

PHILANTHROPY REFRESH

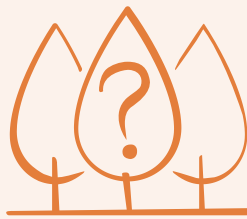
How to Take Inventory in a Changing Environment



Whether there's a shift in societal norms, urgent community needs, a humanitarian crisis, a natural disaster, or a pandemic, today's changing environment reminds givers of the importance of assessing their strategy and grantmaking priorities. To help take stock of your charitable giving, it's important to start by asking four key questions:



What has changed in the foundation's target funding community?



What is needed to address the new landscape?



Does the foundation have what it needs in its philanthropic toolbox to respond to these evolving community needs?



To what extent is the foundation able and willing to incorporate new activities into its work?

Addressing these questions can help donors delve into the conditions that may call for change and what to do in the face of these circumstances with a refreshed point of view. To put this into practice, let's look at some of the ways to take inventory in a changing environment.

#1 Primary Focus

Start by thinking about the foundation's funding priorities and consider if they continue to make sense in today's world. **The primary funding focus may or may not need to adjust to a shift in objectives and values, business focus and nonprofit needs.** You'll also want to evaluate the board's interest in blending long-term goals and a programmatic strategy for impact with the ability to respond to urgent needs. What is the right balance in addressing these two different types of needs?

#2 Grantmaking Structure

Whether you invite proposals or exclusively seek out nonprofit organizations with whom you want to partner, **it's important to ask questions during the development of a grant and consider various approaches:**

- Aligning budget constraints with impact goals
- Creating long-term or short-term partnerships
- Determining to what degree you want to stand out as a lead funder
- Focusing on capacity building for grantee sustainability or targeting project support
- Developing a signature program

#3 Community Impact

It's important to keep the end goal of your giving in mind. Start by defining realistic goals and metrics and determining if there are new and different indicators for success that have been influenced by recent events. Do the interventions you have been supporting make sense in reaching your goals? **Consider engaging community partners and experts in the field to define evolving needs and suitable interventions.** This will help you tailor your response, maximize the impact of donations and allow you to respond quickly when the need is greatest.

#4 Communications

Messaging plays a key role, particularly for corporate foundations, and it starts with having a communications plan. As new funding priorities emerge, there may be ways that the foundation can amplify the work of grantee partners. A communications plan can help reinforce a funder's renewed or revised values and priorities. In addition, it can align foundation and parent company objectives; inform the philanthropic community on how shifting priorities will be addressed; and develop immediate connection to corporate priorities in all geographic arenas.

#5 Employee Engagement

In terms of corporate philanthropy, engaging employees to carry the message forward has become a standard component of many companies' philanthropic activities. **Employee voices can contribute to a corporate foundation's understanding of community needs.** They can also mobilize the workforce, influence the role of leadership, and create grassroots enthusiasm in addressing shifting community needs.

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