



CHARLES STEWART
MOTT FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS



Building a New South Africa
Through Community Philanthropy
and Community Development



This is one in a series of booklets published by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The Mott Foundation, based in Flint, Michigan, U.S.A., began working in South Africa in 1988. Its focus is on strengthening the nonprofit sector to respond to pressing social needs. Since then, the Foundation has made more than 200 grants in South Africa totaling almost \$23.5 million (R153 million). The Mott Foundation operates a local office in Johannesburg.

Revised August 2000



This booklet is meant to suggest
the benefits to be found
in increasing philanthropy
in communities and
considering community
foundations as one
possible vehicle
for managing
that process.

A strong civil society from people who work together



INTRODUCTION

A strong civil society is built upon, and draws its strength from, people who work together for the betterment of that society. One expression of this concept of people helping people for the common good can be found at the local level in “community philanthropy” — the act of individual citizens contributing money and goods, or volunteering their time and skills, to promote the well-being of others and the betterment of the community in which they live. This spirit of generosity is practised by people of all backgrounds and by those of all economic means.

Community philanthropy has long existed in various forms in South Africa. Sometimes it is expressed in spontaneous and informal ways such as neighbour helping neighbour during a time of need. In other cases, it is expressed in formal, organised ways such as participation in communal self-help organisations like stockvels and burial societies or the establishment of local charitable foundations and corporate social investment programmes. These community philanthropy practises contribute to social cohesion within communities, illustrate how working together on a collective basis can accomplish more than acting alone, and can build trust between divided communities.

As South Africa experiences significant political, economic and social change, community philanthropy can play an important role in addressing development needs at the local level. In urban and rural communities alike, financial and human resources from local residents, businesses and organisations can be utilised to improve socio-economic conditions and contribute to long-term sustainable development.

It is within this context that a new type of local organisation is taking root in South Africa. Called a community foundation, this organisation links community philanthropy with community development. It builds on indigenous practises of charitable giving and connects these resources to development needs at the local level. It acts as a conduit, collecting and redistributing gifts and grants from a wide range of sources, in order to uplift and empower local communities.

Community foundations exist, or are under development, in many countries around the world. The concept started in the United States more than 80 years ago and quickly spread to Canada. Today, the United States boasts more than 500 community foundations and Canada more than 80. The idea spread to the United Kingdom in the mid-1980s, where now there are some 50 community foundations. There are at least 18 other countries around the world where community foundations are being established or are under consideration.

This booklet has been written for people who are interested in learning about community

ety draws its strength for its betterment.

foundations and their role in building community philanthropy and facilitating community development in South Africa. The text explains what community foundations are and the benefits they provide. It examines the stages involved in starting a community foundation and the various activities new foundations must undertake. The document also explores how community foundations raise money and outlines the characteristics of successful foundations. The booklet closes with a list of contacts for further information.



WHAT IS A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

A community foundation is an independent, philanthropic organisation (part of the nonprofit, non-governmental sector) dedicated to addressing the critical needs and improving the quality of life in a specific geographic area. This mission is put into practise through five distinct but interrelated functions that a community foundation performs in service to its community:

- **GRANTMAKING.** A community foundation makes grants to address a wide variety of local needs in the community it serves. Since the foundation takes a holistic view of local development issues, its grantmaking programme can cover areas such as health and human services, education, the environment, economic development, and arts and culture. These priorities are established by monitoring local conditions, analysing gaps in services and funding, and proactively responding to changing needs. Advisory committees and review panels of local citizens often are used to inform and enhance the grantmaking process.

Grants are awarded to a wide range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) in the local community to carry out projects, provide services and cover operational costs. In addition to funding, a community foundation helps to build the organisational capacity of NGOs and CBOs by providing technical support services, publicising their work to donors and serving as a bridge to policymakers.

- **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT.** A community foundation mobilises, attracts, pools and manages financial resources for the current and long-term benefit of the community. It solicits and accepts gifts from a wide range of local sources including individuals, corporations, foundations, government agencies and other organisations.

