Re-inventing High-Impact Grantmaking: Bringing Donors, Staff & Nonprofits Together

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• 32 years old      21 staff
• 1,500 funds+  Assets: $326 million
• Contributions in FY 2017: $37 million
• Grants in FY 2017 (record high): $27 million
- 90% donor directed, 5% unrestricted, 5% scholarships
Strategic Planning
Aligning Our Work With Plan Goals

- Grow philanthropy through donor development.
- Leverage community knowledge for donor engagement and ambassadorial roles.
Bubbling up from Strategic Plan

• **Unrestricted Grantmaking**
  - Create more flexible, accessible process.
  - Enhance priority-focused results.

• **Development & Donor Services**
  - Increase engagement & education.
  - Grow unrestricted funds.

• **Communications & Marketing**
  - Improve information sharing & clarity.
Unrestricted Grantmaking
Bubbling in Unrestricted Grantmaking

- Best grants = involvement at early stages of proposal
- Projects impact more than 1 focus
- Shark Tank/ 1 Million Cups models
- Room at the table for donors
- Right-sized application
- No more rigid deadline & process
Grantmaking Design Process

- **Pilot 1: Innovation Forum** Aug 2016
  informal discussion w/ nonprofits, staff
- **Research & Design** Jan - April 2017
- **Pilot 2: Bright Idea Forum** May 2017
  formalized structure, added committee
- **Launched New Processes** July 2017
- **First “official” Forum** Oct 2017
Unrestricted Grantmaking

Current State
- Unrestricted fund has become **Bright Idea Fund** – common focus areas
- Staff-directed:
  - Discovery (planning), Spark (prog/events <5,000k), Sponsorship
- Community Leadership: board-directed
- Bright Idea Forum: committee-directed
  - Lightbulb Labs (informal screening)
  - Forum (5 minute pitch, 15 Q&A, all applicants stay in the room)

Next Steps
- Invite more donors/other funders.
BRIGHT IDEA FUND

1. You have an idea
2. You share it at a Lightbulb Lab
3. You are invited to submit a Lightbulb Letter
4. You present at a Bright Idea Forum
Development and Donor Services
Bubbling in Development & Donor Services

• Growing current & planned gifts to unrestricted funds.
• Identifying & tracking donors’ interests.
• Increasing donor engagement with Foundation and education about community needs.
Development & Donor Services

Current State
• Brainstorming staff information sharing.
• Providing more donor education about community needs.
• Developing better co-investment tracking.

Next Steps
• Formalize process for sharing information internally.
• Engage donors and external audiences in co-investment.
Communications and Marketing
Bubbling in Communications & Marketing

- New, exciting brand for unrestricted fund & its grants.
- Clearer communication about grantmaking focuses & results.
- Processes for sharing ideas from nonprofits and grant results internally.
- Tools for donor and external audience engagement.
Communications & Marketing

Current State
• Clearer priority-focused communication.
• New unrestricted fund brand.
• Reorganized web pages: grant processes, results, donor involvement/co-investment.

Next Steps
• Improving idea sharing among departments.
• Identifying the most effective engagement tools and results sharing methods.
• Co-investment recognition.
Challenges & Learnings
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• Challenge assumptions.
• Communicate!
• Be patient – change takes time.
• Align departments.
• Get to know your donors.
• Use unrestricted funds as catalyst.
• Anticipate ripple effects.
BRIGHT IDEA FUND

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