

Strengthening the US Conservation Field: A Study of Intermediary Approaches in the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's Western Conservation Grantmaking Strategy



Photo credit: Marion Walsh. Perpetual limited-use license.

Jennifer Henderson-Frakes
September 2020

Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to the intermediaries, grantees, and field observers who generously contributed their time and insights, and to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's Environment and Effective Philanthropy staff for ongoing partnership and support of this study.

Key Findings

- Intermediaries play a broad range of value-added roles; a number of these highlight their position to strengthen organizational and field capacity.
- Effective collaboration with grantees hinges on early, substantive, reciprocal engagements that contribute to shorter-term wins and a stronger field long term.
- The drive to deliver highly specific outcomes within short grant terms challenges the ability to address capacity- and field-building interests, and to employ relational strategies critical to strong diverse partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation’s Environment Program works “to protect people and places threatened by a warming planet by addressing climate change globally, expanding clean energy, and conserving the North American West.”ⁱ As one of the Program’s two main strategies, Western Conservation works to conserve biodiversity and protect the ecological integrity of half the North American West for the benefit of wildlife and people alike. Core tactics include defending public lands, advancing conservation protections, and building enabling conditions. Hewlett refreshed the strategy in 2018, further prioritizing collaboration and the engagement of diverse constituents—including indigenous and rural communities—to better realize lasting and locally-driven conservation outcomes.

The strategy’s emphasis on collaborative, place-based conservation and diverse stakeholders reflects ethical considerations as well as Hewlett’s fundamental interest in strengthening the fieldⁱⁱ to help find common ground among a national backdrop of political polarization and erosion in democratic institutions.ⁱⁱⁱ Collaboration and the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are key aspects of field building, as are capacity building, network development, and knowledge-sharing.^{iv}

A longstanding component of Hewlett’s Western Conservation grantmaking strategy is working with a set of intermediary organizations that re-grant Foundation funds to additional grantees, some of which also receive direct support from Hewlett. With respect to field-building, re-granting intermediaries, or re-granters as Hewlett often refers to them,^v occupy a unique and powerful position in

Definitions

- **Re-granter:** an intermediary that receives then re-grants philanthropic monies (e.g., from foundations such as Hewlett) to additional parties. A re-granter may also be called an intermediary or a re-granting intermediary.
- **Grantee:** a recipient of grant funds from a re-granter, a funder, or both. A grantee of a re-granter may also be called a re-grantee.
- **Funder:** a provider of philanthropic funds to re-granters and grantees. Re-granters in this report may receive monies to re-grant from multiple funders, including Hewlett.

between funders and grantees. They hold the potential to help increase capacity and connections among a range of frontline entities, including grassroots organizations and large national groups. Grantees also bring a range of critical assets to their partnerships with re-granters, including but not limited to specific conservation expertise and experience working with diverse communities.

In 2020, Hewlett paused to reflect on re-granters' contributions to Western Conservation grantmaking strategy and commissioned this study to explore their value-added roles, collaborative practices with grantees, and integration of DEI principles. With a field-building frame in mind, the study's emphasis is on *how* re-granters' work is done with others rather than on *what* re-granters have accomplished in terms of specific conservation outcomes.

Current national context is reilluminating racial inequities in health, community safety, and outdoor spaces – spurring shifts in the philanthropic field to help address systemic racism.^{vi} These circumstances underscore the study's findings that reciprocal and substantive partnerships among diverse stakeholders can strengthen both the field and conservation outcomes.

STUDY FINDINGS

Study findings are based primarily on interviews with 29 re-granter, grantee, and field-observer respondents. Additional data sources include document review – such as Hewlett grant reports and relevant field research – and an advisory committee that helped inform the study's design and findings (see Appendix A for a discussion of study methods). While findings are largely based on insights from those working in the North American West, they hold implications for the greater conservation field given the broad themes of collaboration, DEI, and field-building.

Field Roles of Western Conservation Grantmaking Strategy Re-granters

Hewlett works with a highly diverse set of re-granters for its Western Conservation grantmaking strategy. These range from a regional Native-led foundation to a global research and public policy organization. Hewlett has worked with all but two of the organizations included in this study as re-granters for over 12 years.^{vii}

The reasons for using re-granting intermediaries vary in the philanthropic world, but one distinction is whether the impetus is primarily funder- or field-driven.^{viii} Re-granters extend Hewlett's capacity, enhancing its field intelligence, staff, and reach on the ground, all of which help realize grantmaking and relationship efficiencies particularly given Hewlett's lean staffing model. However, re-granters also provide critical resources to grantees, including smaller, emerging organizations, that help build field capacity.

