are not quoted directly, their many contributions to my thinking are reflected in the categories and types of information I chose to emphasize. Alan Abramson at the Aspen Institute Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy Program, who has served on the Scrivner Award selection committee, and Cindy Raab, who was at the Council on Foundations, helped me understand more about the Scrivner Award and the process of selecting awardees. Cindy was especially generous in providing me information from the Scrivner award files at the Council. I also drew upon the social science literature about creativity to guide my questions and thinking about creativity in grantmaking.

The interviews for this project yielded 300 pages of transcripts. An additional source of information was a taped conversation among Scrivner recipients that the Council on Foundations sponsored in December 1999. Many of my interviewees had participated in this facilitated discussion. From these sources, I abstracted dominant themes in the grantmaking described to me by the creative grantmakers and thoughtful observers. In the pages that follow, I distill the stories about how ten creative grantmakers approach their work, drawing heavily on their own words and descriptions. Out of my own professional experiences, I also brought to this analysis a set of assumptions and questions about creativity in grantmaking, including:

- Foundations are very engaged in the work of social change, which requires new ways of thinking, working, and approaching problems. Hence, creativity is important to philanthropic work.

- Much recent dialogue about effective approaches to grantmaking has drawn from business, with vocabulary and metaphors that turn around investments, measurement, outcomes, and strategies. I felt that using the metaphor of creativity, which is more associated with processes of exploration, discovery, and invention, could also be important to articulate the work of grantmaking.

- Creativity and effectiveness are related to each other, so to discuss creativity necessarily involves questions of results.

- Creativity is a product of the characteristics of individuals and the environments in which they work, which means that understanding the conditions for creativity in foundations can provide important perspectives on hiring, supporting, and supervising grantmakers.

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Lise Maisano at the S.H. Cowell Foundation has also been a great friend and fellow enthusiast for learning about the professional development of experienced grantmakers. Jan Jaffe at the Ford Foundation, whose GrantCraft teaching and learning tools for grantmakers resonate strongly with this project, has provided thoughtful input and feedback. Two presidents at Northern California Grantmakers, Lynn Luckow and Caroline Tower, have been very open to using NCG resources to understand more about experienced grantmakers and their learning needs, and Janet Bankovich, formerly on the staff at NCG, was extremely supportive of this endeavor.

Thanks to the encouraging members of the NCG professional development committee as I was forming my ideas for this project: Nommi Alouf of the East Bay Community Foundation, Ron Clement of the Haigh-Scatena Foundation, Don Jen of the Marin Community Foundation, Lise Maisano of the S.H. Cowell Foundation, and Craig McGarvey of the James Irvine Foundation.

Many thanks go to the interviewees, both the ten recipients of the Scrivner award and the five observers of philanthropy, for their time, and to Patrizi Associates who were generous in offering a home to this study.

Exploring the Creativity of Experienced Grantmakers: Purpose and Definitions

This is an exploration of creativity in grantmaking, driven primarily by an interest in the professional development of experienced grantmakers: How do people develop in the field of philanthropy to accomplish excellent and perhaps unique work? And, what are the kinds of individual abilities, skills, learning trajectories, working environments and external conditions that enable creativity?

The basic skills of grantmaking—how to review proposals, analyze the effectiveness of organizations, read financial statements, and structure evaluations—are reasonably well documented and taught in a variety of venues and formats. With the exponential growth in philanthropy, courses and seminars in grantmaking fundamentals are offered in increasing frequency by a growing group of philanthropic service organizations and consulting groups. Although attention is beginning to focus on professional development past the entry point in philanthropy, far less is known about how the basic skills of grantmaking coalesce into a craft, how grantmakers develop the capacity to do high-quality work and, perhaps, make a creative contribution to it. This paper aims to illuminate qualities and abilities of grantmakers that they identify as taking them from journeyman to artisan, from knowing the skills of the craft to creating something new with them.

It is not unusual for the study of work to focus on entry level skills. Much like the study of human development that until recently focused exhaustively on the first eighteen years of life and skipped lightly over the next sixty, professions tend to concentrate on professional development in the early years. In the first book to describe male development throughout adulthood, Daniel Levinson, in *The Seasons of a Man's Life,* observes, "When we discuss or study an occupation, we usually focus on the process of entry and the kinds of work it requires during the initial five or ten or twenty years. But the nature of man's work changes appreciably in middle adulthood. Much less thought, and certainly much less public discussion, have been given to the meaning of work in these years."[2]

Within the field of philanthropy, there is a small but significant literature about grantmakers as a group, their trajectories within the field, how

An essential aspect of creativity must be a demonstrated capacity to change or influence the field.

they go about and think about their work. A 1985 book, *Working in Foundations: Career Patterns of Women and Men,*[3] by Teresa Odendahl, Elizabeth Boris, and Arlene Daniels, pioneered learning systematically about grantmaking as a career by producing hard data and cogent observations about the field and those who work in it. The authors discussed job satisfaction (higher among CEOs than program staff), career mobility (limited), and the special issues women face balancing responsibilities at home and at the philanthropic workplace. More recently, in *The Insider's Guide to Grantmaking,*[4] Joel Orosz provides a comprehensive and detailed guide to the work of program officers. And, as noted above, Northern California Grantmakers conducted and published results of a survey about the professional development of grantmakers that includes responses from 361 grantmakers and their perceptions about their careers.

A sprinkling of essays and observations about grantmaking by grantmakers and close observers of the field adds to what we know about the practice of philanthropy. Two of these were particularly important to me. An essay by Dr. Roy Menninger, "Foundation Work May be Hazardous to Your Mental Health,"[5] is an insightful analysis of dynamics that influence relationships between givers and receivers of foundation funds and can deeply affect the inner experience of grantmakers. "Moral Values and Private Philanthropy" by philosopher Michael Hooker[6] articulates how these same dynamics can jeopardize the integrity of relationships between those who give and receive foundation funding. Hooker offers prescriptions to avoid compromising the moral fabric of the grantor-grantee relationship.

While this paper draws on the work of many who have contributed to reflecting about working in philanthropy, it departs from the most common perception of the relationship between creativity and funding, which is to view grantmakers as custodians or gatekeepers for the creativity of others. Reflecting upon his thirty years of work at the Carnegie Corporation, Alan Pifer, for example, refers to, "the extraordinary social invention for which those of us working in the foundation world are the current guardians."[7] Similarly, leading creativity researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi points to "teachers, critics, journal editors, museum curators, agency directors, and foundation officers," as the arbiters of which aspects of creative work are admitted into mainstream culture.[8] In contrast, this paper's focus is on the creative work of grantmakers themselves.

Creativity generally connotes novelty, something unexpected or idiosyncratic. This definition does not necessarily imply that creative work is grounded, influential, or effective. Contemporary creativity researchers, however, emphasize that an essential aspect of creativity must be a demonstrated capacity to change or influence the field, whether it is art, music, or the sciences, in which the creativity operates.[9,10] The Scrivner award itself specifies that the work of nominees should be "sufficiently developed so that its use as a paradigm is possible." In keeping with both the intent of

the Scrivner award and contemporary research, creativity as used in this paper also implies effectiveness.

Including effectiveness as a component of creativity adds a social dimension to understanding it: Creativity does not exist on its own, but can only be understood in a social context through understanding its influence and effects on individuals, domains of work, and fields of practice. In this vein, creativity researcher Howard Gardner, at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, defines creativity as, "to regularly solve problems, fashion products, or define new questions in a domain in a way that is initially considered novel but that ultimately becomes accepted in a particular cultural setting."[11] Thus, impact is incorporated into the definition of creativity. This is important to the broader lessons of this study. In the end, it is difficult to distinguish a creative grantmaker from an effective grantmaker in many contexts because the business of philanthropy is often starting something new.

The genesis of creativity is also relevant to its definition as a social construct. In the social psychological perspective, creativity is not a genetic quality that people either have or don't have, but a quality that comes from interactions of people and their environments. Individuals bring with them potential for creativity, but whether or not creativity is expressed depends on their environments. By focusing on the sample of ten Scrivner awardees and their approach to their work, this study identifies characteristics of individuals *and their foundation environments* that are important in the eyes of these grantmakers to accomplishing their work.

Organization of the Paper

In the following pages, I offer two different perspectives on the stories of the Scrivner award winners. First, thumbnail sketches of the ten awardees are provided based on their descriptions of their ways of working and the projects that were recognized. Next, the work of these creative individuals is discussed in terms of common themes, the purpose being to build toward observations about how philanthropy can foster more creative grantmaking and grantmakers. Finally, I offer implications for the professional development of grantmakers and for the ways of working in foundations and the field of philanthropy.

The Scrivner Award and the Awardees

Robert Scrivner worked in philanthropy for twenty years, first at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and then at the Rockefeller Family Fund. He was known to his colleagues as a man with vast knowledge of many areas. He gained a reputation for leading the foundations where he worked into many areas of philanthropic activity that were new to philanthropy and central to the times in which he lived, such as nuclear disarmament and the role of agent orange in Vietnam veterans' health. The Scrivner Award was created to recognize creativity of other grantmakers and, in doing so, to stimulate creativity in the field.

The Council on Foundations' nominating materials describe the Robert W. Scrivner Award for Creative Philanthropy as aimed toward someone who has achieved a "creative response to a particularly important problem in society." The award is explicitly focused on a particular grantmaking program and is not meant to be a career achievement award. Other significant criteria include that the achievement should:

- be sufficiently developed so that its use as a paradigm is possible;

- demonstrate an entrepreneurial spirit;

- build on and take full advantage of existing networks;

- demonstrate ability and willingness to take risks;

- be a creative departure from past grantmaking; and

- ensure that "the sum is greater than the parts."

Since its inception in 1985, through 2002, eighteen people have received the Scrivner Award. The awardees who are the focus of this study were the first ten who could be reached and scheduled for interviews in person. It is important to point out that none of these individuals was entirely comfortable with the designation of creative grantmaker that had come to them with receiving the Scrivner award. In varying degrees they attributed receiving the award to chance, the politics of the award, their nominator, luck, and an exaggeration or misperception about their own

roles in the projects for which they were recognized. There is, of course, some truth to these observations. Chance, politics, and luck contribute significantly to any award process. Also at work in these reactions is a kind of culture-wide philanthropic modesty and a hint—discussed in more detail later—of the organizational constraints within the field on entrepreneurial behavior and creative methods: Sometimes the philanthropic culture of modesty punishes those who stand out.

Although the awardees all expressed reservations about being called creative grantmakers, receiving the award caused each of them to reflect on what it was that had been considered creative about their work. Each had, in fact, developed some ideas about what others saw as creative in their grantmaking. In the thumbnail descriptions that follow, the awardees and the projects for which they were recognized are briefly described and a distillation of at least one aspect of their thoughts about creative grantmaking is presented.

Rebecca Adamson: A Spiritual Belief and Operational Wisdom

> A strong operational sense of grants once they "hit the ground" is central to creativity.

Rebecca Adamson was given the Scrivner Award in 1996 for the work of the Eagle Staff Fund at First Nations Development Institute, based in Alexandria, Virginia, which funds Native communities throughout the 50 United States. Adamson talks about creativity in two very different ways. On one hand, she identifies an important wellspring for creativity in her deep resonance with the spiritual foundations of Native culture, which she draws on for her own conviction and creativity. She refers, for example, to the brilliance of systems thinking in Native culture. "Projects they propose are never for a single program like an environmental project that specializes in hydroelectric regulatory reform," she explains. "It's the hydroelectric dam, how it affects the salmon, what it's doing to the soil, what kind of revenue the tribe could possibly derive from it, and how they could provide utility benefits for the whole region. It's the whole thing, the system around the project."

