

Communications as a Tool for Building Transparency, Trust and Sustainability in Community Foundations

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Abstract

This paper defines community foundations as public grantmaking organizations that seek to improve the quality of life of a population in a specific geographic area. Based on this concept, Ms. Trevisan explores how communications can be most effectively employed to help community foundations achieve their goals, deal with challenges and increase the effectiveness of their impact. This study examines how these tools can help community foundations to build trust through transparency and accountability, and ultimately to achieve sustainability. The author also suggests that such tools can be used to help strengthen understanding of the community foundation concept, reinforce identity, build relationships and demonstrate impact.

Vital characteristics of effective communication tools include:

- Outlining concepts, meanings, steps and goals;
- Offering examples of best practices;
- Providing sources for further information;
- Writing in clear and direct language;
- Making information easily accessible both online and through concisely printed brochures or pamphlets.

Ms. Trevisan explains that community foundations issue publications and annual reports and maintain websites at a higher rate than other types of foundations, and that communication is driven by competition in the sector. Because community foundations are guardians of community resources, she argues that they need to operate openly and keep donors, potential donors, grantees and community representatives alike informed of their actions, programs and impacts. In conclusion, communication is particularly important to community foundations because of their unique position, qualities and roles in their communities.

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