

Who is Building Leadership Well?

Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation

Foundation joins with other grantmakers to unite and support the next generation of philanthropic leaders.

Quick Grantmaker Stats

Type of funder	Family foundation
Geography/Issue Area	Los Angeles; national for youth philanthropy initiatives
When founded	1999
Total assets (as of FY 2013)	\$6M
Annual giving (as of FY 2013)	\$555,000
Number of staff	1 Full Time; 3 Par Time
Website	www.fcfox.org
Brief description of the program/ practice being discussed	Youth Philanthropy Connect provides resources, networking for grantmakers with youth boards or youth philanthropy programs and efforts.

1. Describe the situation or practice.

In 2013, the Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation decided to stop accepting unsolicited proposals so it could focus on two major initiatives. One is [Education by Nature](#), an environmental education collaborative approach that connects nonprofits, schools and funders, which was incubated in the foundation and recently transitioned to the Los Angeles-based Children’s Nature Institute. The second is [Youth Philanthropy Connect](#), an initiative aimed at supporting grantmakers and philanthropic families to get youth more involved in their work and to develop the skills of the next generation of philanthropic leaders.

Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation began involving the Fox family’s children in its work shortly after its founding in 1999. The grantmaker created a formal “junior board” in 2006. In the years that followed, members of the junior board presented at events hosted by Exponent Philanthropy (formerly the Association of Small Foundations) and the Council on Foundations.

These presentations, in turn, generated discussions with other foundations that were focusing on how best to engage the next generation of family members.

One of those other foundations was the Lumpkin Family Foundation. Annie Hernandez, who was working at the Lumpkin Foundation as a program officer at the time, had recently taken on the job of integrating younger family members into the Illinois grantmaker's work. Hernandez contacted the executive director of the Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation after one of its junior board's presentations, and the two hatched plans to bring the young people from the two families together. That 2010 meeting, in turn, led to a 2011 gathering at Disneyland for the two foundations' youth, along with young representatives of two other grantmakers — and Youth Philanthropy Connect was born.

2. What have you tried to do differently?

Hernandez ultimately became executive director of the Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation and director of Youth Philanthropy Connect. Inspired by the magic that happens when youth passionate about making a difference come together, and not knowing of any other way the philanthropic families were connecting nationally around youth grantmaking, the foundation is deeply investing staff time and finances to develop Youth Philanthropy Connect over the coming years. The vision for the work now is to grow the number of foundations and youth involved in philanthropy and age-down the next generation of conversations in the field from age 21+ to 8+. In order for the effort to grow to its full potential, the foundation is taking intentional steps to plan for its evolution, and that means it is unlikely to live within the foundation over the long term.

Today, Youth Philanthropy Connect engages in a variety of activities to bring together youth (ages 8-21) in philanthropy and to share stories and lessons from grantmakers engaged in this work. Its activities include:

Annual Conference

They did not know it at the time, but the young philanthropists from four foundations started something when they met for the first time in 2011 at Disneyland. They inspired an annual series of once-a-year meetings that focus on developing and connecting these youth philanthropists, and the series is growing every year. The 2014 Youth Philanthropy Connect conference was the largest yet, with young people attending concurrent sessions presented by experts in various fields across the country. While focused on the youth, the conference is actually intergenerational and designed to build the philanthropic skills of the youth attending as well as support the adult advocates working

with the youth throughout the year. The conference features a giving circle, networking and sharing of best practices, plus interactive, youth-focused workshop sessions like Researching Causes You Care About and Evaluation: Knowing Your Impact. Participants ranged in age from 8 to 21 and represented more than 20 foundations across 18 states.

Research and Resources

As those involved in the conference grew, a number of important gaps were identified in the youth philanthropy field. First, there is no list or place where information about who is doing what and where in youth philanthropy is available. There is actually a lot happening in schools, community foundations, families, family foundations, nonprofits, and more — it just hasn't been connected. There is also no aggregation of resources to support youth philanthropy and there are not a lot of easily accessible resources for families. In response to these gaps, Youth Philanthropy Connect identified partners in the philanthropic space they could partner with to address these issues. In response, Youth Philanthropy Connect is working with the Foundation Center to assess what data is available broadly related to youth philanthropy and developing recommendations for what can be done to aggregate data to support the growth of youth philanthropy in the coming years.

The organization also is working with the National Center for Family Philanthropy to develop resources on what families and family foundations are doing. The two collaborated to produce a 2013 issue brief, entitled Igniting the Spark: What is a Next Gen Board and Why Do Family Foundations Use Them? Igniting the Spark, which features case studies of youth engagement strategies at different foundations, along with perspectives from emerging leaders in philanthropy like Zach Whitten, a youth board member at the Lumpkin Family Foundation and college senior. “My favorite part of being on the Junior Board is the ability to make significant impact with my cousins as our own entity that prepares us for the adult board,” Whitten said.

Youth Philanthropy Connect also is working with Exponent Philanthropy to create a series of youth-accessible resources and curricula about philanthropy. These will be short and easy for a parent or program officer to use with teens just becoming involved in philanthropy. For example, one will highlight information on considerations for going public with your philanthropy and walk through brief content related to the topic as well as exercises to think about what this means for them, their family and their foundation. The hope is that these will help more families get started with something small that could help them begin youth engagement in philanthropy and grantmaking.

3. What has been the result?

Hernandez said the fact that the Youth Philanthropy Connect annual conference continues to attract more participation each year is a sign that her organization is addressing an unmet need in the field. “It’s clear that a lot of foundations are thinking about next-generation strategies and there is a real hunger in the field for information and ideas,” she said.

Hernandez added that Youth Philanthropy Connect is interested in gathering data on the volume of grantmaking that happens via youth boards so it can track the impact of this work over time. She said her interactions with the next-generation philanthropists she meets through her work have convinced her that this work can have lasting impact on how they view their philanthropy and their place in the world.

“We have seen again and again that the earlier people are exposed to this work the more it influences their values, life experience, and their dedication to using their philanthropy to make a real difference,” she said.

Hernandez added that an unanticipated impact of the work of Youth Philanthropy Connect and the youth boards it works with is that it is influencing nonprofits to think about involving youth more actively in their programs. “We are now starting to see nonprofits that receive grants from these youth boards reflecting on why they don’t have a youth board themselves,” she said.

“Our experience shows that young people will step up to the challenge of leadership if we create opportunities for them to do it. Not only does this help prepare them for lives of philanthropy and service, but it helps make our foundations more relevant and more responsive to emerging issues and needs.”

— Annie Hernandez, Executive Director

4. What are your key insights from doing the work?

Hernandez’s main piece of advice to grantmakers who are trying to figure out how to reach the next generation of board members is, “Don’t reinvent the wheel.” She said that while resources and case studies about youth boards were hard to find just a few years ago, that is not the case anymore. Youth Philanthropy Connect continues its partnership with the National Center for Family Philanthropy and other partners to document what’s happening in the field, what’s working to engage youth, and more.

Hernandez's other key insight is that philanthropy should always be looking for new ways to bring in younger voices and perspectives. "A lot of foundations create programs and then invite young people to be a part of those programs," she said. "A better approach is to co-create programs and initiatives with young people." She added that grantmakers should start small and then allow youth-led programs to evolve.