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GOOD PRACTICE PAPER

IMPROVING ORGANISATIONAL EFECTIVENESS: WHAT ARE FUNDERS DOING BEYOND PROVIDING GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper asks the following questions:

- Why is general or programme support insufficient to properly address the organisational effectiveness of grantees?

- What have funders done to go beyond general or programme support?

- What are the benefits of providing additional support to grantees?

- What factors have enabled and constrained the provision of additional support to grantees?

In answering these questions, we first explored how organisational effectiveness is defined. We found two broad perspectives: one which tends to have a narrow focus on technical skills and formal structures that are characteristic of formal businesses in the North and another that covers a more holistic range of abilities required to function, effectively summarised as capabilities and part of being resilient.

We found that general or programme support to grantee organisations tends not to be used to improve the effectiveness of the grantee organisation, due to in part to senior managers prioritising salaries and programme management/expansion ahead of effectiveness or being reluctant to admit they might be experiencing organisational problems for fear of their funders deeming them less worthy of funding.

Funders have supported their grantees to improve their organisational effectiveness by creating an in-house position or team for organisational effectiveness or capacity building as a complement to the programme officer role; giving grants that are either partly or entirely focused on building a grantee's organisational capacity and directly investing in organisational effectiveness service providers among other initiatives.

The benefits of such support include: a better grantee–funder relationship, grantees more able to identify and respond to important organisational challenges, improvement in organisational practices and, although less evidence for this, improved capacity to contribute to key outcomes. However, we did also find evidence of organisational effectiveness interventions having mixed success.

Finally, factors that enabled and/or constrained work to improve grantee effectiveness included:

- A good funder–grantee relationship (which is a pre-condition as well as an outcome);

- The grantee, founder and third parties (such as consultants) reflecting and deciding on the roles and responsibilities they take in relation to the work and to each other;

- Funders and intermediaries positioning themselves as 'a guide by the side, not a sage on the stage';

- Providing grantees with a high degree of freedom in how they structured or made use of additional support; and

- Enabling grantees to find/identify their own community rather than funders doing this for them (where funders have encouraged grantees to work together in communities of practice).

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1. INTRODUCTION

Several foundations have established special funds to support grantees to improve their organisational effectiveness in addition to providing them with general operating or programme support. This paper asks the following questions:

- Why is general or programme support insufficient to properly address the organisational effectiveness of grantees?

- What have funders done to go beyond general or programme support?

- What are the benefits of providing additional support to grantees?

- What factors have enabled and constrained the provision of additional support to grantees?

We answered these questions through a review of documentation that includes evaluations and reviews of foundations' initiatives to improve organisational effectiveness and lessons learnt in relation to strengthening organisational effectiveness among US funders and more broadly within the international development sector.

The report is organised in the following way:

- Section 2 explores how organisational effectiveness is defined.

- Section 3 explores why general or programme support is insufficient to address the organisational effectiveness of grantees.

- Section 4 describes how funders have supported organisational effectiveness of grantees, focusing on the work of seven North American funders.

- Section 5 assesses the benefits of additional support to improve organisational effectiveness.

- Section 6 identifies factors that have enabled and constrained support to grantees.

2. WHAT IS ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS?

What some call organisational effectiveness is often called organisational health or organisational capacity by others. On the latter, there is a considerable body of knowledge, mainly in the international development sector, which describes various perspectives on organisational capacity. For instance, the OECD (2006) describes organisational capacity as the ability of a group of people to manage their affairs successfully, while Ubels et al. (2010) define organisational capacity as the ability of a human system to perform, sustain itself and self-renew (see Saleem et al., 2015).

Focussing on the term 'organisational capacity', recent work by USAID (2019a) suggests two broad perspectives that dominate the discourse. The first tends to have a narrow focus on technical skills and formal structures that are characteristic of formal businesses in the North. These often include financial management, organisational governance, human resources and administrative systems, strategic planning, communications and marketing, monitoring and evaluation systems and service delivery among others. However, many organisations have successfully delivered value and established credible professional reputations in the absence of such technical capacities and structures, while organisations that seemingly had high levels of capacity as judged by formal assessments have withered (USAID, 2019a).

