

Doing **Good** in the 21st Century

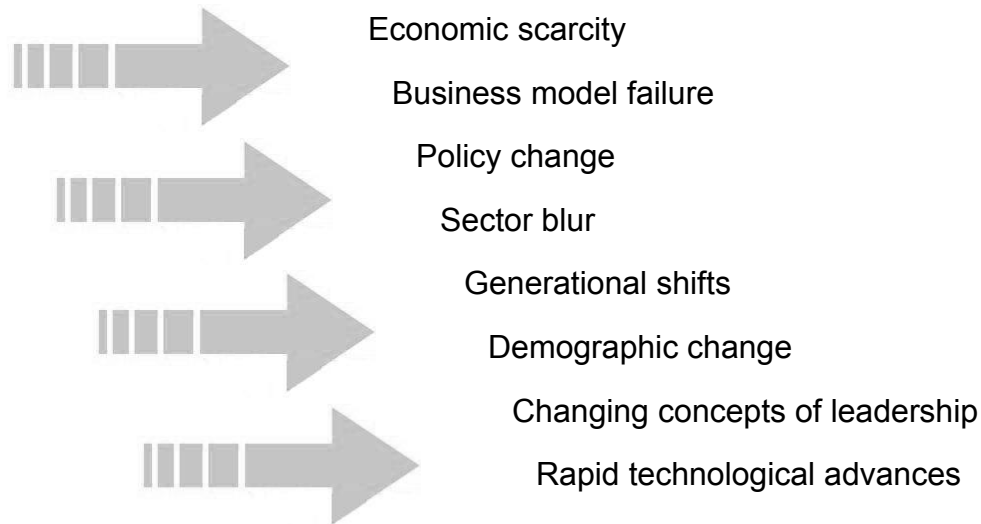
Voices from the Field

Reporting from the 2013 Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy conference



Seismic shifts in the environment in which organizations, individuals, and networks interested in “doing good” advance their objectives have left many struggling to find a new path to success.

Many converging factors are driving the need for change in the social sector, and putting pressure on nonprofits and philanthropies to think differently and work differently.

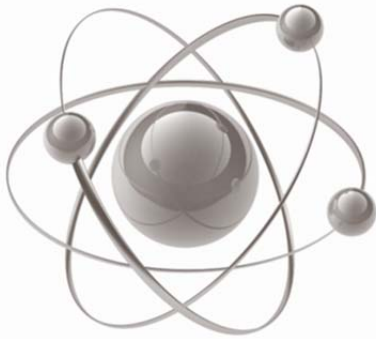


How must the social sector adapt to succeed in meeting these 21st Century challenges and opportunities?

La Piana Consulting and Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP) launched our joint exploration of this question last spring at the EPIP National Conference, co-hosting a workshop session to look more closely at these emerging trends and to surface examples of individuals, organizations, and networks that are proving their ability to succeed in the new reality. We also asked conference participants, along with some attendees of the Council on Foundations Annual Conference the following weekend, to share their views with us on video.

Highlights from these activities were published in the spring as a “conversation-starter.” With this follow-up “*Voices from the Field*” report and the accompanying video series we hope to take the conversation to the next level.

Accelerating CHANGE, Increasing COMPLEXITY



New Players – New Models – Big Data. The ecosystem in which we work is increasingly complex and the pace of change is accelerating, demanding ever more nimble and responsive solutions.

Notice that we said “solutions,” not “organizations” or “leaders.” Yes, we need to develop more agile organizations and become more creative leaders, but with the rise of the social entrepreneur and technology-enabled individual actors setting out to affect change, no longer are nonprofit organizations or foundations the de facto leaders of social change efforts.

Interdependence, Connectedness, and Sector Blur

Today’s big challenges require coordinated solutions. No single organization or person can “do it all,” but any organization or person *can* play a game-changing role. Today, our organizations and sector leaders are just part of a broad and increasingly diverse landscape; one that poses new opportunities for cross-sector collaboration as well as greater competition for resources, talent, ideas, and mind share.





“...as the winds blow in different directions, you're just gonna have to adjust your sails and do something different to get to that new place.”

Trista Harris, Minnesota Council on Foundations
[click on the image to hear more]

So what does “doing something different” look like? And how will the new realities of today’s social sector environment shape the successes of tomorrow?