Adamson also believes that a strong operational sense of grants once they "hit the ground" is central to creativity. "I think the key to creative grantmaking is having operational experience yourself. I've seen so many academic or policy institutes that have never run anything have a good idea. But grantmaking is a tool, and it has to be an operational tool. If you don't have operations experience, you stand a chance of misconnecting from the actual group that you're funding and what you really want to get done."

Caroline Carpenter: Transposing Knowledge to Solve Problems

Caroline Carpenter was awarded the Scrivner in 1993 for a mini-grants program she designed when working at the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. Essential to this program, implemented in several rural West Virginia counties, was a method of making small grants that gave the decisionmaking to local residents. Carpenter explains, "It seems to me that the essence of the creativity here was finding a way to get money into communities to empower people to do local projects, giving them the experience of accomplishing something and have that experience build their self-confidence and their feeling that they and their communities can do that kind of thing. And it was using relatively small amounts of money to really help create and lift up from a very local and grassroots place this kind of community building activity."

Carpenter believes that an ability to translate what you know from one situation to another is an essential element of creativity—one that she used extensively in developing the Benedum Community Mini-Grants Program. The eclectic skills and experiences she counts as influential to designing the grantmaking program include: teaching Latin, what she learned about learning in a carpool, reading a lot of mystery novels, and being an object of charity when her house burned and she lost all her belongings. Many of her non-work experiences were brought to bear in her grantmaking work.

> The ability to translate what you know from one situation to another is an essential element of creativity.

Robert Crane: Moving the Marginal Toward the Mainstream

Bob Crane received the Scrivner Award in 1995 for his work, accomplished as president of the Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Fund, starting the Lesbian/Gay Community Funding Partnership. The Partnership provided funds to foundations that could raise matching funds to increase foundation giving around the country to gay and lesbian agencies and issues. This program has included fourteen foundations as funding partners to date and thirty-two foundations as recipients. The goal of the partnership is to encourage funding for lesbian and gay organizations and issues, and, through this, to move concerns of the gay and lesbian community from the margins toward the mainstream of philanthropy.

For Crane, attempting to move issues from the shadows into the mainstream, as he did in the Lesbian/Gay Community Funding Partnership, is a career pattern and a personal preference. As he explains, "I see myself and have always seen myself slightly outside all the institutions I've ever worked in. I've never really been someone who wanted to be dead center. Whatever my career has been, I've always been critical of the institutions that operate in that sphere, just as I'm critical of philanthropy in many

ways. I'm always pushing institutions on the edges because that's where my comfort level is. My middle is kind of being on the edge."

Thomas Layton: Taking on Tough Issues

To Tom Layton, President of the Alexander Gerbode Foundation in San Francisco, taking on tough topics is tied to his sense of philanthropic mission and central to the creativity of his work. "We are in the extraordinary position of having funds available to use for the public benefit, along with having a great deal of flexibility and only minimal accountability. We have neither stockholders nor customers, and we don't run for office," he explains. "So we are obliged to take on some of the difficult issues that many others will not or cannot address. We at Gerbode do not begin with the notion of pursuing a concern simply because it is challenging or controversial, but neither do we shy away for those reasons. We pursue issues that address concerns consistent with our value system and in areas where we think we can have an impact."

Exemplary of Layton's ease with controversy and exploring territory untrammeled by other funders is the grantmaking Gerbode has done to increase self-determination at the end of life, for which he was given the Scrivner Award in 1998. Layton has funded a variety of approaches to attain this goal. As a result of sustained attention to this issue, and his work in concert with many advocates and a few other funders, Gerbode played important roles in the passage of the Oregon law expanding control by individuals over their own dying process and in a national movement to improve palliative care at the end of life.

Stanley Litow: Creativity Through Problem-Solving in the Digital Age

Vice president for IBM Corporate and Community Relations and President of the IBM Foundation, Stanley Litow was awarded the Scrivner in 2000 for IBM's Reinventing Education program, which takes the newest technology from the IBM research lab to catalyze school reform worldwide. For example, researchers working with educators took voice recognition and dictation technology and developed more effective ways to teach children how to read, developed digital portfolios to help evaluate student learning and teacher performance, enabled online parent–teacher conferences, and used data warehousing tools to improve school decision-making. Litow explains that much of the vision to make an impact on education came from IBM CEO Louis V. Gerstner. For Litow, the creative element was figuring out how to bring IBM's resources to bear on a philanthropic goal and produce tangible results.

For one creative grantmaker, "pushing institutions on the edges" is a career pattern and personal preference.

"When I got to IBM," Litow explains, "the thing that I was most struck by was the depth of the technical resources within the company. My 'aha' was to say, 'Well, what if you took all of that research capacity and applied it against the most difficult barriers that have stood in the way of children achieving and did it in a partnership designed from the get-go to address questions of size, scale, and transferability?' I wasn't inventing a new model for change. It already existed in the company. What was new was taking the best research out of the lab and instead of making it available to business customers for a fee, we'd put it against the most formidable barriers to change in our schools. Then, we'd figure out ways for school systems and states to own Reinventing Education, work with them to adapt, expand, and bring the solutions to scale leading to actual, measurable, improvements in student achievement." Reinventing Education now covers a third of the United States as well as nine other countries serving 75,000 teachers and over 10 million students.

Jack Litzenberg: Creativity as an Iterative and Incremental Process

Jack Litzenberg, program officer at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, has dedicated a career to poverty and its alleviation and was awarded the Scrivner in 1994 for facilitating the development of the micro-enterprise field in the United States to create ownership and entrepreneurship opportunities for low-income people. To Litzenberg, creativity is slow and incremental, building one element of a grantmaking program on another and revising them over time to create a strong and diverse program. "Having an idea is one thing," he explains, "and actually making it happen is another. Getting an idea on the ground and seeing it work is a really important part of the magic." Litzenberg started with the simple and straightforward knowledge that capital was needed to create loan funds, and he used his grants to seed loan funds in amounts of $50,000 to $100,000. These seed grants leveraged many multiples of the original amounts that were then loaned in small amounts to individuals and businesses, advancing ownership in low-income communities.

Litzenberg's goal was not just to seed micro-enterprise loan funds, but to influence public and private policies affecting access to capital in low-income communities. Convening grantees, as frequently as four times a year, was critical to Litzenberg's ability to refine his, and others', knowledge about which methods and strategies were effective in developing and implementing micro-enterprise lending and to shape best practices. Slowly, through an eight-year journey, Litzenberg continued to refine knowledge about these economic interventions to build a field of finance in low-income communities, and to shape policies and practices to help create a number of enduring organizations that continue this work.

> Creativity is slow and incremental, building one element of a grantmaking program on another and revising them over time.

Craig McGarvey: Creativity as a Constant, Collaborative Process of Learning

Creativity to Craig McGarvey is a collective endeavor that entails sustained learning over time. It was on his first site visit as a program officer at the James Irvine Foundation to California's Central Valley that the idea emerged for the project that was awarded the Scrivner Award in 2001. The goal was increasing civic participation among the one in four Californians who are foreign born. The kernel of the idea came from the intersection between three organizations that wanted to work together on issues of immigration, citizenship, and civic participation in the Central Valley. These organizations, and others who joined in this endeavor, formed the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship.

McGarvey explains the hypothesis that served as the substrate for this work: "Change is only going to happen if real people, regular people, can learn their way into it. People in communities have to figure out how to create change, and that is a collective, collaborative process. The creativity of that process happens in idea exchange, and in people working together toward a common goal." This Irvine grantmaking program is now in its fourth iteration, implementing the vision as McGarvey explains it, of "a seamless continuum in preparation for naturalization, the learning of English, and the participation in civic life, creating an experiential education curriculum for learning how to be an American through collective problem-solving in one's community."

Mary Mountcastle: Creativity from Crossing Social Divides

Mary Mountcastle, a trustee at the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation,[12] received the Scrivner Award in 1992 for developing the Opportunities for Families Fund. This project, developed well in advance of welfare reform, started with the basic premise that local communities often know best what needs to happen to move families out of poverty. To tap this knowledge, Mountcastle believed, it takes a cross-section of community perspectives to identify and implement the array of services and programs that need to be in place. Bringing people together was central to her methodology and is the source she identifies for creativity in her grantmaking.

"To me," Mountcastle explains, "creativity isn't one person; it's bringing together a mix of people and perspectives and the friction that creates that sometimes can give birth to new ways of all people looking at things. I think foundations have almost a unique ability to bring the mix together." The sparks resulting from this collision of points of view become a source of energy to solve community problems and find balance among them. "I see the world in tensions, and you never achieve perfect balance, but it's in

> "Creativity isn't one person; it's bringing together the mix of people and perspectives, and the friction that creates sometimes gives birth to new ways of looking at things."

the struggle to achieve some kind of a balance among competing values or ways of seeing things that solutions lie."

Anne Firth Murray: Principles as Guideposts on a Creative Journey

Anne Firth Murray retired from a career in philanthropy that spanned nearly three decades believing that the way we do the work of philanthropy is more important that what we do. She was awarded the Scrivner in 1996 for founding and leading the Global Fund for Women, which makes grants to groups run by and for women throughout the world to advance women's rights and, in so doing, creates the potential for democracy and civil society among marginalized people.

An important factor facilitating development of creativity at the Fund was a template of values and principles that evolved throughout Murray's career, which she applied to her work. Respect and trust, for example, were core values that were expressed through the Fund's approach of providing grants for general support. "Funding was provided," Murray explains, "on principles of respect. If you really respect people and trust people, you give them money flexibly. You don't second-guess them. You don't go back and say, 'Give me a project—let's see a beginning and an end.' You say, 'What you're doing is important, we trust you and we have checked it out with our advisors, and here's the money. We want you to do what you want to do as an organization. We're not going to carve off some little project that stifles you and means that you can't pay your rent.'"

Edward Nathan: Creativity Through Group Process

Ed Nathan's career has been remarkable for its use of people in groups to accomplish social ends. Nathan was awarded the Scrivner in 1986 for starting a collaborative funding program among foundations when he served as president of the Northern California Grantmakers regional association of grantmakers. The award focused on an emergency loan fund established to help nonprofits meet cash flow problems that adversely affected people in need or the agencies, service programs, and agency staff trying to help them. The Foundations and Corporations Emergency Loan Fund was replicated in many communities. This was only one of many collaboratives Nathan started both within the Zellerbach Family Foundation and through the regional association. Although funder collaboratives have become more and more popular over the last decade, Nathan pioneered several that were among the first in the country to bring funders

"The way we do the work of philanthropy is more important than what we do."

around a table, pool funds, and engage in joint decision-making about where funds should be allocated.

Nathan, who is now retired, sees his contribution to creativity as shaping an environment in which creativity could take place in groups. Working very closely with grantees was central to his successes. This was possible, he explains, "because there was an environment of encouragement to do this without my fear that I was going to get set up." Key to this was the relationship he built with his board, bringing them in very early on ideas or needs he was seeing, foreshadowing how projects might develop, and keeping them abreast of developments.

The Foundations of Creativity in the Work of Experienced Grantmakers

Motivating beliefs provide a sense of who people are, what they believe is important, a template for looking at themselves, their worlds and their work.

The Robert W. Scrivner award "honors grantmakers who, with a combination of vision, principle, and personal commitment, are making a critical difference in a creative way." The award winners interviewed for this study articulate some common foundations of what has been recognized as their grantmaking creativity, which are examined and illustrated in this section. The awardees' processes for developing the skills and capabilities that enabled them to undertake creative work, as well as some of the conditions in their foundations that enhanced their ability to be creative, are also discussed.