In addition to financial support, re-granters bring considerable non-monetary assets to the table and play various roles not always recognized by the field. These range from short-term tactical roles to longer-view capacity-building ones. The following table summarizes re-granters' diverse roles in the field as described by re-granters, grantees, and other field observers. These roles are: Campaigner, Capacity-Provider, Coalition-BUILDER, Connector, Convener, Expert, Financial Supporter, Navigator, Partner, and Strategic Responder.

Hewlett Western Conservation Grantmaking Strategy Re-granter Roles*

Value-Added Role	Description
Campaigner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develops strategy and implements campaigns and programs
Capacity-Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extends capacity of funders to connect with work on ground ▪ Increases programmatic capacity of grantees by assuming administrative functions ▪ Enables capacity “bursts” on highly specific issues ▪ Builds organizational capacity of grantees through mentoring and partnering in “learning by doing” ▪ Enables field-building and fosters community (e.g., by facilitating peer connections, developing a pipeline of leaders)
Coalition-Builder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides short- and long-term support of key groups and strategic coalitions (e.g., business community)
Connector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connects grantees to field intelligence ▪ Provides access to people, power, and influence ▪ Delivers connections to organizations, networks, and resources
Convener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Convenes funders and grantees to coordinate or connect (e.g., on strategy) ▪ Convenes grantees around critical milestones and issues (e.g., project learnings, legislative efforts)
Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shares specialized knowledge and expertise (e.g., in conservation sub-areas, culture, professional functions)
Financial Supporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acts as grantmaker to provide funding ▪ Acts as fiscal sponsor to provide grant recipient infrastructure ▪ Acts as fundraiser to help bring additional resources to projects
Navigator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presents unique ability to see and navigate overlap of philanthropic, political, and NGO spheres
Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thought partner to brainstorm ideas ▪ Side-by-side working partner
Strategic Responder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Addresses gaps by filling in skills or capacity in larger team efforts (e.g., communications) ▪ Deploys resources strategically to advance collective work

*These roles were described by study respondents (re-granters, grantees, and field observers).

While re-granters play a broad range of roles, those most highlighted by re-granters and grantees overall – Expert, Connector, and Capacity-Provider – speak to re-granters’ position to strengthen organizational and field capacity. As Expert, re-granters hold specialized knowledge in diverse areas they can share with grantee-partners, including expertise in specific conservation sectors and professional functions such as communications. A Connector role opens doors for grantees, providing linkages to other organizations, networks, and resources, and access to power and influence through a re-granter’s relationships with decision makers, funders, and consultants. A major source of value for grantees also clearly resides in re-granters’ Capacity-Provider role, discussed below.

Capacity- and Field-Building

For grantees, re-granters play a Capacity-Provider role at pre-award stages, during project implementation, and beyond.

Early on, re-granters can help establish organizations or enable greater programmatic capacity by assuming responsibilities for back office operations. In at least a couple of cases, re-granters better position small grassroots organizations to receive funding by curating pre-award relationships and ensuring they have elements required by prospective funders in place. For example, one re-granter described how they support small organizations that do not have funder-required policies in place: *“Instead of saying, ‘You don’t have this policy so we can’t fund you,’ we ask, ‘Would you like some resources to develop the policy because we know other funders will ask too.’ It’s not just, ‘You need to check the box,’ but ‘Can we help you check the box so that you can be eligible for our funding?’”*

During projects, re-granters enable short-term capacity bursts by funding work on highly specific issues that might not otherwise be supported. They also often play capacity-building roles with grantees and local partners though this is not always expected or specifically described as such. This sometimes transpires in a “learning by doing” approach with less established grantees, and other times simply by sharing intelligence, resources, and connections. Prime examples include the following:

- Sharing knowledge base and know-how
 - Demonstrating campaign and project tactics
 - Opening doors and making connections
 - Handing over relationships
 - Strengthening grantee position to leverage additional funding
 - Providing content, tools, guides, and skill-building gatherings
 - Building capacity to build others’ capacity (among frontline communities).
- “Opening doors and making connections for re-grantees is a most direct and effective way to build the field because it builds a new set of skills and relationships that NGOs may not have previously possessed.” – Re-granter*

Two of the re-granters in the Western Conservation grantmaking strategy have the most explicit capacity-building roles by virtue of their cultural orientation and organizational structure. They provide components such as pre-award support, a focus on organizational resilience, capacity-building grants, coaching, trainings, and facilitated peer networks that provide learning and a sense of community.

Some re-granters have thought deeply not only about what they bring to the table with grantees and local partners during a project, but also about what capacities they are leaving behind. In this way, capacity building becomes an end as well as the means to achieve shared project goals. One re-granter observed that, *“Building the capacity of the field is also about building capacity with our local partners. . . it’s about illustrating how we go about taking on these big issues and winning them, and that’s helping to build a knowledge base on how you do it that’s really important even when we leave a particular place.”*

“Bit by bit, we are providing the scaffolding to ensure [grantees] have the organizational capacity to continue doing those things over time. Getting the wins helps build the capacity. We are trying to be thoughtful about building that capacity and ensuring that we are telling the stories that demonstrate it, so [others] look to those groups instead of to us or to other larger groups.” – Re-granter

Building the capacity of individual organizations, then, also contributes to strengthening the field. A couple of re-granters reflected specifically on larger field-building contributions – whether focused on “building the chops” of grantees to do the work long-term, or on ensuring a pipeline of conservation leaders.

