

## Call for Papers and Grant Requests, Themed Issue on Exiting with Impact

In recent years, much has been written about foundations that are spending down (investing all their resources in a limited time frame). Organizations like the Center for Effective Philanthropy, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), and the Foundation Center -- which provide high quality resources on foundation effectiveness and operations -- are beginning to offer insights and resources on exits and spend downs. At the same time, perpetual foundations are regularly exiting from initiatives, lines of work, or from particular geographies. For both limited-life and perpetual foundations when exiting an area of work, there are many challenges about how to exit while leaving in place strong organizations, networks, and fields that can continue to get results.

For this themed issue, we seek articles that rigorously address how a philanthropic funder can make a constructive or even impactful exit.

Through the support of our sponsoring foundations, we are able to offer small research grants to help defray the direct costs of research on these challenges. We will award four grants of \$2,500 each to support direct research expenses such as travel expenses or small student stipends.

### Additional Background

While there is a growing body of publications on limited life foundations, the vast majority is from foundations offering their own perspectives<sup>1</sup> on their experience. Rigorous, comparative research across foundations that takes into account multiple perspectives (e.g. grantees, funder partners) could add enormous value to the discussion of exits and spend-downs while providing guidance for those who are preparing an exit.

For purposes of this issue, we are focusing on planned exits, which may include exiting:

- specific initiatives or lines of work,
- a particular geography,
- strategies,
- a field of work, and/or
- a complete spend-down where a grantmaking organization spends itself out of existence.

*(Note: While funders also end relationships with specific grants or grantees, that is not the focus of this themed issue.)*

We are particularly interested in papers that explore one or more of the following questions in three broad areas:

### 1. When and why do funders exit?

#### ***a. What factors inform the decision by donors, whether institutional or individual, to adopt time-limited grantmaking strategies or structures?***

In what circumstances are time-limited strategies a more or less appropriate approach? How do donors deciding whether to adopt a time-limited model weigh the tradeoffs in impact, opportunity costs, and resource needs?

#### ***b. Are there particular topics or issues that are most often addressed through time-limited grantmaking?***

What is the scale and scope of time-limited investments? Do limited-life foundations address different issues than perpetual foundations with time-limited strategies or initiatives? What is the up-side potential in the context of a spenddown or exit?

Are there ways in which a limited-time approach can accelerate impact?

### 2. What do we know about how funders can exit well, with the most impact?

#### ***a. How can funders collaborate in a spend-down or exit situation?***

How do you collaborate with other funders but not “dump” your grantees on them as you exit the work? How can field-building be coordinated and anchored over time?

#### ***b. How do foundations manage their own human resources when they are spending down?***

What are appropriate human resources practices (hiring, developing, retaining valued staff) in a spend-down context? How do you effectively communicate with and support staff? How are foundations utilizing consultants in a spenddown context?

What are the specific challenges and benefits of heavy use of consultants vs staff in accomplishing exits and spend downs?

<sup>1</sup>In July 2015, the Foundation Center completed a literature review for the Atlantic Philanthropies and the Center for Strategic Philanthropy and Civil Society at Duke University's Sanford School for Public Policy.

**c. How can exiting foundations live up to the mandate to “do no harm” to their grantees or the field? What may be unintended consequences of spend-down or exit situations?**

Are specific kinds of non-profit capacity building most important/relevant as a foundation ends their support? What constitutes best practices in saying goodbye to grantees so as to minimize harm? What do we know about when and in what form (e.g., endowments, capacity building grant, etc.) to provide final grants to current grantees? Do spend-downs invest equitably in small, medium and large grants? How do spend-down and exit investments compare to the broader field in terms of investing across diverse racial, ethnic, rural and urban, dimensions? What has been learned about planning for an exit from the start of an initiative or strategy?

**3. What are the roles of evaluation and knowledge capture in an exit context?**

**a. When and how should the final impact of limited-life foundation be assessed?**

What are the plans of currently identified spend-down foundations with regard to final impact assessments? What are they assessing and how are they going about it? What is an appropriate amount of time to wait to conduct a final impact assessment after a foundation closes its doors or an initiative comes to a close?

**b. How can we extend and preserve the knowledge from foundations or bodies of work that are ending?**

Are there common themes or lessons across foundations that have exited a field/ initiative or that have spent down, that can provide insight/guidance to others? How does the context of a limited-life foundation impact the purposes and practices of evaluation? How are exiting foundations planning for the resources and intellectual property to be saved, shared, etc. How are the currently identified limited-life foundations planning to archive their work – where, how, who will have access, etc.?

Submit abstracts to [submissions@foundationreview.org](mailto:submissions@foundationreview.org) by February 29, 2016. If a full paper is invited, it will be due June 15, 2016 for consideration for publication in March 2017.

**Abstracts are solicited in four categories:**

- **Results.** Papers in this category generally report on findings from evaluations of foundation-funded work. Papers should include a description of the theory of change (logic model, program theory), a description of the grant-making strategy, the evaluation methodology, the results, and discussion. The discussion should focus on what has been learned both about the programmatic content and about grantmaking and other foundation roles (convening, etc.).
- **Tools.** Papers in this category should describe tools useful for foundation staff or boards. By “tool” we mean a systematic, replicable method intended for a specific purpose. For example, a protocol to assess community readiness and standardized facilitation methods would be considered tools. The actual tool should be included in the article where practical. The paper should describe the rationale for the tool, how it was developed, and available evidence of its usefulness.
- **Sector.** Papers in this category address issues that confront the philanthropic sector as whole, such as diversity, accountability, etc. These are typically empirically based; literature reviews are also considered.
- **Reflective Practice.** The reflective practice articles rely on the knowledge and experience of the authors, rather than on formal evaluation methods or designs. In these cases, it is because of their perspective about broader issues, rather than specific initiatives, that the article is valuable.

**Research Support**

To apply for a research support grant, please answer the following questions in no more than one page total. Only 501(c)(3) organizations are eligible for these grants, and your abstract must be accepted in order to be eligible for a grant. Review will be a two-step process and whether or not a grant is requested will not be considered as part of the abstract review.

1. What is the amount you are requesting? (Up to \$2,500)
2. How will the funding be used?
3. What will be the impact on the research of receiving funding? How will the research and paper be completed without the funding?
4. How does this project relate to your overall research agenda and / or mission?
5. Please provide the organization name and proposer contact information.

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