

**Creating Change through Community Organizing:
Funding Strategies That Develop Local Leadership and
Build Collective Power**

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Minnesota Council on Foundations

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(Follows Intro and stories from Minnesota Organizer) (40 minutes)

I. Introduction: 3 minutes

1. Talking points: Thanks to Eric and other funders. Eric great to work with. And intro about self health care example of my family, social work and activist and how came to organizing. Head of fundraising for synagogue, also on social justice committee. Last week CCC did presidential forum emphasis: Community values frame: Big deal, real people, real issues, in it together. Community values matter and are powerful.

2. Worked at Veatch, Funded Mark Ritchie's work at IATP who you know is now secretary of state. I also funded Organizing Apprenticeship Project and Isiah to name just a few. Major goal of our work there was not just to make good grants but to Expanding the number of funders to see organizing as a significant part of their philanthropic portfolio. Previous job was with the North Star Fund, sister fund to Headwaters. There I worked with donors and activist and organizers ails activists and donors working together in funding engaging ordinary people to neighborhood problem solving and broader movement building.

This morning we are going to look at:

- how organizing is different from other community change strategies,
- what components are in it,
- how to evaluate it,
- And in small groups discuss how it crosses different boxes and how you might get involved and involve other funders.

II. Setting the Context for Organizing -Different Approaches to addressing Community Problems (15 minutes)

Who saw the movie Network? He tells people go your window, open it up, put your head out and yell “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore.” He didn’t know it, but he could have been a great organizing leader if he didn’t let frustration take him over. Organizing is a strategy for moving from frustration and paralysis to developing campaign for short and long term solutions to community and national problems.

A great book I’ve read recently is entitled Tools for Radical Democracy by Joan Minieri and Paul Getsos: its essential message: The power of participation. People want to make a difference, but often feel alone and unable to have an impact.

Let’s first distinguish organizing from other ways of making an impact on a community problem. There are generally four different ways to approach community problems each with its own mission, strategies, and impact: social service, advocacy, community development and organizing.

Social Service

Mission: To meet immediate direct needs.

- What they do: Provide goods such as food, clothing, or services such as job training, health care or counseling or both.
- Sample strategy: Developing self help skills, among service recipients, or community members, provide case management in order to meet needs holistically, guiding people through applications for benefits and other complex systems with One-to one advocacy.
- Impact: Primarily on individuals. Usually short term, although long terms effects are possible.
- Effect on Power structures: No real change in power structures.
- How they refer to constituents: Clients or consumers.

Advocacy

Mission: To protect or obtain rights, goods, or services, usually for specific interest groups.

- What they do: Craft or react to legislation. Address elected officials and policy makers.
- Sample Strategies: Participating in issue based coalitions, educating the public, giving public testimony, lobbying elected officials, collaborating with researchers and lawyers.
- Impact: On interest groups. Usually medium to long term effects.
- Effect on power structures: Power structures change moderately due to changes in laws and policies.
- How they refer to constituents: Constituents.

Community Development

Mission: To build physical infrastructure

- What they do: Finance or construct housing, business, parks, or other community resources.
- Sample strategies: Engaging in community planning, analyzing economic impact and training constituents to acquire skills for planning business development and property management.
- Impact: On individuals and communities, Immediate to long-term effects. Sustaining impact is tied to financial resources.
- Effect on power structures: Power structures change moderately, usually by building community participation.
- How they refer to constituents: “The community.”

Organizing

Mission: To build power to create change.

- What they do: Recruit, train, and mobilize a large base of members directly affected by the organization's issues
- Sample strategies: Creating membership structures in which constituents are organizational decision makers, developing strategic campaigns, engaging in direct actions, such as demonstrations, directly holding public and corporate officials accountable for their actions, and forming alliances to build power.
- Impact: On individuals, their communities, and often others with similar concerns. Medium to long term effects.
- Effect on power structures: Power structures change as power shifts to community members.
- How they refer to constituents: "Leaders or members"

Community organizing institutions sometimes engage service advocacy and development. Can you think of examples?

III. Let's focus on some of the main concepts of community organizing (15 minutes)

Here are 10 to keep in mind-by no means an exhaustive list.

