

**Workshop Synopsis**

**Networks as a Strategy to Advance Foundation Priorities**

**About The strategy group**

The strategy group is a small team of passionate and deeply committed national leaders driven toward a vision of social, economic, educational and health equity; improving the life conditions of our fellow humans; and supporting organizations like foundations, schools and nonprofits to achieve their potential as agents of social good.

We believe in the power of a compelling mission woven with the passion of individuals and organizations to bring about lasting change in our most vulnerable communities. It’s our experience that mission and passion can lead to remarkable innovations; all communities have the power to bring about change. But, communities often need support and an approach or strategy to ensure that the needed conditions and capacities are in place to birth and sustain a new way of relating, living, working, educating, and caring for others in community.

**About the Presenters**

The workshop will be led by Dr. William Moore, Principal at The strategy group and Kristin Johnstad, Senior Consultant to The strategy group and Principal at Johnstad & Associates, a Minneapolis-based consulting practice focused on strengthening the capacity of network leaders to do what they do better.

Kristin works with network and organizational leaders to build their network literacy and change the world by changing how they see and think about pressing social problems in the world. She has an extensive history with large, global youth-serving systems like the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and The Salvation Army. She develops and introduces resources for network leaders to use in strengthening their systems and the communities in which they work. She has worked with hundreds of “Healthy Communities – Healthy Youth” collaboratives and was a key technical assistance leader in the REACH Healthcare Foundation’s 5-year investment in transforming rural communities in Kansas and Missouri to implement network principles and strategies to create a rural community culture of health. Kristin is currently working with Dr. Moore in the planning work for a potential future strategic investment by St. David’s in their rural communities.

The strategy group is led by Dr. William Moore, an advisor to foundations and nonprofits, Senior Fellow at the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership and retired Vice-President of the REACH Healthcare Foundation in Kansas City. Bill has spent his entire career working in our most challenged communities - both urban and rural - and with vulnerable populations to find solutions to our most pressing social, education, and health concerns. As the former Vice-President of Programs and Evaluation at the REACH Healthcare Foundation he co-created and guided implementation of community projects designed to give rural communities a chance to redefine what it means to live in rural America and be healthy. In Kansas City, Kansas he led the investment of funds to find out why urban economically disadvantaged persons and their families could not access the health care services they needed. And, at the Institute for Research and Reform in Education he worked with dozens of under-performing, poor urban schools to improve the engagement of students, the alignment of instructional content, and the rigor of curricula to prepare youth for academic success and improved life chances. His personal mission is to help people and improve the world we all live in. Previously, Bill served as the Director of Research in two urban school systems and at two research universities. He is a former professor at the University of Kansas Medical Center, Senior Research Associate at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and Senior Researcher at the University of Kansas Medical Center’s Cancer Center.

**About the Workshop**

The workshop is designed for foundation board members, leadership and program staff to better understand what intentional community change networks are, their unique features, their purposes, and how foundations can use this approach to more effectively advance their strategic priorities. The workshop facilitators will begin by introducing intentional change networks by covering topics such as:

* What is a network and how is it different than a collaborative or coalition?
* What are the key features of effective networks and what supports do they need?
* Why are networks becoming a key tool for foundations to advance their strategic priorities?
* How are networks being used today in communities?
* How does leadership look different in a network?
* How do networks stimulate community innovation and citizen engagement?
* Why are networks so effective at creating new partnerships and collaborations?

The workshop will then focus the remainder of the time on recommendations for funders, based on the lived experiences of funders seeking to use networks to advance their strategic priorities. The facilitators will lead a discussion with participants focused on:

* First, invest in building community capacity to establish the foundational conditions and capacities for community networks to emerge and thrive;
* Recognize the different strategic purposes of networks – stimulating innovation and collaboration, bringing community together, creating community capacity for future challenges;
* Complex community change initiatives (CCIs) require 1) an organizing framework such as networks that must be tailored to local conditions, and 2) technical assistance to support messy work;
* Foundations are well advised to invest in their own learning and Internal change to culture and relationships to support networks. Be prepared to acknowledge your own need to learn alongside your grantees and be authentic in your own learning process.
* Investing in community networks is hard work because it challenges long-standing traditions, ways of thinking and behaving, and local culture
* Supporting the community’s network to become more intentional in operating with a network lens via your own narrative, grantmaking, capacity building, and community change-making
* Structuring funding to support network development, infrastructure and expansion is critical. Are you structured to do grants to nontraditional foundation partners or to fund a fiscal agent representing a network of dozens of organizations – some of which would not be eligible for your grants in the past?
* Just like Collective Impact, there will be a learning curve within your organization, be patient and recognize that unintentional missteps will happen.
* Invest the time for internal shared learning, reflection and adaptation.

The workshop will be interactive with many opportunities for participants to share their own experiences, dialogue with their colleagues, and try out some of the tools used frequently in networks. Participants will receive several publications, tools, and web-based resources to reinforce their learning.

For more information:

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