There was no one path to either the skill development or personal development that resulted in the capacity for creative grantmaking among the people interviewed for this study. Most of these grantmakers, though not all, entered the field of philanthropy after extensive experience in other professional work—in which they had developed many of the capacities that would come to play in their grantmaking programs. Some pointed to experiences in their personal development and in their non-work lives that were influential in their grantmaking. The foundations of creativity described here can be thought of as milestones of development, the achievement of skills and abilities acquired through a wide variety of experiences and learning trajectories that are then brought to bear on grantmaking.

A Motivating Belief

In many of the preceding sketches of the Scrivner awardees, the outlines of their values and principles, deeply held points of view, or even straightforward beliefs about what is right are visible. These motivating beliefs provide a sense about who people are in the world, what they believe is important, a template for looking at themselves, their worlds and their work. For Robert Crane, a value was to make grants that help move groups from the margins more into the mainstream. For Tom Layton, it was important to take on overlooked and tough issues, and for Mary Mountcastle to cross social divides.

Teresa Amabile, a social psychologist who has studied creativity in many different settings, has identified three ingredients necessary for creativity to occur.[13] One of these is intrinsic motivation that provides a sense of inner directedness, the desire to work on something not to meet the demands of external structures or rewards, but from an inner source, which can be pleasure, drive, passion, or combinations of these. For Scrivner awardees, core beliefs often provided this source of intrinsic motivation in their philanthropic work, a well from which they drew energy, enthusiasm, and determination.

Henri Poincaré, a mid-nineteenth century mathematician, developed a four-step sequential outline of the creative process that includes preparation, incubation, awareness, and execution.[14] In this formulation, the creative process begins with preparation. The first stage in preparing for a creative undertaking, according to Poincaré, requires immersion in the arena in which the creative work will be accomplished and extensive information-gathering. This makes possible the next three steps of incubation, awareness, and execution. Many of the Scrivner awardees identified an experience comparable to what Poincaré refers to as immersion, and it was frequently in this immersion that motivating beliefs crystallized.

For Rebecca Adamson, immersion took the form of ten years working in Native communities to help tribes, towns, and reservations wrest control of the schools in which their children were educated. From this community-organizing immersion experience, which resulted in passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act,[15] Adamson developed appreciation for the deeply embedded systems thinking of Native cultures.

It is this appreciation for Native systems thinking that Adamson developed prior to becoming a grantmaker that has served as a motivating belief for her life work raising and distributing funds for community and economic development in Native communities. Adamson explains that when she started to change the focus of her work from education to economic development, her immersion in Native cultures profoundly influenced her worldview and approach. "Rather than seeing development as the infusion of funds for one project, I was coming from a completely different conceptual framework. It was really a systems approach to development that reflected the whole philosophical framework I'd gotten from working in the community."

Adamson explains how this immersion helped to get her out of the usual paradigm of grantmaking. "Innovation is that ability to just make things up, to dream, and to vision," she explains. "And the way that foundations work, I think, can oftentimes stop innovation and creativity from happening. With First Nations, when we first started our grantmaking, we went out to a number of communities in tribal areas across the nation. And every time we showed up, communities initially responded to us as they had to other funders. We were always asked, 'Well, what do you fund?' And we would say, 'Well, we want to know what you need to do in

> The first stage in preparing for a creative undertaking requires immersion in the field and extensive information-gathering.

your community,' and they'd say, 'Well, what we need to do is this and this, but what do you fund?' And then we would say, 'Let's go back to what you said you need to do,' and they'd say, 'okay, okay, but first tell us what you fund.'

"We were working in a situation where the culture of Native people is holistic and comprehensive. If we were to be a foundation with very rigid program categories, we couldn't fit the cultural understanding of communities and the way people solve their own problems into these categories. So what we did within our grantmaking was to focus on assets, which can be human capital, natural resources, or money. We looked at controlling assets, retaining assets, leveraging assets, or increasing assets and said, 'That's our focus. You identify the asset that you want to work on and you tell us how in your program design you're going to control, leverage, retain, or increase the asset. Grants were based around assets.

"Our real key was the ability for our grantmaking to open up and fund innovation and to also have accountability and focus. A good example is the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, who did a buffalo project. It was an environmental project because buffalo eat the native grasses, an economic project because as Indian people came into it, they earned a calf from the buffalo herd, a nutritional project because the excess buffalo that got killed were provided as food supply to the elderly programs. It was an art project because the hides and skulls went to the Indian artists. It was a youth project because youth who were sentenced through the courts were required to study the buffalo nation because the Lakota nation is modeled after the buffalo nation. And it was a cultural project because of the buffalo's sacred meaning to the tribe, and any kill was managed by the medicine man in the proper way of the kill. There wasn't a single program category for this effort and yet the leader at the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe won the *Newsweek* magazine American Hero Award for what he was able to accomplish in his community. That's the kind of innovation that we wanted to promote and support in our grantmaking." Following Adamson's motivating belief in the innate wisdom of Native systems thinking provided the intellectual and motivating fuel for the work of First Nations Development Institute.

For Jack Litzenberg, the straightforward beliefs that poverty is bad and ownership helps alleviate poverty were essential to his creative grantmaking. Before joining the Mott Foundation, Litzenberg worked with the federal Model Cities anti-poverty program. It was this experience that shaped his core belief that ownership is an essential ingredient to poverty reduction. He describes developing this idea about ownership that has provided the basis for a creative career exploring, developing, implementing, and refining different approaches to ownership as a means of reducing poverty: "You could go down almost any block in a low-income community and tell the rentals from the owner-occupied houses. You could go into stores and tell that nobody from that neighborhood owned the store because nobody from that neighborhood worked in it. It was those sorts of

"If we were to be a foundation with rigid program categories, we couldn't fit the cultural understanding of communities."

things that gave me a feeling that ownership built an anchor for people, a vested interest in the community, and once they had a vested interest, the community then began to mean something."

Litzenberg came to see ownership as more than an economic asset, but as a means of reducing alienation and powerlessness. It became a motivating belief. "Who's to say whether a house in a very low-income community will gain in assets or depreciate?" he asks. "But it does build a feeling that 'this is mine' and you want to create more 'this is mine.' It also begins to give low-income people the experience that they have a right to make decisions over their lives. It reduces the deep alienation that comes from poverty."

As the stories of Rebecca Adamson and Jack Litzenberg illustrate, immersion experiences that lead to the formation of motivating beliefs of creative grantmakers do not necessarily occur within the context of philanthropy. More often than not, the Scrivner award winners brought these beliefs from previous experiences to their philanthropic work. Values, beliefs, and principles are frequently rooted in childhood experiences. Some awardees referred to the transmission of beliefs from their parents or childhood experiences. But it was often an immersion experience from previous work that shaped, formed, and crystallized ways of working and thinking into principles, values, and beliefs that then became activated as motivating beliefs in the philanthropic work of the Scrivner award winners. Anne Firth Murray had been an editor for university presses and Ed Nathan a county social worker. Many had had several different professional lives. Bob Crane, for example, had worked at a university, taught at a high school in Europe, written curricula for inner-city youth, and run a large program in the arts. They were teachers, lawyers, school administrators, and business people. Stan Litow had worked in leadership roles in the public, voluntary, and private sectors, all focused on improving the quality of life in New York City.

Not all crystallizing experiences came from work or were necessarily long in duration. Caroline Carpenter tells how the essential principle of giving with dignity fell in place for her when her own house burned. "I remember driving up and finding everything I owned had been destroyed by a fire. A friend of a friend told me, 'I've got a whole bunch of stuff for you, come pick it up.' So I went and picked it up and I went through the plastic bags and it was almost everything that she couldn't sell at a yard sale. And so treating people in McDowell County (West Virginia) with dignity instead of saying, 'Well, here's what I can offer you, what's left over from the yard sale,' became essential to me."

Once core beliefs are in place, it is often an experience of disjunction between what is and what should be, according to the motivating belief, that is a precursor to a creative undertaking.[16] Creativity researcher Howard Gardner points out that for scientists, identifying a discrepancy between what they observe and what is accepted as knowledge often catalyzes a creative undertaking. For Scrivner awardees, the catalyst for

Often an experience of disjunction between what is and what should be is a precursor to a creative undertaking.

creative action frequently came from identifying a gap between their motivating belief and what they experienced in the world.

Adamson's perception of the strength of indigenous approaches to problem-solving jarred with her experience of seeing government funding repeatedly fail to connect with Native culture and create the change it was intended to make in Native communities. In response, she developed the First Eagle Fund to help build on the strengths and assets in Native communities in a way that operationalized the motivating belief she had developed in her immersion experience. For Anne Firth Murray, the dissonance between her belief that funding for women's groups should be based on human rights, justice, and respect—not solely on the utilitarian value of addressing social problems—contrasted with the way she saw most philanthropic funds being allocated for women internationally. This ultimately caused her to develop the Global Fund for Women and shaped the values and principles that became basic to the work of the Global Fund. As was evident in Murray's story, motivating beliefs provided a template against which awardees judged their work and their own relationship to it over time.

Although necessary, a motivating belief was not sufficient to account for creativity among the Scrivner awardees. To be effectively used, a motivating belief had to mesh with other skills and abilities to accomplish creative work. Important among these other capacities are the skills, primarily cognitive, that are described next.

Cognitive Skills: Sifting Information, Translating Between Contexts, Staying Grounded, Seeing Patterns, Synthesizing, Being Flexible

A second necessary ingredient for creativity identified by Teresa Amabile in addition to intrinsic motivation is a cognitive capacity for creative thinking. She describes this cognitive ability as, "a way of approaching the world that allows you to find a novel possibility and see it through to execution."[17] Many of the Scrivner awardees came to their work in philanthropy with extensive experience solving puzzles and problems in their professional lives. They described a range of skills they employed in developing and implementing grantmaking projects. Below, several examples of such skills are described based on the reports of the awardees. Then, the components of this cognitive style most important to grantmaking are identified.

Stan Litow joined philanthropy at the IBM Foundation after two decades of service dedicated to the City of New York, where he was born and raised and, early in life, developed a passion for the City. In his early twenties, Litow worked for New York City Mayor John Lindsay, whose administration placed a premium on change, creativity, and solving problems aimed at social improvement. Between the Mayor's office and IBM,

he held a wide variety of positions in government, started and led a non-profit think tank, founded advocacy coalitions, served on city and state policy boards and as Deputy Schools Chancellor. He was also a consultant to foundations and sought and received many grants from foundations, corporations, and government—all focused from different angles on improving and strengthening New York City, but in particular addressing the critical social and educational issues of teaching and learning.

When he entered IBM, Litow thought he was expert in education, public policy, and philanthropy but he lacked a complete understanding of technology or the scope, power, and workings of a global company. Significantly, he felt well prepared to learn what he didn't know in order to bring IBM's technical expertise to bear on the problems of school achievement in many different states and countries. "It was about getting the work done and figuring out what it would take to get a challenging or difficult piece of work done. And I'd really done a lot of that in a variety of sectors, including being the chief operating officer of the largest and most complex urban education system in the United States." Litow identifies the ability to take in vast amounts of information and digest it as key to his work. "This is a dream job because you have access to all the people that you want to have access to, and to learn from my colleagues in the business part of IBM, the people in research, in communications, government relations, people in individual technical areas, business areas." Equally important is the time to digest the information. "I write a lot of articles and a lot of materials. I write for the Chairman a lot. I digest a lot of information and material and present it and analyze it, and that's a very important part of my working style, figuring it all out."