As a result, discourse around organisations has acknowledged how complex they are (see Kaplan, 1999; Mowles, 2011). This has led to a second perspective emerging, which represents a more holistic range of abilities required to function effectively. The 5 Cs framework developed by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) (2011) is illustrative of this. It identifies five capabilities that collectively contribute to an organisation's ability to create social value: 1) the capacity to act and commit; 2) the capacity to relate; 3) the capacity to adapt and self-renew; 4) the capacity to achieve coherence; and 5) the capacity to deliver on development objectives.

More recently, this more holistic approach has featured in the emerging discourse on resilience amongst non-profit organisations in the US. Organisational resilience is seen as a way of being rather than an end point, which the Bechtel Foundation (2016) defines as the capacity to respond effectively to change, to adapt successfully to new

and unforeseen conditions and circumstances and to seize opportunity. Scearce (2020) work proposes seven characteristics that make a non-profit organisation resilient: 1) being purpose driven; 2) being clear eyed; 3) being future oriented; 4) being open; 5) being empowered; 6) being committed to self-renewal; and 7) being connected. The two perspectives (technical skills and formal structures on one hand and more holistic abilities on the other) described here are not in opposition to one another. Rather the second broadens out the types of capacities organisations need to function effectively within their context. We use effectiveness, capacity, health and resilience interchangeably from here on in.

3. WHY GENERAL OR PROGRAMME SUPPORT IS INSUFFICIENT TO ADDRESS GRANTEE EFFECTIVENESS

Many funders provide general operating support (or unrestricted) grants and assume grantees will use some of this to invest in their organisational effectiveness. But some funders have found that grantees tend not to do this. Why not? In some cases grantees use general support to subsidise other funders who do not cover their indirect costs, while in others, senior managers prioritise formal programming and salaries ahead of organisational effectiveness. Senior managers might be uncomfortable using general support for interventions (such as coaching or organisational development) that may benefit work that is their responsibility (such as developing a strategy or restructuring the organisation, among other things).

If grantees need additional support they could reach out to their funders. But grantees are often reluctant to have candid conversations about the challenges they might be facing internally for fear that doing so might affect future funding decisions (Hewlett, 2018a)[1]. For instance, a programme officer (PO) working for Ford Foundation's BUILD programme says in relation to an organisational capacity assessment that 'if there was any feedback from the OMT [organisational mapping tool] assessor that could be seen as negative, the grantee would not want to share it' (Niras, 2019). Similarly, when non–profit CEOs were asked an open–ended question in a survey by Buteau et al. (2018) about what made them comfortable or uncomfortable telling funders their needs, the third most common consideration was fear that their organisation would be thought of as weak.

Nevertheless, when grantees have made requests for capacity support, some funders have not always been ready to respond. When asked to describe the top three challenges their foundation faces in providing support to grantees in a survey by Buteau et al. (2018), lack of internal staff capacity or time topped the list with 64 per cent of

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[1] See also https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/columns/the-sustainable-nonprofit/five-elements-for-success-in-capacity-building

foundation leaders mentioning this. Hewlett POs support this, suggesting that their existing practices are ill-equipped to deal with the organisational effectiveness needs or challenges of our grantees. In the OSF's Economic Justice Programme, POs do not have sufficient bandwidth to respond to grantee requests. In practice, POs are not able to stay focussed on both programmatic support and organisational effectiveness equally.

In addition, there might be reluctance among funders to offer organisational effectiveness grants as they see it as paying for basic institutional needs and 'that's not what they want to invest in. It's like how people understand the need for traffic lights and road, but they don't want to pay for that. They want to pay for their luxury car' (Jenny Hodgson, Global Fund for Community Foundations in Pond (2015)). And for those thinking that capacity grants may not be well spent, Susan Chandler, writing on the Grantsmanship Center's (TCGI) blog adds, 'the purpose of capacity building grants is to help organisations make good operations better, not to rescue organisations from bad planning or to rehabilitate bad management...'[2].

