Convenings 2.0

Connecting adult learning, communication strategies and event logistics to build stronger relationships

August 2013

A report prepared for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
by Special D Events, Inc.

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION™

Special D Events, Inc.

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Introduction

"The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is a relationship-based and an event-based organization. We love to bring our grantees together so they can learn, network and share best practices."

— Sterling Speirn, president and CEO, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

WKKF convenings are one of the key ways in which the foundation communicates with its stakeholders and grantees on an ongoing basis. **Convenings are a physical delivery of the WKKF brand and should demonstrate or model everything for which the brand stands**.

The better WKKF communicates with its grantees, the more effective these partnerships will be, and the more likely grantees will perform in ways that are consistent with the foundation's goals. Every convening represents an opportunity for communication, learning and relationship-building, specifically allowing the following:

— Grantees to:

- share ideas, learn and network.

- build relationships that will further ongoing knowledge transfer.

— WKKF to:

- facilitate knowledge capture and transfer.

- demonstrate understanding of the grantees' goals and strategies.

- exemplify its identity pillars, brand and standards.

- communicate its needs, expectations, concerns and guidelines.

The purpose of this study, Convenings 2.0, is to recommend approaches, protocols and standards for convenings that will reinforce WKKF's identity and strengthen relationships with its grantees. Rather than content, the focus is on the **process** of convening design and execution.

executive summary

PURPOSE

As noted in the introduction, WKKF convenings are one of the key ways in which the foundation communicates with its grantees. The purpose of this study is to recommend approaches, protocols and standards for convenings that will reinforce WKKF's identity and strengthen relationships with its grantees. Rather than content, the focus is on the **process of convening design and execution**.

METHODOLOGY

Special D Events conducted internal and external research to identify opportunities and challenges within WKKF's current convening design and execution process, as well as to identify best practices. Research was conducted in four phases.

Phase one, the initial research, included the review of WKKF materials such as identity guides and the master convening calendar, as well as numerous convening evaluations. We also conducted in-person interviews and surveys with internal WKKF stakeholders and attended select WKKF convenings. Cursory Internet research and a study of relevant external publications were also conducted.

In phase two, our environmental scan for best practices, we conducted interviews with 35 external subject matter experts from six countries in the areas of meeting design and logistics, adult learning and communication. We also conducted telephone interviews with five WKKF peer foundations:

- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

- The Kresge Foundation.

- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

- The David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

Subject Matter Expert Contributors

13 FOUNDATION

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Additional interviews were conducted with five other foundations that focus on vulnerable populations or were identified by the Center for Effective Philanthropy as has having exemplary relationships with their grantees or hosting well-regarded convenings. They included:

- Colorado Health Foundation.
- S. H. Cowell Foundation.
- The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread.
- The Lumina Foundation.
- Wallace Foundation.

The data was analyzed in phase three, and this report was created in phase four. For more information, please see the Methodology appendix in this report.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation holds 75 to 120 annual convenings (including internal meetings, such as board dinners) with attendance ranging from 10 to 800. Convenings may be held worldwide, but most occur in the United States.

WKKF convenings are currently designed and executed by multiple internal staff members, including representatives from Programming, Meeting Services, Communication, and Learning and Impact, as well as many external consultants, subject matter experts and audiovisual producers. These stakeholders are committed, willing to experiment with new convening concepts and technology, and welcome the opportunity to establish best practices. Because they are a diverse group, they may also benefit from clarification of their roles and a process that connects the dots among them.

Overall, an internal and external survey of convening best practices indicates that WKKF has some very strong building blocks in place, but has room for improvement in the design, execution and evaluation processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve maximum impact, every WKKF convening would benefit from following agreed-upon guidelines. Specifically, convenings should do the following:

- Be designed in collaboration with WKKF Programming, Communications, Meeting Services, and Learning and Impact.

- Clarify convening stakeholder roles and responsibilities.

- Have a documented purpose, measureable goals and measurable learning objectives that drive convening design.

- Include the appropriate people in attendance based on convening purpose.

- Feature sufficient, clear communication with all stakeholders before, during and after the event.

- Be evaluated with a cumulative standardized system.

- Allow for knowledge products generated at convenings to be captured and fed into a knowledge management system.

To aid the foundation in implementing these guidelines, this report offers a list of specific recommendations for convening process enhancements, some of which are already being considered by WKKF. Many recommendations would be relatively simple to implement; others require some infrastructure investment. The report also includes a recommended implementation plan, based on input from the foundation's Program Leadership Council (PLC), which suggests the formation of a cross-functional work team to review this report and determine organizational readiness.

CALL TO ACTION

For WKKF to develop a process like Convenings 2.0, leadership needs to continue to do the following:

1. Recognize the value of convenings and their potential to achieve the organization's goals.

2. Integrate convenings into the organization's strategy and encourage staff to think of them that way.

3. View convenings as part of the ongoing cycle of communications and engagement.

4. Pay as much attention to convening design and evaluation as to execution.

5. Recognize that if more collaboration is needed in the design, and additional interactive elements are considered, the planning timeline will need to be longer. However, by involving Meeting Services earlier in the planning process, the foundation will likely save money since the planner will be able to a) make additional suggestions to minimize costs and b) benefit from a longer lead time for negotiation with vendors and hotels.

The engagement and support of all convening stakeholders will be necessary to implement the recommendations captured here. Some recommendations may be implemented immediately, while others may take more consideration and time.

the landscape

Successful convening design and execution requires consideration of several disciplines, including meeting and event logistics, knowledge management, integrated communications and technology. Before embracing any change to the way WKKF convenings are planned, it's important to understand the current trends and landscape of those disciplines, as well as those of foundations overall.

