

strategies & tools from funders & program staff

*Improving
Philanthropy
for Girls'
Programs*

T H R E E G U I N E A S F U N D

intro:

In the separate worlds of grantees and funders,

there are few genuine opportunities

for the two to share insights and

problem-solve around the

issues that are of concern

to both. In the case of

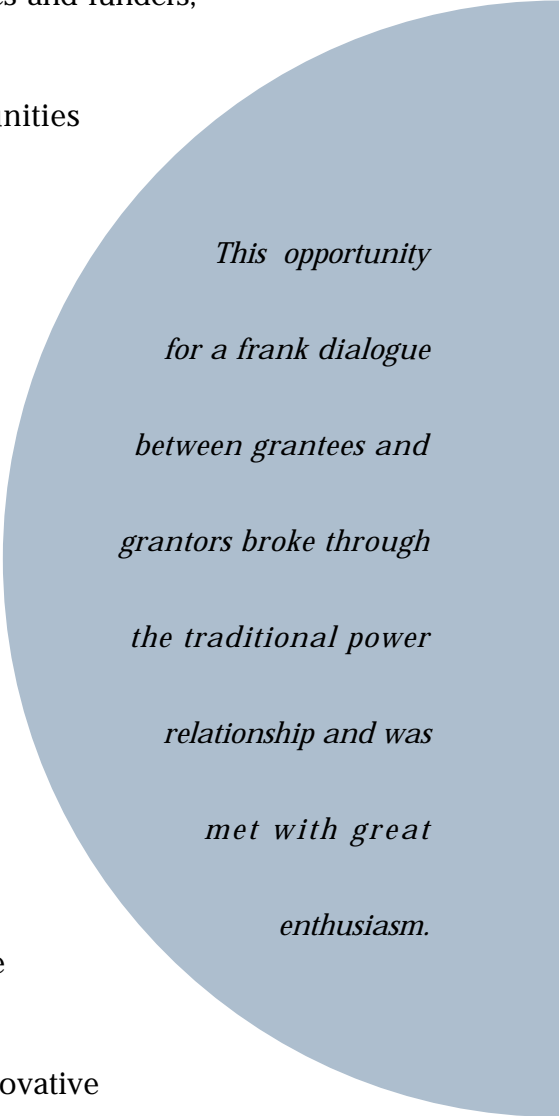
urban girls' programs, the

Three Guineas Fund set out to

bridge the divide between these

experts in order to develop innovative

strategies to improve philanthropy for girls' programs.



*This opportunity
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between grantees and
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The True Power of Funding Girls' Programs.

Foundations have a powerful opportunity to support and influence the direction and success of girls' programs across the United States. While there is a growing body of research on programs for urban girls, there is little information on the strategic funding of these programs.

The Three Guineas Fund is interested in improving philanthropy for girls' programs, and set out to explore strategies through this project. In Spring 2000, we conducted a literature review of "best practices" for girls' programs and interviewed 31 funders and girls' program staff. We also brought together individuals from both groups to share their perspectives, identify promising strategies, and gather recommendations for improving philanthropy for girls' programs. This opportunity for a frank dialogue between grantees and grantors broke through the traditional power relationship and was met with great enthusiasm. It fueled creative solutions and an appreciation for one another's views.

The strategies and tools developed by participants are presented in this report. For more information visit www.3gf.org.

Funders Interviewed

Boston Women's Fund
California Wellness Foundation
Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation
Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund
Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Foundation
Girl's Best Friend Foundation
Koret Foundation
Los Angeles Women's Foundation
Michigan Women's Foundation
New York Women's Foundation
Nokomis Foundation
Susie Tompkins Buell Foundation
The Women's Foundation
Third Wave Foundation
Three Guineas Fund
Tides Foundation

Programs Interviewed

After School Action Programs
Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)
Big Brother, Big Sister
California School Age Consortium
Center for Young Women's Development
Dimensions Dance Theater
Girls After School Academy (GASA)
Girls Incorporated
GirlSource
Lavender Youth Recreation & Information Center (LYRIC)
Offering Alternatives to our Sisters in SOMA (OASIS)
SAGE Project
Teen Voices
Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD)
Youth Guidance Center
YWCA Chinatown
YWCA Mission Girls Services

In the interviews and discussion groups, funders and program staff agreed upon seven best practices for girls' programs. The fruitful discussions also uncovered two crucial areas for improving philanthropy for girls' programs.

