DONOR FUNDING TO NETWORKS: DONOR CASE STUDY B

This case study is one of nine capturing the experience and insights from a diverse set of donors about how they fund networks. It is part of an in-depth research project undertaken by Collective Mind to help both donors and networks to improve funding to and fundraising for networks.

All case studies were developed by the respondents using a provided template and have been anonymized to allow us to share them publicly. Other research products – including nine case studies of networks and a "how to" guide for network funding and fundraising – are also available at www.collectivemindglobal.org.

Each donor case study provides insights on:
- The donor's funding strategy
- The donor's operational approach to funding/grantee management
- The challenges and reflections of the donor

DONOR B PROFILE

- **Donor location**: Europe
- **Geographic funding scope**: Africa, Latin America, and Europe
- **Types of networks funded**: As an operational foundation with its own multi-stage network, does not fund external projects or networks, but all projects are part of the foundation's network structure
- **Types of funding provided to networks**: Network management activities (i.e. strategy, monitoring, evaluation, communication, events) and financial resources/funding (i.e. projects within the network/ecosystem, researching on funding opportunities for the network and its members)
- **Percentage of network grantees**: All projects are part of the Foundation's network structure - even though not all projects are networks
- **Donor's definition of networks**: A collaboration of actors that understand their interrelationship is paramount for their work and societal participation

ORGANIZATIONAL FUNDING STRATEGY

WHY DO YOU FUND NETWORKS?

Networks are of great importance for our work. Collaboration and exchange of scientific- and pedagogical-content knowledge as well as of international practice experiences leads to a better understanding of and innovation in the complex field we work in. By working with networks, we were able to build an ecosystem for innovation, where actors from different societal sectors work together to foster our common goals and strategies.

WHAT TYPES OF FUNDING DO YOU PROVIDE TO NETWORKS?

- Funding for network management including strategy, monitoring, evaluation, communication, and networking events
- Financial resources/funding for innovative projects within the network/ecosystem and research on funding opportunities for the network and its members

HOW FLEXIBLE ARE THE FUNDS THAT YOU PROVIDE TO NETWORKS?

The networks are intended to provide both flexibility and continuity for their peers. That's why network funding is provided long-term and sustainably as well as short-term and unbureaucratically.

WHAT CONDITIONS, IF ANY, DO YOU PLACE ON YOUR FUNDING TO NETWORKS?

We operationally fund our own networks, but for projects within the network the main conditions are:
- Strategically and financially sound project/network planning
- Strong impact orientation

HOW DO YOU SELECT THE NETWORKS THAT YOU FUND?

We operationally fund our own networks.

ORGANIZATIONAL FUNDING MANAGEMENT

HOW DO YOU OVERSEE THE USE OF YOUR FUNDS?

The main instrument to oversee and monitor the use of funds is contracts with the network coordinating institution that include financial and programmatic reporting. This can be collaboration agreements or contribution agreements.

DO YOU CHANGE YOUR APPROACH AND PROCEDURES TO WORK WITH NETWORKS AS COMPARED WITH OTHER GRANTEES?

No.

WHAT OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES, OR IMPACTS DO YOU REQUIRE NETWORKS TO DEMONSTRATE FOR THEIR FUNDING FROM YOU?

The outputs, outcomes, and impacts are not pre-defined because every network has its very own context. To cope with the different contexts and to work with their respective complexity, we flexibly adapts our network strategy and goals, outputs, outcomes, and impacts as well as our monitoring and evaluation, which are collaboratively defined with the network peers/members. This openness leads to a co-creation of systemic impact and long-term engagement.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ROLE WITHIN THE NETWORKS YOU FUND?

As we concurrently coordinate and fund our networks, we really alternate between conveners, weavers, advocates, organizers, evaluators, and communicators. Still, the foundation makes sure that each role is filled by at least one more peer.

DONOR REFLECTIONS

WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL CHALLENGES YOU ENCOUNTER IN FUNDING NETWORKS?

- Evaluation and communication of a network's achievements (showcase the extraordinary impact)
- Find common ground (e.g., on what the impact should look like) between actors from different sectors is always a big deal
- Find and activate the intrinsic motivation in the peers to actively participate in the network activities
- Fill the different roles that structure and form the network
- Build a collaborating community
- Build trust in the community

WHAT INFLUENCE DO YOU HAVE WITHIN THE NETWORK?

We fill many roles in the networks, which leads to a lot of influence. This influence is used to engage the peers in the strategic, thematic, and programmatic planning of the network – as the networks grow and articulate, this influence is more and more shared and decentralized.

WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM WORKING WITH NETWORKS?

Networks rely on motivation, trust, and actions. To run and manage a network, the balance has to be nurtured between collaborative actions and time to establish a community.

HAVE YOU INTEGRATED THESE LESSONS INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION'S STRATEGY AND/OR OPERATIONS?

Collaboration, co-construction, continuity, and sustainability are important pillars of our organization's strategy and operations – though the lessons from international networks on the importance of trust and motivation made these values more important in everyday work.

HOW WOULD YOU CHANGE THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU FUND NETWORKS? WHAT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO FUND NETWORKS?

Starting alone and building a network from scratch is not easy. It would be convenient to co-fund and thereby establish collaboration and co-creation from the beginning.

IN YOUR VIEW, HOW CAN DONORS BE MOST SUPPORTIVE TO NETWORKS?

This depends very much on the network structure. To support a network, donors have to create and communicate incentives for each actor and the greater good to participate and be part of a network. It is important to visualize how each actor can benefit and provide from/to the network. Donors have to provide their time – and resources for other institutions to spend theirs for the network.