

Delaware Valley Grantmakers 2012 Fall Conference

Re:Envisioning Philanthropy

Afternoon Workshop:

“Bringing It All Home” with Robert Lewis, Jr.

Robert Lewis, Jr.’s Four Principles for Re-Envisioning Philanthropy:

- Ground Truth (Data)
- High Touch Philanthropy (Community Engagement)
- Return on Community (Results)
- Change Makers (Impact/Moving the Needle)

What do Robert’s four principles mean to your own work and/or communities?

- All four principles impact our work all the time
- “Rules” create a recipe that is needed to get work done
- Add a fifth rule: Get positive stories out
- See truth as a variable—truth is not always truth when representing communities
- Value in collaboration
- Shared community goals
- Consistent movement forward/not getting distracted
- Data
 - Gathering a lot of data is important, both quantitative and qualitative
 - Are we asking for/giving the right kinds of data
- Assess the passion of leaders
- How do we get relevant information?
 - The community solicits information through communication
- Ground truth as the impact on affected people—understand the value of community where it lies
- Long-term investment (high risk /high reward)

When have you seen the four principles operating in your own communities? How have you applied these, even if under a different name, and how have they worked?

- Need to have data, but love to hear the stories
- Going into the heart of a community
- Board composition—does it reflect the organization and who they serve
- Broaden definition of community/include more players
- Valuing organizations with community volunteers in leadership roles or on the board
- Coalitions—public/private sector collaborations

- Convening across geographies
- Finding good partners is a challenge/opportunity
- Put aside who gets credit
- “Live” what your mission is
- Drexel University’s Witness to Hunger program
- Fair Housing stewardship program
 - teaches students about housing fairness for them to share with their families
 - leads to internships/workforce pipeline
- Mastery charter school model (parents hire/evaluate/terminate)

What benefits / outcomes do we want to see for our region and how can we apply these principles going forward to realize these changes?

- New mindset to seek outside ideas
- Differentiate *output* from *outcome*
- Getting to honesty, collaborations and thinking differently
- Make space for more collaboration and having a system to support this
- Collaboration among nonprofits
- Convening around essential issues (i.e. benefitting underprivileged children)
- Identify key issues
- Build common strategic goals/objectives
- Build a signature project or approach around common goals
- Identify 1-3 key issues for funders to get around (i.e. to benefit children)
- Quality of life
- Fund leaders not programs
 - Look at leaders for the future
 - Need pathways for growth
- How to keep young people in nonprofit jobs
 - How to make these jobs sustainable
 - How to enable us to retain good people
- Take risks
- Look for a bold/audacious initiative –can’t find ideas in the grant cycle
- High level of service

Robert’s Takeaways

- The answers are in the room
- Tell your stories from the perspective of those being served, but NOT from a lens of charity
- Bring in national perspectives and learn from them—they become your best ambassadors
- Seek out the best collaborative models and share those with the community
- Shift to general operating support and be clear about the end stakes
- The best collaborations are out of mutual need
- Community ownership is key—broad coalitions
- Investment/engagement of board is key

- See the board as a “partner” to engage (see them as the same as other community partners)
- Understand board expectations (work around them)
- It takes time and commitment
- The hardest thing to do is roll up your sleeves
- Take one thing that you do and do it well
- The greatest movements are led by citizens