We wanted to add up all the good you’ve done since 1970.
But that’s a lot of counting.

Mutual of America Financial Group is proud to salute the Minnesota Council on Foundations on your 50 years of promoting philanthropy. We could try to calculate the tremendous impact of your work, but to save time, we’d rather just say “Thank you.”
50 Years Ago
Foundations Came Together, and What a Difference They Have Made

Minnesota has a long history of civic and philanthropic commitment to building healthy and prosperous communities. Fifty years ago, our predecessors in philanthropy saw a need. Prompted by the 1969 tax act, they recognized that Minnesota’s foundations needed a voice to amplify their collective power, and a place to collaborate. With a vision to strengthen our state’s resources, MCF launched in 1970 with a board comprised of representatives of several foundations which continue to be active members and leaders in the field.

Fifty years later, while the desire to collaborate and mobilize our collective voice are the same, in many ways we are different. Given this year’s global pandemic and uprising for racial equity, our role and responsibility in philanthropy is even more prevalent than ever before. I think you’ll enjoy learning more about how our field, our practice and our community have evolved over the years. As I approach the end of my tenure as Board Chair, I feel hopeful about the future and our shared work ahead. As the field of philanthropy comes together through the Minnesota Council on Foundations, we are called to adapt, challenge ourselves and stretch to become better and better at advancing prosperity and equity.

Our history informs us. And our future is bright.

Kim Borton | MCF Board Chair

Our Role and Perspective Has Evolved

At the Minnesota Council on Foundations, we connect, strengthen and mobilize the field of philanthropy in order to collectively advance prosperity and equity.

Fifty years ago, at its founding, MCF was focused on mobilizing. Foundation leaders came together to protect the sector from state and federal policies that threatened the structures and privileges of philanthropy. Over the decades, we have evolved.

Today, while we continue to have a role in protecting the sector, we have extended our collective voice to advocate for critical societal issues that advance justice, equity and democracy. We are no longer organized solely around self-interest; rather, we are organized with deep community interest and commitment.

The year 2020 has emerged as one of multiple crises—challenging every system, structure and societal norm. As we navigate these challenging times, we commit to: connecting with each other, and the broader community, to address immediate needs and advance long-term solutions; strengthening the practice of philanthropy to increase effectiveness and be excellent partners to the nonprofit community; and mobilizing our voice—and our resources for the greater good.

We can, and will, do better together.

Susie Brown | MCF President
Fifteen years ago, Black men, Indigenous people and people of color were not only being killed by the police but targeted for inequity in ways that ranged from the generational impact of redlining to the day-to-day insults of implicit bias. But nobody wanted to talk about this. Or maybe people wanted to ignore it and pretend it would go away.

In the fall of 2005, I donned a suit and tie to stride through the wooden double doors of The Minneapolis Foundation and begin my career in philanthropy. I’d spent the previous six years in jeans and t-shirts at small Black-led nonprofits that advanced equity in their missions. But that’s not how we described it at the time. We talked about serving African Americans and people of color.

We’d say cultural competence. With an occasional “racial justice” thrown in, when the audience seemed with it. We were always struggling for funding. In philanthropy, the term racial justice was out of vogue. A Foundation Center search I’d conducted on the term at the time yielded only four funders in all of America. Instead, everything was structures and systems change. Support for “at-risk” and “marginalized” communities to overcome “barriers.”

To learn all the jargon, I might also have needed to learn a wink and handshake. Being direct and mentioning race, more often than not, could be a quick way to end a conversation. The terms diversity and inclusion had emerged as ways to discuss race without having to confront it directly. And, as I moved deeper into my work at The Minneapolis Foundation and, later, as a consultant and the first director of the Joint Affinity Groups (which has since evolved into CHANGE Philanthropy), the field began landing on the term equity.

One of the simplest ways I’ve seen equity expressed is the need to work towards a society in which you can’t predict advantage or disadvantage on the basis of race or identity. But is this definition nuanced enough about race?

During a year-long fellowship and subsequent partnerships with the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE), I grew deep appreciation for a comprehensive framework for responsive philanthropy in Black communities that identifies a number of tailored policy, practice and other recommendations to advance racial equity.

I learned from partnering with Native Americans in Philanthropy and my current work at Northwest Area Foundation that Native communities take equity in different directions to include sovereignty and self-determination. Racial equity looks different in Asian American communities and Latino communities, too.

Now, in the wake of George Floyd, “racial justice” has come back in vogue. But, at the root of it all is the need for our field and our society to have meaningful discussions on race that really haven’t occurred before. Many have tried hard to avoid such discussions, and few know how to even begin. Race and its legacy of relative harm and advantage—of slavery, colonization and xenophobia—aren’t simple to come to terms with.