> ## The ability to take in vast amounts of information and digest it is key to foundation work.

Other Scrivner awardees described how their work before philanthropy developed specific cognitive abilities. Anne Firth Murray describes, for example, how editing can provide a useful approach to grantmaking. "If you are a very good editor," she explains, "you need to have a broad picture of a book or whatever it is, but be very, very concerned about details and how they fit together. You need to ask, 'How do these changes and these amendments fit into a broader picture?' That's very much, I think, what grantmaking is like. You have some idea of what you want to accomplish through your interaction with grantees and how it fits into the bigger picture of your grantmaking."

Caroline Carpenter points to her experience teaching Latin and likens the experience of developing the Benedum Foundation mini-grants program to solving a sentence in Latin. "Not only do you take things apart in studying Latin, but you put them back together. I don't know that I see that with friends who are in academia. They take things apart beautifully, but then they leave. In the creative process, you have to take it apart, and put it together. It's like a jigsaw puzzle or a mystery problem. If you can solve a Latin sentence, you can do a lot."

While many of the Scrivner award winners experienced the process of developing grantmaking programs as intuitive, Litow, Murray, Carpenter,

and others pointed to a number of cognitive skills important to their work, including how they handle data and information, their abilities to draw critical information from people and organizations in the field and to "think like grantees," the ways they put together various sources of information, their abilities to transfer lessons from one environment to another, and their abilities to adjust plans to changing circumstances.

Transferring learning. The Scrivner awardees demonstrated significant abilities to transfer learning from one enterprise to another. Stanley Litow felt very prepared to undertake a major project in school reform at multiple sites in many countries using new technologies even though he had little experience working internationally. Similarly, on his very first site visit, Craig McGarvey started working with applicants to the Irvine Foundation to undertake a collaborative learning process and long-term funding commitment to increase civic participation in California's Central Valley. He was able to draw from his past experiences teaching, in school administration, and designing a high school service learning program to move quickly. Both Litow and McGarvey had learned approaches to working with people, and designing and implementing projects, that they were able to transfer as a template for action in an entirely new setting with barely a beat skipped.

Some of the skills that Scrivner awardees described as important from their prior work included working with multiple groups of people, often with different roles and purposes, to accomplish a goal. Understanding how organizations work, to both respect and bypass the constraints they impose, was important. And, many had important experiences attempting to create change of different kinds—at individual, organizational, systems, and policy levels.

An important aspect of preparation for their work in foundations mentioned by nearly all of the awardees is that, with one exception, they had all received grants from foundations prior to becoming grantmakers themselves. This experience gave them the opportunity to, as Stanley Litow described it, "think like a grantee," which has to do with understanding how the grantor-grantee relationship works, the structure and responsibilities of applying for and receiving grants, understanding the nuances of the relationship, and the challenges of making complicated change-oriented system reforms work. Many said that being able to "think like a grantee" provided understanding of the experiences of their nonprofit partners in undertaking change-oriented work and how to create a culture and climate for the work to maximize productivity and creativity.

Gathering and sifting data. Foundations are magnets for knowledge and ideas, and all of the awardees were avid data gatherers. Many described themselves as omnivorous readers and loved the aspect of foundation work that brings reports, information, and people into their lives, telling and teaching them about many facets of their work. There are also

> Foundations are magnets for knowledge and ideas, and all of the Scrivner awardees for creative grantmaking were avid data gatherers.

important challenges that come with this aspect of foundation work and awardees talked about several of these.

Information overload is an occupational hazard, and managing the sheer volume of information that flows from various sources is one of the major challenges for grantmakers. The survey responses from 361 California grantmakers identified managing time, sifting through what is important and what is not, as the most significant work challenge that both new and experienced grantmakers contend with. As Jack Litzenberg explains, "We could actually sit there all day and read stuff that comes across the desk. I'm not talking proposals, but just articles or information on the Internet. You could just do that all day. You could spend weeks away from actually doing things that gets money out the door."

The Scrivner awardees were skilled in both gathering data and knowing how to sift through it, often describing access to people and information, the ability to get a "big picture," as one of the luxuries and pleasures of the work. They liked the analytical aspect of their work and several described an intuitive approach to their work that went hand in hand with the overtly analytical. Having the time to step back, reflect, read, write, and digest were important to the process of sifting through data, as was a culture within foundations that several referred to as climates in which it was okay to make mistakes, learn from them, and continue to refine their approaches as they moved forward.

As discussed above, motivating beliefs provided a guidestar and template for Scrivner awardees to judge and prioritize ideas. They had a general, if not a specific idea, about where they were aiming, and information was sifted and sorted according to its value in moving in the direction of motivating beliefs. An important aspect of sifting through data for the awardees was understanding its practical value, how it would play in actual grantmaking programs, in communities, and with grantees.

Staying grounded. The danger of data gathering is becoming overly burdened by an information flow that can easily sweep grantmakers into a world distanced and abstracted from the work of applicants and grantees. Awardees emphasized the importance of the types of information that serve as their database. All, in different ways, pointed to the importance of learning from grantees, grantseekers, and others who are actually doing the work foundations promote, facilitate, and support.

The ability to stay grounded was articulated as an important quality for designing their programs by nearly all of the interviewees. It often came through in their interviews both as an analytic observation about its importance to awardees' work and in the vivid ways awardees spoke about the grantees and the sites they considered important to their work.

As a measure of the extent of her grounding in the communities she funded, Caroline Carpenter put over 150,000 miles on each of four cars while she worked at the Benedum Foundation. "In West Virginia," she explains, "I went to a lot of meetings, and I would just listen to what

people were talking about and try to capture some opportunities. I think it was a lot of going to as many different meetings as possible. Creativity is very labor intensive."

Seeing patterns. Another important cognitive skill for creative philanthropy, highly related to sifting through data, is being able to see patterns, trends, similarities, and differences across a variety of projects or in a program area. Scrivner awardees often commented on the privilege of looking at fields, clusters of grants, and areas of social endeavor from a removed distance. Ed Nathan calls this, "the luxury of not concentrating on all the commas and the semicolons but listening to the broader music, going off on your own tangent and coming back again with what this has meant to you."

Mary Mountcastle connected this skill, highly desirable in grantmakers, to creativity. She explains, "When hiring staff at the foundation (the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation where she serves as a trustee), I look for people who can get a 10,000-foot perspective to see the different grants, see the relationships among them, and identify opportunities to bring people together because they're either working on something similar and they can learn from each other. Or it might be that the whole field of community economic development in North Carolina is at a stalemate or has hit a wall in terms of its vision, so we need to bring people together and help the group figure out how to get over this wall."

Jack Litzenberg describes how seeing patterns interacts with gathering and sifting data. "In the foundation world, you get all these ideas across your desk, and what your brain is doing, without you knowing it," he explains, "is rearranging these things you're exposed to in a pattern that only you have the opportunity to arrange them in because you're the only one that sees this unique variety of people's thoughts. I've often felt it really isn't creative. It's your ability to make some match. Maybe that is creativity."

It appears to be a hallmark of creative grantmakers that they can use skills that are somewhat opposite in nature. They can open a very wide-angle lens to all kinds of information and data, be omnivorous in their data gathering, but also be grounded and focused, to discard some information, prioritize what they are learning, and create patterns from it. Ultimately, they synthesize information to shape, and reshape, their grantmaking programs.

Synthesizing. The Scrivner awardees came to their work in philanthropy with a range of experiences and knowledge, and data from many sources. One of their important skills was to be able to use this work and eclectic array of data to develop a grantmaking program. Mary Mountcastle describes this aspect of creativity as, "taking little bits of pieces of things that are in your ethos and putting them together in a new way." Caroline Carpenter exemplifies this synthesizing capability in what she identifies as

Creative grantmakers are open to all kinds of information, but also focused on prioritizing what they are learning and creating patterns from it.

the influences that shaped her ideas for the Benedum Community Mini-Grants Program. These influences included the work of Mohammed Unis, who developed a micro-enterprise loan program in Bangladesh; Helen Lewis, a rural sociologist in West Virginia, whose wisdom she drew from; and her experiences in a carpool going to and from business school, which demonstrated to her that learning occurs best in groups. Also of great significance was the cumulative knowledge she gained from being "on the ground" at countless community meetings where she learned the values, culture, and openings for change in the rural areas where she was planning to fund.

Being flexible. A quality that Scrivner awardees emphasized as important to their ability to design and accomplish their philanthropic work was flexibility, the capacity to make changes and amendments as new data and information changed their thinking. Flexibility was discussed as both a personal style and as an important quality for foundations to exercise. For Ed Nathan, the capacity to be flexible was essential to his ability to use group processes to guide many aspects of his grantmaking. He emphasizes, "You have to also be willing to have people change your ideas around, and if you're not married to any one particular idea, well, then you're on safe ground." He worked hard to build the trust and relationships with his board that would give him the flexibility he needed to work closely and responsively with grantees and potential grantees.

Craig McGarvey talks about the importance of organizational flexibility in implementing grants to increase civic participation and a specific mechanism he developed with grantees to increase this flexibility. "We've tried to be in the idea exchange business and to be as flexible and as inventive as we can be. It's hard. One of the things that the (Irvine) Foundation has done in the last year is to create an opportunity fund. Ideally we'd just be able to change the objectives of grants as we go along. But we thought if we could figure out a way to have relatively small amounts of money available when a great idea came up, that would be good. So, there's an opportunity fund now administered by members of the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship, who have developed guidelines for it."

Tom Layton describes the role of the Gerbode Foundation in encouraging creativity in similar terms. "Foundations have the opportunity and perhaps the obligation to pursue ideas in their nascent form, knowing that the initial explorations might be non-productive or, in fact, even wrongheaded. It is often these exploratory efforts that are the most productive, even if they are anxiety-provoking. Talking to people, pulling people together, exploring ideas can create expectations, because people like to think that taking a first step guarantees a second step, which of course it doesn't. It is not always possible to persuade colleagues and board members that a particular approach for a grantmaking strategy is appropriate or productive. Sometimes we grantmakers get lost in our own enthusiasm and need to be reeled in. Some of us work in foundations that clearly have

> "We've tried to be in the idea exchange business, and to be as flexible and inventive as we can."

a higher tolerance for ambiguity than others. I'm fortunate to work with a board that is open, imaginative, and often courageous. It is not unusual for me as the 'front person' to get credit that really would more appropriately be given to our board members."

An important challenge of data gathering for foundation work is that, to stay grounded and to think like a grantee, much of the data needs to come from people who are deeply enmeshed in the work. Getting accurate information from individuals who may be current or prospective applicants to the foundation raises a series of challenges. "The more good information you have about a problem, the better the chances are of designing a solution," Goleman, et al., explain. However, they continue, "When the challenge involves other people, the art of looking and listening is all the more essential. One subtle barrier to acquiring good information can be our social or professional role."[18] This challenge of gathering information from people—which is so central to philanthropic work and fraught with so many potential distortions—is discussed as the third foundation of creativity, "interpersonal competence." In contrast to the cognitive skills that most awardees developed in prior work, often as a grantee, a specific type of interpersonal competence vital to grantmaking had to be learned and negotiated in their work in philanthropy.

Interpersonal Competence

The Scrivner awardees place their relationships with grantseekers at the heart of their philanthropic work and their own creative processes. Anne Firth Murray asserted this when she said that, in looking back upon her career in philanthropy, she has come to understand that how we work in philanthropy is more important than what we do. Several others made the same point in a slightly modulated form—i.e., that how we work is *at least as important* as the dollars we allocate. Many believe that their creativity is a direct result of their interactions with grantees and grantseekers, that these relationships are the taproots to their own capacity to be creative.