1. Leadership is **not a person**

Leadership was a key theme in our discussions—not surprising, given that we were talking to emerging (and experienced) leaders. Going into this process we posited that although new leadership models are being developed and tested, we have yet to see the future fully emerge as the highly diverse next generation of nonprofit leaders will themselves shape and define it. What we heard coalesce from our many conversations was that “leadership” goes far beyond individual “leaders” —and yes, while examples are out there, there is still a long way to go.

2. It’s about **balance**

The other piece that became apparent is that to navigate this environment of constant change, success will require the ability to balance—to hold and act on sometimes divergent ideas simultaneously. To succeed we must be acutely **aware of power dynamics**, and not afraid to **use power**. We must **invest**, and also **share**. We must **embrace distribution**, and also **connection**. We must have great **patience**, and great **impatience**. We must **span boundaries**, while always **appreciating boundaries**.

Leadership is not a person

In many cultures shared leadership is the norm; not so in most mainstream American organizations. That isn't to say there aren't some great examples in the nonprofit sector. Among those called out at the conference were Teach for America (with two CEOs working from two different locations), National Center for Lesbian Rights (experimenting with a Deputy Director position), Social Venture Partners (run by an "Executive Connector"), and the Atlanta Opportunity Zones (with a strong focus on listening to and being guided by community voices). It is



"We need to move from thinking about leadership as the behavior of an individual and start to think about leadership as a process by which many actors align their efforts to make change together... This is not really a new paradigm; it's a new way of thinking for the dominant culture."

--Deborah Meehan, Leadership Learning Community



not an easy transition for most organizations to make. More than one speaker referenced the tension between the concept of heroic leadership and models that emphasize more shared, or collective, leadership. Too often organizational structure and organizational culture support—and even demand—a single charismatic individual leading the charge.

Clearly, one size does not fit all. We need different kinds of leaders for different kinds of problems. We also need to think differently about leadership development, and how to prepare both individuals and organizations to thrive in a world where traditional forms of hierarchy aren't conducive to maximizing community impact.

Sharing Power



Collective Leadership

What is collective leadership? What does it require?
A sampling of ideas put forth at the conference:

It is

- A web, as opposed to a hierarchy*
- An expectation: a leader in every chair*
- Service- and servant-minded leadership*
- Thinking abundance*
- An elevator to innovation*

It requires

- Support, empowerment, diversity, cultural competency*
 - Continuous learning*
 - Trust—and the time to build it*
 - Cross-sectoral translation*
 - Open acknowledgement of power dynamics*
-

The awareness and use of power

The consensus among these philanthropists: we need a different kind of leadership—shared leadership, collaborative leadership, *collective* leadership. Sharing leadership means sharing power. Can those *in power share power*?

There is individual power, organizational power, and the power of a community coming together around a shared passion or goal. Where does power come from? The traditional answer: from position; from influence. But it also comes from diversity. Much of the wisdom and perspective an individual brings to his or her work comes from life experience; those with different life experiences bring insights that others cannot. Power from diversity is often power unrealized, however—because other forms of power get in the way.



Some individuals, organizations, and communities are supremely comfortable with sharing power. Many more are not. Larger structures are often more hierarchical. There is privilege inherent in structure.

Those in power need humility. Leaders must be humble and accessible—and *listen*.

“The needs and the experiences that... people bring to the table are very different. When you step down a little bit and say, “This is what I’m not,” I think that makes you humble, and that makes you understand that you don’t have all the answers. And that helps you listen.”

--Efrain Gutierrez, FSG

• • •
“We need more leadership from those in non-positional authority. Leaders can be at any level of organization or society.

--workshop participant

• • •



“...we need to examine the power dynamics and be transparent that they exist. They’re there.”

Kate Seely, EPIP

[click on the image to hear more]

It is not enough to *have* power; we must use it. Advocacy is one way to do so. Those interested in “doing good” must use the power of their voice—and the voices of those they seek to impact—to shape conversations, influence systems, and affect policy. This is how “Big Change” will happen.

Spotlight

Levi Strauss Foundation’s Pioneers in Justice Initiative

In addition to navigating the transfer of leadership from one generation to another, the social justice sector is recognizing the need to retool in order to remain relevant, vital, and effective while working at the front lines of change on the social issues of our day. The Levi Strauss Foundation understands that this transition to “Social Justice Version 2.0” will require more than a mere technology upgrade. The Pioneers in Justice initiative is supporting a select group of next generation leaders to explore and test how new ways of leading, collaborating, and communicating—all deeply rooted in values—can build powerful alliances and drive community engagement to achieve common goals around equity, opportunity, and fairness.

