

FINDING YOUR FOCUS IN PHILANTHROPY

WHAT CHALLENGES WILL YOU TACKLE,
AND WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?



ROCKEFELLER PHILANTHROPY ADVISORS
PHILANTHROPY ROADMAP

Many people come to
philanthropy with their focus

SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

For some, the big issues are too large a place to start. Their inclination is to focus on something far more concrete and specific, which may later develop into a broader program. Examples of starting with a more focused lens include challenges as varied as these: Parkinson's disease, early childhood education and care, preserving open space or training home health aides to serve low-income immigrants.

WALLIS ANNEBERG
VISION, LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

The Annenberg Community Beach House in Santa Monica, California is unique. The five-acre beachfront estate was once owned by Marion Davies, actress and

PEOPLE

Many donors will concentrate on the types of people whom they wish to support. Children, women, the elderly, youth, artists, refugees, innovators—there are myriad possibilities. A donor may choose to help people related to a family history or experience or through having learned more about a community through work, travel or affinity.

JEFF SKOLL
FOCUSING ON SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

PLACES

These funders choose to focus on certain sites — driven often by heritage or experience, but not always — and may fund many “subject” areas within that geography. How a donor defines that geography can vary greatly — from a continent or region to a village or even a neighborhood.

TRACY MCGREGOR AND KATHERINE WHITNEY MCGREGOR
RELIEVING MISFORTUNES IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT

Tracy McGregor helped his parents found a homeless shelter in Toledo, Ohio in the 1880s. In 1891, when his father died, Tracy left Oberlin College to run a mission for the homeless and needy in downtown Detroit. Over 45 years, the McGregor Institute provided food and lodging for 700,000 men. Tracy met Katherine Whitney, the daughter of one of Michigan's richest families, while they were both volunteering at the Children's Free Hospital in Detroit. They married in 1901 and “formed a lifelong partnership to aid numerous Detroit charities and families in need of assistance,” according to their foundation's website. That foundation, the McGregor Fund, was established in 1925 “to relieve the misfortunes and promote the well-being of mankind.” In practice, the fund focused its work from the beginning in

metropolitan Detroit. The McGregors gave in a variety of program areas, including care for the homeless, education, health care and arts and culture. Tracy McGregor died in 1936, Katherine Whitney McGregor in 1954. Their fund continues to honor their approach to philanthropy by supporting organizations serving the metropolitan Detroit area. The fund has provided more than \$200 million in assistance over more than 85 years of service.

INSTITUTIONS

Funders who view the world through the “institution building” lens seek to achieve their philanthropic goals by supporting certain kinds of organizations. They often focus on a particular type of organization and the role it plays in the world. Some examples: think tanks, policy and advocacy organizations, museums, ballets, orchestras, charter schools and community colleges. The potential list is large but often a donor will intuitively know they wish to narrow the range by the other components discussed such as geography or people served.

LUCILE SALTER PACKARD
CARING FOR CHILDREN BY CREATING A WORLD-CLASS HOSPITAL

Lucile Salter Packard (1914 – 1987) wanted to provide children with health care in a setting that would nurture both the body and the spirit of each child. She decided creating a new hospital was the best way to do that. She, together with her husband, David (1912 – 1996), co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, became the driving forces behind the development of the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital in Palo Alto, California, giving \$40 million towards its construction in 1986. The hospital awards

ideas are on the table, many family members find themselves impressed and inspired by the views of others. Even so, it's important to allocate enough philanthropic resources so the programs are not too diluted. Often difficult decisions about priorities and proportions will need to be made. Where the dominant family member has made a firm decision on how philanthropic resources will be used, it may be best to abandon the notion of family decision-making and recognize that other family members will simply not be participating in the philanthropy. (For more on this topic, see our guide, "Talking to Your Family about Philanthropy.")

All too often, philanthropy is funding the problem. This isn't to say that philanthropy is making things worse (although some would make that case). It means that too many of us are content to direct money in response to problems, with little thought about how that money might create a solution. In fact, it's common to hear people say sincerely that their philanthropy "funds health care and poverty in my community." Presumably, they want to see more of the first and less of the second. Funding the solution, on the other hand, means not only having a clear focus on a challenge of appropriate size, but having a clear vision of what change you want to achieve. Whether you call it a goal, an outcome or a solution, it's important to define what end-result you seek. And you'll need a clear-eyed view of the milestones along the way that indicate progress. (For more on this topic, see our guide "Assessing Impact.")