4. GOING BEYOND GENERAL OR PROGRAMME SUPPORT TO SUPPORT ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

While non-profit or grantee CEOs consider general operating support to have more impact on strengthening grantee capacity than other interventions, they also want support from their funders to strengthen their organisations, especially their fundraising, staffing and communication capacities (Buteau et al., 2018). Moreover, Buteau et al. (2008) argues assistance beyond grant making is crucial for creating impact and for grantees' achievement of their goals. She quotes one non-profit CEO as saying 'the check may get the community to the table but technical assistance sustains and supports their ability to finish at the table and get to their goals'.

Several funders have supported grantees to improve their organisational effectiveness beyond general operating support by:

- Creating an in-house position or team for organisational effectiveness or capacity building as a complement to the PO role. The organisational effectiveness officer or team engages with grantees in an advisory role, helping them assess needs and solicit honest feedback (Synergos, 2018).

- Giving grants that are either partly or entirely focused on building a grantee's organisational capacity. Other funders reward innovation in organisational

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[2] https://blog.fluxx.io/what-are-capacity-building-grants-and-why-are-they-game-changers

effectiveness through specialised funding such as awards programmes (Pond, 2015).

- Directly investing in organisational effectiveness service providers (which might be an established non-profit in the field) and intermediaries, who in turn provide technical assistance and consultancy services to a cohort of grantees. This might include building partnerships with consultants to manage aspects of grantee organisational effectiveness (ibid.).

- Nurturing peer-based learning opportunities and grantee communities of practice (ibid.).

- Collaborating with other funders to address organisational effectiveness challenges, share issues, problems and opportunities that come along in the area of common interest (ibid.).

- Making specialised investments like capital grants with matching requirements, endowment investments in social enterprises and fellowships (ibid.).

- Offering workshops, primers and intensives to grow non-profit organisational effectiveness knowledge, sometimes in partnership with organisational effectiveness providers (ibid.).

- Lending staff capacity to grantees through volunteering and serving on non-profit boards (ibid.).

- Convening or hosting retreats (ibid.).

The availability of additional support can be critical, especially for organisations led by people of colour in the US, which tend to have weaker capacities due to unequal access to funding and perhaps other marginalising factors (Niras, 2019).

We now provide examples of efforts taken by funders to provide support to grantees to improve their organisational effectiveness, which draw on one or more of the above activities. Specifically, we describe initiatives pursued by the:

- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation;

- David and Lucile Packard Foundation;

- Ford Foundation;

- Meyer Foundation;

- Evelyn and Walter Haas Junior Fund;

- Think Tank Initiative (TTI) and;

- Open Society Foundations' (OSF) Economic Justice Programme (EJP).

4.1 THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION

The Hewlett Foundation's Organisational Effectiveness (OE) Programme disburses a total of US$6 million a year through relatively small grants of targeted support to grantees (of all sizes) across all the foundation's core programmes. The OE programme has a portfolio of 140 grants. Grants are on average US$40–50k for US based organisations and usually last a year. The grants enable non-profits to hire external experts to support them with strategic planning or diversity and inclusion, communication, fundraising and leadership development. In addition, the OE programme offers training, resources and assistance to Hewlett's programme staff to enhance their ability to support grantees' capacity-building efforts (Henderson-Frakes et al., 2015; Hewlett, 2018a).

4.2 THE DAVID AND LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

The Packard Foundation has a dedicated organisational effectiveness team that works with thematic programmes to provide effectiveness support to grantees. Until recently they were providing year-long grants worth on average between US$30–50k to individual grantees. Grants primarily covered the cost of outside consultants who strengthened capacity in one or more focus areas, such as strategic planning, leadership development, fund development, or communications planning. However, recently they have doubled their budget from US$4 to 8 million and now provide two additional types of support: 1) grants to cohorts (of leaders, organisations, a field or a movement), who are involved in the design of the grant and; 2) multi-year grants for grantees that are core to Packard's programme strategies, during which CEOs received coaching (funded by the Haas, Jr. Fund's Flexible Leadership Award). Packard believes supporting cohorts (ranging between 5 and 25 participants) is an efficient way to build the capacity of many grantees at once as well as promote collaboration of participants and the sharing of information (ORS Impact, 2018; Synergos, 2018).