Visit the [Pioneers in Justice website](#) to learn more about the program and view video profiles of the first cohort of Pioneers in Justice.



“[We need to] educate the nonprofit/
philanthropic world around advocacy and what
they are allowed to do. If you aren’t at the table,
you are on it—and right now we are on it.”

--workshop participant



For more on Identity, Diversity, and Power...

Check out [this 5-minute video](#) featuring excerpts from our interviews with Michael Smith, Kate Guedj, Efrain Gutierrez, Rahsaan Harris, Zeke Spier, and Beth Herz.



A commitment to **invest**... and to **share**

It's a common refrain: *as a sector, we must invest in our future leaders*. Yet most of the time it is not "the sector" making the actual investment, it is an individual organization or funder. Many do this willingly—even eagerly—while others hesitate to make a significant investment in junior staff who quite likely will end up moving on to another job, perhaps even a job outside of the sector. This is shortsighted. EPIP members point out the need to think more broadly about professional development and professional movement.



"In the social sector you have to move on to move up professionally."

--workshop participant

"We need to think of [professional development] as something three dimensional, rather than linear."

--workshop participant



We must invest in people, and conceptualize that investment as something of benefit far beyond our own organizational walls. We must do the same with data. We must invest in data collection, use that data, and share what we learn. We cannot hoard either our human or our intellectual capital, but instead must connect and collaborate with others, pooling our resources for the greater good.

Spotlight



The Strive Partnership

Data sharing within the Strive Partnership and other collective impact initiatives in the Strive Cradle to Career Network exemplifies how pooling information resources instead of allowing them to remain siloed can drive evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement. Such data transparency can be a challenge, especially for cross-sector partnerships, so it is just as important to invest in building trusting relationships as it is to develop shared measures, methods of tracking them, and analytical capacity to make sense of the results. The Strive model's use of tools like the community report card helps make shared data meaningful and actionable.

For more on the realities of collecting and sharing data within a collective impact initiative, see Geoff Zimmerman's two-part blog, [A Day in the Life of a Data Manager](#).

Distribution... with connection

The call for connection and collaboration in the social sector is nothing new. For well over a decade, philanthropy has urged nonprofits to work together to reduce duplication and make a greater impact. More recently, foundations themselves have begun experimenting with joining forces to achieve common goals.

“Distribution” is an equally important concept, integral to any discussion of collaboration. Distribution of leadership and power is often easier to talk about than to accomplish, yet is common in high-functioning collaborative relationships and networks. These approaches also require distribution of effort, with each partner valued for their specialties and strengths and playing niche roles as part of a bigger strategy; and distribution of resources, with multiple parties seeking and contributing both financial and human capital in service of a larger goal. And when collaborative efforts succeed, or fall short? There must be distribution of credit and accountability.



“Within a good sports team or in a basketball team, if you're a jump shooter, you should shoot your jump shot. And when the ball is passed to you, you know your role, and you do it. **But someone has to pass you the ball.**”

--Rahsaan Harris, EPIP



New technologies—and new ways of *using* technology—are supporting distributed innovation. Organizations cannot afford to rely solely on internal knowledge and ideas to advance their mission, but must seek out and work with others whose expertise can enrich the discussion. Addressing the challenges we face requires collaboration, and collaboration requires connection... *and* distribution.

Spotlight



UCP Life Labs

UCP Life Labs, a technology and grassroots-focused initiative of United Cerebral Palsy, is dedicated to identifying, developing, and supporting ideas that will make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities—wherever those ideas may come from. Connection and collaboration between a broad range of individuals and organizations are key components of its strategy. A recent example: Life Labs discovered the Indiegogo project of mechanical and software engineer Steve McHugh, who—in response to a Google-sponsored contest—was attempting to crowdfund and build the first ever eye-control app using Android and Google Glass for motorized wheelchair users. Life Labs supported the campaign and connected McHugh with a local UCP affiliate willing to provide a motorized wheelchair for prototyping and testing his designs.

Patience... and impatience

Change can't wait.