Rebecca Adamson directly identified her relationships with grantees as the source of her creativity. She explains how a colleague praised her for having a good idea. This surprised her and made her think, "I had nothing to do with this idea. I was just listening to people in the community and the creativity came from there. I think that staying connected in a special way might even be a necessary ingredient for creative grantmakers. They might readily admit this, or maybe it happens on a more subliminal level that this connection is what is bringing the new ideas. It's what percolates through."

Craig McGarvey describes his belief that creativity is a collaborative and collective process, and that his role is an indirect one. "If there's any creativity in the Foundation's work in California's Central Valley," he explains, "it has been in trying to behave in such a way that creativity

would be stimulated in the communities, which you can't do directly. The power and privilege of philanthropy is that one is in the position to stimulate creativity. It has to be done indirectly, but I think that's where the creativity lies."

The academic study of creativity has surprisingly little to contribute to understanding the role of interpersonal relationships in creativity. Teresa Amabile makes the point that even in the scientific realm, the degree to which interpersonal relationships are a key ingredient to creativity is underestimated. She describes an analysis of the work patterns and attitudes of winners of the Nobel Prize that reported that nearly two-thirds of the 286 laureates named between 1901 and 1972 were honored for work they did collaboratively.[19]

More information about the importance of interpersonal relationships in philanthropy can be drawn from business, where there is increasing importance attached to the effect of interpersonal skills on productivity. In *Emotional Intelligence at Work*, Daniel Goleman describes an analysis of two large data sets rating qualities of managers that predict success. This study shows that two-thirds of these qualities have to do not with cognitive or technical skills, but with those capacities that enable people to effectively understand and manage themselves and their relationships with others in work settings.[20] In the recent survey of California grantmakers, the 361 respondents rated 17 skills important to their work. At the top of the list was interpersonal skills, rated as important or very important by 96 percent of the respondents.

Upon entering the field of philanthropy, grantmakers learn how to assume the role of grantmaker, represent a foundation, negotiate with grantees and grantseekers, and ultimately make grants to some applicants, say no to others, and not lose themselves or their integrity in the process. The Scrivner awardees made it clear that these interpersonal skills are complicated and remain a continuing focus in their work. They identify interpersonal skills as critical to their ability to be creative.

Key to the trickiness of social roles in philanthropy is that grantmakers have money, grantseekers want it, and grantees frequently want more of it. Dr. Roy W. Menninger, M.D., of the famed Kansas psychiatric clinic, who has raised funds and distributed them, points out that at the core of philanthropic work is a potent mixture of interpersonal relationships and money, "a metaphorical freight car laden with a variety of beliefs and fantasies."[21] The power of money in the grantseeking-grantor relationship, he points out, creates distortions through which all such relationships are experienced.

Every program officer has a story, often wry, about his or her initial experience with the distorting lens. One interviewee related her experience entering philanthropy and quickly gaining ten pounds. Yet, on site visits people remarked that she appeared to be losing weight. She enjoyed the remarks, thinking that people were perceiving her as slim because she was wearing black, or perhaps, she thought, because the cut of the dress was

> The power of money in the grantseeking–grantor relationship creates distortions through which all such relationships are experienced.

flattering—until she realized with a start that neither of these was accurate, but that she had wandered into a wonderland where feedback had ceased to be real. Tom Layton describes the result of this lack of accurate feedback as "existing in a field that is outside natural selection and the evolutionary process itself."

There are many facets of this distorting lens. Philosopher Michael Hooker describes how lack of accurate feedback can lead to moral failure. In his singular article, "Moral Values and Private Philanthropy,"[22] he points to the unintended exaggeration that results when there is no accurate feedback. This creates what he calls a conspiracy of optimism, when grantseekers motivated by their desire to be funded promise more than they know they can deliver and grantmakers trying to achieve the lofty goals of their foundations accept the exaggerated goals. The result is either final reports that lay claim to larger effects than actually resulted (a lie) or a disillusionment that leaves all parties complicit to the conspiracy cynical and, over time, burned out.

Although all of the grantmakers interviewed for this paper were mindful of problems caused by the distorting lens, each had found methods of diminishing its effect. If one of the old saws in philanthropy is that, "Once you enter the field, you never have a bad meal or a true friend," the Scrivner awardees had developed strategies to challenge this cynical statement about the potential for honest and real relationships with people. They did, in fact, find ways to engage with those involved in their grantmaking programs that they experienced as honest and effective.

Several, including Jack Litzenberg, referred to the intimacy of the grantor-grantee relationship as essential to their own creativity. "It isn't like you go out for dinner every night, but it's intimate in terms of learning and knowing what they're doing, how they go about it, what they don't know. It's actually respecting the knowledge that they have, and them respecting your opinion about what they're doing."

Dealing with the distorting lens. Scrivner awardees developed methods to navigate interpersonal relationships, to recognize the distortions, but to diminish them in a way that allowed grantmakers to proceed without great fear that the relationships would entrap them or backfire. It was this dual capacity of accepting and moving past the distortions that enabled them to engage effectively. As Caroline Carpenter succinctly describes it, "In some ways, it was distancing, and in some ways, it was also being involved. It's a balance."

Robert Crane describes his philosophy: "I'm not afraid of having a relationship with the people that I support. I don't believe in unbiased relationships, that one actually has these arm's length relationships that make you objective. Underneath it all, we operate in a world of assumptions. What I like to do is constantly explore the assumptions that I'm using, that others are using, and to challenge them. And so I have no problem seeing myself as a partner to the people and the issues that we fund and I

don't want to be an objective observer on those issues. But I also don't want to determine what those needs are or what the issues are. I want that to come from the people doing the work."

Among the strategies that the Scrivner awardees reported using to diminish the effects of the distorting lens, were the following:

- **Checking back with motivating beliefs.** Awardees frequently talked about reflecting back to the core beliefs, values, or principles that they brought to philanthropy. Their motivating beliefs created what Joel Orosz calls an "interpersonal gyroscope"[23] in negotiating relationships with others in the context of grantmaking. Rebecca Adamson tells the story, soon after she started making grants, of having an acquaintance approach her and ask her how it felt to have so much power. Upon reflection, she told him that she now had access to resources, but that her power came from another source. Adamson drew upon the spiritual beliefs that motivated her work to deflate the power of money and its potential to distance herself from those important to her work.

- **Increasing self-knowledge.** Several Scrivner awardees talked about the importance of understanding themselves and what they brought to relationships with grantees and grantseekers as a strategy for mitigating the effects of the distorting lens. As one interviewee explained, "I came to understand more about what I brought to the table, and that every interaction was to some degree a projection." Psychotherapy and psychoanalysis were useful tools for this awardee to better understand himself and, with that knowledge, to negotiate interactions with others.

  Other interviewees had devised different strategies of gaining feedback to increase their self-knowledge. One created an intentional group among people outside philanthropy where the ground rule was that people needed to be straight with each other. Tom Layton created a fellowship that made unsolicited cash awards to individuals, but did not involve himself in the decisionmaking process. By setting up an awards process that placed him outside the decisionmaking loop, he was able to establish relationships with the recipients of these cash awards that were unusually free of the distorting filter, useful to his data gathering, and personally rewarding.

- **Making clear role distinctions.** For many Scrivner awardees, making a clear role distinction helped clear the air by distinguishing the role of grantmaker from that of grantee and grantseeker. For example, a theme among several of the interviewees' comments is that grantmakers should be generalists

and grantees the experts. As Robert Crane describes it, "If you're an expert in the field, you bring the biases and baggage of your approach or knowledge of that field to the work. While that isn't bad in and of itself, the confluence of that bias and control of the resources can become deadly."

A similar role definition that several interviewees invoked to balance the power distribution is that of program officer as learner. Tom Layton explains: "As a grantmaker, one has the privilege of being a full-time student. It's like being in an ongoing tutorial where extraordinarily smart, committed, and accomplished individuals will work with you, one on one. They know they have to help you understand what they are trying to achieve, no matter how dense or confused you may be. They know that if you don't understand, you can't be of help."

Rebecca Adamson makes the role distinction according to who's really doing "the work"; for her, this is key to staying in a position as a funder that can be helpful. "If you understand with a lot of humility that it's the nonprofits doing the work and not you and, at best, you can help, but they're really the ones on the front line, then you can ask what else you can do to add value to the work. Then, you keep yourself in a position to work together in a mutually helpful way."

- **Building trust.** Trust is central to relationships with grantees, a word and value used by nearly every interviewee to describe the goal of their relationships—central to their ability to be effective and creative. As Robert Crane describes it, "I've always tried to build a lot of trust with the people we support. Grantmaking is always complicated. You can't escape the power dynamic of grantmaking, the fact that you've got the money and that ultimately you're making the decision. You have to be honest about it. At the same time, I really work very hard to build open, honest relationships with the people I support. In return, I expect them to be honest about the needs they have, warts and all, because otherwise, I can't be as helpful to them as I really would like to be."

  Money itself can be a barrier to trust. As Roy W. Menninger points out, "Money, when used to buy and control relationships, ultimately demeans them, albeit unintentionally."[24] A number of interviewees talked about how the structure of grants can build or diminish trust in the grantor-grantee relationship. Several mirrored Ann Firth Murray's perspective that structuring grants as flexible core operating support is a direct expression of trust. "Flexible support," she emphasized, "demands that you trust and respect other people."

Role definitions matter: "As a grantmaker, one has the privilege of being a full-time student."

A theme of nearly all the interviewees' comments on trust in relationships with grantees is that to create those trusting relationships, grantmakers need to have the trust of their own organizations. They must be able to negotiate grantee relationships in which they can reflect and represent their own foundations without risk of being out on a limb precariously attached to the tree's trunk. Ed Nathan explains how trust emanates from within the foundation itself: "The question is: How do you create an environment where there can be some creativity? It seems to me that it starts with a sense of security, a sense of being appreciated, a sense that if something doesn't work out, it's okay. Being treated as a staff member in a foundation in a way that is respectful, hopefully, will permit you to work with other people in the same way. This is one of the keys to satisfactory relationships and permitting others to really be strengthened themselves. We're trying to help people reach their full capacity and if we're doing that, it's not as though we're saying something creative is going to happen, but at least we're creating an environment in which something creative can happen."

- **Transparency, or at least translucency**. Several interviewees stressed that an important aspect of building trustful relationships is to be open and candid about the foundation they represent. Craig McGarvey explains, "Part of the way in which we've tried to figure out how to build learning communities has meant opening the window to our work at the Foundation, saying 'here's what's honestly happening, here's how we're trying to honestly deal with it, here are the risks, here are the potential rewards, here's where we might be able to have some positive outcomes internally at the Foundation, and here's where we might not.' It's a matter of trying to figure out how far to go, how to be as candid as professionally possible with community colleagues."

An important aspect of interpersonal relationships for the Scrivner awardees is that many of them occur among very diverse groups that cross many traditional societal boundaries. And diverse groups provide many of the best learning opportunities for grantmakers. The next section on "crossing boundaries and mixing worlds" describes the aspects of creative work that derive from such unconventional relationships.

> To create trusting relationships with grantees, grantmakers need to have the trust of their own organizations.