Challenge Areas

Challenges exist to re-granters playing a capacity-building role in Hewlett’s Western Conservation grantmaking strategy, including the following:

- **Capacity- and field-building roles in Western Conservation grantmaking strategy are not explicit.** While re-granters are clearly making capacity- and field-building contributions, they are not necessarily occurring in line with explicit expectations or plans, with missed opportunities for Hewlett’s overall grantmaking strategy and learning.
- **Re-granters and grantees alike perceive an inherent tension between field-building interests – with a need to take a longer view – and the drive to deliver highly specific outcomes and wins within short grant terms.**^{ix} As non-endowed funders, re-granters are not always ideally positioned to balance these aims. One re-granter observed, *“There are other things that we would love to do, but we are just not supported to do . . . What it leads to is tension between field-building and perceived, or anticipated, efficiency in outcomes.”* Grantees who must tend to their

own organizational capacity and sustainability are also challenged by the need to focus strongly on short-term outcomes: *“The downside is we often end up getting pushed really hard to not take the long view, to just look for short-term outcomes. [We] built our reputation over decades and do our best to take a long view and also create a staff structure that’s sustainable.”*

Re-granters as Networkers and Collaborators

Hewlett’s Western Conservation grantmaking strategy integrates collaboration in its articulation of what is required to realize durable conservation outcomes. Hewlett program staff also emphasize collaboration in their conversations with re-granters and grantees, encouraging connections across organizations and areas of work.

Building network connections and sharing knowledge are important components of any field or field-building effort and can spur additional collaboration.^x Examining the strength of the conservation field – and the unique role of re-granters – means understanding what drives collaboration and what characterizes effective collaboration, particularly between re-granters and grantees.

While collaboration may be an operating principle in and of itself and a main ingredient of a long-term field-building vision, for re-granters collaboration is often driven by shorter-term factors such as shared project goals or pain points, and funder reinforcement.

Between grantees and re-granters, the nature of collaboration is greatly influenced by particular project or campaign parameters, organizational culture and staff personalities, and any power dynamics at play depending on the specific partners at the table. However, effective collaboration also hinges on some specific practices; focusing on these is critical for ensuring re-granter effectiveness and more equitable, meaningful partnerships in the field.

◇ Early Engagement

Grantees reported they value upfront, substantive involvement to inform and understand the larger vision; brainstorm and pitch ideas; include community-driven priorities; and co-create tactics that reflect grantee expertise including community-appropriate strategies.

“[Re-granter] called me to say they were thinking about redesigning an initiative for next year and wanted my opinion. That was really important to me. There was more equity there in being included at the beginning of the process.” – Grantee

“Self-determination is really a part of framing the greater conservation effort, especially when you’re assisting communities of color that you don’t normally work in.” – Re-granter

◇ Knowing & Leveraging Grantee Strengths

According to grantee respondents, effective collaboration also depends on re-granters' keen understanding and deployment of individual strengths, including those that smaller grantees bring to the table (e.g., work nationally with frontline communities, relational strategies, a different voice and political orientation).

Grantees pointed to instances where re-granters clearly understood grantees' niche, how best to engage their organizational strengths, and refrained from forcing an ill-fitting or token role, particularly for those representing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), rural, and hunter-angler communities.

"[Re-granter] really understands the niche my organization plays and ensures that the way they're engaging our strengths is maintaining our strengths." – Grantee

◇ Creating & Working Side-by-Side

Beyond early involvement in vision and strategy, grantees appreciated opportunities to co-create content with re-granters. For example, the ability to co-design as well as co-host a webinar for funders and NGOs was a strong signal to one grantee of how a re-granter approached collaboration. In another case, co-creating content for a funder's website was an important chance to meaningfully inform both content and practice. A couple of re-granters and grantees alike described side-by-side work, being in the trenches together, as additional evidence of authentic partnership.

Challenge Areas

Articulated challenges include those concerning collaboration between grantees and re-granters, as well as among these two groups.

- **A directive style challenges positive collaboration.** This was described primarily in the form of pre-set tasks and excessive supervision.
- **A focus on short-term outcomes challenges ongoing relationship development.** An emphasis on short-term outcomes, a function of grant terms, can inhibit the frank conversations and ongoing relationship building at the root of effective collaboration. It can also test longer-term collaborations that feed the field. *"Re-granters are in the same boat as we are, which is that they don't know what their long-term funding is, so the collaboration is*

"It's challenging in some regards unless you have a multi-year grant . . . I think [collaboration is] a goal but at the same time we are being evaluated on whether we should receive funding at all times when having conversations." – Grantee

about the here and now, it's not about the movement," one grantee observed.

