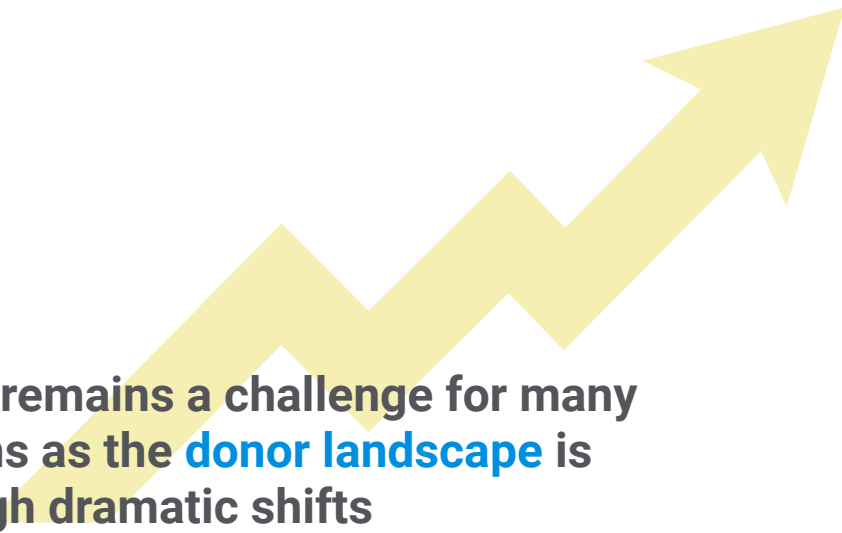





2018

ANNUAL LEARNING REPORT

At the Kauffman Foundation, learning and continuous improvement are core values that drive our work. Over the past year, associates, alongside grantees and other partners, developed new insights and lessons that can be applied to increase our impact moving forward. This brief summarizes four key themes from grant reports, external evaluations, and staff presentations to the Board of Trustees in 2018.

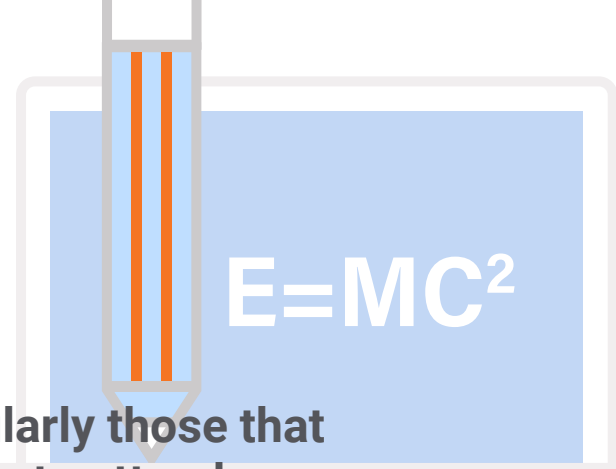


Fundraising remains a challenge for many organizations as the **donor landscape** is going through dramatic shifts

1 EXAMPLE

The local chapter of a national nonprofit reported that while most community members see the organization as an agent for positive change, they often cannot provide specifics on its impact in the community. As a result, simply increasing the organization's existing fundraising strategies have not been sufficient to overcome the increasing demands of donors to understand more about its impact before they give.

- For some newer organizations, securing large financial contributions is less likely until data are available about the program's long-term impact on participants. As a result, it is often necessary to adjust fundraising expectations for new programs depending on how long it will take for program impact data to be available.
- Web-based fundraising campaigns through social media generally require organizations to have large followings on the major platforms, like Twitter and Facebook. To be successful, it may be necessary to use professional consulting services to build a social media presence before considering this as a viable revenue option.
- The landscape for donor engagement is changing and requires new strategies to be successful. In particular, donors today require tailored, high-touch relationships with the organizations they fund, including understanding specific details on its programming and impact. As a result, simply improving traditional strategies around donor engagement may not be enough to overcome the increasing demands of donors.

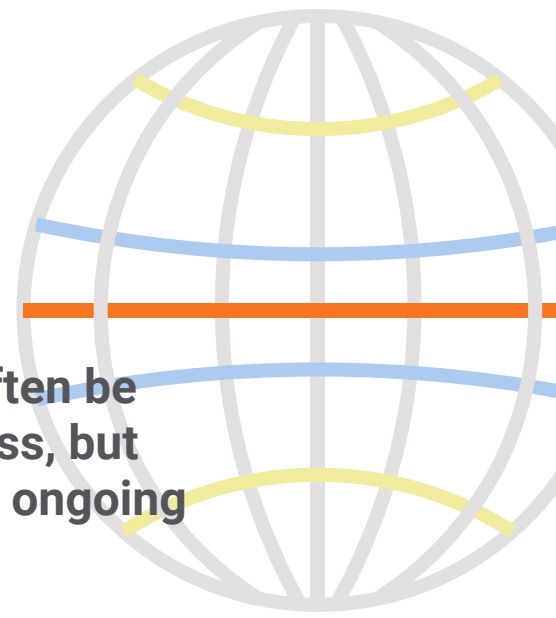


College students, particularly those that are the first in their family to attend or are returning as an adult, need specific additional supports

2 EXAMPLE

A local nonprofit is working to address the issue of institutional debt in two ways. First, it is helping potential college students access grant funding to pay down previous college debts. Second, it is convening postsecondary institutions to discuss potential changes in their policies that would reduce this and other potential barriers for adults seeking to return to school and earn a degree.