Neither is the question of how we should re-imagine race and society as we progress through this year of crisis. Race is complex. But before we coin or re-coin new terms and definitions, or add another theory of change, wouldn’t it be enlightening if we developed the muscle to have truly understanding discussions on race and find ways to do so with open minds and shared respect?

We need to learn how to do this—and follow through—so that the flurry of new racial equity pledges, programs and funding initiatives that are sure to become the in-vogue responses to today’s crises can reach beyond the current moment and achieve the kind of change that lasts.

Paul Bachleitner has worked within the philanthropic and nonprofit sector for over 20 years; leading as the Communications Director at the Northwest Area Foundation, as a national consultant and director of a national affinity group.
To Equity and Beyond

By Camille Cyprian

Most of my career has been spent in the nonprofit sector. I started as a community organizer and trainer, working on social justice campaigns around racial, economic and environmental justice—sound familiar?

In 2015, I became a program officer at a community foundation. The field was what I would call "social service", but not quite "social justice". Foundations began to weave a lens of equity across their grantmaking, primarily in the form of grantee requests. There were even a handful of special projects to support Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) leaders and their organizations.

I’ve observed this approach often in my short time in philanthropy. Fast forward to now, the time has come to explicitly and boldly fund Black, Indigenous and people of color-led racial justice movements.

Like the other structures in society, philanthropy must reckon with its historical function within and perpetuation of anti-Black, racist oppression and reconcile with the communities from which a majority of its wealth has been gained, primarily Black, Indigenous, migrant and immigrant communities. Engaging in this reconciliation requires a posture of humility, heretofore uncommon for our sector.

During my time organizing and leading equity and justice work I have witnessed organizations attempt to address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion through approaches that center in dominant culture—some of the very structures we’re working to disrupt.

Institutional philanthropy must lift the anchors of dominant cultural ideals and strategies. Practitioners in our field must not only regurgitate the rhetoric that the best solutions come from those most directly impacted but must reassess their role from a position of strategy-setting to a position of support.

Having this posture requires being in relationship with individuals and communities that are most directly impacted and holding the complexities of understanding that communities—even communities with shared social identities—are not monolithic.

It is essential to recognize intersectionality when identifying the best and most authentic solutions that foundations have access to.

As we move forward toward a “new normal” we’ll need to embrace new ways of being and doing as a sector, which also means individually and interpersonally. Our work will need to shift, meaningfully, into a space of transformation, which requires trust and relationship.

Transformation starts from within, which means that philanthropy will need to work internally and be different in the ways that it moves and shows up in and with community, in order to do (behave) differently.

2020 has certainly been a catalyzing year of change, both socially and in our sector. Let’s harness the momentum of this moment to truly transform!

Onward.

Camille Caster-Cyprian is a leader, activist, teacher and community healer; leading the Minnesota Council on Foundations as the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

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The Minnesota Council on Foundations was initially formed to respond to public policy threats to the field of philanthropy. At the federal level, the Tax Reform Act of 1969 imposed sweeping changes on private foundations, creating an excise tax, reporting requirements, and minimum payouts. At the state level, the state legislature started exploring how it could reinforce and even strengthen the new federal laws on foundation payouts and reporting. The state legislature started holding hearings on these proposals, and the philanthropic sector was not organized to respond.

The Hill Family Foundation ultimately decided to convene 30 foundation representatives from across the state to discuss their strategy to these new requirements. The Foundation is an attorney at Lathrop GPM and serves on the MCF Board of Directors.

The following interview with Sarah Dunway, a long-time member of MCF’s Government Relations and Public Policy (GRPP) Committee, explores how MCF transitioned and expanded its public policy work to include substantive work that furthers equity, supporting the sector and the broader community. Sarah is an attorney at Lathrop GPM and serves on the MCF Board of Directors.

How long have you been a part of MCF’s Government Relations and Public Policy Committee (GRPP)?

A: I’ve been a committee member since the early 20000s. At that time it met once per year, and there wasn’t much continuity of the work. But we participated in Foundation on the Hill, including efforts to create a flat private foundation excise tax, but there wasn’t much more for the committee to do. Then in 2012, the work became much more interesting as we were allowed to explore a broader range of issues and community impact.

How would you describe the focus of MCF’s policy work in early years?

A: In the early days, MCF focused exclusively on tax policy, at the state level and major funding policies that would affect the sector. There were proposals for major cuts to social services, and we took a position when philanthropy couldn’t fill the gaps created by these cuts. Then, for several years, Endow MN (driven by the community foundations group) became an important part of the committee’s work.

What was happening at MCF and in the community that led up to the decision to broaden MCF’s policy work?