Key Findings

- *Best Practices of Effective Girls' Programs.*

Many shared strengths and practices exist among successful girls' programs. Participants examined what works best and identified seven "best practices." (p.6)

- *Crucial But Underfunded: Staff Development & Evaluation.*

Program directors and staff who are in daily contact with girls are often underpaid and feel under-supported. Participants agreed that for programs to succeed, staff need more support and recognition. Participants offered several ways to address these issues. In discussing project evaluation, funders and program staff alike provided tools and innovative suggestions for improvement. (p.10)

- *Building Leadership. Building Partnerships.*

Leadership goes beyond the Executive Director. Talented staff lie behind any successful girls' program. Funders and program experts developed a check-list for assessing and nurturing leadership at every level of an organization. Building leadership also goes beyond the organization itself and requires real working partnerships between the funders and organization staff. (p.18)

Best Practices of Effective Girls' Programs

single-sex programs for adolescent girls

Single-sex programs give girls the space to explore, deconstruct, and develop strategies to address the gender roles that society, family, religion, and the media impose on them. This is particularly important for urban girls—overwhelmingly low-income girls of color—who deal not only with gender, but its intersection with race and class.

Programs that serve urban girls exist along a spectrum from grassroots programs to those that reside within a larger national agency, such as the YWCA or Girls Incorporated. Regardless of their structure, most girls' programs serve as “home-places” providing the trinity of people, places, and possibilities that help girls maneuver through the challenges of adolescence.

seven best practices

In this project, funders and service providers identified the following seven best practices for strong, effective, and sustainable girls' programs.

1. "Homegrown" programming that caters to the specific needs of girls served.

When programming is "homegrown" it considers the specific needs and strengths of girls in the community being served, rather than using a pre-packaged curriculum developed elsewhere.

2. Holistic approaches that serve the "whole" girl.

Service providers say that the key practice is a holistic approach, catering to the needs of the "whole" girl instead of addressing only one aspect of her life.

"[It is] absurd to separate out pregnancy prevention from young women's health and well being."

— Executive Director of a grassroots girls' program

3. Collaborations to build a full spectrum of services.

Collaborations between programs and community organizations build a full spectrum of services for girls, and make it possible to create a holistic approach. It is rare that a single grassroots program can provide all the services a girl needs such as counseling, leadership development, academic support, and crisis intervention. Collaborations leverage the strengths of unique programs, avoid duplication of services, and build connections within a community.

4. Strong personal relationships between staff and girls.

Girls are often seeking anchors and the staff of girls' programs, usually young women in their 20s or 30s, can play this role.

5. Long-term programs.

Many program staff envision a continuum of daily, weekly, or monthly support as well as long-term involvement over a course of years. One-time intensive experiences do not offer long-term gains. A regular and extended program offers continuous support to girls as they navigate the tricky transition into adulthood. To maintain a long-term relationship with the girls, programs must adapt to fulfill new needs as the girls grow and mature.

“Girls still come around when their program has ended and are looking for something else.” — Program leader

6. Quality over quantity.

Foundations often focus on numbers of girls served and cost per girl, figures that run contrary to what program staff consider most effective—fewer girls served, smaller staff-to-girl ratios, and more in-depth programming.

*“Large numbers typically have no long-term impact. When you’re reaching 500 people, the impact is superficial.”
— Program staff member*

7. Provide a girls-only space.

A girls-only space that is safe both physically and emotionally is critical. Even if the space is temporary, a private space for girls is important because it can be difficult to offer effective girl-centered programming with boys present.

“School support is important [in securing a gender-specific space]...since a girls-only program is threatening and rouses the curiosity of boys AND adult men.” — School staff member

Crucial But Underfunded: Staff Development & Evaluation

support the people who support the girls

Staff development—support, training, fair compensation, and wellness programs for the people who work with girls—is a crucial need for girls’ programs. Program staff voiced the need for staff development to ensure long-term organizational sustainability and the emotional health of program staff. Yet there is a glaring lack of resources devoted to this fundamental need. Salaries need to be improved and opportunities for skill development need to be built in to every organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TRAINING & SALARIES

Funders should provide financial support for staff training.

Boards and Executive Directors should encourage staff training.

Girls' needs are always evolving, and non-profit staff require on-going training if they are to be effective and up-to-date. Training also helps retain and improve the most valuable resources of a non-profit organization—staff—by offering opportunities for professional growth. Areas where training is needed include fundraising, grant writing, financial management, evaluation, technology, and girl- and ethnic-specific issues.

Funders should fund higher staff salaries.

Boards of Directors should approve higher salaries for program staff.

Women who work in girls' programs experience two levels of pay discrimination—women earn less than men, and social services are undervalued as a profession. Foundation and program staff agreed that salaries should be higher. Organizations should also find creative ways to address the low salaries in the nonprofit sector, such as more paid time off, flexible schedules, and generous benefits.