Crossing Boundaries and Mixing Worlds

If interpersonal relationships are the taproots of creativity for many of the Scrivner awardees, a special and important aspect of interpersonal relationships occurs when crossing social, economic, disciplinary and other boundaries. Often this happens in group settings. Mary Mountcastle explains: "I think the creative process for foundations is thinking very intentionally about how you bring people together who cross all the fault lines of race and class; public, private, and nonprofit perspectives; groups that include grass roots voices, a policy point of view, and other kinds of technical expertise. There's a real magic in all those people coming together, learning from each other, and trying to move toward ways that they can all work together."

Like Mountcastle, many of the Scrivner awardees valued a diversity of opinions, approaches, and crossing boundaries to forge some kind of common path among them. Each described his or her work in ways that mixed different worlds. Craig McGarvey works with grantees who are primarily immigrants from Mexico and Central America in California's Central Valley. Caroline Carpenter forged a program from the combined knowledge she gleaned from rural sociologists and people living in economically devastated West Virginia towns. Ed Nathan regularly put together groups that included service providers, recipients of services, academics, and county administrators. They developed different methods and opportunities for people to work together who do not typically do so, for people to come out of their expert roles and ordinary walks of life to meet with others and find ways of moving ahead on their separate agendas by working together.

Dean Simonton, a social psychologist and historiographer at the University of California at Davis, has evidence that across time and geography, cultural diversity is a catalyst for creativity. He has compiled a vast database of historical information to correlate historical conditions and the incidence of creativity. His data, which include centuries of information in many cultures, have allowed him to test the potential contribution of many factors to creative output. He found that those historical locations and time periods that experienced high levels of creativity were notable for experiencing widespread mixing of cultures. Venice and Florence in the Renaissance, for example, were cultural centers and hubs of commerce whose active networks extended throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The mix of cultures and perspectives that these cities contained, Simonton believes, catalyzed creative breakthroughs in many domains.[25]

Not unlike a geographic area situated in the crosscurrents of different cultures, foundations can be magnets for innovative ideas, people, and information of all kinds. Scrivner awardees were able to use this quality of foundations as a meeting point for people, ideas, and approaches to benefit their work. For some, including Mary Mountcastle, mixing worlds and crossing boundaries was an aspect of their basic values and motivating

beliefs. For others, this was not so clearly articulated, but was embedded in the way they conducted their work. The late Paul Ylvisaker, who served for thirteen years as the Ford Foundation's director of public affairs, gave definition to this social role when he described foundations as, "the resilient margin of the industrial order, the most stretchable part of the world's status quo."[26]

Many of the Scrivner awardees perceived their roles as working in the margins, able to see and understand different aspects of the social order, be critical of it, and use their position in the margins to push at the *status quo*. The self-defined position of many Scrivner awardees as "outsider" was useful to their capacity to be active listeners, to take in a great deal of information from a variety of perspectives, and to forge a strategy for change from them. Groups representing aspects of this diversity were an extremely important tool to accomplishing their work and were empowered by many of the Scrivener awardees to play a major role in their programs.

Groups are an important vehicle for crossing boundaries and mixing worlds in philanthropic work. Forming, convening, and working through diverse groups characterizes many of the creative contributions of the Scrivner awardees. For example:

- **Groups to develop programs.** Robert Crane describes how he came to designing a new philanthropic program on felon re-enfranchisement with a collaborative, group process at the center of the design process: "In the course of meeting with a lot of people working in this area," he explains, "I found they were all talking about the work they do and at one point I said to myself, and then to a small group of people that had come to me, 'You're all talking about this and occasionally you get together and even talk with each other, but you're all in your little silos, doing what you do in this area. I want to challenge you to think about it together, not to tell you what you should think, but to think strategically together and ask yourselves, if someone were willing to put forward a significant chunk of money to help you move this agenda forward, how would you use the strengths that each of you have in some joint way to make this issue more powerful?'"

- **Groups to guide programs.** Jack Litzenberg uses group meetings as a formative evaluation process, helping grantees learn from each other and build a field around their collective knowledge. "I think that it's people learning by doing and then being able to talk to each other about the learning that is the deepest learning you can have," he explains. "Some of these people who run the projects we fund feel like they're the only ones doing it. I think it's important to feel like there are others in your place experiencing the same thing." In addition to social support,

Litzenberg sees these meetings where information is shared as critical to building the knowledge around which a field is built. "Eventually," he explains, "you want to get to the point where you know what a good project is and what doesn't work, and you want to approach that without destroying people. This happens when they have the chance talk amongst each other. All of a sudden somebody learns without being singled out, 'Wait a minute, that's what I'm doing, and it doesn't sound quite right.' I think it's a very good way of trying to provide technical assistance without embarrassing people. I think that that's the way people learn."

- **Groups where process and product coalesce.** Caroline Carpenter designed a process in which very small community groups in rural West Virginia would come together, decide upon a community project they wanted to accomplish, learn how to write a grant application, and then serve as review teams for each others' proposals. The process was structured so that each group had the potential to win funds, rather than as a zero-sum game or competition among them. The process itself that pulled people in communities together and provided a group experience in problem solving was, in Carpenter's estimation, as important as the actual grants and, in some cases, initiated ongoing efforts to tackle other community building projects.

     Tom Layton summarizes the role that groups can play in philanthropic work:

> Much can be accomplished simply by getting the right people together under the right circumstances and with the potential of supporting what develops. Foundations have an extraordinary convening power. We can talk to pretty much anybody in the world, and we can bring people together. We can even pay to bring people together if need be. This power to convene is one of the great strengths of foundations.

> The grantmaking field is full of creativity and ingenuity (if not feedback). We're in a field where almost everybody wants to be a leader and no one wants to be a follower. But it's often difficult for any individual to stand out because much of the most successful work requires highly collaborative activity and significantly more resources than any individual funder is able to commit. Many of the most effective grantmakers are not just organizing their own grantees' projects but are simultaneously seeking the input and collaboration of their colleagues in other

The power to convene is one of the great strengths of foundations.

foundations. The best and most effective projects and organizations usually have many midwives. As a consequence, a good organizer knows that it's important to share the credit and ownership.

The foundations of creativity described so far—a motivating belief, a particular set of cognitive skills, interpersonal competence, and the special case of interpersonal competence of crossing boundaries and mixing worlds—are supplemented by staying power. The Scrivner awardees show the capacity to learn, reflect, revise, and continue with programs and ideas over time. This last foundation of grantmaking creativity, discussed next, highlights the longer course of action that is essential to many grantmaking programs.

A Sense of Journey

A common perception of foundations is that they are fickle, moving rapidly from one hot topic to another. This does not apply to the Scrivner awardees, however. Tom Layton describes the time dimension of his work at the Gerbode Foundation: "Much of our grantmaking is based on timing and opportunity. Some work pays off in the short term, but much of it takes a sustained effort. We have been working on some fields for twenty years and more. Continuity of effort is critical."

Jack Litzenberg believes that it takes a minimum of eight years to develop a program for replication, and Ed Nathan, like Layton, refers to a twenty-year time frame to develop an effective approach. Stanley Litow continues to work with the worldwide team at IBM as they refine and expand Reinventing Education nearly a decade after the program began.

From the perspective that creative works take long periods of time, Poincaré's formulation of the creative process as moving through a linear, four-step process is a vast simplification of a far messier, less sequential, and more repetitive experience. "Any model of the stages in the creative process is only a rough approximation of a process that is actually quite fluid and can follow any number of courses," Daniel Goleman says. "A writer or artist may have an ongoing series of illuminations that carry him through the entire work, from beginning to end," he continues. "Or an inventor may find that most of her working time is spent in preparation and execution—the ninety-nine percent of genius that, as Edison told us, is perspiration, not inspiration. More often over the course of a complex creation, like writing a screenplay or designing a building, the act of creation is a long series of acts, with multiple and cascading preparations, frustrations, incubations, illuminations, and translations into action."[27]

The Scrivner awardees conveyed a sense of journey about their work, that grantmaking was a process in which they made grants, learned from them, incorporated their learning and continued on, moving toward the

goals for which they were aiming. Jack Litzenberg, for example, aimed toward alleviating poverty through ownership; Mary Mountcastle focused on the process of bringing multiple community perspectives together to solve problems associated with poverty; and Rebecca Adamson aimed to jump start economic development through approaches consonant with Native cultures. This section highlights the longer journey and some of the critical ingredients that the Scrivner awardees identified as sustaining them in it. Among these are obtaining and using feedback, staying connected to the end product of philanthropic work, and avoiding isolation.

Evaluation and iterative learning. Daniel Goleman refers to good managers as having a "passion for feedback,"[28] and the Scrivner awardees are no exception to this. For several, good feedback was identified as key to their ability to develop and refine programs over long periods of time. It allowed for the iterative learning essential to social experimentation. As Stanley Litow explained the process, "You put something together, you get it out, you give people the opportunity to use it, and you develop it in an iterative kind of way. I think that's how you produce real change."

"You don't spend your time charting out a nine-year plan or a ten-year plan," according to Litow. "You have to get on the ground and get your feet wet, roll up your sleeves and figure out how you solve these problems. I think a key to achieving creativity is having that flexibility and recognizing that sometimes the best idea doesn't come from the place you thought it was going to come from. Part of being a good grantmaker is having that stance where you do focus and you do make a commitment, but you also don't become overly crazed about it, overly rigid, or too attached to your own ideas. You have to be open to new ideas and often better ideas."

Jack Litzenberg has articulated the process described by Litow into what he calls the "research and development" or R&D model of grantmaking. He first used this in experimenting with different strategies to achieve ownership in low-income communities, such as creating revolving loan funds that make small loans to low-income entrepreneurs, establishing or strengthening formal community-based financial institutions such as banks and credit unions, and financing cooperatively owned businesses working in impoverished communities.

Litzenberg likes to use a process of making "cluster grants," a series of investments using slightly different techniques to achieve similar ends. Bringing grantees together as often as four times a year was critical to Litzenberg's and his grantees' ability to know which methods and strategies were effective. Slowly, through an eight-year journey, they continued to refine knowledge about these economic interventions, document what was working and what was not working, and create policies reflecting this knowledge. Through these steps Litzenberg and his collaborators helped build a field of finance in low-income communities and created a number of enduring organizations that continue this work. "Without the R&D type of approach where we're always trying to dig deeper or go further,

Good feedback is key to grantmakers' ability to develop and refine programs over long periods of time.

and then sharing that learning, I think I would've been bored with philanthropy a long time ago," Litzenberg explains. He is now applying the methodology he developed in the micro-enterprise loan program to a new interest—developing sectoral strategies for regional job creation.

Evaluation and the iterative learning process were also central to Craig McGarvey's grantmaking in California's Central Valley, which is aimed at increasing civic participation among the one in four Californians who are foreign born. The kernel of the idea came from the intersection between three organizations that wanted to work together on issues of immigration, citizenship, and civic participation in the Central Valley and McGarvey's worldview of change resulting from sustained group learning. Evaluation has been critical to this grantmaking program, now in its fourth iteration. McGarvey explains: "We called ourselves a learning collaborative from the start, and we tried to learn from each other. But it wasn't until we built an evaluation into the process, with the help of Irvine's new evaluation department, that we really started walking the walk." Central to the success of this evaluation was its use as a tool for mutual learning. "For me," he continues, "the important question is who's doing the learning, who's participating in the design and implementation of the evaluation. If one can do that collectively, in partnership with the community, then it's a very powerful tool."

Significantly, this strong desire for feedback and reliance on evaluation data of all kinds, formal and informal, continued through the completion of many of the Scrivner awardees' programs. In keeping with their roles as outsiders and critics, even to their own work, they kept a very engaged but slightly dispassionate eye on their projects from inception through completion. Several were quite frank about where they felt their program had failed to achieve what they had hoped for and had ideas about what they would do differently next time.

