

LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESSION IN COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY



**PHILANTHROPY
LEADERSHIP
NETWORK**

Background

Despite efforts over the last 16 years to build the field of community philanthropy, the network has seen a decline in membership. **From 23 member organisations in 2005 to 12 in 2015 and more recently 14 in 2016.** Members have also seen a decline in the number and size of

grants they are able to secure for community grantmaking. The community philanthropy field still feels like the Cinderella of philanthropy.

The network, incubated by Inyathelo-Southern Africa Institute for Advancement and Synergos, was managed by Synergos until 2010 when it became independent. Independence was seen as desirable. More recently the

executive committee of the network, reflecting on the challenge of leading the network, noted that the cost of independence was higher than expected.

Members assumed the network had the time, energy, commitment and resources to run this independent structure. In reality very few members are active 100% of the time so a group of core members tend to contribute

more i.t.o. energy, time and resources. The network has struggled with leadership and communication challenges. Despite this, the core held, but it is time to question if member management of the network is still desirable.

Founder members of the network would like to hand over the baton to others, younger visionary leaders with a passion for community philanthropy. These young leaders

are few. When they do come up in the ranks they tend not to stay long.

We looked at our own practice of leadership and what we do that invite and block these younger leaders. We wanted to know what we thought about leadership, what our journeys were like and where we might be headed as individuals and as a network. This is our leadership story.

The Problem

Developing and sustaining leadership talent is a challenge

Leadership and Succession are fault lines in organisations

If leadership is not adequately supported, managed and transitions planned for – efforts to build community philanthropy as a field will be held back



Leadership Learning Circle

Three Key Questions

How is the term leadership understood?

What factors are shutting out as well as welcoming emerging leaders?

What are the features of the current environment that make it difficult to lead or facilitate leadership?

Methodology

A formative and exploratory inquiry

Enquiry Period: June – September 2016

No of key informants: 14

Geographic Spread: South Africa and Zimbabwe

Sector: Community Philanthropy Organisations (members of the PLN) and Community Based Organisations (grantee of a member of the PLN)

Methodology: Conversations/Interviews which created a space for self-reflection and critical analysis.

Conversations sought to:

- Draw out how the concept of leadership is understood;
- Identify key barriers and constraints to leadership
- Identify enabling factors for leadership
- Better understand the openings and obstacles for young or emerging leadership and what the sector can do about it.

Technique • Key informant interviews

Reach • South Africa
• Zimbabwe

Coverage • Community Based Organisations, Community Philanthropy Organisations & Forum perspectives

Sample • 12 CPO leaders
• 2 CBO leaders

Core Messages

- Leadership must engage with dynamics of context-changing issues, perspectives, funders and communities
- Established leaders must “create more leaders” – mentorship is critical
- Succession has to be planned – it cannot be left to chance
- There is a leadership deficit – the sector requires a different type of leader going forward
- The network should expand its role and widen its membership base
- The network should be more forgiving of itself – adopt an asset based not deficit approach!

Key Findings

- Leadership in CPOs is about vision and moving everyone together and less about management – efficiency and effectiveness
- Leadership in CBOs is about leading from behind
- Creativity and innovation is unlocked by leaders listening and being responsive to the environment – at national and community level
- The future needs leaders that are: in touch with the field - shift with the times - listen to their constituency - move people together - and then move on themselves
- There are internal and external obstacles to leadership transitions
- Succession needs to be taken seriously: plan, budget, genuine commitment and readiness

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How do we navigate our way through the leadership and management tension? How can we blend the relational and visionary aspects with the need to manage projects and satisfy compliance requirements?
- What could an “asset based” approach to mentoring look like? How do we mobilise what we have?
- How does the network support succession planning as an urgent sector wide issue? What is our African way of supporting succession and leadership that suits our cultural context?
- Should we, examine the value of a 360 degree assessment of leadership and succession?
- If the network is to become the place for leadership incubation and support and grow its membership base how should it shape and organise itself. Should it remain member managed?

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