A community foundation's primary aim is to build, over time, a permanent base of charitable assets to serve the community into the future. As a result, the foundation places a priority on raising endowment funds.

- **FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP.** A community foundation acts as a guardian of donated funds, investing and overseeing their safekeeping. The foundation follows sound investment principles, and often uses outside financial institutions such as banks, brokers and investment managers to manage the invested funds.
- **DONOR SERVICE.** A community foundation works closely with donors, providing flexible, cost-effective services tailored to their interests and giving capacity. Donors can give an unrestricted contribution, which can be used by the community foundation for any community need, or set up funds that are restricted to a particular purpose or organisation they wish to help. Donations can take many forms, including cash, securities, property and in-kind services.
- **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP.** As a community foundation matures, it can serve as a convener and catalyst in the community. The foundation can coordinate with other forums, stimulate public-private partnerships, and bring worthy local projects to the attention of national and international grantmakers.

Taken together, these five functions make a community foundation unique and set it apart from all other types of foundations and nonprofit organisations active in South Africa.

A community foundation reflects the dynamics, needs and conditions of the community it serves. It also is rooted in the philanthropic traditions, history and legal framework of the community in which it is located. As a result, a community foundation in one community likely will differ, in general terms, in its structure and operations from a community foundation in another location. Variations can include, for example, grantmaking priorities, fundraising methods and types of donor services.



WHY ARE COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS IMPORTANT IN SOUTH AFRICA?

Strong, vibrant communities are one of the basic building blocks of stable, well-functioning societies. In building a new South Africa, there are a number of challenges affecting local communities that community foundations can help address. These include:

A community foundation reflects
and conditions of

- ***BUILDING BRIDGES IN DIVIDED COMMUNITIES.*** Extreme geographic separation and economic stratification among residents exists in virtually all communities in South Africa. Bridging these divides will require engaging visionary leaders from all facets of community life. A community foundation can bring these leaders together to establish effective communication channels, identify shared values and expectations, craft ways of working together, and build trust across racial, political and economic divisions.
- ***MEETING MASSIVE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS.*** Addressing the development needs of South Africa will require concerted action at both the national and local levels and will necessitate involvement of government, business and nonprofit development organisations. A community foundation can help focus attention on local development needs, leverage new resources and encourage new alliances among key community actors. In addition, a community foundation can be a mechanism to consult with, and involve, poor and marginalised citizens in addressing local needs.
- ***ASSISTING WITH GROWING DEMANDS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT.*** With the creation of nine provinces and more than 800 new local authorities, much of the responsibility for the delivery of services has shifted from central government to the provincial and local levels. A community foundation can assist local government in dealing with these new responsibilities and pressures by helping identify emerging and changing needs in the community and by testing innovative and cost-effective ways to deliver services.
- ***SUSTAINING THE NONPROFIT SECTOR.*** Many NGOs and CBOs are threatened by several trends. One is a financial crisis as traditional sources of funding, primarily from international donors, have declined or shifted to other priorities. Another is a less than favourable legal and tax environment, which limits the ability of nonprofits to raise funds from the public. A third is the loss of skilled staff to the public and private sectors. A community foundation can help strengthen the financial and human capacity of local NGOs and CBOs, and assist them in sustaining current programmes and developing new ones.

the dynamics, needs,
the community it serves.

- **BUILDING ON EXISTING PRACTISES OF GIVING AND VOLUNTEERING.** Even though many communities in South Africa face major development challenges, they all have existing strengths and assets that can be built upon and expanded. One of these strengths is the tradition of giving and volunteering by local residents. A community foundation can recognise, nurture and encourage these existing practises and help stimulate the development of new forms of giving – of time, money and skills to address local problems.

As a locally owned, locally controlled and locally financed entity, a community foundation can nurture local leadership and promote self-reliance, provide a forum for a variety of stakeholders to come to the table and discuss issues and options, and develop cross-sector partnerships among citizens, community groups, businesses, government, the media and other local players. Overall, through its unique blend of active, flexible, creative and participatory philanthropy, a community foundation can enhance the community's ability to take on new challenges as they arise.