A: The marriage debate (including the proposal in 2012 to codify in law that marriage is between a man and a woman) was the first real policy discussion at the GRPP Committee. At the time, it was clear under the Council’s policy—MCF could not take a position on issues, without changing all of its policies.

The Council focused on non-advocacy work around the marriage amendment, holding trainings and education sessions so that foundations could be involved in a legally compliant way. But, a policy position was not taken—this may have been a factor that led to the change.

The board went through a strategic planning process in 2011. There were two focus areas, and one of them was public policy. This was a huge change. MCF became more responsive to what membership wanted, broadening their overall role.

Public policy is one example where MCF previously took a narrow view of what its role was as an association. It was an evolution of the vision of what this organization stands for. It was interested in occupying a bigger role in the philanthropic community than it had before.

You were on the GRPP Committee as the public policy work shifted to include promoting equity and inclusion. What was it like to be involved in this shift?

A: The board recognized that it just added a whole new platter to the meal, and said—you need to figure out what goes on the platter. They appointed a sub-committee of the GRPP Committee.

At this point, Bob Tracy had joined MCF and the board appointed a committee to develop our public policy policies and procedures. I volunteered to be on the task force, along with several others, and eventually became co-chair of the process. It was a very thoughtful process that took a year and a half.

How did MCF and the committee create a public policy agenda?

A: We had many conversations with members and member networks. The key question being—how do we develop a process for issues, that strikes a balance between being responsive to what members want, while focusing on the agenda.

We ultimately developed a process for soliciting proposals and the level of resources to commit (completed in 2012).

Key Public Policy Moments for Philanthropy and MCF

Imposed an annual payout requirement on foundations and tightened restrictions on their political activity.

The Act also required foundations to pay an excise tax, supporting oversight activities, increased reporting requirements and prohibited self-dealing, among other reforms.

Re-wrote the tax code, substantially reducing tax rates—decreasing the value of the charitable deduction.

2006: Pension Protection Act
Congress passed the act in 2006, imposing new regulations relating to community foundations and grants to certain types of supporting organizations.

2011: Endow Minnesota
MCF and its community foundation members start research and policy conversations on Endow MN, a proposed tax credit to incentivize endowment giving at community foundations.

2012: New Inclusion & Equity Policy Focus
MCF hired its first Director of Public Policy, developed policies and procedures for taking policy positions that promote equity and inclusion and the board approved its first annual advocacy agenda.

2016: Census of 2020
MCF added supporting a fully inclusive, accurate and nonpartisan Census to its advocacy agenda and started organizing the Minnesota Census Mobilization Partnership.

2017: Tax Cuts and Jobs Act
Was passed, imposing new excise taxes on nonprofits and decreasing access to the charitable giving deduction.

2019: Private Excise Tax Simplification
After many years of advocacy, a complex public foundation excise tax was simplified to a flat rate.

2020: Equitable Disaster Recovery
MCF and other nonprofit partners advocated for state and federal support for nonprofits in the wake of Covid-19, building on MCF’s equitable disaster response and recovery policy commitment.
Which issue did MCF first add to its expanded policy agenda? What was the conversation like with the committee and board?

A: As we went through the process of creating the policies and procedures, some came forward with policy ideas. It was helpful because it allowed us to test our process. One of the early issues we quickly coalesced around was disaster relief, after the tornado in North Minneapolis. It became a natural choice because funders were already meeting regularly, thinking about the role of philanthropy, and policy-related ideas emerged.

Democracy work—specifically voting rights, was second. We took early positions that were a little bit higher level, rather than very specific pieces of legislation. The felon re-enfranchisement and ban the box legislation were also happening at the time. The whole concept of access to voting rights were brought to light when the voter ID amendment was on the ballot in 2012. Several member networks focused on these democracy issues.

In MCF’s first 25 years, Minnesota philanthropy shifted its focus from self-preservation to self-improvement. In its second 25 years, how would you describe this policy shift?

A: I think like a lawyer. There is procedural law (the rules of evidence, what gets into a court proceeding), and substantive law (for example, you can’t dump pollutants in soil). The shift of MCF’s work moved from procedural work to substantive work. The National Standards were still fresh. The policy agenda focused on the sector and “how” it does its work.

Today, MCF has shifted its focus to the “work” that members are doing and the support the work needs. We’re talking about inequities and working to improve them. We’re amplifying and creating a place for the substance of the work within philanthropy.

Voices at the national level have also matured and many of the sector issues are federal. With the maturation of the national Council on Foundations, and other leading national advocacy voices, we no longer need to take a leadership role on federal issues. We can play a supporting role, as it opens the opportunity to lead on more substantive matters, and those closer to home.

Describe the way you see foundations currently engaging in advocacy and policy work. And, do you think the current moment may change how foundations engage going forward?