- **Stronger peer connections would permit greater visibility and exchange.** Facilitating collaboration among grantees was not a strongly described component of re-granters' roles, though it takes place in various ways including specific coalition gatherings, monthly calls, and meetings at project milestones. A few grantees remarked on lack of visibility of their funded peers and wished for re-granters to facilitate more connections among fellow grantees—for example, on grappling with shared challenges at the state level.^{xi} Similarly, re-granters do not always have insight into each other's work, how they "fit" together, and the ways they might benefit from peer-based learning and exchange.

Re-granters' Advancement of DEI

How re-granters are prioritizing DEI—within their own organizations, as well as in their approach to partnerships—is important for multiple reasons, including gauging the extent to which a through-line exists from Hewlett's DEI values. In addition, it is important for understanding how re-granters' way of work translates to a diverse set of national and community-based grantees that strengthen the field, which has long been troubled by low levels of racial and socioeconomic diversity.^{xii}

"I think there's a fundamental change in that most conservation groups in this space are working on DEI. . . it's happening somewhat organically, but when you have funders telling you it's important, it gets you motivated as well. . . Hewlett's emphasis on that has had an impact on the community as a whole, and that is evident." –Grantee

Hewlett funds a set of re-granters at fundamentally different DEI positions. Some embody DEI by virtue of their cultural orientation or considerable past work to incorporate DEI into core values. Others are working to embed DEI into organizational learning and practices. The second group includes re-granters that may not have a long-standing DEI orientation or intentionality but are aligned with shifts in the field and funder reinforcement about the importance of diverse coalitions as a matter of principle and practicality.

Re-granter Steps Taken

Some re-granters are currently working with consultants to embed DEI into their organizations and way of work, focusing on activities such as baseline assessments, staff trainings, DEI committees, and detailed DEI plans for organizational operations.^{xiii}

Overall, DEI is showing up internally for re-granters in: DEI goals, statements and tools; shifts in recruitment and hiring practices; streamlining of grant processes to ease burden; and adoption of a DEI lens on project work, such as how to partner more

effectively with local communities and offer autonomy to drive the work that impacts them most. Some re-granters described themselves as being on a relatively early part of a learning journey where DEI is incorporated internally before showing up externally in a stronger fashion. It's a process that can take considerable time, with a perceived danger in neglecting a "meantime strategy," as articulated by one re-granter: *"We also realize that all of that work obviously is going to take time and we can't – in the meantime – say, 'We didn't talk to any of these communities because we are trying to get ready to do that.'"* This meantime strategy can involve partnering with those already well-positioned to reach and engage with diverse communities.

Externally, DEI is showing up in re-granters' practices and collaborative approaches to varying extents: creating more authentic partnerships with tribal communities by supporting indigenous-led work and investing time in relationship development apart from conservation objectives; expanding the table to diverse partners including BIPOC organizations, groups representing rural and conservative voices, and environmental and social justice organizations; re-thinking allyship with diverse communities so that re-granters engage on issues important to those communities beyond the environment; and conveying DEI expectations and catalyzing change by "just asking the question" – for example on how grantees are implementing DEI policy or involving diverse segments of their local communities.

"It's getting out in the field, seeing the places they care about through their eyes, hearing their stories, not adhering to schedules . . . Our perspective [shifted] to what tools can we bring to help you?" – Re-granter

Challenge Areas

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are bedrock values of Hewlett's Western Conservation grantmaking strategy. However, these values have not always translated to discernible DEI practices or outcomes.

- A DEI "through-line" is not always perceptible. While some grantees perceive DEI expectations as embedded within the general operating support (GOS) they receive directly from Hewlett, this is not always the case with the smaller, shorter grants they receive from re-granters who also may not have the same level of DEI emphasis organizationally.

"One of the things none of us is actually judged on is, did we actually diversify this movement? Did we make the public lands community look more like what the West actually looks like?" – Re-granter

- **Attention is needed on DEI as process as well as outcome.** Challenges remain to moving the needle on diversified re-granter portfolios, as evidenced by the difficulty encountered identifying BIPOC-led grantees for this study's interviews.^{xiv} Respondents, particularly grantees, were vocal about the need not only for diversified portfolios, but also for attention to process, or how re-granters conduct their work to ensure an inclusive culture for BIPOC organizations.^{xv}