WHAT IS ENDOWMENT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A community foundation endowment is a sum of money that is permanently invested to produce a continuing stream of income. The endowment is made up of many different contributions. These funds are jointly invested to produce a maximum rate of return, consistent with a prudent investment strategy. The income is used to make grants for community improvement activities in the local area, and to cover the administrative expenses of the community foundation.

With current needs in South Africa so great, many ask: Why build an endowment for the future when current needs are so pressing?

A community foundation addresses both current and long-term community needs. If a community's needs are immediate and critical — for example, providing accessible and potable water — a community foundation will seek funds and collaborate with other groups to address those urgent problems right away.

However, a community foundation also constantly looks to the future, anticipating new community needs and developing strategies to address those emerging problems before they become overwhelming and urgent. In this regard, endowed funds enable the community foundation to serve as a “savings account” for the community.

Endowment also provides several significant benefits to the community foundation itself and to donors. Among these:

- it strengthens the long-term stability and sustainability of the community foundation;
- it ensures that the community foundation has resources of its own to contribute to current and long-term projects addressing community concerns;
- it increases organisational independence and stature when decisions, some of which may be difficult or controversial, are being made by the board and staff of the community foundation;
- it provides a margin of security so that the community foundation can ride out periodic economic downturns;

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Endowed funds enable the community foundation to serve as a “savings account” for the community.

Starting a community foundation is a challenge commitment and contacts

- it enhances the credibility of the community foundation as an entity that can exercise fiscal management and good judgment;
- it enables the community foundation to plan with greater certainty, perhaps making multiyear grants for long-term projects; and
- it provides the opportunity for a donor's gift to last forever, and for the donor's concern for the community to be recognised in perpetuity.



WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN ORGANISING A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

Starting a community foundation is a challenging activity that takes time, energy, commitment and contacts. The process involves several stages, from generating interest to launching the foundation, which typically take place over a 12- to 15-month period.

1. GENERATING INTEREST. The inspiration to start a community foundation usually comes from one or more residents who are interested in the future of their community. They share the idea with other important civic leaders whose acceptance and commitment are important, and recruit a steering committee to take the planning to the next phase. The steering committee is made up of a cross-section of key local leaders who are knowledgeable about the community, some of whom can offer fundraising, legal, financial and media skills, and others who offer other contacts and linkages within the community.

2. DETERMINING FEASIBILITY. The steering committee collects and analyses information about the local area to answer three basic questions:

- Is there the necessary interest in and support for the establishment of a community foundation in the area?
- Is there sufficient capacity for cooperation among local government, business and NGOs?
- Is it possible to gather adequate financial, human and organisational resources necessary to initiate a community foundation in the area?

To address these questions, the steering committee looks for evidence that several key factors exist in the community. These include:

- an economic infrastructure with growth potential, including the presence of businesses in good economic condition and an active, pro-community attitude;
- an array of active NGOs and CBOs;
- functioning governing structures (e.g., local government, traditional leaders, etc.) that provide support services to the local area;
- a population of at least 100,000 residents;
- unmet local needs that a community foundation could address;
- evidence of cooperation among local authorities, businesses and NGOs; and
- visionary community leaders.

ing activity that takes time, energy, cts.

The steering committee conducts a consultative process to brief a broad range of community organisations and leaders, often with the help of outside professionals. Through this process, the committee identifies potential donors, especially those willing to provide start-up operating support, initial grantmaking funds and possibly endowment. The steering committee continues to learn about community foundations, perhaps visiting an established community foundation.

3. DECIDING TO MOVE AHEAD. If the research shows that a majority of success factors are in place, then the steering committee makes a decision to start initial organising activities.