- While postsecondary institutions are working to provide a more supportive campus environment and connect students to a variety of services, they may lack the capacity to adequately implement these solutions. Programs may need to look outside of campus resources and create new partnerships that have the capacity to deliver critical resources to students in need. Part of the Kansas City Scholars program now includes resources for colleges to increase their capacity to support first-generation students.
- Adult students returning to college have to balance a much larger and complex number of considerations than traditional students entering straight from high school. Some of these are well known, like the challenges of balancing work and family commitments or having more significant transportation challenges. However, there are less obvious barriers like reduced access to scholarship information and more uncertainty about what degree will be most valuable in the job market.
- Institutional debt is one of the largest barriers to adult postsecondary completion. Because postsecondary institutions will not release an official transcript until all outstanding debts are paid, adult students have a very difficult time getting re-enrolled if they want to go back to school. Organizations or programs should include an assessment of whether there exists a ready supply of capable people to staff the project.

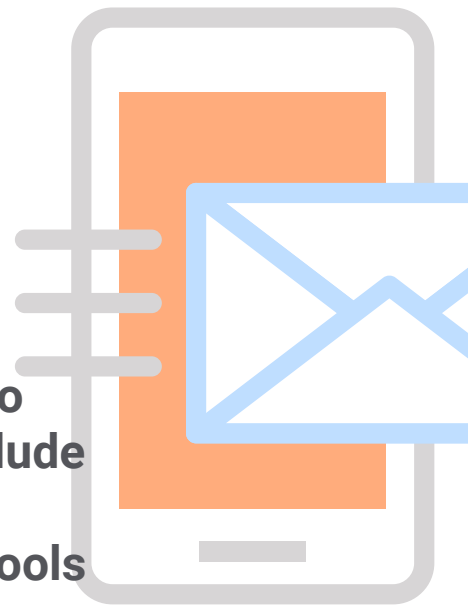


Building partnerships can often be critical to a program's success, but require careful planning and ongoing management

3 EXAMPLE

Four nonprofits that focus on attracting and training teachers and school leaders collaborated to solve a mutual challenge: recruitment. They hosted a joint recruitment event at a local university, as well as multiple collaborative events at their respective organizations to leverage each of their unique offers to potential participants and to foster best placement from the overall pool of applicants. These events led to an increase in the number of applicants for all four organizations within the first year.

- Organizations working in the same schools to develop teacher and leader pipelines may intersect with one another in ways that lead to confusion among organizational leaders, frustration between the organizations and their clients, and a sense of competition that could ultimately put student outcomes at risk. To create strategic alignment between partners, local leaders in this space now hold bi-monthly meetings that help these programs break down silos, build trust with one another, and create mutually beneficial and timely solutions to challenges as they arise.
- For programs that are delivered by independent affiliates, the process of identifying and creating formal partnerships with those affiliates can be streamlined by having a standardized approach to due diligence. This both saves time and ensures better alignment around program implementation expectations. In addition, with this structure in place, affiliates tend to be more stable and lead to longer-term commitments.
- Apprenticeship or internship-based programs may be able to reduce internal costs and increase the chances of successful placement by requiring that organizations hosting an apprentice have a tailored onboarding process. In addition to helping the apprentice gain a better understanding of the organization they are joining, it also facilitates deeper relationships and increases the likelihood of additional placement opportunities in the future.



Efforts to influence policy tend to be more effective when they include people directly affected by the decision and an array of media tools to **spread the message**

4 EXAMPLE

According to research conducted by the Foundation, entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs universally worry about two things: finding necessary funding and competing with larger businesses. Policies that explicitly meet these concerns are likely to earn more support and have a greater impact, particularly on newer and minority business owners who often feel left behind.

- The demands of running a business make it challenging for entrepreneurs to engage in public policy advocacy. As a result, entrepreneurs are often absent from policy debates, and policymakers lack entrepreneurs' perspectives about how to support new businesses. Greater entrepreneurial advocacy would add value both to policymakers who would gain real insights into the challenges of running businesses and to entrepreneurs who would be empowered to change policy.
- When engaging in advocacy, local leaders are often a critical voice for reaching and influencing policymakers. Through the use of toolkits, chapter or network calls, and ongoing coaching, local leaders can be equipped to advocate directly for their needs. And as a result, policymakers may be more likely to engage when it is clear that there are direct implications of a policy for constituents in their district or state.
- With fairly modest resources, organizations can be effective advocates for policy improvements. Five key factors for leading effective advocacy efforts are: strong leadership that is committed to a long-term strategy; a narrow focus on a small number of policy priorities; advocacy messages that are grounded in research; regular personal contacts with policymakers; and use of multiple media channels to educate a broader audience and build grassroots support.