4.3 THE FORD FOUNDATION

Ford Foundation's Building Institutions and Networks (BUILD) initiative is a five-year, $1 billion investment in the long-term capacity and sustainability of up to 300 social justice organisations around the world[3]. It is led by a cross-organisational team that works with POs and grantees (Synergos, 2018). At the beginning of their BUILD grant, all organisations undergo a facilitated organisational assessment using its Organisational Mapping Tool and in-depth analysis of their finances. Both are designed to help organisations better understand and prioritise their needs in key areas like strategy, leadership, finances, and systems. Each organisation then receives additional, targeted funding to help them develop and implement an institutional strengthening plan. Drawing on assessment data, BUILD connects organisations working on related issues, in similar geographies, and/or with comparable capacities.[4]

4.4 THE MEYER FOUNDATION

The Meyer Foundation's capacity-building programme has three components: shared learning for cohorts (the primary component), management assistance programme grants, and learning and travel grants. The foundation generally focuses its capacity building support on organisations that are current grantee partners. In supporting cohorts, the foundation brings together a group of organisations to work with a trainer or capacity-building provider to gain new skills and address common challenges. They believe through this approach grantees strengthen their practices while connecting with a network of other organisations with similar priorities, opening up potential for collaboration. Meyer awards a limited number of Management Assistance Programme grants to organisations or coalitions to work with a consultant to design and carry out a custom-designed capacity-building project. The grant covers the cost of the consultant as well as other direct project costs and supports projects in organisational change, such as succession planning; executive and other leadership transitions, mergers and strategic planning; governance, including strengthening of boards; revenue development, including fundraising from individuals; and racial equity, including targeting projects to incorporate racial equity into an organisation's operations.[5]

4.5 THE EVELYN AND WALTER HAAS JR. FUND

The Haas Jr. Fund finances the Flexible Leadership Awards (FLA), which provide a grant to organisations ranging between US$35 and 50k per year for up to

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[3]www.fordfoundation.org/work/our-grants/building-institutions-and-networks/

[4] www.fordfoundation.org/work/our-grants/building-institutions-and-networks/approaches/

[5] www.meyerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Meyer-Foundation-2020-Capacity-Building-Grants-Guide.pdf

five years for coaching, training and specialised consulting (such as executive coaching, senior team development, strategic planning and board development). Each organisation is paired with a consultant who helps them create a leadership development plan and determine what resources they need to implement it. It is hoped that the consultant becomes an expert ally to help them make informed and strategic choices about how to select (other) consultants and how to sequence and sustain the leadership development work. The Haas Jr. Fund convenes FLA grantees regularly to provide opportunities for peer learning and mutual support.[6]

4.6 THE THINK TANK INITIATIVE

Managed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) was a partnership between five donors[7]. The TTI was dedicated to strengthening the organisational effectiveness of over 40 independent policy research institutions in 20 countries in the developing world, primarily through core, non-earmarked funding for 10 years (2009–2019). Core funding or general support was combined with continuous advice and accompaniment by regional programme officers; training and specific capacity development events and activities; other capacity development support through a special window called opportunity funds and; finally, networking and exchange opportunities facilitated by the programme, among and beyond the TTI community (Christoplos et al. 2019).