THE MEETING AND EVENT INDUSTRY

TRANSPORTATION **LODGING** BUDGET ITINERARY **NAME TAGS** CHECK-IN
CONTRACTS **GUEST** HOTEL AUDIO VISUAL **DÉCOR** AIRLINE **PLANNER** CVENT
NEGOTIATION SETUP **SIGNAGE** REGISTRATION DIETARY **VENUE** TRAVEL
CONFIRMATIONS LOGISTICS TIMELINE **SPOUSE** RESEARCH

Meeting Professionals International (MPI), the primary membership association for the global meeting and event industry, recently released "From the Outside In: The Future of Meetings," a report based on interviews with a range of experts from outside the meetings industry — writers, teachers and thinkers in fields such as science, population, technology, digital media and business — as well as economists and futurists. All but two of MPI's 27 interviewees expect face-to-face meetings to remain an integral part of business for at least the next two decades and, in most cases, believe that online and virtual connections will actually increase the need for in-person events.

However, with so many opportunities available online for communication, education and networking, meeting organizers will need to adapt. In-person meeting attendance will be driven by attendees' desire for connections (networking) and context (somebody who is able to guide them through a subject).

MEETING INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

"With Millennials, it's about 'I just want to get there, get the information I want, and I want to meet people and I want to do it right now.' Waiting around for the annual meeting does not suit them. Right now, if they have an idea, they just text a friend and it gets the ball rolling. We have to adapt."

— **Michelle Bruno**,
   Bruno Group Signature Events

The following observations highlight other notable trends in the industry:

- Although meeting and event industry associations have made attempts to standardize the planning process, progress has been slow. Research conducted by one of our interviewees, veteran event planner Carolyn Ray, found that 62.7 percent of planners were unfamiliar with two major event industry standardization initiatives: CIC's APEX (Convention Industry Council's Accepted Practices Exchange) and EMBOK (Event Management Body of Knowledge).

- For veteran meeting attendees, expectations are low — particularly when attendance is required. They attend, but often expect that they will return with only one or two useful ideas.

- In general, younger (Millennial) meeting attendees expect meetings to make better use of their time.

  A PCMA Education Foundation study entitled, "What the Millennial Generation Prefers in their Meetings, Conventions and Events" revealed that Millennials (those born between 1979 and 1994) prefer "edutainment" programs that utilize technology when they attend events. This finding is consistent with research that indicates that they have the desire for concise, entertaining meetings. Additionally, with multitasking and visual learning the norm, technology in educational programming can provide visual, auditory and sometimes participatory learning experiences. Millennials also expect technology to be woven throughout the experience in forms of communication, team building, Wi-Fi availability and interactive activities.

- Although meeting organizers worldwide acknowledge the value of adult learning principles, interactivity and flexible meeting designs, there is only scattered progress. Meeting venues are still geared to large classroom settings; meeting presenters are uncomfortable with reduced structure; and the undocumented belief that "our attendees aren't ready for change" remains popular.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

INTERACTIVE EVALUATION FACILITATOR **KNOWLEDGE** DELIVERY **EXPERIENTIAL** CAPTURE **INNOVATION** STORYTELLING EDUCATION **ADULT** AUDIENCE **DISSEMINATION** DESIGNER CONTENT **PRODUCT** LEARNING PRESENTER

Traditionally in America, knowledge has been transferred from the top down, from master to neophyte, either via the printed page or in classroom settings. This has been going on worldwide since Plato sat with his student on the log, and in the U.S. since one-room schoolhouses began popping up on the American countryside in the 19th century.

In the 20th century, some of the media, but not much of the method, began to change. Fast forward to learners, whether at conventions or colleges, spending countless hours rooted in chairs listening to "experts" explain incomprehensibly complicated PowerPoint frames occasionally punctuated by videos and coffee breaks. Sometimes 20th century learners, as they endured mind-numbing information dumps, were able to absorb and process valuable information. More often, they ended up drowning in volumes of information they couldn't possibly absorb and being swept away in waves of irrelevance.

This would have continued into the 21st century if it weren't for one simple fact: learners today obtain information *from one another*, electronically and instantly. As a result, learning never stops, which means that most learners on any given day are adults. This has important consequences for the designers of communications, conventions, convenings, workshops and conferences. There is no escape from facing up to the reality of adult learning requirements.

Flip teaching (or flipped classroom): A form of education that encompasses any use of technology to leverage the learning in a classroom, so the instructor can spend more time interacting with students instead of lecturing. It is also known as backwards classroom, reverse instruction, flipping the classroom, and reverse teaching.

Adults dislike being talked down to even more than children; adolescents warm up to experts even less. Adults also insist on relevance: "What's in it for me to listen to you?" is the first, but often unspoken, question that they have. Also, adults today know a lot and always have something to say, whether or not meeting planners take advantage of this by providing them opportunities to do so. Most adults learn best by doing, not always by watching or listening, and require time to reflect on, discuss and process information before turning it into knowledge. And knowledge fades away rapidly in adult minds if they are not put in positions to apply it immediately after they obtain it. In other words, an expertly facilitated, collaborative, problem-solving exercise that can be replicated back on the job goes further in educating adults than any author, lecturer or image-maker can hope for working top down. (*See Two Views of Adult Learning Theory and Principles in the report appendix.*)

In 21st century convenings and conferences, knowledge is not only dispensed to, but also created by, the participants. As the knowledge is created, it needs to be captured and stored for easy retrieval, then instantly disseminated and applied in real-life problem situations. This means that communications people and convening designers need to learn myriad new terms and techniques: "strategic communications channel integration," "communities of practice," "experiential learning," "un-conference," "world café," "knowledge mobilization," "flipping," "crowd sourcing," "landscape mapping," "conference activity intervention," "energizers," "facilitation techniques," "knowledge resource sharing" and many more, to say nothing of the multitudinous social media terms and fluencies proliferating and evolving every day.