These include:

- deciding on the formal boundaries of the geographic area to be served;
- selecting a name;
- selecting the method of incorporating and registering;
- determining the method of appointing or selecting a board of directors (e.g., forming a Nominating/Appointing Committee);
- undertaking, in collaboration with other community organisations, an appraisal of community needs to determine fields of priority in which grants from the community foundation might be most effective;
- preparing and circulating a visionary document;
- securing initial pledges from founding donors and sponsors;
- targeting messages, through meetings and materials, toward leading lawyers, bankers, business leaders, local government officials, NGOs and other local organisations to encourage their support and involvement; and
- planning the first public announcement.

4. FORMALLY ORGANISING. The steering committee implements the agreed-upon procedure to form the first board. Then the new board files legal papers to incorporate and register the community foundation. The initial board meets and assigns tasks and appoints committees of the board.

5. LAUNCHING THE NEW ORGANISATION. A comprehensive, multiyear strategic plan with components on marketing, resource development, investments, grantmaking and general management is developed and initiated. An office is opened and staff is hired. A public launch event is held.



WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT IN A NEW COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

Two aspects of setting up a new community foundation — governance and management — are particularly important and need special attention in the development stage. The board must include a variety of people from the community who are respected, credible and influential, and are concerned

about the well-being of the community. The board will need members with diverse skills, including fundraising, managerial, legal, financial and media expertise. Board members can be formal leaders who hold recognised positions or grassroots leaders. They can be people with financial wealth as well as those who have experiential wealth.

The size of the board typically ranges from 10 to 25 members. Board members serve staggered, renewable terms, which generally range from two to five years, so there are always some established members who know the history and some newcomers who contribute new perspectives and fresh enthusiasm. Board members serve without payment.

The board's functions are to set policies and priorities that guide the development of the foundation; ensure effective planning; hire and evaluate staff; raise money; build long-term donor support; and oversee budget, investment and distribution decisions.

The day-to-day operations of running a foundation's office are handled by paid, preferably full-time, professional staff who are familiar with economic and social welfare conditions of the area as well as with how the community makes decisions. Staff members carry out the directives of the board, keep abreast of issues affecting the community and work to secure donors.

All procedures used by a community foundation must be open and transparent. Conflict-of-interest policies are developed early to guide board members and staff concerning all aspects of the foundation's operations. A community foundation is audited every year and publishes an annual report with financial and grants information.



WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES OF A NEW COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

A newly established community foundation must engage in five fundamental activities in order to achieve its mission:

1. **GRANTMAKING.** A new community foundation must develop a grantmaking programme that is responsive, flexible and creative. It must also be accessible, transparent and fair. Steps in developing a grantmaking plan usually include:

- setting guiding principles, strategic priorities and funding policies;
- developing funding guidelines and an application procedure;
- determining grant assessment and administrative procedures;
- developing grant award policies and procedures;
- undertaking grant monitoring and evaluation activities; and
- publicising effective grants.

Board members can be people
as well as those who have experi

In its initial stages, a community foundation usually has limited resources to make grants. As a result, most grants are targeted toward highly visible local projects in order to raise awareness in the community. In addition, a community foundation will follow a collaborative leadership role by seeking out new ventures or innovative responses to local priorities. It can also play a value-added role by providing advice to grantseekers and convening meetings for community representatives to discuss key issues.

2. RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT. A new community foundation must raise money and in-kind support to cover its initial administrative expenses, start making grants and build its endowment funds. Resource development involves a series of marketing, cultivation and solicitation activities intended to attract gifts. Having a fundraising plan is essential from the outset. Components of a typical fundraising plan include:

- setting financial targets;
- determining types of funds to be sought;
- identifying prospective donors and amounts to be requested from each;
- outlining methods for approaching and recognising donors;
- establishing a time line; and
- identifying roles and responsibilities of board and staff members in raising funds.

Community foundations often raise money, especially endowment funds, through matched giving. A single donor, such as a corporation or a wealthy individual or a larger foundation, commits to giving a certain amount of money if the community foundation can raise the same amount, or more, from the community. The donor, for example, may promise to give two rands for every one raised from other sources up to a predetermined total commitment.