4.7 THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS' (OSF) ECONOMIC JUSTICE PROGRAMME (EJP)

OSF's EJP manages an Organisational Health Fund (OHF), which draws inspiration from efforts made by Hewlett, Packard and Ford. The OHF is designed to provide additional, demand-driven support to existing EJP grantees with specific, short-term capacity gaps, organisational challenges, or unexpected needs. Funds can be used to strengthen and support a wide range of internal systems and processes. The principles underlying the fund are that grants need to respond to clear articulation of need by the grantee; the grantee takes responsibility of its delivery; EJP does not promote the use of any particular consultants or approaches; and in allocating grants, EJP must put into practice its values of diversity, equity and inclusion. In 2019, half the proposals received from grantees concerned financial

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[6] www.haasjr.org/issues-impact/leadership/flexible-leadership-awards

[7] The Think Tank Initiative's funders are: William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the UK Department for International Development (DFID); Netherlands Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS)' International Development Research Centre.

sustainability, strengthening financial systems and the development of alternative income generation models.

We now discuss the benefits of providing additional organisational support.

5. THE BENEFITS OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Offering specialist organisational health or capacity development support including grants to non-profit organisations in addition to general or programme support has proven to 1) improve the grantee-funder relationship; 2) help grantees to identify and respond to pressing organisational capacity/health needs 3) improve organisational practices in the medium term and 4) lead to longer term impacts. We discuss these below.

5.1 A BETTER GRANTEE-FUNDER RELATIONSHIP

We found the following evidence that additional support for organisational effectiveness improved the funder-grantee relationship:

- Grantees valued more those funders who worked with them to increase their capacity and impact (Buteau, 2018).[8]

- Within some foundations, the provision of additional support including additional foundation staff capacity alleviated pressure on thematic programme officers (PO).

- The standalone structure of Hewlett's operational effectiveness (OE) programme has allowed for honest conversations among the OE team about organisational changes and needs without fear of jeopardising programme funding. Similarly, in the EJP, the 'firewall' between the PO and its OHF created space for grantees to be more candid.

- Hewlett grantees who received OE grants rated Hewlett higher in a Grantee Perception Report (Hewlett, 2018b) when asked to what extent the foundation was more aware of their challenges.

- Hewlett and their grantees say that collaborating closely on OE proposals has helped strengthen their relationships by treating organisational health as a

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[8] https://cep.org/provide-more-assistance-beyond-grant/

priority and encouraging mutual trust, respect and understanding (Hewlett, 2018a).

- Niras (2019) suggests that grantees receiving support from Ford's BUILD programme feel they can be honest and true to their priorities in explaining what they wish to do. With other funders they need to 'hide' overheads and investments in their organisations. The opportunity for this sort of transparency was important for the wellbeing of some grantees.

5.2 IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES

We found the following pieces of evidence to suggest additional support to organisational effectiveness helped grantees to identify and respond to important organisational challenges:

- Targeted funding for strategic planning or other capacity development projects helps grantee managers avoid the political challenge of having to justify diverting resources from already scarce general operating funds (Hewlett, 2018a).

- Hewlett staff have heard from grantees that having dedicated OE funds provides non-profit managers with 'cover' and permission for making capacity-related investments, from their staff and board, without it affecting their annual funding.

- Niras (2019) suggests that Ford's BUILD programme enabled grantees to invest in their organisation rather than in programmes.

- Similarly, in relation to the FLA, annual planning, ongoing contact with plan consultants, Executive Director convenings, and even evaluation interviews repeatedly reengaged grantees in thinking about their organisations' leadership needs and the potential of leadership development to support their mission-advancing goals (Ryan, 2013).

- The availability of additional support is especially useful when an urgent need arises, enabling the grantee and funder to respond quickly (serving as a 'booster shot') or if a funder has a concern about, and wants to address, an organisation midway through a grant.

Our review suggests that when grantees secured funding, they generally used it well. An evaluation of Hewlett's OE grants showed that OE grant recipients met their objectives, producing solid strategic plans, fundraising campaigns, leadership transition plans, and more (Henderson-Frakes et al., 2015; Hewlett, 2018a). Similarly, Ryan (2013) suggests that organisations receiving support from the Flexible Leadership Awards were highly successful in advancing their leadership development goals.