A: Over the last 10+ years I witnessed a growing interest in understanding how we can be involved in advocacy and policy work. Getting at the nuances of what we can and can’t do, while not letting the rules be a barrier. There is a steady drumbeat of more and more people asking those questions, more publications coming out, and more education provided. This will change with the current moments in 2020, as people desire to do more. There is real momentum and interest that is unlike anything I have ever seen.

Do you have predictions of where you see MCF’s public policy work heading in the next 25 years?

A: Well, I think about the current conversations around racial inequity and how it manifests itself in subtle and profound ways. It is already an important part of the work, but I see it becoming even more important. There’s so much more discussion and openness to thinking about racial inequities that will translate into profound and important policy needs and opportunities, and that is why I am excited to continue this work.

Katina Mortensen is the Director of Public Policy for MCF. She works with MCF members to develop MCF’s public policy agenda, while encouraging them to consider how public policy could be part of their grantmaking activities.
Learn how foundations can move from moment data to movement data within the philanthropic sector—truly making a difference within the communities they serve.

By Dr. Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D.

Moment Data vs. Movement Data

Fund what works. That is the unconditional commitment for community foundations.

We understand that knowing what will work – before a program is designed or an intervention is implemented – is challenging. Gathering the data to make an informed recommendation can divert nonprofits from their crucial work. The danger, succinctly stated by my friend Shirley Malcom at the American Association for the Advancement of Science: “We risk spending more time weighing our babies than feeding them.”

To avoid that unproductive prospect, our grantmaking approach at the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation is to ask questions that probe beyond what has traditionally worked to find answers in the data through existing sources or ones we develop.

Three questions inform our grantmaking.

First, we ask not merely “what works” but “what works, for whom, and in what circumstances?” An intervention that works in a Native American community may not succeed in a Latinx or Black or immigrant community. An intervention that works in a rural community may be impractical in an urban setting.

The “for whom, in what circumstances” acknowledges the need to understand unique cultural and sociological attributes of the communities served.

Second, “what is needed?” The philanthropic landscape is littered with well-intentioned remedies for problems communities did not name. We strive to ensure our grantmaking focuses on issues the community has identified.

Third, “what is wanted?” We listen to learn, recognizing that an unwelcome intervention will fail.

Data gleaned from answering these questions ensures we understand who set the agenda and established the priorities, whether proposed interventions are culturally appropriate and what enduring change these interventions will deliver. In short, we ask: who informed the work, who formed the work and who benefits from the work?

In Minnesota, we are fortunate to have valuable data-gathering partners. We have relied on data aggregated by organizations such as Minnesota Compass, the Itasca Project and Greater MSP.

We have filled gaps in needed data ourselves, relieving nonprofits of that task. One example: East Metro Pulse, which regularly measures community vitality and quality of life in Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties. Dozens of nonprofits have used East Metro Pulse to better understand what’s needed in the communities they serve.

We have worked with our partners at the Blandin Foundation on their Rural Pulse initiative to provide data, disaggregated by income, gender, age and more, to inform initiatives statewide, urban and rural.

We talk to our grantees and hold community convenings to learn about their needs and priorities. Our aim is to deliver data of the movement versus data of the moment. The latter is a snapshot of what’s working in this hour. The money disbursed to a mother of hungry children solves this week’s problem, but not next week’s.

Data of the movement is about having the patience and persistence to see an intervention through. Data is not just about figures and numbers. Every data point tells a story. What does it take for that mother to have a fulfilling job that pays a living wage and the childcare that enables her to pursue it?

We all want lasting change for our communities. We want to solve problems rather than resolve an issue. That’s what funding what works means.

Dr. Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D. is the President and CEO of the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation – an organization working to create an equitable, just and vibrant Minnesota where all communities and people thrive.
A Celebration to Remember: MCF’s 50th Anniversary Conference

The Minnesota Council on Foundations kicked off the year 2020 with a celebration at our 50th Anniversary Conference—illuminating philanthropy’s past, present and future. Our largest celebration in recent years, the conference had over 250 MCF members and philanthropic allies in attendance joining together to connect, strengthen and mobilize their impact while collectively advancing prosperity and equity in Minnesota. The 2020 conference was led by 53 dynamic workshop presenters and facilitators who led 16 sessions—attended by both emerging and existing industry leaders throughout the state.

Various dynamic keynotes were led by Naaima Khan, Program Manager, Community Innovation Team, Bush Foundation; Holly Sampson, President and CEO, Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation; Bukata Hayes, Executive Director, Greater Mankato Diversity Council; Dr. William Doherty, Ph.D., Professor of Family Social Science and Director, Citizen Professional Center, University of Minnesota; and The Theatre of Public Policy. Each year, the MCF Annual Conference serves as a place to connect. It’s an annual family reunion for long-time members of the community—and an excellent place to meet new friends. The conference is a place to strengthen skills; learn about current trends and challenge old ways of doing business. And the conference is a place to rejuvenate as a sector. Attendees leave with new energy to mobilize the field for the good work ahead.