3. INVESTMENTS. A new community foundation must develop a sound investment policy for the funds placed in its care. Investments are guided by a set of criteria approved by the board, often with help provided by outside professionals. Sample investment criteria include:

- maintaining the capital value and purchasing power of the foundation's funds;
- achieving maximum total return on investments, consistent with a prudent investment strategy, while taking acceptable levels of risk; and
- providing appropriate cash flow to support the activities of the foundation.

4. MARKETING. A new community foundation must inform and excite the community about its work. A marketing plan helps guide the foundation in this process. A typical marketing plan involves:

- developing clear, simple messages that reflect the mission of the foundation;

with financial wealth
essential wealth.

- determining key audiences such as potential donors, nonprofit organisations, local authorities, etc.;
- identifying the concerns and needs of those audiences by talking with representatives of each group;
- developing target messages to respond to those concerns or needs; and
- developing appropriate vehicles for communicating the messages.

Initial marketing materials often include a general introductory pamphlet, a logo and a donation form. At a later stage, other materials may be developed such as a periodic newsletter, annual report or specialised leaflets for different target audiences. Special events and press conferences also are a good way to tell the community foundation story.

5. GENERAL MANAGEMENT. Managing the internal operations of the community foundation is an often invisible but critically important function. Activities include:

- monitoring and complying with all legal requirements;
- running the office;
- developing and monitoring an operating budget;
- setting up administrative systems for tracking donor contributions, administering grants, monitoring assets and reporting financial information; and
- providing ongoing training for staff and board.



WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

Anyone of any means can be a donor to a community foundation. The list of persons is as diverse as the wealthy businessperson who gives millions of rands to the child who gives only coins from his or her tiki box. The list of organisations that can give is equally diverse, ranging from big corporations to small local clubs. Government and non-governmental bodies can be donors. Even other foundations can give to community foundations. Every gift, large or small, is important.

Donors are attracted to a community foundation because of its knowledge of the community, effective leadership, sound financial management, accountability to the community and, when available, the tax benefits it can offer.

- **INDIVIDUALS.** Individuals often are motivated to give to a community foundation by a keen sense of community responsibility and a desire to give back to the area where they and their family have lived and worked. Some give because they have amassed a degree of wealth or property holdings but have no one to leave it to at the time of their death or they want to give to a worthy cause in addition to providing for family members. Others give to create a legacy for themselves or in memory of someone else, and still others may give because of favourable tax laws.

Individual donors can be approached directly or through a local financial advisor such as a lawyer or accountant. Individuals can contribute cash, stocks and bonds, real estate, jewelry, works of art, furniture, insurance policies, patents, oil and mineral rights, or other assets to a community foundation. Individuals who give to a community foundation can make contributions from their current income or leave their accumulated assets to a community as a bequest.

- **COMPANIES.** Businesses, large or small, multinational or local, may give to a community foundation because of the foundation's wealth of information about community needs and local groups. The foundation also can provide professional staff support at a lower cost than a company managing its own corporate-giving programme in-house.

Companies can give funds or in-kind contributions, provide sponsorship for special events, establish an endowment fund to support a long-term project, or encourage their employees to become active on the foundation's committees or board. Some businesses may contract with a community foundation to administer the company's local corporate social investment programme.

- **OTHER FOUNDATIONS.** Other foundations, especially those not located in the community, can learn from the community foundation's local knowledge and contacts and its ability to reach out to a broad cross-section of the community. In addition, a community foundation often is an effective local grantmaking partner and co-funder of community projects. Foundations may provide support to a community foundation for administrative costs, specific programmes of interest or its endowment.

- **GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.** Local authorities, which often are bound by cumbersome regulations and procedures and political pressures, may support a community foundation because they see the foundation as a faster and more effective way to get certain things done. A community foundation will not replace local government but can complement it, especially since it can leverage private sector contributions and experiment with new forms of service delivery. Local governments often provide funding for specific projects and, on occasion, give to build endowment funds.

