



# 2014 Philanthropy Partners Conference Summary

Presented by Craig Freshley as an Endnote Address  
Wednesday, May 7, 2014, Point Lookout, Northport, Maine

## Welcome - Barbara Leonard

- Isn't it great that Spring finally came!
- This conference has at its heart the goal of providing partnerships
- Purposes of the Maine Philanthropy Center
  - Strengthen effectiveness of members of the philanthropic community
  - Increase the impact of philanthropy
  - Incorporate a focus on diversity and inclusion
  - Be a resource and leader in the service of philanthropy

## Introduction - Barbara Edmond

- We have been planning this party for a long time!
- Thanks to Sponsors, Volunteers, and Speakers
- I wake up every day thinking about the power of philanthropy and how do we make giving count.
- “You must first be independently effective before being interdependently effective.” – Stephen Covey
- Philanthropy requires a sense of urgency
- To address urgency, we need first to get clear on our impact – what we want to do – interdependently. That's synergy!
  - We need.
  - New thinking.
  - New behaviors.
  - New actions.
- Barbara's end game is that through philanthropy, Maine will be the best place for all people to live, work and play.

## Cracking the Network Code - Keynote - Heather Peeler

- The main reason that organizations collaborate is that they want to increase impact.
- But the issues are SO complicated and interrelated!
  - Remember the rubber bands photo?
  - The school attendance issue?
- “Mastering collaboration is the most important opportunity to close the gap between achieving pretty good performance and full potential.”
- No matter what you call it -- collaboration, collective impact, whatever -- it all comes down to the same things.
  - Mission, not organization
    - Successful organizations don’t think so much about organizational growth, but about network growth
    - Rather than build playgrounds, invest in others who build playgrounds
  - Trust, not control
    - Build trust first rather than sign MOU’s
    - When trust is in place, it opens up a new kind of leadership
  - Humility, not brand
    - Nothing kills collaboration faster than hubris and ego
    - Bring curiosity to our work - it helps us be more patient
  - Nodes not hubs
    - Effective networkers see themselves as nodes rather than hubs
- If grant makers want to be truly effective, we need to change how we do things. We need to not always pit organizations against each other. We need a personality change.
- For grant makers to support collaboration, give grantees the resources and flexibility to build trust.
- The values that brought us into the nonprofit sector don’t always show up in our work.
- Our challenge: How to match our values with our actions!

## Energy of the Breakout Sessions

- Thoughtful
- Candid
- Serious
- Focused
- Curious and fun
- Giddy
- Open and friendly
- Enlightening
- High
- Skeptical

- Moderate
- Tired, but engaged, focused, interested

## Best things about the Breakout Sessions

- Candid Conversations....Let's REALLY Talk!
  - “Grantmaker teams” recognized issues around fighting bias and difficulty in decision making. “Grantseekers” experienced angst of making presentations and the variables at play.
  - One of the best workshops I’ve gone to on this topic – very thought provoking.
- Are We Really Ready? Preparing for Impact of Leadership Transitions
  - Are there conversations your organization isn’t having?
  - Closure and good endings create space for strong beginnings.
  - Funders want to help nonprofits in transition to not lose momentum – include them in the transition process.
- The Operating Support Conundrum: Are We Asking The Right Questions?
  - The candor of the panelists and audience members made it possible to talk directly about what funders and nonprofits do, don’t do, could do, and should do, to help accomplish what they want to see happen.
- Building Capacity for Community Impact
  - It gave a historical perspective of how diverse organizations pulled together and made healthy change over 40 years.
- Considering Mergers as a Strategy from a Position of Strength
  - Honest sharing of the personal side of considering mergers and ability to put your mission above your organization.
- Break Out of Business as Usual: Strategies for Innovation
  - The overarching theme of the speaker’s closing comments: perseverance paired with vision, then sharing the vision, showing that you care, engaging others, and being flexible to change or leave one’s own ideas behind, are all the things that lead to success.
- Impact Through Advocacy: Public Policy to Make Change
  - Demystifying advocacy and advocacy funding
  - Real life, real time examples from both
  - Grant seeker and grant maker perspectives
- Evaluation and Assessment: Moving Beyond Measuring Success to Understanding Impact
  - Re: evaluation/assessment: What do we want to achieve? What do we want to know? How did we get there?



- If You Think You're Not Working in Aging? Think Again!
  - At Home Downeast is a volunteer-launched, volunteer-delivered, membership program to pull together neighbors and community members to address the needs of seniors to help them stay in their homes and become/remain a part of the community (Joe Perkins). Average members are in their 80's, age of volunteers mostly 60-80.
- Engaging NextGen Philanthropists and Volunteers--What's the Secret?
  - Fresh perspectives from young leaders committed to the work.
  - Hire staff who reflect the demographic you are trying to attract; like with traditional development strategies, you need to focus on authentic relationship building and take the long-term view.
- Corporate Partners: More Than Just Money in the Bank
  - It was exciting to learn how enthusiastic the corporate funders are about their respective givings and communities.
- Working Across Lines of Difference: Learning from Each Other
  - One presenter gave her comments in a poem
  - The panel represented and demonstrated topic of diversity

## So what are you going to do differently?

- Launch new programs with new contacts
- Thank grantees for applying
- Work with many people I met today on my program
- Start dialogues by talking about our common history
- Amp up seeking feedback so we can do things better

## Learned and Overheard

- There are over 3,000 501(c)(3)'s in Maine
- "You can be accountable.....and in debt."
- "I know these speakers can't wait to participate."
- Our intentions and our behaviors rarely align
- "Tell me more about the dark side of mergers."
- From a foundation board member: "Now I finally understand why nonprofits appreciate operating support so much. It's like sending your kid to school so they can accomplish something but if you don't feed them breakfast they can't learn anything."

- Just because something is not measurable, doesn't mean that it doesn't have value.
- The Maine State flower is a pine cone
- When asking for help on projects or cash, nonprofits should think how it may connect to the greater good.
- "How does the dance start?"
- Maine is the oldest state (by median age) in the nation, and soon 25% of the population will be 64 or older.
- That session made me realize why what I have been asked to do is, in fact, really important!
- The difference between a philanthropist and a philatelist
- "In the absence of information, people will make up stories."
- "Can I trust to be understood?"
- Collaboration is frustrating
- Accountability and effectiveness are just table stakes, they get us in the game, but they are not enough.
- 70% of grant makers collaborate
- 49% of nonprofits collaborate
- A grant maker role playing a grant seeker commented, "You mean we need to do this again?"
- Grantmakers and grantseekers are not always comfortable with networking
- "A shared vision/mission is most the most important aspect; over time, partners change."
- "We came up with a plan but the Cities weren't supportive. When we stepped back and let their input take priority, we ended up with a better partnership and outcome."
- Maine is third in the country in terms of percent of population with charitable bequests.
- Maine produces 99% of the country's blueberry crop
- L.L. Bean receives over 150 requests for donations per week
- "Next Generation" donors are "Now Generation" donors – they are here now and not waiting their turn!
- "Leadership transition is organizational transition. Don't underestimate it."
- Be a "first follower" – this is a very important leadership role

## Conclusions

- Synergy requires matches
  - Find your peeps!
  - “Network” is a verb!
- Stretch for collaboration
  - Mission, not organization
  - Trust, not control
  - Humility, not brand
  - Nodes, not hubs
- Values into action
  - Let’s ACT on the values that drew us into this work
  - “Network” is a verb!
  - The story of the three frogs and one “decided” to jump off
- We love our Maine philanthropic and nonprofit community!