Exponential growth of information and knowledge has generated the need for not only the mastery of new convening design terms and techniques, but also the *innovation and invention* of new ways to bring people together for effective learning and problem-solving. In today's world, technology and new techniques often become obsolete before they can be mastered, so designers are obliged to dream things up as they go along and must not shrink from trying something that hasn't been "proven." If they fail to innovate, they run the risk of losing the learners.

ADULT LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

"Research tells us that adult learners learn best in the context of real work, of authentic work. They need to put what they learn immediately into practice; otherwise it leaves them."

— **Sue Beach**, Education Consultant

INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS

TECHNOLOGY COMMUNICATION POSITIONING MESSAGE COLLATERAL
INVITATION GRAPHIC HANDOUTS BLOG LOGO IDENTITY TWITTER VISUAL
SOCIAL IMAGE MATERIALS WEBCAST SIGNAGE BRANDING WRITER
MEDIA PILLARS WEBSITE PRESENTATION

No one involved in a convening will argue the importance of communications to convening success. For foundations, it's all about building and sustaining relationships between the foundation and its grantees by exchanging an ongoing stream of relevant and valuable information to enable them to achieve their goals. Additionally, when WKKF communicates to grantees, the expectation is that the foundation is modeling best practices.

What has changed in the environment, and will continue to change, is the following:

- Convenings are now viewed as components of an integrated communications strategy.

- Communications in and around convenings have become an integral part of convening design.

- Communication vehicles are evolving. Once limited to person-to-person conversations and print materials, people now communicate with each other electronically in a variety of ways.

- The reach, speed and quantity have increased. We are *all* connected, information is now available instantaneously, and people are constantly bombarded with information.

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"These events are fundamentally communication vehicles. They need to have clear focal points. The major bookends ought to set the agenda clearly, engage attendees and advance understanding. Although credible, relevant content is the sine qua non, *there is also a performance aspect to meetings — they ought to be reasonably lively so people aren't falling asleep. So even if Communications is not in charge, I would strongly urge a strong role for Communications to look at the conference as a communication vehicle."*

— **Lucas Held**, Wallace Foundation

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"The respondents to CEP's surveys of grantees frequently mention that they want more opportunity to get to know their foundation funders … or the other grantees that the foundation is funding. And some want to have more time to talk to the foundation about the lay of the land: What's happening in the field? Where is the foundation going? Where do they think they as a group are going? And I think that is one symptom of the challenge of being clear and precise and frequent enough in the kind of communications that foundations have with their grantees. [These things] can be hard to do over the phone, and they are hard to do over email. So grantees can be looking for greater kinds of in-person opportunities to really develop that sense of shared alignment and shared mission across grantees and across foundations."

— **Kevin Bolduc**, Center for Effective Philanthropy

Going forward, as foundations continue to focus on providing clear, concise and consistent communications to meet their grantees' needs and expectations, they should think about the following:

- How to make the integrated communication stand out from everything else the grantees are hearing and reading.

  Foundations with a powerful brand have the advantage of standing out amidst the information noise that bombards its grantees.

- How and when (and even if, in some cases) to use electronic and social media to exchange information with grantees.

- How to take advantage of the interconnectedness of everyone to capture knowledge and project it beyond convening temporal boundaries.

- How to measure the effectiveness of communications media and strategies. Are they working? Are they sustainable? Are they helping the grantees to achieve their goals?

TECHNOLOGY

WEBCAST SMARTPHONE POLLING TWITTER QR CODES MOBILE
SLIDESHARE CRM API YOUTUBE TABLETS MATCHMAKING WIFI WIKIS BLOGS TRACKING
SURVEY APPS ARS CVENT HYBRID HASHTAG WEBSITE SKYPE
AUDIO VISUAL iPAD RECORDING HTML STREAMING INTERNET

Technology is having a profound impact on the way people think, live and do business around the world, and opportunities to incorporate technology into convenings are increasing exponentially. Convening-related examples include the following:

- Tracking attendee data (CRM systems).

- Online Registration (Cvent, SignUp4, RegOnline, Eventbrite).

- Soliciting attendee input (electronic pre- and post-event surveys, audience polling, Twitter, QR codes).

- Connecting attendees (online communities, speed dating, mobile apps).

- Communicating information via edutainment and gamification.

- Virtual collaboration (Skype, GoToMeeting, sophisticated video conferencing products).

- Disseminating information and knowledge products via online resource centers.

