



Sustainability and Continuity after Philanthropy: Insights from a US Study Tour

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After five years of activity and to further develop implementation plans for the “building professional infrastructure” phase of the foundation’s strategy, Jo Cohen and Eli Hurvitz embarked on a study tour in the US (3-6 April, 2017) in order to meet colleagues from foundations, and to participate in the bi-annual conference of the Center for Effective Philanthropy in Boston. The national conference brought together 400 directors and professionals of foundations throughout the US.

Among others, we met with: William Foster (Bridgespan Group), Barbara Kibbe (S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation), Linda Baker (Packard Foundation), Lori Grange (Hewlett Foundation), and Chris Oechsli and Ben Kerman (Atlantic Philanthropies).

Main insights

1. With non-endowed foundations that aim to quickly make an impact, there is a unique attendance to the future – that is, after the foundation sunsets. Because these are foundations that address current social problems and devote great efforts to them, such foundations engage in high-profile and take highly-active roles. As a result, the hardship associated with exit from the scene is particularly complicated.
2. Accordingly, this should be planned for and be part of the foundation’s strategy. A picture of the future must be simply and clearly defined. The picture of the future includes the endpoint to the foundation’s activity and another point, five years after that. This stems from the understanding that the pace of improvement will trail off, and the question of what the foundation wants to leave behind should be predefined.
3. Continuity is created by different factors, separately or in combination with them: leaders of systems, organizations and institutions, ecosystems, professional networks, physical buildings, funding pipelines, shared knowledge and language, perceptions, beliefs and habits. Each foundation must decide what it wants to emphasize in its sustainability program.

4. Different people suggested different ways and various emphases for the Trump Foundation's sustainability but most of them pointed to two main methods:
 - a. Creation of intermediary expertise centers that will assume a leadership role and at times, a funding role, to assure the continuity of elements necessary to the strategy.
 - b. Foundation support that combines program operating support and development of organizational effectiveness for a number of anchor programs that are the key-drivers of the strategy.
5. The reason for this recommendation is that the focus of the Trump Foundation is narrow and it works with large, established organizations. Thus, the question is not one of the organizations' survival and sustainability but rather, the continuity of the programs within them and of the agenda of clinical teaching and excellence in mathematics and science studies.
6. In the march towards the exit juncture, an important point is the transfer of the center of gravity from the foundation to the field. When starting out, the foundation tends to lead and to take on leadership roles in the professional community. However, for the sake of sustainability, the responsibility for leadership and funding must be transferred to other parties.