Change takes time.

Both are true. How do we hold these two concepts simultaneously, and how does doing so transform our efforts to “do good”? In short, we must **cross-train to be better agents of change.**

To **Work With Urgency**, we have to be like a sprinter, getting out of the blocks quickly and putting in intense effort to achieve a significant *short-term goal*.

To **Work As Long As It Takes**, we have to be like a marathon runner, managing our pace so that we can go the distance in achieving a significant *long-term goal*.

In reality, the work of the social sector has more in common with a marathon than a sprint, but it is the sprinter's sense of urgency that draws many to the field and guards against complacency in the face of slow-moving indicators of change. We must *all* be impatient, and recognize that change starts here: with ourselves, our organizations, our networks. And we must *all* be patient, willing to forgo the quick win in favor of a more thoughtful and nuanced long-term approach to the complex problems we face. Change *is* possible—and necessary! —and we cannot wait to start. But true transformation will take time.



“...Maybe some indicators are moving in the right direction... but they're not moving in that direction fast enough.”

Diana Church, Church World Service
[\[click on the image to hear more\]](#)



“...The most important changes in our world don't happen in a year, or two, or three, or five. They take a few decades.”

Aaron Dorfman, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
[\[click on the image to hear more\]](#)





“We talk a lot about advocacy, and organizing, and system change. We all know how long that takes, but that's not the only thing that takes a long time. Changing mindsets, changing structures within organizations, is also something that takes a great deal of patience and courage.”

-- Sharmila Rao Thakkar, The Siragusa Foundation



How do we know we're making a difference? We need to become more adept at measuring both short-term and long-term change, while at the same time being open to the idea that not all change is easy to measure.



“Really successful organizations will be ones that are not so tied to how they do the work, but what they're trying to accomplish in the world—and that actually know when they accomplish it.”

--Trista Harris, Minnesota Council on Foundations



Spotlight



Partnership for Safety and Justice

Partnership for Safety and Justice (PSJ) is a statewide advocacy organization in Oregon that is pioneering a new model for criminal justice reform that works with those most impacted by crime and the criminal justice system. Founded in 1999, PSJ (formerly the Western Prison Project) was the first to unite all of these constituencies in advocating for more just, effective, prevention-based approaches to community safety.

Frustrated with the traditionally reductionist, often fear-based approaches to criminal justice reform, PSJ leverages a combination of coalition building, legislative advocacy, grassroots leadership development, organizing, public education, and research to create social change.

PSJ has achieved numerous advocacy victories, including defeating legislative measures that would have resulted in increased incarceration of non-violent offenders and new prison construction in the state—and instead allowing for the investment of those resources toward more “upstream” solutions.

PSJ's coalition-based approach has proven an effective strategy for achieving real change.



Boundary-spanning... with appreciation of boundaries

Some boundaries need to be crossed; others are to be encouraged, and even cherished. Both types were the focus of conversation at the EPIP conference.

Some boundaries divide us, even if unintentionally. These stem from our identity, our background, or our role. For-profit/nonprofit/public, funder/grantee/recipient of services, field of practice, title, age, race, gender, sexual orientation, family status. Our perspective is shaped by all of these things, and hard as we try to understand the perspective of others that are different from us, no one can do this perfectly. We *must* try. We must truly and transparently engage with those who are different, and include those who “span” such boundaries in our conversations.

Leaders must be encouraged to move and communicate in different “worlds” and to translate as they go. They must cross boundaries, test boundaries, push boundaries, and span boundaries.



“...philanthropy needs to invest in individuals that share this commitment to change... and allow them to move in whatever way they want to move.”

Rahsaan Harris, EPIP

[click on the image to hear more]



“These divisions between sectors are false divisions—we need trans-sector innovation.”

--workshop participant

“Innovation happens at the margins of disciplines and leaders who are comfortable there have a greater potential for impact.”

--workshop participant



Technology is hugely supportive of boundary-spanning in that it allows anyone to be in touch with anyone else in the world both quickly and visually. Connection, collaboration, and the aggregation of differing perspectives are easier now than they have ever been. At the same time, we still need individuals with deep experience in multiple realities to help others with less of that experience bridge the inevitable divides.