On behalf of the MCF board and staff, thank you for celebrating our 50-year anniversary with us. We look forward to many more opportunities to connect, strengthen and mobilize the philanthropic sector, together.
In February, the MCF community came together at the 2020 Annual Conference to reflect, learn, share and celebrate. Little did we know that just one month later the whole world would change. Being together gave us a solid platform on which to evolve and challenge ourselves in response to Covid-19 and the murder of George Floyd. In hindsight, it was an incredible way to launch a year like no other.

Susie Brown, MCF President
When I started to reach out to community members to contribute their voices to this article, I was surprised about the consistency of the responses I received.

As Jackie Reis, former President of MCF, explained: “As I consider the work of MCF over the past 50 years, it becomes clear that many of the issues for philanthropy have not changed.

One of the first conferences for Minnesota foundations in the late 1970s had the theme: Changing Times: The Challenge to Foundations. That could be the title for a 2020 conference, almost 50 years later.”

As we look forward to the next 50 years of philanthropy in Minnesota, let us take the time to not just celebrate, but to listen and reflect. Every day, we stand at a crossroads as individuals, professionals and organizations. Together, we can decide our shared path towards the equitable, just and strong Minnesota communities we wish to belong to.

As society must change, foundations must also. Foundations need to listen...listen...listen. They must re-examine the way they understand community issues, whose voices they listen to, and how they interact with formal nonprofits, the people being served by those organizations and those who are overlooked by traditional organizations.

Indigenous teachings tell us that we are born with the inherent ability to thrive, but our environment and life experiences dictate how that ability will be cultivated or challenged.

Philanthropy should invest in community-led solutions that support tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Support our communities and help us to find and implement the solutions that we need—on our own terms.

Support us to thrive.

- Carly Bad Heart Bull, Bdewakantunwan Dakota/Muskokee Creek, a Citizen of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and Executive Director, Native Ways Federation

How do we remain humble and curious enough to explore what we don’t know?

- Bo Thao-Urabe, Founder and Executive Director, Coalition of Asian American Leaders

Listening and Learning—a Humble Start

Often, foundations are seen as the institutions with the answers, but we need to acknowledge our place as co-learners and co-collaborators.

The core of that is listening and being open to learning what we don’t know and where we might be wrong.

Hope for the future of philanthropy in Minnesota is a cohesive vision, common metrics, greater collaboration, increased diversity, broader equity, improved efficiencies, more giving, enhanced impact... leading to stronger communities.

- Steve Joul, President and CEO, CommunityGiving

As Jackie Reis, Co-Founder and Former Executive Director, Greater North Star Care Community Foundation and Former President, Minnesota Council on Foundations
Our Personal Responsibility as Philanthropic Professionals

Organizations and systems are made up of people. To solve systemic challenges, we must start with individuals, including ourselves. As philanthropic and social sector professionals, we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to evaluate our personal role in creating a better future.

Philanthropic organizations need to truly recognize the many ways we make decisions that impact our communities and deliberately work to center equity throughout decision making.

- Michelle Norris, Director of Community Philanthropy, North Dakota Rural PArtnership Foundation

Solving problems requires that we create macro paradigm shifts. For example, food shelves are not enough, how are we addressing the root causes of poverty? To do that we need to be more ambitious and willing to interrogate our own participation in systems of that cause and perpetuate inequity.

- Bo Thao-Urabe, Founder and Executive Director, Coalition of Asian American Leaders

Philanthropy needs to harness its power to invest in the people most impacted by inequities. Problems and solutions are found in the same place.

- Gloria Perez, President and CEO, Women's Foundation of Minnesota

Community, Community and Community!

Everyone I talked with mentioned the importance of centering the needs and active participation of affected communities as part of the solution to the problems facing our society. Within these communities, we need to actively build capacity and recruit for philanthropic professionals, board members, selection committee members, consultants and grant recipient organizations.

Funding within a known community is good. Prospecting to fund start-ups and grassroots activists is better.

- Bernadine Joselyn, Director of Public Policy and Engagement, Blandin Foundation

Facets of racism and white supremacy are deeply embedded within our philanthropic institutions. All you have to do is look at how the wealth was accumulated to know this to be true. Philanthropic leaders must take responsibility for the power they hold and commit to giving some power back to Indigenous and communities of color.