5.3 IMPROVEMENTS IN ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES

We found evidence that additional capacity support had led to specific improvements in organisational practices. The final report from the familiarisation phase of the evaluation of Ford's BUILD programme (Niras, 2019) reports that grantees have used support to:

- Create space to step back from day-to-day operational concerns to **critically reflect on their work** (which included reflecting on the need for transitions from dysfunctional boards that had been largely taken for granted in the past).

- Take a more relaxed inclusive and critically reflective approach to **thinking about strategies**.

- Continuously **imagine where the organisation should be going and how**.

- Stabilise what had become somewhat lopsided or distorted **organisational structures** (especially during times of leadership transition) or after a period of rapid growth.

- Move from increasing staff numbers to demonstrating **increasing professionalism**.

- **Strengthen important capacities** that were long recognised as needed, but unlikely to be funded by other donors.

- Develop capacities to **work closer to the people they serve**.

- Focus more internally on **diversity, equity and inclusion issues**, and take a stronger intersectionality approach.

An evaluation of Packard's Partnership Projects by ORS Impact (2018) suggests that all but one individual self-reported that their capacity somewhat or greatly increased as a result of participating in the project and that intended project outcomes were achieved. Outcomes achievement was strongest for leadership development projects. Moreover, participants were putting what they learnt or gained into practice, with ORS Impact (2018) citing the following examples:

- A number of organisations that participated in a diversity, equity, and inclusion Partnership Project described taking **a more inclusive approach to working with communities**. One expanded its services to include both rural and urban communities, and in doing so is '… listening, rather than coming in with our own set of desires and wants and imposing those on the community.'

- Another organisation also described using **a more inclusive approach to working with families**, including removing barriers to programme access.

- An organisation that participated in a communications and advocacy partnership project described how they **operationalised their internal communications strategy** since the cohort capacity-building project concluded in 2016.

In addition, an evaluation of Haas Jr's Flexible Leadership Awards suggested that an organisation was able to use this support to **weather an executive director transition, improve board and senior team practices, and develop a strategy that was compelling to staff, volunteers, and donors**.

5.4 LONGER-TERM IMPACTS

Longer term outcomes that can be attributed to capacity development work are difficult to gauge (with counterfactuals being almost impossible to establish) and subsequently remain a terrain less explored (Faulks and Stewart, 2017). Nevertheless, we have gathered some evidence to suggest that capacity improvements stemming from additional support have been sustained, with positive effects in the longer term.

- Findings from Buteau et al. (2018) on strengthening grantees suggest that when funders provide more intensive patterns of non-monetary support to grantees — more than a smattering of support here or there — it is associated with substantially more **positive perceptions of foundation impact on grantees'**

experiences, and, importantly, more positive perceptions of funder impact on grantees' organisations.[9]

- In an evaluation of the capacity development grant programme run by the Meyer Foundation, Faulk and Stewart (2017) found that it led to **better longer-term outcomes for the non-profits engaged**, specifically to non-profit financial growth outcomes.

- In an evaluation of Hewlett's OE programme, a majority of programme staff and grantee survey respondents rated the impact of OE grants as moderate or significant in the areas of organisational effectiveness and organisational resilience – suggesting that OE grants **strengthened organisations' long-term performance**. Notably, for each outcome area, a higher percentage of grantees rated the impact of OE grants as 'significant' compared to programme officers (Henderson-Frakes et al., 2015).

- In a grantee perception report (Hewlett, 2018b) Hewlett grantees who received OE grants **rated Hewlett higher in terms of the impact the foundation had on the organisation**.

- ORS Impact (2018) suggest that **changes in capacity experienced by grantees participating in Packard's partnership projects generally held up over time**. Participants who were interviewed one or two years after their project ended agreed that outcomes were sustained or expanded upon since completion of the project.

Despite the evidence above highlight the benefits of additional support to organisational effectiveness, this is not always the case. For instance, Christoplos et al. (2019) in an evaluation of the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) suggested that supplementary capacity development interventions (beyond the core grant) yielded mixed results. Although some grantees reported significant benefits, for many, TTI's interventions were not seen as an important input. The authors question whether a global initiative with an extremely heterogeneous range of grantees can be sufficiently tailored to such diverse needs.