*"If we're only funded for outcomes, then we're not going to get there on diversity."
— Grantee*
- **Additional investment in relational strategies is needed for effective collaboration with diverse organizations.** Grantees highlighted the need for re-granters to invest further in relational strategies for working with diverse organizations and communities. Part of this challenge was attributed to some re-granters' organizational cultures. Another identified aspect of the challenge was a strong focus on short-term outcomes among re-granters. Both can lead to tension between re-granters with a perceived deliverable mindset and organizations with models "deeply ensconced in long-term relationship-building over time."^{xvi} For example, one grantee described a difficult grant negotiation between a funder and a BIPOC colleague: *"Her approach and strategy didn't fit their strategy. They were buying outcomes and she just didn't have those outcomes to sell. Eventually they got there, but it was painful."*

"I think the field is moving toward being more relational. If [re-granters] understand and change that within their own organizations, they will be more successful in engaging diverse stakeholders." — Grantee

CONSIDERATIONS MOVING FORWARD

Re-granters are making important capacity- and field-building contributions by virtue of their value-added roles. To the extent that Hewlett is specifically interested in field-building as one of its key approaches for realizing lasting conservation outcomes, opportunity exists for a refined strategy moving forward.

Field-Building Vision

A preliminary question for Hewlett's consideration is how strongly it views field-building as a cornerstone of its theory of change in Western Conservation grantmaking strategy.^{xvii} An explicit field-building vision should detail the desired components of a stronger field — such as DEI advancement, network development, increased organizational capacity, and/or leadership development — as well as strategies and ways to measure progress toward identified outcomes. For example, measuring progress in network development could mean using social network analysis (SNA) to assess the number and nature of connections with and among groups currently on the

periphery of the field, and how these groups' network positions and partnerships evolve over time.

A clear vision would help Hewlett assess existing strengths and potential gaps between desired field-building outcomes and current strategies and partnerships with re-granters, grantees, funders, and others. This assessment can inform Hewlett's future approach and investment strategy for realizing both a stronger field and specific conservation outcomes.

Re-granters and other partners should be invited to provide input on a field-building vision, where they see current and prospective roles, and what challenges they anticipate—including organizational culture shifts necessary to support long-term collective change, and potential tradeoffs between field-building and conservation objectives given resource constraints.

Finally, a clear vision will allow Hewlett and others to systematically learn from how re-granters and grantees are contributing—in different ways and to varying degrees—to the different components of a stronger field. Hewlett should consider using its grant proposal and reporting process to request a further breakdown of activities that speak to identified field-building outcomes (e.g., facilitating grantee networks).^{xviii} Reporting forms could be used to prompt consistent sharing of the ways in which re-granters contribute to capacity- and field-building aims.

DEI Advancement

As both a field-building component and guiding value, DEI advancement merits particular attention. Hewlett should ensure it has measurable goals in place for its Western Conservation grantmaking strategy that focus on DEI as both process and outcome, building on implementation markers currently in place.^{xix} Sample outcomes include an increasingly diversified grantee portfolio along all dimensions of desired diversity, dollars out the door specifically to BIPOC-led organizations, and measurable improvements in organizational capacity of emerging grantees indicative of growing power to conduct the work long-term.

Reflecting the importance of relational strategies highlighted in this study, qualitative outcomes focused on relationship development also make sense—for example, initial engagements with diverse, non-grantee stakeholders not yet “in the room.”^{xx}

Focusing on *how* the work is done also means: tracking Hewlett's existing approaches to centering equity (e.g., grants that center power-building strategies; participatory grantmaking); ensuring DEI incorporation into grantmaking practices from outreach to reporting stages;^{xxi} and assessing, via grantee and other stakeholder feedback, how inclusive funder culture is for communities of color and organizations of varying capacities.

Re-granters should also consider these steps in context of their own specific DEI efforts, grantmaking strategies, and organizational priorities and constraints. Among its re-granters, Hewlett can signal a desired through-line on DEI advancement by requesting annual grantee portfolio data and making use of strategic grant reporting questions.

Network Development and Collaboration

Network development and knowledge-sharing are recognized as key field-building elements.^{xxii} Looking at re-granters with a field-building lens means understanding how focused convenings can help build connections, share knowledge and best practices, strengthen work, boost collaboration, and shape a stronger field.

Hewlett can help create space for a targeted learning community, tightly organized around topics of common urgency such as DEI advancement, where re-granters can share their respective efforts and coordinate learning with Hewlett, particularly in light of the Foundation's announced steps to help address systemic racism. Hewlett could share how its different approaches to centering racial equity in Western Conservation grantmaking are yielding lessons that can inform the Foundation's and others' practice.

Another learning topic of particular relevance would be exploring ways to bolster asset-based collaboration—for example, further embedding principles of effective partnership highlighted by grantees in this study. Hewlett should also explore the potential of collaborative peer-exchange grants between grantees and re-granters on areas of respective need, recognizing that grantees are providers as well as recipients of critical capacities.