- Carly Bad Heart Bull, Bdewakantunwan Dakota/ Muskogee Creek, a Citizen of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and Executive Director, Native Ways Federation

For philanthropy to be more impactful, we need funders to better reflect the communities they serve. The current dynamic perpetuates a racially divided power structure, with professionals in philanthropy being overwhelmingly white, while focusing on social disparities that disproportionately impact communities of color. We have a responsibility to change this.

- Nicola Dixon, Executive Director, General Mills Foundation and Global Philanthropy Director at General Mills, Inc.

- Antonio Cardona, Director, Office of Public Charter Schools, Pillsbury United Communities

Community, Community and Community!
Review Your Organization to Maximize Equitable and Accessible Practices

Our day to day practices have huge impacts on the communities we serve. Many recommendations I received boil down to four core practices: less restrictive funding and focus on general support; extended grant terms and funding periods; flexible reporting focused on bringing value to the communities doing the work; and a focus on organizations led by and serving BIPOC communities.

Banked money is unrealized community potential. Foundations need to unlock that potential by distributing more grants from Donor Advised Funds.

Forward, Together.

Judith Koll Healey has spent 45 years working in philanthropy and served as Founding Executive Director, Minnesota Council on Foundations. Judith reminded me that, “Philanthropy means ‘love of man.’ Organized philanthropy should be open and generous, have integrity and creativity, respect the work of those funded and work toward equality”.

As we reflect, listen, learn and move forward together, let us remember that a love of people and communities is the guiding light for our path for the next 50 years of Minnesota philanthropy.

A special thanks to everyone who contributed their thoughts and words, including those who chose to remain anonymous.

Kaitlin Ostlie is the Grant Manager at the InFaith Community Foundation; a faith-based national organization that serves donors while spreading joy and changing lives.

Paul Masiarchin is the Director of Member Services at MCF and focuses on delivering educational programming, events, cohorts and conferences while supporting MCF leadership throughout the state.

If all philanthropic financial assets were somehow distributed over the next year, it would make a temporary ripple in a large pond; and then the unique power of philanthropy would be gone. So how do we transfer (or share) philanthropy’s resources, power, flexibility and enormous access to information, equitably with the greater community? This is the “question of our time”. In a way, this has always been philanthropy’s big question.

I envision a philanthropy where those most impacted by the problem have a larger role in how resources are distributed and success is evaluated.

- Marcus Pope, Vice President, Youthprise
- Michelle Morris, Director of Community Philanthropy, Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation
- Antonio Cardona, Director, Office of Public Charter Schools, Pillsbury United Communities
- Mary Karen Lynn-Klimenko, President, Private Philanthropy Services
- Bill King, Trustee, Marbrook Foundation and Former President, Minnesota Council on Foundations
- Anonymous
The year 2020 has been a time of unexpected events that have dramatically impacted many across the state of Minnesota. The coronavirus pandemic and murder of George Floyd amplified racial injustices, displaced families and small businesses—triggering a shift within the philanthropic sector to do more.

As nonprofit organizations seek short-term crisis relief and recovery to support the communities they serve, philanthropy has proactively responded by taking action here and now.

MCF conducted a qualitative survey of foundation CEOs to understand how philanthropic entities have shifted grantmaking practices in the year 2020—in addition to providing insight on how foundations anticipate shifts in grantmaking practice in 2021 and beyond.

Of MCF’s nearly 150 members, 84 foundation CEOs participated in the Grantmaking and Practices Survey. Foundation types included community foundations (including donor advised funds or DAFs), private independent foundations, private family foundations and corporate foundations and giving programs.

65% of foundations increased giving Compared to their 2020 plan. Additionally, 29% gave the same and 6% gave less.

Taking a stand in 2020:
- 62% Issued a public statement.
- 47% Contributed to or started a pooled fund.
- 44% Joined a funders collaborative.
- 36% Engaged in advocacy efforts.

Top 4 practice changes in the first half of 2020:
- 65% Committed to giving more to Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) led organizations.
- 65% Increased flexibility of usage of grant funds.
- 44% Committed to increased communication with grantees.
- 27% Devoted to relaxed reporting requirements.
- 15% Committed to increased multi-year grants.

Established new 2021 grantmaking practices:
- 65% Committed to giving more to Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) led organizations.
- 65% Increased flexibility of usage of grant funds.
- 44% Committed to increased communication with grantees.
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- 15% Committed to increased multi-year grants.
Historic MCF Moments

These milestone moments in MCF’s history are a small part of the many activities of the Council over the past 50 years. Many of MCF’s milestones relate to the public policy environment that presents itself in the way of oversight and regulation throughout the Council’s history.

To pare MCF’s milestones down to a few highlights doesn’t do justice to the rich and varied work of the Council over the past 50 years—but it can provide a snapshot of key moments in time as progress was made in the field.