- Audio and video capture and distribution via YouTube, video streaming and social media of various kinds.
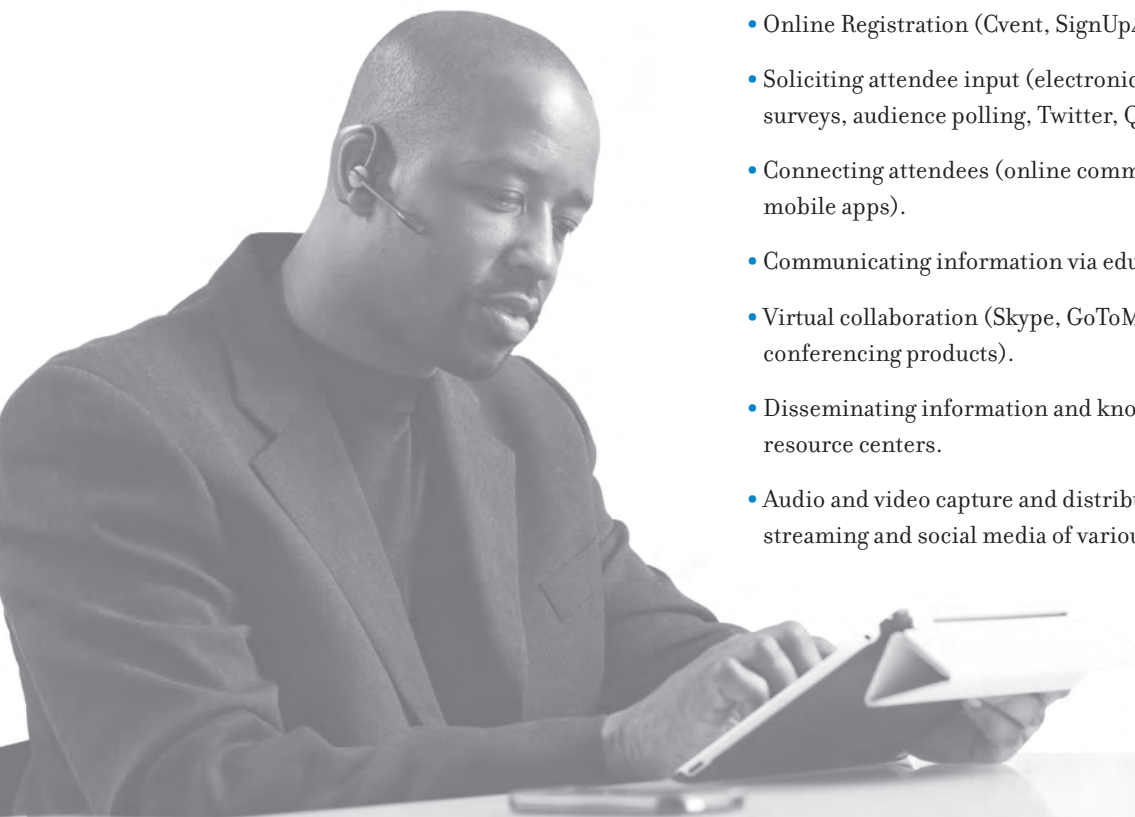
When incorporating new technology into convenings, designers emphasize that it is important to demonstrate how the technology will help achieve the event objectives vs. simply adding technology for technology's sake.

In addition to the opportunities, there are also challenges. When incorporating technology, it is important to consider the following:

- Geographic limitations (e.g., availability in remote areas).

- Individual technology limitations (audience knowledge and comfort with technology).

- Technology is not flawless. Experimentation and usage means meeting execution may not be flawless.

Gamification: The use of game-thinking and game mechanics in non-game contexts in order to engage users and solve problems.

FOUNDATIONS

PROGRAM MISSION EXPECTATIONS RELATIONSHIPS CONSULTANTS FUNDER COLLABORATION VALUES FUNDING GRANTEE CHANGE ALIGNMENT FOUNDATION GRANT DELIVERABLE EVALUATION DEVELOPMENT PHILANTHROPY

As expected, foundations differ in their approach to convenings. Our research shows that those foundations that do hold convenings, however, view the events as key relationship-building opportunities with their stakeholders, particularly grantees.

Recent surveys conducted by the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) indicate that the majority of foundation CEOs and program staff believe that providing assistance beyond the grant is important — both for the achievement of foundations' goals and for the achievement of grantees' goals. As one program officer said to CEP, "It can often mean the difference between making a grant and making an impact."

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"One thing that we are all about is having an impact. That is first and foremost. Our tool for doing that is convening, so we've got to be good at that. And our theory of change involves our role as a catalyst, that if we do those things right, if we convene people well, we forge the kinds of important collaborations that are necessary on an issue and we communicate effectively about the issue, that we become this catalyst for other organizations to create change."

— **Roger Dower**, The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"Convenings offer four main opportunities, in our experience. They provide a venue for the foundation to build clarity about its objectives — and priorities — and to provide a sense of momentum, of a joint undertaking. This is very important because a study by the Center for Effective Philanthropy indicates overall grantee satisfaction is highly correlated with grantee clarity about what the foundation is seeking to accomplish and how it will measure success. No grantee likes being in the dark about what the foundation is trying to do. A second opportunity is for the foundation to learn from grantees what challenges and opportunities they are facing. A third opportunity is to share knowledge — which is often crucial since many efforts ask grantees to do things that are new or unfamiliar; hence grantees are eager to learn from each other and outside experts about how to make progress. A fourth opportunity may be the most helpful to grantees — and that is to enable them to make informal contacts with their peers, contacts that they can later draw on for advice."

— **Lucas Held**, Wallace Foundation

The enthusiasm for helping grantees in ways that go beyond the grant seems only to have grown over the past decade, with an increasing number of reports and resources aimed at technical assistance, capacity building, or high-engagement grantmaking. Convenings are frequently used for this purpose. Although many foundations plan convenings with the direct intention of accomplishing set goals, they acknowledge it is difficult to demonstrate ROI.

The way a convening is designed and executed can make or break the establishment or continuation of a community of practice.

ADULT LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

"I think foundations need to be much more thoughtful in the content and the adult learning experiences for the knowledge exchange experiences in their meetings so that the objectives can be met. I believe from my limited experience with convenings, there was not much of a fit between the objectives desired and how the meeting was designed and/or evaluated. There needs to be this alignment between what is the purpose, how are you going to achieve it, and how do you know you have, and to be realistic. Activity does not equal outcome. Speaking doesn't mean hearing. Hearing doesn't mean understanding. Knowing doesn't mean doing. There are a lot of assumptions behind how foundations go about having these meetings. If we just have the meeting people will be different. It doesn't work that way."