Staying close to people and programs. For many of the Scrivner awardees, staying close to the target population and recipients of their grantmaking efforts was an important ingredient in sustaining their work over the longer haul. As described earlier, contact and communication with people on the ground and close to the work was important to developing ideas and approaches for projects. It was equally important through the implementation phase to keep a good flow of ideas and feedback coming in. In some instances, this contact was the reward that merited the hard work and rejuvenated the effort.

Jack Litzenberg explains how this contact sustains him in this work: "It's talking to the people who benefit from the interventions. It's going to cooperative home care workers and talking to the home care aides. It's going to the Lakota tribe and sitting down with a woman who's known worldwide for her star quilts. It's going to Tucson, Arizona, and seeing a previously homeless man that I knew when he was homeless now working and in an apartment."

Tom Layton points out that in philanthropy, "The demands on our time often force us into a bit of a rut. We have to be careful not to spend all our time with the same individuals and the same organizations, no matter how wonderful they may be. David Packard of Hewlett Packard, in his book *The HP Way,* used to talk about 'management by walking around.' I think that applies to philanthropy as well. I believe in grantmaking by walking around. Of course, I don't mean walking around and passing out money. But I don't mean simply making site visits. I mean being available to new people and new ideas; I mean recognizing where you're comfortable and going there; I mean challenging your own assumptions and stereotypes. We must not allow our learning and imagination to be held hostage by our own comfortable lives.

Layton elaborates: "For the most part, we associate with people in and around the nonprofit sector exclusively, many of whom are brilliant people. But of course, the nonprofit sector is only one small part of the world. Much of the learning that informs my work comes from people who may share our concerns but are not part of the nonprofit world, don't think about grants at all, aren't all that interested in what the Gerbode Foundation does, and whose ideas are not filtered through the lens of fundraising. For example, I've gotten more ideas involving sustainable agriculture at farmers' markets, just wandering around and talking with farmers, than anyplace else."

Rebecca Adamson concurs: "Through our grantmaking we're actually able at times to get a real good close-up look at the difference we're making. We actually see things happen. We see people's lives change and I think that is the recharge we get, and I think not a lot of other foundations necessarily say that. Most of the folks that I know [in philanthropy] talk about feeling still one step removed and disconnected, and they become disconnected from what they feel is the real work."

Avoiding isolation. Adamson's observation that many grantmakers feel a step removed from the "real work" points to potential barriers to creativity that can come from the failure to stay connected to people close to the end products of philanthropic work. A constellation of problems related to isolation serve as barriers to creativity. These are isolation from oneself, from grantseekers, and from people who are doing work in various sectors of the field that is the focus of one's philanthropic work.

Stanley Litow refers to the importance of being actively engaged. "Using yourself is part of the change process," he calls it. "You may hit a wall, but you don't burn out [when you are involved in this personal way]." Awardees talked about the importance of reflection, checking back with their basic motivating beliefs, and continuing to develop their knowledge of themselves to guide their journeys and keep their motivational wellsprings alive and in the center of their work.

Jack Litzenberg talks about some of the problems in foundations that create isolation when grantmakers become "gatekeepers, not distributors." These problems include not being able to extricate oneself from an

Many people in philanthropy talk about feeling one step removed and disconnected from what they feel is the real work.

inundation of paperwork, being sucked into the routine of foundation bureaucracies where meetings and red-tape details can keep grantmakers tied to their offices, and feeling intimidated by grantseekers.

Michael Hooker explains how the sheer volume of requests can isolate program officers from grantseekers and result in less than straightforward responses: "Program officers are constantly under political siege; of necessity they have become defensive in their dealings with grantees."[29] Hooker describes the impact of this phenomenon: "The program officer's inclination to be straightforward is diminished by a kind of bunker mentality inherent in being on the firing line."[30]

Howard Gardner points to support, both cognitive and affective, as critical ingredients for sustaining any creative endeavor,[31] and Roy W. Menninger, M.D., identifies some of the fallout that can occur when that support is not forthcoming and results in isolation or serious imbalance in relationships with grantees. Dr. Menninger characterizes grantmakers as a group as very conscientious and deeply internally motivated to undertake the work that they have chosen.

People like this sometimes have a recurring problem of over identifying with the grantee. Some reach the point where the conflicting pressures can no longer be handled and they over-invest in the opposite direction, at which point they seem curt, cold, and withdrawn. A high risk of burnout afflicts conscientious people who are so strongly motivated to provide service to others. They have a much higher need for appreciation and fulfillment than they are often willing to recognize," he explains. . . . Sooner or later the backlash comes. The personal needs that have been pushed to the backburners become painfully obvious. When the system is radically out of balance, the inevitable result is psychological bankruptcy or burnout.[32]

Several of the Scrivner awardees observed that many people are motivated to participate in social change processes because of something they don't like. Yet for grantmaking to be sustained and sustaining, there needs to be a positive energy for creating change, and it's staying connected to work on the ground and to one's own motivating beliefs that keep a positive ballast. As Rebecca Adamson explains, "A positive energy has to be in there for the long haul because it's harder and takes longer to build than it does to take apart. For me, it comes simply from a belief in people, a hope, and a concern about that future that seems to be ever present." Similarly, Mary Mountcastle speaks about her consistent optimism, a natural tendency to see any glass as half full rather than half empty, as an important aspect of her personality that helps to sustain hers in the journey.

In addition to characteristics that people bring with them to their work in philanthropy, or develop in it, it is clear that the foundation context within which grantmakers work is critical to their ability to maintain a sense of journey. Many boards and staff do have a short attention span, and grantmakers are not given the room to develop and refine a grantmaking strategy or program over the many years it takes to achieve change, or at least sustained progress. In the next and concluding section

For grantmaking to be sustained and sustaining, there needs to be a positive energy for creating change. Staying connected to work on the ground and to one's own motivating beliefs are the fuel.

of this paper, I abstract from the qualities of creative grantmakers to suggest how grantmakers and foundations can use this information to improve grantmaking.

Promoting Creative Grantmaking

There has been little concerted attention in the foundation world to understand, recognize, and promote creativity within philanthropy.

My quest in undertaking this project was personal. After a dozen years of grantmaking, I felt the need to step back and reflect upon what I was doing. I wanted to consider where my work fit into the larger picture of philanthropy, how my grantmaking style compared to others in the field, and how I could keep engaged, growing, and fresh in my work. Creativity as a lens through which to view grantmaking offered the possibility for framing that reflection, which was confirmed by the survey of California grantmakers finding that the most important reason people wanted to participate in professional development was to increase creativity in their grantmaking.

My personal goals for this project were more than achieved. I learned an extraordinary amount from the fifteen interviews I conducted and was inspired by the thoughtfulness and passion of the interviewees. The exercise of framing the foundations of creativity in grantmaking was a rewarding way to compact and synthesize what I had learned. Although my own position has changed so that I am no longer doing direct grantmaking, I have spoken to groups of grantmakers several times using this framework, and the dimensions of creative grantmaking have been useful at opening productive discussion about the experience of grantmaking.

Beyond my own learning, this exploration suggests lessons for the field more broadly—lessons about how grantmakers and their institutions can promote creativity. So far, however, philanthropy has benefited far less from the work of the Scrivner awardees than have the fields of endeavor toward which their grantmaking has been directed. In spite of the award, there has been little concerted attention in the foundation world to understand, recognize, and promote creativity within philanthropy.

Some of the lessons for grantmaking and the practices of foundations that flow from looking at creative grantmaking take this lack of attention into account. They include:

1. *As a field, we need to find more ways of sharing experiences that get to the heart of the grantmaking enterprise.*

Most of the internal conversation in foundations is focused on getting the work done, rather than on professional development and peer learning. Despite the best of intentions, it is difficult within foundations to achieve

the distance and reflection to get to the heart of the business of grantmaking and the ways in which individuals connect with their own work. This kind of learning rarely comes through philanthropic service organizations, either. Learning formats are typically for sharing successes and learning about current issues, not the process of grantmaking that includes how we make mistakes, are challenged by grantees, or become stuck or stagnant. There are few opportunities for grantmakers to talk openly and candidly about their inner experience of the work and their careers in philanthropy. Foundations' own reports and publications are for the most part public relations vehicles that do not promote this kind of dialogue.

Contributing to the lack of candid sharing is the pervasive sense of individualism that marks philanthropy. As Ed Skloot of the Surdna Foundation explains, "There is the single-minded individualism of philanthropy, going all the way back to Rockefeller and Carnegie. Funders just don't see their work systematically, as part of a whole."[33] Related to the sense of individualism, there seems to be an implicit philosophy that grantmakers should find their own way in the field, guided by the unique qualities of their own foundations. At the extreme, a few foundations do not participate in professional development opportunities within philanthropy because they are going to "do it better." For them, affiliation with others in the field can only tarnish the true gold of their unique capacity to create social change.

At a minimum, the culture of individualism dampens the effects that creativity could have. Howard Gardner distinguishes two kinds of creativity. One is what he calls "paradigm-shifting." This type of creativity fundamentally changes the basic assumptions and approaches in a field. The second type, "forward-incrementalism," influences and improves a field through relatively modest shifts in approaches.[34] Creativity in philanthropy can be seen as having dual potential impacts, one on the fields that grantmaking focuses on and the other on philanthropy itself. In the fields in which foundations fund, foundations have contributed to creativity that is often forward-incremental and sometimes even paradigm-shifting in nature. But the creativity described in this paper is neither forward-incremental nor paradigm-shifting for philanthropy itself because what is done by one grantmaker in one foundation rarely influences what is done either by other grantmakers in the same organization or grantmakers in other foundations.

The culture of individualism may also cause grantmakers to overlook the fact that we are more essentially similar in our work than different. We each make grants for a purpose, bring a set of social and personal goals to the job, use grants to achieve these ends, and interact in some way with grantseekers and grantees. Although there is and should be variation in the way foundations accomplish their work, a great deal of similarity in the grantmaking process binds the field. It is these similarities that enable many foundations and philanthropic service organizations to provide

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courses in "Grantmaking 101" to people entering the profession. It could be these same similarities that lead to deeper and better professional development programming for more experienced grantmakers.

Experienced grantmakers need to find more ways of candidly discussing the inner experiences of working in philanthropy, both sharing strategies and approaches to grantmaking and the personal reflections and experiences that are such a vital part of the work. To focus on skills and content knowledge alone without addressing personal experiences and relationships is, as the Scrivner recipients teach us, to miss a major part of the story of grantmaking. Grantmaking relies very heavily upon one's own connection to an inner life and relationships with others. In this way, grantmaking is similar in some fundamental ways to teaching, social work, or many other professions, especially in the human services, and we probably have much to learn from them. Grantmaking is also unique, especially in its isolation, lack of feedback, and absence of a bottom line. Personal development is important in every field, but especially critical in philanthropy where one must individually develop sensors and feedback mechanisms that are not only missing in the structure of the work, but are strongly countered in relationships with grantees and grantseekers.

Organizational politics, competition among foundations, and a tendency toward personal self-aggrandizement—even in a culture of modesty—all work against the kinds of self-disclosure that provide the best learning opportunities. Philanthropy as a field needs to experiment with different methods of achieving the kinds of personal and work-focused disclosure that foster the capacity for grantmakers to learn from each other and to diminish the individualism and isolation so pervasive in philanthropy. For these reasons, new forums and opportunities for learning are needed. There are some promising approaches. "Heart of Philanthropy" workshops that have been developed by the Fetzer Institute provide a rare opportunity for reflection, for connecting "soul and role," and for addressing areas where the personal and professional may not be in congruence. Northern California Grantmakers is exploring approaches to using peer networks and learning circles to deepen the work of experienced grantmakers.