MCF has led philanthropy in Minnesota, and at times, nationally with the addition of new programs and services have helped MCF achieve its mission to collectively advance nationally with the addition of new programs and services

### 1970-1975
- Ad Hoc Steering Committee on Foundation Legislation formed in response to state legislative concerns following 1969 Tax Reform Act; name changed in 1971 to Ad Hoc Committee on Minnesota Foundations.
- A Study of Minnesota Foundations was conducted by Robert Bonine, Hill Family Foundation. This first-ever study compiled information on number of foundations, assets and grants made.

### 1975-1979
- Upon its inception, MCF’s core programs included: Continuing Education for Foundations on Administrative Practices and Community Needs; Public Information; Research on Foundations and Government Relations.
- First public meeting was held in 1977, following the lead of Bush Foundation’s 1976 meeting, the first rural public meeting was held in Marshall, Minnesota in 1978.
- Giving in Minnesota research began in 1978.

### 1980-1984
- MCF conducts “cash flow study” of impact of delays in government funding to nonprofits in 1980, leading to the creation of MN Nonprofits Assistance Fund.
- Humphrey Doerrmann, Bush Foundation, leads comprehensive strategic plan from 1981-86; addressing program, staffing and financial structures for the future—in addition to establishing membership eligibility for corporate giving programs.
- First capital and endowment campaign study produced in 1981.
- First grantsmanship seminar offered in 1982.
- A public meeting was held in Mankato, Minnesota in 1984, led by Russell Ewald of The McKnight Foundation. The meeting was aimed toward residents of greater Minnesota—to increase philanthropy in “outstate” Minnesota. This meeting led to the creation of six initiative foundations throughout Minnesota, now known as “MIFS.”

### 1975-79
- Giving Forum was first published in 1976; informing the public about the kind of work being done in our area by Minnesota foundations and corporate giving programs.

### 1985-1989
- Michael McCarthy, Williams Tool & Hardware, chairs strategic plan in 1986, which addressed on-going financial plan for MCF, including adoption of new “earned revenue” activities.
- A. A. Heckman Award established by Jerome, Northwest Area and Grotto Foundations to honor Al Heckman who first encouraged Minnesota foundations to join together. Five annual winners were invited to present a public lecture in 1986.
- With input from nonprofits in 1988, a series of public meetings identified four issues for the field: definition of nonprofit, relationships between funders and nonprofits, communications and racism in philanthropy.
- Social issues of the 1980s were addressed through member programs: Reaganomics, women’s equality, gay rights, HIV/AIDS, ethics, immigration and racism.
- MCF created and identified member profiles (member organization types); leading to expanded staff capacity for MCF.

### 1990-1994

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**MILESTONES**

Written by Bill King and Jackie Reis, with research contributions from Chris Oien

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
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<td>- Stephen Belton, Chair, Northwestern Area Foundation, report</td>
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**GIVING FORUM**

*First issue of Giving Forum was published in 1976; informing the public about the kind of work being done in our area by Minnesota foundations and corporate giving programs.*

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**IMAGE SOURCE:** NCFP.ORG

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**MCF HELD ITS FIRST ANNUAL MEETING IN 1972**

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**1979-2001**

- Government relations work organized to set private foundation payout rate at 5% and to respond to Congressional review of foundation operations.

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**1995-2001**

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**1981-83**

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1991

MCF AND MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS HOLD FIRST JOINT CONFERENCE IN 2003

2013-18

MCF Loses the Minnesota Disaster Recovery Fund for coronavirus—supporting 93 organizations and awarding over $11.4 million to support community intermediaries who have been dedicated throughout the coronavirus pandemic and community impacts of the murder of George Floyd; sustaining Minnesota’s residents, businesses, and nonprofits.

MCF Launches the Ron McKinley Philanthropy Fellowship, aligning and increasing opportunities for leaders of color with careers in philanthropy—with 19 fellow participants.

Reatha Clark King, General Mills Foundation, led MCF’s strategic plan, Imperatives for New Times: A Strategic Plan for Working Together in the 90s. The plan identified three imperatives: Promote high standards in philanthropic practices, promote cultural diversity in philanthropy and recognize and work to eliminate and prevent racism in philanthropy.

Michael O’Keefe, the McKnight Foundation, chairs committee that leads to the creation of Principles and Practices for Grantmakers; MCF Board votes to make Principles a condition of membership.

Bill King was the third President of the Minnesota Council on Foundations—leading a 12-year term.

1995-1999

MCF was involved in the issue of Devolution and worked with Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and Minnesota Council of Churches to create the Minnesota Futures Fund—to assist nonprofits affected by reduced federal budgets in 1995.


To simplify the grant application process, MCF members created the MN Common Application Form in 1996.