— **Cynthia Phillips**, Phillips Wyatt Knowlton, Inc.

wkkf
convenings
today

WKKF holds approximately 75-120 convenings annually. The majority are held in the United States at hotels, community centers and convention centers. Attendance ranges from 10 to 800.

TYPES

Convenings are loosely categorized as follows:

Internal

- Employee special events (picnics, retirements, parties, all staff training).
- Communication events, employee meetings and team meetings.

External

- Announcement, launch or kickoff meetings.
- Grantee convenings, which may be annual updates or one-time events.
- Planning and team meetings in the place grantmaking is happening.

AUDIENCE

Internal convenings includes staff and board members. External audiences include current or potential grantees and may also include members of the general public, civic leaders and others who are interested in the work of WKKF.

Demographics vary considerably in terms of age, geographic location and education.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The decision to hold a convening may be inspired by the following factors:

- A grant necessitates grantees gather to accomplish specific objectives or build relationships.
- Grantees prompt a meeting.
- Program staff or external consultants suggest that a convening is needed.
- An employee event occurs that suggests a celebration (e.g., retirement, holiday).
- Organizational changes require internal and/or external communication.
- The environment in a place suggests that a convening may be appropriate.

FUNDING

Funding is approved for activities such as convenings when the overall budget is approved. This internal process is complex and multi-step. A one-year budget cycle impacts the planning process and compresses the planning timeline.

APPROVAL

Once the decision is made to hold a convening, a Scope of Work is prepared and, if the cost exceeds a set limit, it is sent to the leadership team for review and approval. The form requires the author to provide the following:

- Purpose.
- Strategic fit and funding rationale.
- Impact statement.
- Learning statement.
- Broad planning timeline (e.g., year one, year two).
- Total budget and fixed fee.

CONVENING DESIGN AND EXECUTION

The convening design process and planning timeline varies depending on the purpose and scope of the event. This variation is also due to the fact that there are multiple stakeholders involved in the design, execution and evaluation processes. They include internal staff from Communications, Programming and Meeting Services as well as external consultants, subject matter experts (SMEs), facilitators and, in some cases, grantees. The Meeting Services team typically functions as the clearinghouse for all convenings and is primarily responsible for meeting logistics and execution.

Convening content is sometimes controlled by one or two stakeholders, but in many cases it is a collaborative process in which program staff or consultants create the agendas, determine speakers and create the overall meeting design. Larger convenings that necessitate extensive audiovisual elements often include a producer either as part of the meeting design team or as a resource during the event.

WKKF STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE

"Not all of our meetings have clear objectives around what the next step is going to be."

"I think that defining that purpose is really critical, but it is doesn't always happen."

Open Space Meeting: A meeting in which participants create and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions around a central theme of strategic importance. Sometimes called an "unconference."

There has been some experimentation with untraditional meeting designs such as "open space." For instance, at the New Mexico 2011 meeting "Connecting for New Mexico's Children," grantees used an open-space session to host spontaneous meetings on food shed development, school board trainings, healthcare reform, racial equity, youth organizing and several other topics.

COMMUNICATION AND BRANDING

According to a study conducted by the Hauser Center, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, many nonprofit organizations are "embracing a more strategic role for their brands in driving long-term social goals and building internal cohesion and capacity." WKKF is leading the way. The foundation has done an outstanding job of creating tools that explain its organizational identity. It has also examined its communication methods and messages to understand how it is viewed by external audiences and how it is positioned among its peer foundations. As part of this comprehensive re-examination of the foundation's identity, WKKF designed a new visual identity and spelled out the usage guidelines. The four identity guides are its branding building blocks.

WKKF IDENTITY PILLARS

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS	VULNERABLE CHILDREN	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON PRIORITY PLACES	PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE
1	2	3	4

The communications department serves as the guardian of the WKKF brand. Convening branding typically includes signage, print and online material.

Convenings serve as excellent opportunities for the foundation to continue to build brand recognition and awareness, and more effectively leverage its brand to advance its social mission.

TECHNOLOGY

The use of technology and social media is expanding, and experimentation is taking place. WKKF uses Cvent, a web-based online registration system, standard audiovisual tools, audience response and polling, and tweeting. Convenings are sometimes linked to the organization's website. Mobile apps are in the process of being designed.

ADULT LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

WKKF benefits from a strong commitment to adult learning and knowledge management. Its staff includes a Vice President of Learning and Impact who provides oversight for the approach and day-to-day management of assigned human, technical and financial resources.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Confidential content removed.

recommendations

The following recommendations were developed to move WKKF toward Convenings 2.0, a scenario in which there is a cyclical, integrated convening design, execution and evaluation process that serves the organization's overall mission.

Note that it is not intended for all of these recommendations to be adopted immediately. In fact, some must occur sequentially in order to be effective. Institutionalization of these recommendations also should take into consideration WKKF's organizational readiness. A recommended implementation plan follows on page 37 of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WKKF CONVENINGS 2.0

1. Establish or clarify, if already established, the **role of the meeting architect** to bridge the gap among program staff, Meeting Services, Communications, and Learning and Impact. Allow the meeting architect to conduct orientation and training sessions with WKKF staff, perhaps at the monthly program implementation meetings, on topics such as meeting design, adult learning and facilitation.