1. **Power.** The ability to make something happen. The way to build power is by getting people to understand the source of their social or political problems, then devise solutions, strategize, take on leadership and move to action through campaigns that win concrete changes

2. **Relationship building.** One on ones to find out a person's passions and to create a strong connection that is sustainable over time. Public relationships. Community power building organizations exist to build members collective power not their personal social status. The result is a network of public relationships.
3. **Leadership development.** Must build a base of members. More people means more power. Guide members to see the roots of the problems. Get members to understand what organizing is. Get people involved. Develop that base of members to be leaders. Leaders learn by doing, for example recruiting new members, giving testimony, running meetings, developing strategies, making decisions, building the organization. Move members to action. Action fosters commitment. Builds strong organizations.
4. **Political education.** Political education is a form of training about issues as well as about social movements and history that you both formally in workshop sessions and informally in daily or regular contact with members and leaders. Through political education, you communicate the analysis **or** worldview of the organization.
5. **Strategy.** In a campaign, strategy is the way or ways that a community power building organization uses its power to win what it wants. Effective

organizations are strategic in everything they do. Always refining their power analysis.

6. **Mobilization.** The essential process of moving people to action.
7. **Action.** A public showing of an organization's power, such as a march, lobbying meeting in the state capital, accountability session with elected officials. Actions take place during campaigns. In addition a person can take action as an individual to support a campaign or organization, such as signing a membership card or writing a letter to an elected representative.
Move power holders with numbers,
8. **Winning.** Organizing focuses on winning. It results in positive, concrete change in people's lives. Run winnable campaigns. Implement Strategic Campaigns: campaigns deliver wins.
9. **Movement building.** In movement building you use your resources to engage in broader social justice activities that are not solely connected to winnable campaigns or the self interest of community members.
10. **Evaluation.** Evaluation is the process of assessing your actions and determining what worked, what didn't, and what you would do differently next time. Evaluation takes place after every substantive event, from a day of recruitment to a phone conversation with an ally. Frequent evaluation hones and builds the skills, standards and excellence of everyone

in the organization. Sometimes organizers refer to an evaluation that follows a specific activity as “debriefing.”

IV. How to assess a proposal and evaluate a group? Key here to evaluating impact of group later. (20 min)

I have a three sieve approach. **Program** (issue), **Strategy**, and **Organizational ability**.

1. What to look for in the PROGRAM AREA?

Review against the mission, goals and values of your foundation.

- Is there a strategic opportunity for work in this area?
- Does the work in this area have the ability, if it succeeds, to affect the big picture that is to have a structural impact?
- Is the work elite dominated or led by the grassroots? Who actually participates and is affected by this work?
- Is there a movement? Embryonic? Strong? Waning? Who is involved? In what way are people involved?
- Is the movement one that promotes and is characterized by a broader "justice" agenda or is it limited to one issue? (In other words if this movement succeeds, where will we be at the end of the day?)

2. Next is STRATEGY. Is the proposed work activity the right way to go in that particular area right now and why?

What does the group hope to achieve and how does it intend to get there? This should be reviewed against the political landscape of the particular issue area, looking to see how well the proposed strategy takes advantage of the features of that landscape such as:

- openings in the centers of power,
- public perception,
- strength of the movement,
- local and national policy debates, etc.

Some of these activities/strategies might include:

- base building/community organizing
- campaigns(media or boycotts)
- lobbying
- training, direct action, technical assistance
- research\data\information
- popular education
- development of alternative institutions

3. The ORGANIZATION itself is the third sieve---does it have the capacity to carry out its strategy?

1. Does the group have a justice orientation? Does it see its work in the larger context of trying to reach racial, economic, environmental and political justice? How do you know that?
2. Does its governance structure reflect this justice orientation? Is there elected leadership? What is the composition of its board and staff? Is there meaningful participation by its members?
3. Does the organization have the financial \organizational capacity to achieve what it proposes? How does its current budget measure against the actual income\expense statements from the previous two years? Where does the group's income come from? How large, capable experienced is the staff? Are there internal problems with staff and/or board?

4. What is the group's relationship to other organizations working in the same area? Does it work well with others? Is it among the best organization to carry out the proposed work?

Finally return to how group evaluates its own work and the principles of organizing we laid out earlier. Also keep in mind:

- good grantmaking principles
- general support
- multiple year grant
- reasonable time line for measuring outcomes
- site visits, going to action
- art and science of evaluation

V. (Optional) Small group discussion: (20 minutes)

How does organizing cross traditional boxes within philanthropy? Either “interests or issues,” or across guidelines in philanthropy.

How do you get boards/allocation committees to embrace organizing as a strategy? What types of resistance or questions do you run into and how can you effectively address them?

VI: Evaluation of workshop: (10 minutes)

- What came up in small group?
- Anything we didn't cover? Wish we had?
- Suggestions for future workshops?

Thank you and goodbye. Feel free to follow up with me individually.