Red River Flood begins involvement of MCF in disaster philanthropy in 1997.

With the goal of increasing philanthropy, the first Minnesota Toolkit for Giving is published and serves as a national model.

2000-2004

MCF receives a grant from the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers for a collaborative project to increase giving by businesses throughout Minnesota in 2001. The Business of Giving Rocky, a study by Wilder Foundation, documented current giving. The Business Giving and Community Involvement Handbook is created.

MCF initiates new research, Minnesota Grantmaking Outlook Report in 2002, for the first-time, projecting future giving in response to the major economic downturn following the September 11 terrorist attack; and a $2.0 billion state budget shortfall impacting nonprofit contracts.

MCF increases its research and reporting capacity issuing special giving research reports on the Arts in 2002; and Youth Development in 2004. MCF also publishes Giving in Minnesota annually for the first time.

2005-2009

MCF establishes a Public Policy Fellowship with the University of Minnesota, Humphrey Institute in 2008.

MCF’s Board adopts an organizational Plan of Inclusivity to guide the Council’s staffing, volunteer leadership and programmatic efforts in 2009.

2010-2013

Endow MN, a multi-year public policy effort, designed to create a tax credit for endowment contributions to community foundations is launched, in 2010.

MCF expands its capacity for work on diversity, equity and inclusion, creating a diversity fellowship and hiring its first staff to lead the Council in D.E.I. programming and organizational development in 2011.

MCF’s leading diversity research: Working Towards Diversity IV is completed with a companion publication, Diversity and Inclusion Action Kit, to assist grantmakers to actively enhance diversity, equity and inclusion in 2011.

2013-2019

MCF founded the Minnesota Impact Investing Initiative (M13) in 2017, enabling foundations to invest geographically in affordable housing and small business lending.

MCF leads the Minnesota Census Mobilization Partnership—helping Minnesota achieve an accurate 2020 Census count.

MCF led the advocacy effort to successfully secure a $1.6 million appropriation from the Minnesota state legislature to support Minnesota’s preparation for the 2020 Census.

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Minnesota Disaster Recovery Fund for coronavirus

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Chris Oien is the Communications and Research Specialist at MCF; assists with data and research-related inquiries, with a passion for the field.

In 1991, MCF Created Its First Communities of Color Committee

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Leslie Wright, Director of External Engagement, Greater Twin Cities United Way

Nancy Zallek, President and CEO, Mankato Area Foundation

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Beim Foundation
Bouck Foundation
Carlson Family Foundation
Charlson Foundation
Elmer L. and Eleanor J. Andersen Foundation
Engelsma Family Foundation
Frey Foundation
GHR Foundation
Hugh J. Andersen Foundation
I. A. O’Shaughnessy Foundation
James R. Thorpe Foundation
John Larsen Foundation
Langwater Foundation
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Marbrook Foundation
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Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation
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Pohlad Family Foundation
Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation
Robert E. and Edith M. Grissinger Foundation
Sauer Family Foundation
Shavlik Family Foundation
Sundance Family Foundation
Swift Foundation
Tankenoff Families Foundation
The Barry Foundation
The Graves Foundation
The Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation
The John Mondiati Foundation
The Laura Jane Musser Fund
The McKnight Foundation
Trillium Family Foundation
Turner Family Foundation

Private Independent Foundations
Better Way Foundation
Blandin Foundation
Bush Foundation
E. W. Hallett Charitable Trust
F.R. Bigelow Foundation
George A. Hormel Testamentary Trust
Hardenbergh Foundation
Jerome Foundation

Private Operating Foundations
Ecumen
Donor Advised Fund
Sunset Point Fund

Community and Public Foundations
Alexandria Area Community Foundation
Ann Bancroft Foundation
Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation
Center for Disaster Philanthropy
Central Minnesota Community Foundation
CommunityGiving
Disabled American Veterans of Minnesota Foundation
Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation
Fargo-Moorhead Area Foundation
Golden Valley Community Foundation
Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation
Greater Twin Cities United Way
Greater White Bear Lake Community Foundation
Headwaters Foundation for Justice
InFaith Community Foundation
Initiative Foundation
Luverne Area Community Foundation
Mankato Area Foundation
Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation
Minnesota Twins Community Fund
Nexus Community Partners
North Dakota Community Foundation
Northfield Shares
Northland Foundation
Northwest Minnesota Foundation
PFund Foundation

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
Northwest Area Foundation
Ordean Foundation
Otto Bremer Trust
PrairieCare Child & Family Fund
Tozer Foundation
WCA Foundation
Wells Foundation

Private Operating Foundations
Ecumen
Donor Advised Fund
Sunset Point Fund

Association
Minnesota Chamber Foundation

Funders Collaborative
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