By and large, however, these experiences are few and far between, underdeveloped and often undervalued. A national working group could explore what resources exist and those resources that need to be developed to promote and enhance mid-career professional knowledge in philanthropy, and it could provide a vehicle for creating more opportunities for reflection and professional development among experienced grantmakers.

> 2. *We need to get beyond treating grantmaking as an accidental career, temporary tour of duty, and exercise in humility by recognizing the skills necessary to be creative and effective in the field and by valuing the kinds of professional development that promote them.*

Philanthropy needs to experiment with methods that enable grantmakers to learn from each other and diminish the individualism and isolation so pervasive in the field.

There is a tendency in philanthropy to minimize the skills required to accomplish good grantmaking. This was captured in Odendahl, Boris, and Daniels' work on careers in philanthropy in the comments of a foundation CEO, who said that he reflected the wisdom of the field in saying that the only quality needed to make grants is good common sense.[35] Without overlooking the importance of good common sense, the conversation should not stop there. The Scrivner awardees demonstrate that creative grantmaking requires a full range of skills, abilities, and personal qualities that go far beyond grantmaking basics and probably far beyond what the foundation CEO quoted by Odendahl, et al., meant by "good common sense." These include an extensive set of cognitive skills, self-knowledge, and interpersonal skills that allow for connection to people despite substantial barriers to authenticity. Effective grantmaking also requires the ability to get feedback in a field of distorting mirrors, an inner conviction that supplies motivation, an ability to engage with a wide variety of people and approaches, and the capacity to tap into core beliefs over an extended period of time.

Lack of attention to grantmaking skills past the basics could stem from the fact that people generally enter philanthropy from established careers where they have already forged identities in the fields in which they are hired to make grants. (In California, just under three-quarters of grantmakers report joining the field mid-career or even late-career.) With the majority of grantmakers coming from the nonprofit sector, joining philanthropy could be perceived as a relatively simple step of moving from one side of the grant-negotiating table to the other while the grantmakers' identities stay with the professions from which they came into philanthropy. The implication of this assumption is that grantmakers do not identify strongly with the roles of grantmaker and do not value learning experiences focused on grantmaking skills.

Another reason for minimizing the skills of grantmaking—and, thus, the skill development needs of grantmakers—is that there is a widespread assumption that grantmakers come into philanthropy for a limited period of time, and then go back to the fields from which they came. Some high-profile foundations have formal time limits to encourage this. Others have an implicit understanding that grantmakers' work is time-limited and they will at some point be turned back into the fields from which they came, much as crops are rotated to avoid soil depletion. The implication: If a career only lasts five or seven years, how important is it to really focus on the skill sets beyond the basics required for effective philanthropy?

The data do not support either of these implications. Based on their responses to the 2001 survey of California grantmakers, those individuals clearly see themselves first and foremost as grantmakers. Among the 355 grantmakers who responded to the question of whether or not they identified primarily as a grantmaker, 79 percent replied in the affirmative; 59 percent also identified as a professional in the field in which they make grants. There is indeed an interesting dual professional identity for many

> There is a widespread assumption that grantmakers enter philanthropy for a limited time, but this is not supported by the data on foundation careers.

grantmakers, but over three-quarters view themselves as professionals in philanthropy. And, contrary to the image of grantmaking as a short-term career, the survey indicated that over four-fifths of respondents believe that grantmaking is a long-term career choice. The survey also indicated a strong desire for grantmakers to participate in additional learning experiences, especially those that are experiential and peer-led.

Another explanation for a lack of emphasis on skills and training beyond the entry point in philanthropy is the humility factor. Philanthropy is a field in which humility is a constantly touted value, signaled, for example, by the characterization of foundations as agile servants in one of the seminal books in the field.[36] In such an environment, talking about the skills of grantmaking, or, worse yet, suggesting that good grantmakers are highly skilled, may be perceived as humility's opposite. Somewhere between the humility we tout and the arrogance we deplore, there is an important set of skills and abilities that should help clarify where we might realistically place ourselves.

Related to the humility factor is the aversion in philanthropy to "the professionalization of the field," a phrase that sends shivers through a room of grantmakers. We prefer to call ourselves generalists. There is good reason for this, as several of the Scrivner awardees pointed out: When a grantmaker sees herself as a professional in the field in which she is funding the work of other people, the confluence of expertise and money endangers new ideas. A grantmaker who believes she has the answers to social problems stands very little chance of being able to listen and to work flexibly with grantseekers and grantees to create a climate within which creativity can occur.

Yet, the aversion to seeing grantmakers as professionals should not also, through fuzzy reasoning, result in minimizing the skills that go into high quality grantmaking. The field should actively support the professional development of grantmakers and finding ways to talk honestly about what works, and what does not work.

> 3. *We need to understand more about learning trajectories over long grantmaking careers.*

Grantmakers report that they join the field for the long-term, and there is evidence suggesting that many grantmaking careers are of substantial duration. Even with the doubling of foundations in the past decade that has brought many people into philanthropy for the first time, 58 percent of respondents to the California survey had been in the field for six or more years and nearly one-fifth had been in the field over fifteen years.

While grantmakers report they make long-term career commitments to philanthropy, they also believe that their mobility in it is quite limited. Only 23 percent of California grantmakers indicated they thought they would advance to a higher position in philanthropy. This may change. In what was once a fairly static field, the growth in the number and size of

foundations that is projected to continue over the next two decades will presumably open more positions, allowing for some career growth, with grantmakers moving between and among foundations. However, most grantmakers still believe they are in the field for the long-term and that they will not advance in it. The challenge for the field is to discover how to support career development in place.

The stories of the Scrivner award-winners illuminate areas in which continued learning and education for grantmakers would be of value; professional development for experienced and entering grantmakers, based on the qualities of creativity, should be designed to:

- Help clarify the motivating beliefs that grantmakers bring to their work in philanthropy in order to more effectively use these beliefs that tap into people's energy, passion, and commitment, both as a source of ongoing motivation and energy and as a template for mid-course assessment, reflection, and course correction.

- Help achieve mastery of the cognitive skills required for effective grantmaking; assess strengths and weaknesses in framing issues and programs; help grantmakers learn how to balance academic kinds of information with those learned on the ground and in the field.

- Continue to develop different types of interpersonal competencies required for effective grantmaking; find ways to reflect upon and improve different facets of interpersonal competencies and provide opportunities to improve self-knowledge and understanding.

- Expand grantmakers' comfort zones and skills to aid work in diverse worlds, crossing social, cultural, racial, class, and other boundaries, and to learn how to effectively bring diverse groups together.

- Provide opportunities for grantmakers to take breaks from their ongoing work, to reflect upon it, recharge, learn more, and come back to it with the cognitive and affective support that sustained, creative work entails.

    4. We need to understand more about occupational hazards.

Before starting this exploration into the professional development of grantmakers, I was fond of saying that arrogance was the major occupational hazard of philanthropy—that wielding dollars, even if someone else's, creates a strong though undeserved sense of personal power that can result, in many cases, in its abuse. Working on this project and listening to

The challenge for the field of philanthropy is to discover how to support career development in place.

the various interviewees has caused me to reframe my thinking about arrogance, to believe that it is probably a symptom, in many cases, of a more fundamental occupational hazard, which is isolation.

Feeling isolated was a strong theme in the focus groups held with experienced grantmakers in northern California, but it was not altogether clear where this feeling came from. Grantmakers who work in small offices alone or with few staff face a particular kind of isolation, but grantmakers who work in large foundations with many colleagues also talked about feeling isolated. Interviews with the Scrivner awardees shed light on the issue of isolation through their emphasis on the importance of being connected to one's own motivating beliefs, to grantseekers and grantees, and to the work that is being accomplished.

Yet, there are many barriers in philanthropy to being able to forge honest and trusting relationships and obtaining real and useful feedback. Even in the best of relationships between grantmakers and grant recipients there is still a structurally induced distance. Arrogance can result when these relationships do not provide enough of the cognitive and affective support that creativity researchers have identified as critical to sustaining work over the long haul.

Closely related to isolation is another occupational hazard—inundation. Grantmakers are often flooded with information, requests, data, and, in many cases, demands from inside foundations. Managing time was the challenge in grantmaking mentioned by most grantmakers in the survey of California grantmakers. The inability to get out from under these demands makes it difficult to forge the connections important for reducing isolation. Conversely, difficulty making rewarding connections can lead grantmakers to escape into the mounds of information and requests that can then become entrapping. It helps grantmakers—both novices and experienced professionals—for there to be more open recognition and discussion of these, and other, occupational hazards.

> 5. *Foundations need to pay more attention to organizational cultures and behaviors that foster high-quality, effective grantmaking.*

The Scrivner awardees emphasized how important their relationships to their own foundations were to their ability to accomplish their grantmaking programs. The two factors that most stood out were trust and flexibility. These grantmakers repeatedly stated that trust from their foundations was essential for establishing productive working relationships with grantees. When they were representing their foundations, they needed to be able to be clear about what they could do and what they could not do, and to communicate this to grantseekers directly. The worst situation they described was to be moving in one direction and have the foundation start to move in another. Flexibility enabled them to respond to what they were learning about how best to achieve the overall goals of their grantmaking programs.

Isolation is a fundamental occupational hazard.

Most (though not all) of the Scrivner awardees worked directly with their boards and were in positions from which they could directly create the trust and flexibility they needed. It may be more difficult to foster these qualities when there are additional administrative layers between the grantmaker and decisionmakers within foundations. Philanthropy needs to push further on the questions about how foundations can manage grantmaking staff to achieve accountability while providing the trust and flexibility that interviews with the Scrivner awardees identified as being so important to their work.

> 6. *This framework for thinking about creative grantmakers can inform the process of hiring and supervising grantmakers.*

There is often a question about what to look for in hiring grantmakers and at what point in a person's career development it makes most sense to start working in philanthropy—at mid-career, before, or after. All of the Scrivner awardees had had substantial career experience prior to the grantmaking work for which their creativity was recognized. Theoretically, all of the qualities of creative grantmakers—a motivational belief, cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, boundary-crossing skills, and a sense of journey—can be developed while working in philanthropy. Practically, some of these qualities are harder than others to develop in the position of grantmaker. A motivating belief, for example, is a very basic ingredient for effective grantmaking and it is difficult to imagine how a grantmaker could become much more than a routine processor of grants without this source of internal motivation if it had not developed prior to joining philanthropy. Probably most difficult to develop while working in philanthropy, because of the structural problem of getting honest feedback, is the set of interpersonal competencies so critical to the work.

High-quality supervision of grantmakers is difficult to accomplish, often because many of the essential transactions and relationships that underlie good grantmaking are not measurable or even visible to other staff within foundations or to trustees. There is an interesting contradiction in the supervision of grantmakers: They are often highly supervised and monitored on the bureaucratic aspects of their work, such as write-ups, reports to the board, and paper trails, yet, in their work with grantseekers—for example, in fielding and generating requests for grants, saying yes or no, and working with grantees over time—they exercise a great deal of autonomy and this work is essentially invisible to their organizations. It is difficult, yet important, for supervision to get to some of these "hidden" areas of competence that are difficult to articulate, see, measure, and evaluate. It is in these less visible and tangible aspects of the work of grantmaking that grantmakers experience the vital, connected, and creative aspects of their work that make them effective.

Philanthropy needs to push further on ways to manage grantmakers to achieve accountability, while providing the trust and flexibility important to creative work.

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