MEETING INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

"The way Maarten [Vanneste] put it in his Meeting Architecture book is the basic concept, 'you wouldn't build a building without a blueprint.' But essentially that is how we do build most conferences. We don't have a blueprint. We will invite a bunch of builders to the site and call them speakers. And each speaker brings some lumber or two by fours or something and then we put something up. Now I think it is a lot more sophisticated if we start with essentially a blueprint. … What do we want to create here or design here? And then make that drive the thinking."

— **Ed Bernacki**, The Idea Factory

What is a meeting architect?

He/she oversees the format of meetings in order to achieve the desired participant behavior. It is a new role, and requires an understanding of adult learning, knowledge management, meeting planning and facilitation. Meeting architects do not create meetings on their own, nor do they replace meeting planners. Meeting planners are specialists who make sure that all aspects of operations and logistics are perfect and delivered at the lowest achievable cost.

The meeting architect is one of the more strategic positions within an organization because he or she helps to translate the organization's mission through its most powerful communication tools: meetings, conferences and events.

2. Establish a **customer relationship management (CRM) system** to track convening attendee data so the "right people" are in attendance. That means WKKF must have an up-to-date database of potential invitees and actual participants. Ideally, the database should include information about the education, needs, experience and interests of attendees, as well as their history of attendance at convenings. WKKF is currently investigating such a system. The convening application of this database should be considered if a CRM is developed.

3. Establish a stronger cohesion for **consistent evaluation** of each convening and its impact on progress, while allowing for some customization based on the convening purpose.

MEETING INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

"You almost need somebody dedicated to do measurement. If it is your job to measure, then you will do it. It actually means adding a position to the team. That's the only way to get it done. If you don't do that, everybody will be pulled toward where the money is spent and where all of the activity is. Things like venue selection, travel accommodation, etc.

There is so much stuff in the participant logistics that the measurement falls off the table and it doesn't happen. And also, it is not necessary to do it: If you don't do it you'll not get any complaints. If you have no flight for a person or no hotel or you give this person pork while he asked for halal, you will get feedback, you will have complaints. Everybody is your customer as far as the hospitality and participant logistics is concerned.

They will not tell you if don't call them a year after asking them, 'Did you do something with the relationships you identified at our meeting? Is there a project, etc.' If nobody calls them after a year, no harm done. Nobody will complain. So you need to create a situation where this becomes infallible."

— **Maarten Vanneste**, Meeting Support Institute

4. Enhance the process of requiring **all convenings to have purpose, impact and learning statements with measureable objectives and to be evaluated in those terms**. Consistently communicate them from beginning to end.

ADULT LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

"Too many organizations are spending 80% of their budget on the doing and only 20% on the thinking. If you really are serious about a achieving your objectives, then you've got to get a whole lot more serious about your meeting and design planning. It can't just be at a nice place and everybody got together, talked and sang Kumbaya and drank margaritas. You've got to work both sides of the equation: strategy behind the meeting, what gets delivered, and whether or not you do evaluation and follow up."

— **Cynthia Phillips**, Phillips Wyatt Knowlton, Inc.

5. **Clarify existing convening stakeholder roles and responsibilities** and ensure that they use a common nomenclature. In other words, converse in a language that every stakeholder understands. For more information, refer to the glossary located in the appendix.

WKKF STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE

"Given the number of individuals and entities involved in the planning process, the assignment of roles and responsibilities should be streamlined and clearly communicated well in advance."
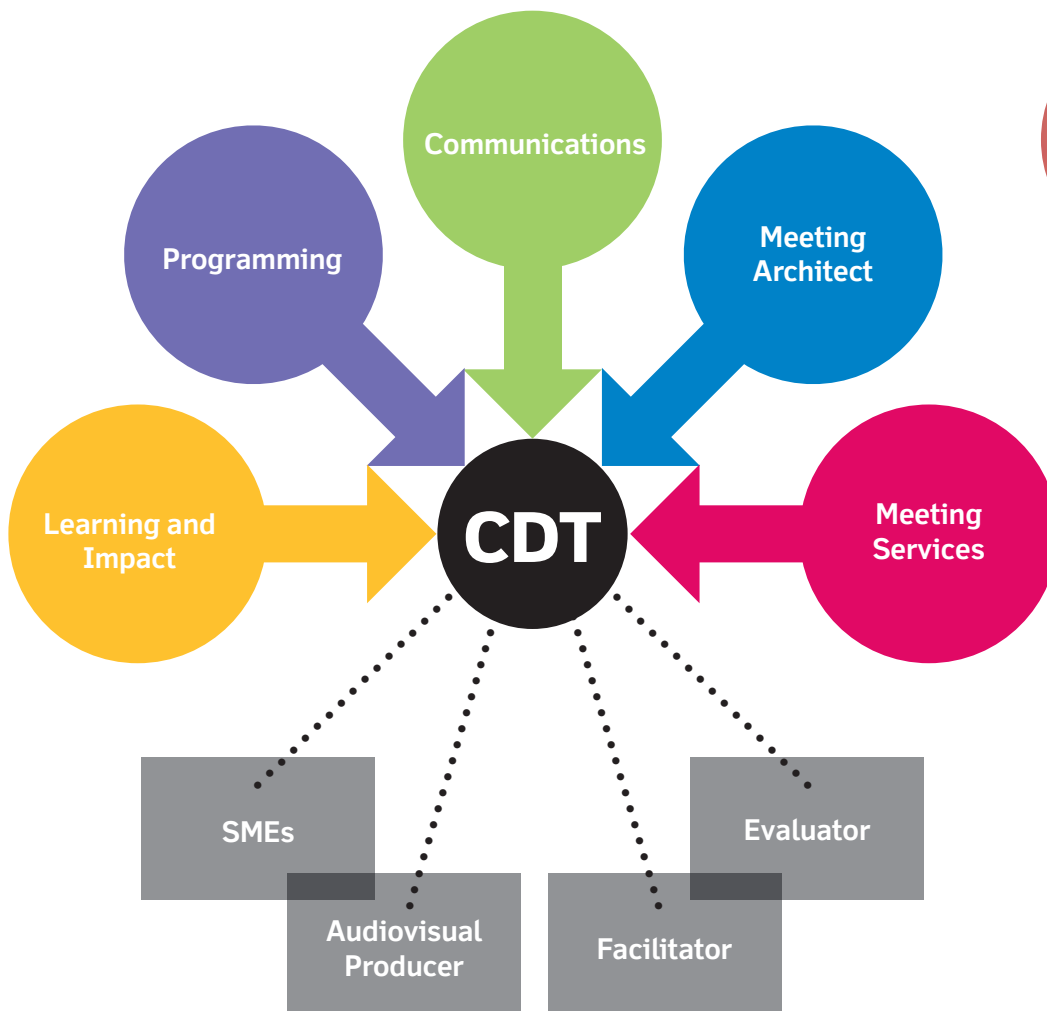
— CHA Report on America Healing 2012