“How can you say you are empowering women when you’re paying staff sub-market rates?” — Funder

“[We] need to encourage stability. Pay staff well so that they’ll stay.” — Director of a national affiliate



In this project, funders stated that they should be funding staff development, but are not.

CHALLENGES

- Rigid funding categories (e.g. program only, capacity-building only) often present barriers to innovative strategies for support.
- Some funders have not considered staff development an area of need—education at higher levels in foundation hierarchies is in order.
- Encouraging higher program staff salaries could be perceived as problematic by larger traditional foundations that often consider staff salaries as administrative overhead (when it can appropriately be considered a program expense).
- Funders also pointed out that programs, while recognizing the necessity for staff development, prioritize immediate service needs to the detriment of the long-term sustainability of the organization.
- There is confusion about what staff development funds may be used for.
- Some funders are not receiving requests to support staff development.

Tools

staff development assessment for funders

- Develop a relationship with program staff and ask them about their training needs.
- Encourage Executive Directors to add a staff development line item to their program budgets.
- Help nonprofit Boards and Executive Directors come up with a guide for salaries that reflects comparable work in other sectors.
- Identify high quality staff training programs, and sponsor grantees to attend.
- Invite experts to conduct training workshops for grantees.
- Convene grantees to facilitate the sharing of new ideas with one another.
- Create customized training programs for staff of girls' programs and house them at existing technical assistance providers.
- Fund or create an online resource list of good training programs like the Girls Coalition of Greater Boston's web site, www.girlscoalition.com.
- Pool resources from several funders for the development of training programs. For example, the Three Guineas Fund, Susie Tompkins Buell Foundation, and Woodhull Institute are collaborating on a professional development institute for young women service providers who work with urban girls.

Tools

staff development assessment for girls' programs

- Add a staff development line item in program budgets.
- Identify on-going staff training needs.
- Talk to foundation program officers about staff training needs.
- Request funder sponsorship of trainings and conferences.
- Host trainings for other program staff on your area of expertise.
- Develop a resource list of good workshops for staff of girls' programs.
- Research information on salary ranges from nonprofit and foundation resources.

DEVELOPING USEFUL EVALUATION METHODS
FOR BOTH FUNDERS AND PROGRAMS

Evaluation seems to elicit passionate responses from both funders and program staff. Both agree that evaluation is very important, but funders and programs use evaluations to satisfy different needs. Programs are accountable to girls, while funders are accountable to their Trustees and generally only use evaluation results to report back to Boards. Even if a program has a stellar evaluation after three years, some foundations will not invest in an organization for longer than three years.

“Evaluation should be used to strengthen the program [for programs] and guide funding decisions [for funders] but it is not used for either.” — Researcher

CHALLENGES

- Given the slow pace of social change, funders who do not have direct program experience may have unrealistic expectations of evaluation results.
- While the grant application process is usually clear, it is often unclear how foundations use evaluation results, and what the follow-up process is.
- Funders do not often accept qualitative, including anecdotal, evaluation measures.
- Resources for evaluation are limited. This often results in evaluation plans being developed as an afterthought, instead of being integrated into program design from the beginning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Educate staff and trustees about the added value of qualitative evaluation.

Qualitative methods, including conversations and observations, allow for subtle documentation of successes that quantitative methods can miss. Hearing the girls' feedback on an on-going basis allows programs to continually evolve to meet their needs over time: program staff think this would be more useful than a quantitative end-of-year evaluation.

Funders are interested in measurable outcomes to determine the impact of funding dollars, and are accountable to their Boards and Trustees. Foundation trustees need to be educated about the value of qualitative evaluation methods. At the same time, program staff need training in evaluation methods, so they can embrace its value as essential to knowing whether they are making a difference in the lives of the girls they are working with.

Build and maintain working relationships between funders and organizations.

To ensure better understanding about expectations and outcomes, funders and programs should create working relationships that function as true partnerships. Funders should stay involved with programs on an on-going basis, and we should all move beyond the power dynamics of the old "command and control" relationship, and build avenues for honest communication.

Develop a common evaluation template for funders and programs.

Funders and staff of girls' programs should develop a universal evaluation standard and template that utilizes quantitative and qualitative elements.

Allocate resources for evaluation.

Evaluation can be effective when it is conducted by program staff or professional outside evaluators. Either way, the key is allocation of resources. If an outside evaluator is hired, foundations should cover evaluation costs on top of the grant, and hire an evaluator with solid program experience. If evaluation is to be conducted "in house" by program staff, foundations should provide additional support for evaluation time, and the organization's Executive Director should allocate staff time and training for evaluation.