A community foundation must be both intentional and entrepreneurial in marketing, cultivating and soliciting gifts. In addition to following a resource development plan with its various steps and activities, a community foundation also must build relationships with potential contributors. Getting to know donors — individuals, families, companies, etc. — understanding what is important to them and being responsive to their concerns are critical to successful fundraising for a community foundation.

Several options are available to those making contributions, in terms of the kind of funds they may set up. The most common are:

- **UNRESTRICTED GIFTS** in which the donor allows the community foundation the discretion to decide how the gift should best be used.
- **FIELD-OF-INTEREST GIFTS** in which the donor identifies a broadly defined field of interest such as the arts or the environment, or a type of population such as youth or the disabled. Such a fund also can be dedicated to benefit a specific neighbourhood within the community foundation's service area or a small town or rural area nearby. The community foundation typically decides which organisations or programmes will receive grants from the fund, taking into account the donor's interests.

- **DONOR-ADVISED GIFTS** in which the donor plays an active role in making recommendations about which charitable organisations receive grants made from the fund. The donor can make suggestions on a regular basis and can change the recommendations. The final decision is made by the community foundation board.
- **DESIGNATED GIFTS**, which are dedicated to specific organisations or purposes for as long as the donor desires. One type of designated fund is an agency endowment where an NGO can have its own endowment fund within the community foundation. Another is a scholarship fund, which can provide financial help for students of a certain age, income bracket and level of academic achievement.

Another valuable way that donors can be involved in their local community foundation is to give non-monetary forms of support. Someone with expertise about the community in a particular area such as health care or child nutrition might provide the board and staff with information. Other agencies might open their facilities to the community foundation at no charge to convene community meetings. Business owners may contribute building materials, food, office supplies and other goods, which the community foundation then passes along to the appropriate NGOs in the area, which in turn distribute them as needed.



WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

Community foundations that have credibility and are making important contributions to their communities share several characteristics:

- They have vision. They see how existing human and material assets of the community can be leveraged to greater benefit, but they also look into the future to help the community identify future trends, anticipate problems and position itself to address new challenges effectively.
- They conduct grantmaking that is relevant to the needs of the community. The foundation's grantmaking programme is an expression of its commitment to the community and is its most public contribution.
- They have leadership and citizen involvement. The board of directors is strong, trustworthy and representative of the community. Board members and other community leaders willingly commit time, energy, money and in-kind goods to turn vision into reality. Over time, more and more inspired citizens and local institutions participate in giving and in doing good for the benefit of the entire community. This involvement can unite the community toward addressing community needs.
- They carry out strategic planning. First there is a planning stage through which the mission, governance, structure and operations of the community philanthropy organisation are determined. Next, a business plan is formulated in which specific management, fundraising, investment, grantmaking, donor services and public relations goals are set, delegated and implemented according to timelines and criteria for gauging successful completion.

- They secure sufficient start-up resources. This usually consists of cash and in-kind resources for planning and initial operation, and can involve a matching grant to stimulate contributions for grantmaking and endowment-building. Start-up funds can come from a number of sources — individuals, businesses and other foundations — and should be secured to cover costs for the first three to five years of operations.
- They build long-term resources. Successful community foundations build stable sources of income to support current and future needs. These predictable revenue streams, which typically come from endowment, fees for services or other sources, enable the community foundation to take a long-term, strategic approach to building partnerships and addressing problems.
- They network to learn what other community foundations are doing and to promote and build momentum for the broader concept of community philanthropy.
- They are patient. Building relationships, securing funds, developing credibility and the host of other tasks to be accomplished do not occur overnight. These activities take time to develop and mature.



A CLOSING WORD

A community foundation is a powerful vehicle for strengthening civic participation and empowering communities. Through a unique combination of functions — grantmaking, resource development, financial stewardship, donor services and community leadership — a community foundation works to improve the quality of life and build a better future for the area it serves. With its hallmark characteristics of optimism, flexibility, responsiveness and innovation, a community foundation brings together the diverse aspects of a community in a special way that inspires cooperation, strengthens bonds and leverages new resources.