6. **For each convening, establish a convening design team (CDT)** that includes the role of meeting architect and liaisons from Programming, Communications, Learning and Impact and Meeting Services. **Supplement the CDT with grantees (or other target audience representatives), subject matter experts, an audiovisual producer, facilitators and a convening evaluator** as needed based on the convening purpose.

MEETING INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

"To do good meeting design we need to involve several stakeholders over a period of one day or more. Identifying objectives is something that is really important, and it should be given enough time. So what we do with the meeting architecture process is ask a number of questions, mainly about why we organize this conference or event … and then the meeting team needs to discuss it and come up with a long list of ideas. Next, the objectives need to be ranked for value-generation potential so we can see our top three or top five. Usually we want a small number of objectives so we can afford them and also change the project in a limited way. So 'designing a meeting based on objectives' is meeting architecture process in a nutshell."

— **Maarten Vanneste**, Meeting Support Institute

7. Engage in a **strategic, thoughtful convening design** process that embodies the following:

- Is cyclical vs. linear.

- Incorporates adult learning principles.

- Delivers a design **based on the convening's purpose and expected outcomes**.

- Considers attendees' varying levels of interest and expertise.

- Includes **participant-led components**.

- Pulls from a "toolbox" of interactive, collaborative and motivational meeting devices to be employed in designs for various purposes.

- Includes not only time for peer learning and networking, but also **mechanisms for peer learning and purposeful networking**. Avoid relying solely on unstructured free time (e.g., cocktail receptions) to meet attendees' desire for networking and interaction. Use tools such as Twitter, online attendee directories and speed dating to ensure even introverts are included in the process. The meeting architect and communications new-media manager can recommend numerous ways to support this interaction based on the convening purpose and audience.

- Provides attendees with clear post-meeting action directions.

8. Establish a mechanism to **ensure grantee input** in convening design and make meeting design a more participant-led process. Internal research showed that this is occurring at some WKKF convenings, but it is not consistent. Meeting owners (e.g., program staff) should have flexibility in the way they seek grantee input during the design process, but the act of seeking that input should be required. In addition, it should be demonstrated to convening attendees that grantee input was not only sought, but also genuinely considered.

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"It's an outside-in process that is in response to the needs and interests of our key stakeholders. I think that's the only way that you stay relevant."

— Kim Ribich,
Colorado Health Foundation

WKKF's desire for respectful relationships with grantees can be addressed by giving grantee attendees a role in the convening design process and execution.

"We are convinced that top-down, externally derived approaches are neither effective nor reliable. A commitment to driving change from the inside out is at the center of our place-based approach and a crucial component of our identity." **WKKF Identity Guide #2, p. 11**

9. View the convening experience from the attendee's point of view. Establish an **Attendee Bill of Rights** that anchors the WKKF Convenings 2.0 process and ensures that convening designers respect attendee needs. *(See Appendix for sample.)*

10. Continue to hold **smaller, more frequent and better focused gatherings and increase the use of online meetings, hybrid meetings and social media** to extend meeting reach and to keep convening attendees engaged over extended periods of time. In its report, "Working with Grantees: The Keys to Success and Five Program Officers Who Exemplify Them," the Center for Effective Philanthropy noted that one of the keys to strong relationships between grantees and foundations is the initiation, and frequency, of communications. Those grantees who have contact with their foundation more than once a year — and are not most often in the position of initiating communication — rate their funders higher on CEP's relationships measure.

Virtual meetings can assist with:

- Getting participants ready for the convening.

- Extending the reach.

- Networking.

- Including the voices of people when there are participant availability issues, they lack resources, or there are some other hard constraints that prevent meeting in person.

Hybrid Meeting/Event: Meeting/event that combines a "live" in-person event with a "virtual" online component.

11. **Formalize the participation of Communications staff** as experts on the various media vehicles to be used before, during and after convenings, as well as experts on the branding, graphics and technology at convenings. Recognize that Communications' expertise must be employed in the capture, storage and dissemination of knowledge products.

12. **Improve communication with convening attendees.** WKKF attendee evaluations frequently called out the need for more pre-meeting communication such as agendas and pre-reading, as well as more information about the speakers and their fellow attendees. Understand that if the communications process falters, grantees may attend a convening with expectations that cannot be met.

- Utilize a broad spectrum of communication tools to reach WKKF's diverse grantee population.

- Establish a consistent sequence of pre-meeting communications, giving attendees instruction and ample time to prepare.