We now turn our attention to the final section, which outlines factors that have helped and hindered the provision of additional support to grantees.

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[9] https://cep.org/provide-more-assistance-beyond-grant/

6. FACTORS THAT HAVE ENABLED AND CONSTRAINED SUPPORT TO GRANTEES

Additional support in the form of more staff time and funding does not in itself lead to better organisational outcomes. How these are deployed is just as important. During our survey of documentation, we noted the following factors that were seen to enable or constrain grantees in making the best use of additional support.

Grantee organisations were more likely to benefit from additional support if senior managers and board members had the motivation to promote organisational change (demonstrated through initiating the grant-making process), had considered what challenges they might be experiencing and were prepared to carve out enough time in the short–medium term for staff to work through a process (Henderson Frakes et al., 2015).

Although a **better funder–grantee relationship** was to some extent an outcome, we found it is also a helpful **requisite**. Grantee relationships with both the funder and any consultants who were hired to support them were key.

- On the relationship with the funder, Henderson-Frake et al. (2015) in their (broadly positive) evaluation of Hewlett's OE programme suggest that grantees praised programme staff for their responsiveness and supportiveness, their constructive feedback, as well as their ability to 'stay out of the way' when necessary. It was important that foundation staff understood the grantees' needs and were supportive throughout the process (Hewlett, 2018a).

- On the consultants, coaches, and educators who were brought in to support grantees, it was essential they had the right qualities, such as flexibility, accessibility, having a broad and deep knowledge of the relevant field (where necessary), and were able to develop a strong rapport with counterparts (at all levels) in the grantee organisation (Henderson-Frake, et al., 2015; Ryan, 2013).

To ensure healthy relationships between grantees and funders and between grantees and consultants, it was **crucial that partners reflected and decided on the roles and responsibilities they took in relation to the work and to each other**, on a periodic basis (as these were likely to change). In some cases, this was not always clear. For instance, in relation to Ford's BUILD programme, one staff member was quoted as saying that 'the BUILD philosophy is that the grantee is in the driver's seat, but we [Ford] will tell you what organisational development is' – suggesting a contradiction between rhetoric and practice (Niras, 2019).

Grantees in most cases can develop their own capacities but might need a little guidance from external sources. From this perspective, funders and consultants need to move away from feeling they need to address a deficit and **move towards a fostering or facilitating role, positioning themselves as 'a guide by the side, not a sage on the stage'** (USAID, 2019b). This was highlighted by ITAD (Vogel and Punton, 2018) in their evaluation of the DFID funded Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) programme, which suggested that projects had most success where government partners were accompanied by external support in a flexible, tailored, collaborative way that promoted ownership and strengthened partner capacity through learning-by-doing.

Several of the papers reviewed **suggested grantees benefited when they were given a high degree of freedom in how they structured or made use of additional support** (such as funds or expertise). For instance, grantees receiving support from Hewlett's OE programme appreciated the flexibility to determine the focus and scope of the work (Henderson-Frake, et al,. 2015; Hewlett, 2015). In relation to facilitated organisational assessment using organisational mapping tools, which grantees in Ford's BUILD programme are required to undergo, some grantees suggested it added little value, whilst others suggested it did not capture the realities of the organisational context (Niras, 2019). And given the difficulty of sustainable change, support will likely need to go beyond technical inputs and skills building through training (Vogel and Punton, 2018; Saleem et al., 2015).

In relation to the growing trend of supporting communities of practice or cohorts among grantees, the evaluation of the TTI by Christoplos et al. (2019) cautions against funders establishing the group, saying that '**although interventions to promote networking was highly valued by many grantees, this tended to be successful when the grantees found their own partners**, rather than necessarily via participation in TTI-led efforts – suggesting the risks involved in pursuing one-size-fits-all efforts.'

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