Other boundaries are critical to our individual and collective well-being. “Doing good” in today’s world is no easy task; there is incredible urgency to the work, and an emotional burden that is often hard to escape. Current tools and norms support and encourage remote work, rapid response, and 24-7 communication; current pressures are many and varied. Nonprofit leaders of today *and* tomorrow need time to reflect, refresh, and recharge. Honoring and providing those opportunities can mean being intentional about organizational culture and expectations around “off-hours” time, creating “flatter” structures that are less dependent on single individuals, and providing opportunities for sabbatical.



“EDs need to wear too many hats, be expert in too many things.
It leads to burnout.”

--workshop participant



Let’s face it, though: the 24-7 mindset is hard to avoid, and many nonprofit professionals (particularly the younger generations) value flexibility during what has traditionally been considered the “work day.” *Allowing* work-life boundaries to blur can be as effective in some situations as supporting them is in others.

Spotlight



The Durfee Foundation’s Sabbatical Program

Recognizing that creative leaders need time to think and reflect if they are to keep their organizations ahead of the curve, [The Durfee Foundation](#) offers stipends to Los Angeles-area leaders to travel, reflect, or otherwise renew themselves in whatever way they propose. Check out [this video](#) to hear a personal story about the impact this program had on The Los Angeles Center for Law & Justice and its Executive Director, Hellen Hong.



“We had somebody come in and teach us a 30-minute yogic practice that we can do in our work clothes.”

Meriam Good, Mind Science Foundation

[click on the image to hear more]

Looking forward...

Leadership is not a person, and yet transformational change will only happen if every person sees him- or herself as a leader and those in formal leadership positions welcome the leadership of others. The “look” of leadership is changing as the demographics of our country change; the “feel” of leadership will change as well. To succeed in the new reality we must be willing to learn those skills and approaches that do not come naturally to us, and bring our authentic selves to our work. Are we ready? Are our organizations ready? What can each of us do to prepare? What will *you* do?

“Doing Good” Video Series

Check out these other videos in our series,
Doing Good in the 21st Century.

New Realities [5:40]

Technology [5:27]

Diversity [6:19]

Generations [5:30]

Business Models [6:14]

Sector Blur [5:07]

Philanthropy’s Role [6:10]



What three words best describe the leaders – or leadership – that will be most successful in the 21st century?

collaborative
nimble relational curious
welcoming of dialog
caring adaptable
disciplined innovative
transparent open
values-based patient
thoughtful
strategic focused
charismatic
trustworthy
eye-on-the-ball
bold
networked flexible
having passion
honest listening
tenacious analytical humble
inspiring
courageous



Doing Good in the 21st Century: Voices from the Field

A collaboration of La Piana Consulting and Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy

September, 2013

Authored by Heather Gowdy and Melissa Mendes Campos, La Piana Consulting

Thank you to the many individuals who shared their insights with us, on camera and off. Special thanks to:

Carl Ballton, Union Bank Foundation

Guillaume Bergeron, the Grable Foundation

Richard Brown, American Express

Anne Callan, Public Health Fund

Diana Church, Church World Service

Aaron Dorfman, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

Jason Franklin, Bolder Giving

Meriam Good, Mind Science Foundation

Kate Guedj, the Boston Foundation

Efrain Gutierrez, FSG

Teri Hansen, Gulf Coast Community Foundation

Jacob Harold, GuideStar

Rahsaan Harris, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy

Trista Harris, Minnesota Council on Foundations

Beth Herz, Surdna Foundation

Arcelia Hurtado, National Center for Lesbian Rights

Debbie Kobak, Mb Financial Bank

John Kobara, California Community Foundation

Daniel Lee, Levi Strauss Foundation

Nichole Martini, Equality Charter School

Vincent Pan, Chinese for Affirmative Action

Mark Pritchett, Gulf Coast Community Foundation

Christine Reeves, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

Nicole Robinson, Mondelez International Foundation

Consuelo Castro Salinas, Centro Mexicano Para La Filantropia

Kenneth Scott, Alston Beech Foundation

Kate Seely, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy

Michael Smith, Social Innovation Fund

Graciela Padilla Sojo, Fundacion Bancomer

Zeke Spier, Social Justice Fund Northwest

Sharmila Rao Thakkar, the Siragusa Foundation

Jasmine Thomas, Citi Foundation

Jeff Ubois, MacArthur Foundation

Dorshanay Williams, Love out Loud