Hewlett and re-granters can increase their focus on enabling connections among grantees and identifying those with specific strengths in grantee network facilitation. Grantee networks have been a critical area of re-granter support for building organizational and field capacity in other initiatives. Peer networks are critical not only for grantee learning and connections, but also for re-granters' understanding and strategies for working with grantees.^{xxiii}

Main Considerations for Hewlett

- Articulate clear field-building vision with different components of a stronger field (e.g., DEI advancement, network development, organizational strengthening, and/or leadership development), connection to conservation goals, and ways to measure progress.
- Use field-building vision to assess current strengths and gaps, inform future approach and investment strategy, and systematically learn from re-granters and grantees' field-building contributions (e.g., through grant proposal and reporting processes).
- Review grantmaking structure for re-granters and grantees (e.g., increased grant amounts, flexible multi-year funding), particularly as they address longer-term field-building priorities in addition to shorter-term programmatic ones and support emerging and less traditional partners.
- Ensure measurable goals for Western Conservation grantmaking strategy that focus on DEI as process and outcome.
- Make space for targeted learning community tightly organized around topics of common urgency such as DEI advancement and asset-based collaboration.
- Explore potential for collaborative peer-exchange grants between grantees and re-granters on capacity areas of respective need.

Main Considerations for Re-granters

- Provide input on field-building vision, where see current and prospective roles, and anticipated challenges and tradeoffs.
- Consider ways to further embed principles of effective collaboration highlighted by grantees (e.g., early and substantive engagement).
- In context of their own DEI efforts and grantmaking strategies, ensure integration of DEI goals with respect to both process (e.g., how work is done, relational strategies) and outcomes (e.g., diversified grant portfolios).
- Focus on enabling greater inter-grantee connections and exchange that also increases re-granter learning and informs strategies for working with grantees.

Re-granters play valuable, wide-ranging roles that help bolster organizational and field capacity. Study findings reveal opportunities to increase partnerships that are more diversified and reciprocal, and that align with Hewlett's stated priorities on DEI and collaboration. Such partnerships contribute to critical short-term wins as well as to a broader field empowered for long-term impact.

Jennifer Henderson-Frakes is an independent research and evaluation consultant based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Previously she was a Senior Associate at Social Policy Research Associates, an evaluation firm in Oakland, CA where she worked primarily in the Philanthropy, Equity & Youth and Education Divisions, and conducted numerous capacity- and field-building studies.

jenniferhfrakes@gmail.com

APPENDIX A: STUDY METHODS

Conducted over approximately six months, the study relied on qualitative methods to answer research questions on re-granters' value-added roles, collaborative practices, DEI integration, and grantmaking practices.

An advisory committee was convened to inform the study's research questions and preliminary recommendations. The committee was comprised of five re-granter and grantee volunteers, all of whom were also individually interviewed for the study.

Key Methods

- 7 interviews with 15 re-granter respondents.
- 8 interviews with 10 grantee respondents.
- 3 interviews with 4 field-observer respondents.
- Document review including Hewlett grant documents, strategy papers, evaluation reports, and field research.
- Advisory committee to inform study design and findings.

The study relied heavily on a set of 18 interviews with 29 re-granter, grantee, and field-observer respondents. Interviews were conducted by videoconference or phone using a semi-structured protocol for each sub-group, with questions further tailored to individual respondents. This allowed interviewees to speak effectively on the study topics from their particular vantage point, while also permitting for new lines of inquiry and intriguing themes to emerge. Hewlett staff were also interviewed to provide further perspective and triangulate data. With a couple of exceptions, interviews were recorded. All interviews were written up individually before data were organized by study topic. Each topic area was then further analyzed for patterns, sub-themes, and illustrative examples. These qualitative analyses informed the annotated report outline, preliminary recommendations, and drafting of each report section.

Document review was another data source that informed both the study's design and findings. Grant proposals and reports, including Organizational Effectiveness (OE) grants, were analyzed to better understand re-granters' goals and work and to develop interview protocols. Other documents included Hewlett evaluation reports, strategy papers, and relevant research from the field.

The study produced two reports: an internal version for Hewlett Western Conservation staff, and a shorter version for public dissemination centered on field-building.

The study's main challenges were the small sample of grantee respondents and identifying BIPOC-led organizations to interview. Additionally, the grantee sample was skewed toward feedback on certain re-granters. While one re-granter had no grantee feedback, another received feedback from seven of the eight grantee organizations. Data collection from a larger grantee sample would have yielded more robust findings and themes stratified by sub-groups. Additional data on re-granter funding and portfolios over time, as well as on Hewlett Western Conservation and OE grants, might have further illuminated study findings.