Building Leadership. Building Partnerships.

Leadership beyond the executive director

It is a given that foundations measure an organization's leadership when making funding decisions. In general, however, funders reported that they consider only the top leadership team, especially the Executive Director, when assessing leadership in an organization. Of the 16 foundations interviewed for this project, none had explicit criteria for assessing leadership. Some foundation staff did express interest in including the extent to which girls' leadership is integrated into the organization as an assessment of the program, but were not doing this consistently.

“Funders look for driven women who are accomplished in a very mainstream way—with college degrees and more affluent backgrounds.” — Program staff member

It is essential to apply a broader measure of leadership, including the organization's second-tier leaders, its role and reputation in the community, and its internal decision-making processes.

In addition, the integration of girls' leadership throughout an organization (program planning and delivery, evaluation, and staff and Board positions) is recognized as a best practice in girls' programs. Putting this into practice, however, can be challenging and requires management's full commitment to the effort.

Tools

Leadership assessment

Girls:

- What mechanisms are in place for girls to contribute to program design, implementation, and evaluation? How are their voices incorporated in grant writing?
- Are girls given opportunities to grow into internship or staff roles? What percentage of the staff have been clients?
- Where are alumnae of the program? What are they doing?

Staff:

- How long have most staff been with the organization?
- Is there a built-in system for developing leadership?
- What kind of professional development is available for staff?

Board of Directors:

- Are there young women on the Board? What role do they play? What support mechanisms are in place to facilitate their participation? (Do girls answer this question the same way as adults?)
- Is there diversity on the Board in terms of sector (business, government, non-profit)?
- What type of mentoring is available for staff (not just the Executive Director) and Board?

Tools

Leadership assessment

Community:

- How does the organization seek community input?
- How is the organization involved as a member of the community it serves? Are girls acting as leaders in the community?
- How is the organization perceived by peer organizations? The local community it serves?

Organization:

- Who represents the organization besides the Executive Director? Are girls, staff, and Board members involved in site visits?
- How are decisions made in the organization?



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN FUNDERS AND PROGRAMS

The need and desire to forge closer working relationships between funders and programs became crystal clear from this project. Participants called for bringing funders and programs together to engage in honest conversation away from the power imbalance and pressures of individual funder-grantee relationships, and working more closely to advance a common cause—the success and sustainability of girls’ programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide more non-monetary resources and technical assistance to grantees.

- Many foundations are currently providing non-monetary resources and technical assistance to grantees. This support could be broadened to include hosting workshops for grantees, sponsoring conference attendance, and providing media coverage or marketing resources to support a project. Foundations can also convene grantees to allow the exchange of best practices and create a community of programs.

Build and maintain working relationships between funders and organizations.

- Program staff expressed a strong desire for closer, non-paper relationships with foundation program officers, beyond the formal grant application and reporting process. Informal site visits that allow funders to interact with girls but minimize the staged “dog and pony show” are particularly attractive.
- Funders recognize that developing closer relationships with grantees encourages honesty, especially in evaluation, and facilitates the communication of real program needs. Funders also realize the benefits of becoming more connected to the community through attending community events and joining coalitions. To achieve this change, funders need to find methods to deal with the challenge of time constraints, the power imbalance, and a fear of compromising objectivity when evaluating programs that are “friends.”

Streamline grant application and reporting processes.

- Foundations should simplify their grant application and reporting processes, especially for grants less than \$10,000. Program staff often spend the same amount of time writing proposals and reports for \$5,000 grants as for \$50,000 grants. Foundations should commit to multi-year grants, with designated evaluation checkpoints along the way. This will minimize the amount of proposal-writing that programs have to engage in, allowing them to concentrate on doing the real work of social change.

Women's funds should collaborate and advocate for grantees.

- Many girls' programs struggle with getting funding because of their gender-specific focus. Not surprisingly, girls' organizations identify women's funds as their biggest supporters. Women's funds should collaborate to leverage funding for grantees, and to advocate for increased gender-specific funding from larger, traditional foundations. Women's funds could also champion increased staff development opportunities and higher salaries in the larger funding community.





Where do we go from here?

The goal of improving philanthropy for urban girls' programs is certainly within reach. Interviews and convenings with a diverse group of funders and girls' programs demonstrate strong enthusiasm and commitment to working together to make this happen.

In the Bay Area, preliminary recommendations from this project resulted in two new initiatives:

- A new network of Bay Area funders of girls' programs.
- A collaborative staff development institute for women service providers who work with urban girls.

These efforts could be adapted in other regions.

More Information:

If you are interested in learning more, please contact the Three Guineas Fund at info@3gf.org

Footnotes:

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