WHERE CAN YOU FIND MORE INFORMATION?

The Southern African Grantmakers Association (SAGA) is a nonprofit membership association of organisations and individuals involved in the funding of development in South Africa. In an effort to promote increased and new forms of giving and grantmaking, SAGA has established a programme to assist community leaders in starting community foundations. Under the programme, SAGA provides general information to any community requesting it and works intensively with a limited number of communities that show evidence of potential success. SAGA's full range of services include data gathering and feasibility study activities, resource materials, training and technical assistance, and networking with others.

SAGA is one of several support centres around the world that provide services to emerging and established community foundations. The contact information for SAGA, and a handful of other support centres, is listed on the following page.

A community foundation works to **improve** the quality of life and build a **better future...**

SOUTH AFRICA

MAX LEGODI, PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

Community Foundations Pilot Programme
Southern African Grantmakers Association
2nd Floor, Braamfontein Centre
23 Jorissen Street
P.O. Box 31667
Braamfontein 2017
SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: (011) 403-1610
Fax: (011) 403-1689
E-mail: saga@wn.apc.org

UNITED STATES

SUZANNE L. FEURT, MANAGING DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Council on Foundations
1828 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
U.S.A.
Tel: 09-1-202-466-6512
Fax: 09-1-202-785-3926
E-mail: simoc@cof.org

DONNELL MERSEREAU, DIRECTOR

Community Foundations
Council of Michigan Foundations
1 South Harbor Avenue, Suite 3
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417
U.S.A.
Tel: 09-1-616-842-7080
Fax: 09-1-616-842-1760
E-mail: dmersereau@cmif.org

BELGIUM

SILVIA PIPERNO BEER, ASSISTANT COORDINATOR

Community Philanthropy Initiative
European Foundation Centre
51 Rue de la Concorde
B-1050 Brussels
BELGIUM
Tel: 09-32-2-512-8938
Fax: 09-32-2-512-3265
E-mail: suzanne@efc.be

UNITED KINGDOM

GAYNOR HUMPHREYS, DIRECTOR

Community Foundation Network
(formerly ACTAF)
2 Plough Yard
Shoreditch High Street
London EC2A 3LP
ENGLAND
Tel: 09-44-20-7422-8611
Fax: 09-44-20-7422-8616
E-mail: network@communityfoundations.org.uk

CANADA

MONICA PATTEN, PRESIDENT/CEO

Community Foundations of Canada
75 Albert Street, Suite 301
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7
CANADA
Tel: 09-1-613-236-2664
Fax: 09-1-613-236-1621
E-mail: mpatten@community-fdn.ca

CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION
1200 Mott Foundation Building
Flint, MI 48502-1852
U.S.A.

TELEPHONE 09-1-810-238-5651
FAX 09-1-810-766-1753

PUBLICATIONS HOT LINE
In the U.S. and Canada: 800-645-1766
Elsewhere: 09-1-414-273-9643

WEB SITE <http://www.mott.org>

SOUTH AFRICA OFFICE
1st Floor, Braamfontein Centre
P.O. Box 32088
Braamfontein 2017
SOUTH AFRICA

TELEPHONE (011) 403 6934
FAX (011) 403 7566

PRODUCTION CREDITS

TEXT Suzanne L. Feurt, European Foundation Centre

(on assignment from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation), Brussels, Belgium

EDITING ASSISTANCE Christa Kuljian and Moira Mbelu, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Flint, Michigan, U.S.A.

PROJECT COORDINATION Val Osowski, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Flint, Michigan, U.S.A.

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND PRODUCTION The Image Group, Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A.

PRINTING The McKay Press, Inc., Midland, Michigan, U.S.A.

Additional copies of this publication can be obtained without charge by contacting the Southern African Grantmakers Association or the Mott Foundation's Johannesburg office by phone, fax or letter.



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