Endnotes

ⁱ <https://hewlett.org/programs/environment/>

ⁱⁱ “A field is defined as a branch of knowledge, policy, and practice composed of a multiplicity of actors in relationship with each other. It involves both knowledge and action.” Petrovich, J. (2011). *Exiting Responsibly: Best Donor Practices in Ending Field Support*. A Study for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Princeton, NJ: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
<https://www.cof.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/RWJ%20Report%20-%20Exiting%20Responsibly%20-%20Best%20Donor%20Practices%20in%20Ending%20Field%20Support.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to documented increases in partisan animosity among the American electorate <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/> other factors such as declining trust in governmental institutions, partisan manipulation of the electoral process, and growing disparities in wealth, economic opportunity, and political influence have contributed to the U.S.’s declining state-of-democracy scores from multiple sources such as: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/united-states/freedom-world/2020> and <http://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>

^{iv} Field-building is, in part, about connecting actors, building or strengthening networks, and sharing knowledge so that “the field can operate more effectively, efficiently, tease out best practices, and improve outcomes.” Social Innovation Generation, <http://www.sigeration.ca/field-building/>

^v In general, re-granter is not a strongly shared identity or a way that these organizations think about or define themselves either separately or in relation to Hewlett, whom most described as a close working partner. The re-granting function sits very differently within each organization’s history, values, roles, and their way of working in conservation, which can lead to differences in perception on what it means to be a re-granter.

^{vi} <https://hewlett.org/new-steps-to-address-systemic-racism/>

^{vii} There were seven re-granters at the time this study began. Since then, Hewlett began partnering with three additional re-granters; these three were not included in the study.

^{viii} For example, intermediaries can increase a funder’s reach and power “by virtue of a relevant capacity – knowledge, experience, willingness to work the details, capacity to make connections.” Szanton, Peter L., 2003. *Toward More Effective Use of Intermediaries*. Foundation Center.
http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/practicematters_01_paper.pdf
However, intermediaries “are also . . . often started in response to the needs of communities of color, women, regions, or communities with less support . . . they are typically in closer relationships and alignment with the field and more willing to make investments that others . . . may view as riskier. If you look at emerging grassroots organizations, often their first grant is from an intermediary.” Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, *Grantmaking with a Racial Equity Lens*, 2020.

^{ix} While this study did not systematically collect data on what constitutes a “short” grant period, some grantees described grant periods of six months or less with re-granters. As comparison, from 2004-2013, average grant terms for new and renewing grants in Hewlett’s Environment Program were between just over one year to 1.7 years: https://www.hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Grantmaking%20Trends%20Memo_Environment_2014.pdf . More recently, Hewlett defined “longer-term” grants as at least two years for its international reproductive health strategy to support local advocacy in sub-Saharan Africa:

https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2020/09/Phase-3-Report-Public-Facing-Final-9-11-20-1.pdf?_ga=2.84665497.1827327567.1601317854-828481565.1600997668

^x “Networks are the connective tissue of a field . . . A thriving field doesn’t rest on a single institution—rather, it is the connections and collaborations between institutions and individuals that allow new ideas to be generated and new resources to be pulled into the field.” O’Neil, Kevin. *How Do You Build a Field? Lessons from Public Health*. The Rockefeller Foundation, 2015.

<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/how-do-you-build-a-field-lessons-from-public-health/> Field-building “develops incentives for collaboration that may not have happened organically.” Social Innovation Generation, <http://www.sigeneration.ca/field-building/> Bernholz et al recognize the importance of developing a network infrastructure for foundations interested in strategically building a field. Bernholz, Seale, & Wang. (2009). *Building to Last: Field building as a philanthropic activity*. San Francisco: Blueprint Research & Design Inc.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/26742690>

The Bridgespan Group’s Strong Field Framework prioritizes fostering a knowledge base, among other key field-building components. Bridgespan Group. (2009). *The strong field framework: A guide and toolkit for funders and nonprofits committed to large-scale impact*. San Francisco: James Irvine Foundation.

<https://irvine-dot-org.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/64/attachments/strongfieldframework.pdf?1412656138>

^{xi} “One of the most important functions an intermediary organization (IO) can perform is to help connect and nurture networks of grantees and other organizations. Network management is a specific skill set (and mindset) that is critical for both IOs and their foundation partners if they aspire to field-building as one of their ultimate goals.” David, Tom, 2007. *Partnering with Intermediaries*. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

http://www.tdavid.net/uploads/3/8/9/1/38919813/partnering_with_intermediaries_finale.pdf

^{xii} For example, a survey effort led by Dorceta Taylor at University of Michigan, School for Environment and Sustainability found that white people comprised 85 percent of the staff and 80 percent of the boards of 2,057 environmental nonprofits. Taylor, D. (July 2014). *The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations Green 2.0 Report*.

http://orgs.law.harvard.edu/els/files/2014/02/FullReport_Green2.0_FINALReducedSize.pdf

A Green 2.0 report in 2019 found that people of color comprised only 20 percent of the staff (and 21 percent of senior staff) at the 40 largest environmental NGOs. Johnson, Stefanie K. (2019). *Leaking Talent: How People of Color are Pushed Out of Environmental Organizations*. www.diversegreen.org

^{xiii} Bartczak et al found OE-DEI grant patterns across Hewlett’s program areas that mirror the ones reported for this study: “While grantees are taking many different approaches to building DEI capacity, proposals most often named work around three themes: 1) training staff, 2) developing an organizational philosophy or ethos around DEI, and 3) conducting assessments related to DEI.” Bartczak, Lori, Lauri Valerio, and Carla Taylor. (September 2019). *Hewlett Foundation OE-DEI Grants Final Report*.

