Listening, Learning, Leading
Developing grant making strategies for deeper impact

We heard you.

In September of 2017, the Community Foundation facilitated three focus groups to identify the root causes of obstacles faced by many of our neighbors here in Chattanooga and Hamilton County. We listened to social service professionals, thought leaders and nonprofit executives speak to both the quantitative data surrounding needs in our community, as well as the anecdotal experiences of the students, families and individuals seeking better lives here in Chattanooga.

What we learned inspired us to think deeper about our grant making strategies. Through diligent study with our newly formed Implementation Team, we agreed that far too many of our neighbors lack shared opportunities to achieve upward mobility. We also recognized that our nonprofit partners would need to build greater capacity if they are to successfully address these mobility issues.

In response, the Foundation chose to:
1.) develop funding focus areas that create opportunity for all, and
2.) increase investments in those strategies that build organizational capacity for our community’s change makers.

We know how difficult it can be for nonprofit leaders to address community needs when operational capacity is limited. So we’re committing more resources to making sure our nonprofit partners are positioned to most effectively help our neighbors reach their fullest potential.

Implementation Team

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Investing in Infrastructure
Strengthening organizations to care for our most vulnerable and create community solutions

Why Community Solutions?

The Foundation is ultimately accountable to the community. Its members - our neighbors - are our priority. As such, we seek to support strategies that provide solutions to the community's toughest issues, whether those be the root causes of intergenerational poverty, systems-level changes that address multiple barriers or meeting the basic needs of our most vulnerable.

As our nonprofit community partners, the Foundation turns to you to help us serve the community. With a focus on building organizational capacity, grant seekers can apply for capacity building or multi-year funding that supports these community solutions.

Organizational Characteristics

Examples of grant seeker characteristics sought to secure funding:

- Clear organizational vision with corresponding goals, strategies and a written plan designed to measure progress toward goals
- Necessary leadership and staff skills and experience for successful plan execution
- Capacity to measure organizational and program success and to apply learning for continuous improvement
- Organizational decision-making strategy that engages those being served
- Solid financial practices related to budgeting, forecasting and reporting to the board and a financial plan to support the organization's strategic plan goals
- Demonstrated knowledge of national trends in the field and use of best practices
- An elected, engaged Board of Directors representing the diversity and demographics of the community served, including individuals with varied skill sets and the committee structure necessary to succeed
- Collaborative relationships that enhance the organization's ability to serve the community
- A broad base of community and financial support demonstrating organizational sustainability

"Overhead is what drives growth. If charities can't grow, they can't solve problems."
- Dan Pallotta

Dan Pallotta visited Chattanooga in 2017. While here, he spent time with Foundation leadership, discussing why it's important to invest in organizational capacity. We couldn't agree more.