^{xiv} Hewlett’s portfolio also has room for increased diversification. As of 2018, 20 percent of Hewlett Western Conservation’s grantee portfolio was composed of people of color—“significantly better than the industry average across environmental organizations” but not representative of the West’s racial diversity. Hovland Consulting LLC (2018), *Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity in the Western Conservation Program*.

^{xv} Challenges go beyond diversity in staff representation and grantee portfolios, to mainstream environmental organizations with work priorities that do not include equity, and dominant organizational cultures that can be alienating or non-inclusive of communities of color. Allala, L. (March 31, 2016). *Breaking the Green Ceiling: Empowering People of Color in the Environmental Sector*. <https://elpnet.org/breaking-green-ceiling-empowering-people-color-environmental-sector>

^{xvi} A recent Harder + Company Community Research evaluation of RLF's California Conservation Innovations (CCI) Program – aimed at engaging younger and more ethnically diverse people in environmental advocacy and leadership – found that “many of the grassroots organizations come from collectivist cultures and that they may work, communicate, and show up in ways that do not fit neatly into mainstream, traditional spaces.” <https://resourceslegacyfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CCI-Constituency-Evaluation-Final-Report-March-2020.pdf>

^{xvii} For example, Hewlett's grantmaking strategy to support local family planning and reproductive health (FPRH) in Sub-Saharan Africa explicitly names capacity development and power sharing as critical to its theory of change for achieving policy outcomes. “. . . the foundation views investment in a robust civil society sector with the capacity to influence FPRH policies and funding decisions . . . as a structural change needed to have enduring impact on FPRH outcomes.” Dilliplane, Susanna and David Devlin-Foltz. (January 2020). *Evaluating Impacts of the Hewlett Foundation's Strategy to Support Local Advocacy*. https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2020/02/Phase-2-Brief-on-Impact-Final-2-5-20.pdf?_ga=2.105134467.1093933833.1600206834-1537010045.1551356563

^{xviii} Currently, the requested breakdown of activities in grantee proposals is between: (1) defense of public lands protections, (2) advancing new policy proposals, (3) building enduring conditions for conservation, and (4) facilitating funder collaboratives.

^{xix} Western Conservation grantmaking strategy's current five-year outcomes and implementation markers for mid-2019 to mid-2020 (updated March 10, 2020) include a goal of at least 30 percent of the grantmaking portfolio “is comprised of organizations serving communities of color, including indigenous communities” over the next three to five years. In addition, over the next 12 months, “grantee campaigns in three priority geographies include active participation from indigenous communities, rural community leaders, and/or nonprofit organizations serving communities of color.” *Implementation Markers 2019-2020*, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

^{xx} This speaks to increasing the “number and diversity of stakeholders who participate in or contribute to the field, including those affected by the field's issue(s).” Stachowiak, S. Gienapp, A. & Kaira, N. (2020). *Not Always Movements: Multiple Approaches to Advance Large-Scale Social Change*. https://www.orsimpact.com/DirectoryAttachments/6242020_35339_970_Not_Always_Movements_Multiple_Approaches_Large-Scale_Social_Change.pdf

^{xxi} For example, Arabella Advisors has developed tools for incorporating DEI into grantmaking, including a checklist of practices at various stages. <https://www.ncfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Incorporating-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-in-your-Grantmaking-Process-A-Checklist-of-Potential-Actions-Arabella-Advisors-2016-a-checklist-of-potential-actions-incorporating-dei-into-your-grantmaking-process-arabella-advisors-1.pdf>

^{xxii} “Building networks and sharing knowledge is an important component of any field-building initiative. Webinars, institutes, convenings, and other knowledge-sharing opportunities help those working in a field build skills, relationships, and connections, and to engage in critical conversations. Knowledge sharing also helps break down the isolation, [and] increase the accessibility of best and promising practices . . .” Yu, Hanh Cao, Jennifer Henderson-Frakes, and Lucia Corral Peña (2016) Building a Field: Blue Shield of California Foundation's Strong Field Project Leaves a Legacy and Valuable Lessons. *The Foundation Review*. June 2016. Vol. 8, issue 2.

^{xxiii} See for example the evaluation of the Community Leadership Project, a multi-year, \$20 million collaborative effort of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the James Irvine Foundation to build the capacity of organizations serving low-income communities of color in California. <http://www.communityleadershipproject.org/evaluations.html>