- Set expectations for attendee participation by clearly communicating convening objectives, who should attend, why they are being invited, opportunities for their participation and, in general, what is "in it for them."

- Use the online registration process and, if appropriate, social media to solicit attendee input and begin to build a community, helping members to establish networks and relationships before, during and after the convening.

- For convenings purposed for training, conduct a needs assessment within the target population prior to design.

- Share useful convening materials to allow attendees to begin the learning process prior to the convening. In other words, eliminate "information dumps" on-site so that convening time can be spent on discussion and practice.

- Always use signage, print materials, or a brief 2-3 minute video to convey WKKF's mission and vision at each convening.

- Avoid setting the expectation that convenings will be an opportunity for grantees to receive extensive communication on overall WKKF grantmaking policies and procedures.

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"Our meeting materials are generally developed and provided to people in advance so that when they come to a meeting they have already read the material. That way, each meeting is a forum for how do we proceed, or a discussion, rather than a presentation of material which people would then need to think about and discuss but are not really prepared to take the next step."

— **Joan Garretson**, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

13. Provide **consistent messaging** at every convening that is in alignment with WKKF's Identity Pillars.

14. Establish **consistent physical branding** elements (WKKF sign package, agenda template and PowerPoint template) but allow for co-branding with the convening logo.

15. **Use convening logistics to reinforce WKKF values** (examples: a diverse staff and suppliers, sustainable cuisine, healthy food, pitchers vs. bottled water, minimal soda, nursing room, day care, towel re-use programs, recycling).

16. Continue to position **program staff as the meeting owners and hosts** and use facilitators and meeting planners to create mechanisms for building relationships with attendees on-site.
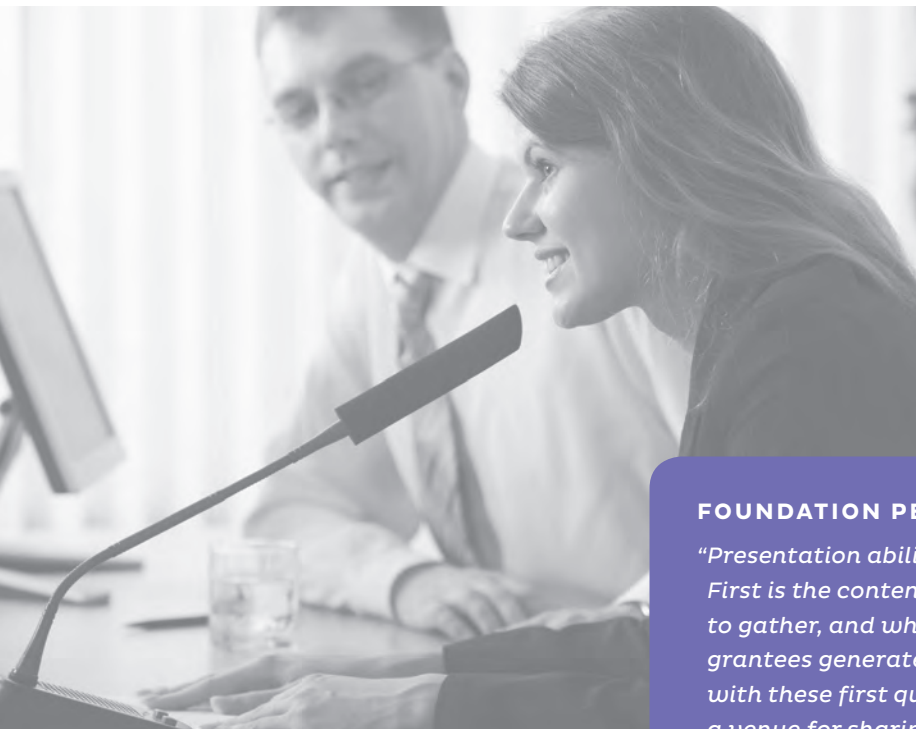
17. Select speakers not only for their subject matter expertise, but also their ability to **effectively present those ideas**, relate to the audience, work with the meeting tools WKKF recommends, and incorporate an interactive environment. Build in sufficient time into the convening design for advance preparation with these speakers.

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"Presentation ability is important, but it is only one factor. First is the content: What knowledge do attendees need to gather, and what credible knowledge have we and our grantees generated that is ready to be shared? We begin with these first questions, because if we are not providing a venue for sharing credible knowledge, what is the point of gathering people? Having figured out the topics, we can then ask who can speak on a particular topic. …
So the first criterion is whether they have relevant experience to share. A second is their ability to present effectively, meaning clearly and cogently. A third criterion is taking into account various forms of diversity — geographic, small vs. large organization, and racial and ethnic diversity. Then, for all sessions, it is crucial to work in advance with the presenters."

— **Lucas Held**, Wallace Foundation

18. Increase the use of **professional facilitators** in tandem with subject matter experts and program staff. Sessions that incorporate professional facilitators are more likely to achieve their goals.

"Ideally there is a facilitator in every room. Most speakers are dead nervous just to do their presentation alone, and they are even more nervous as soon as there is a microphone involved. If you confront speakers with even more complexity [to seek audience input] many of them will panic. They will just not do it unless you add a facilitator. This really important process of audience-generated content causes too much stress for 90 percent of the speakers. So, it will not happen by itself; it is something that needs to be managed and facilitated. … It takes a forward-thinking organization to make that decision and invest the money in facilitators or training."

— **Maarten Vanneste**, Meeting Support Institute

"We are seeing TEDx organizers communicating and collaborating beyond their events and we encourage that. It isn't just about one day at a TEDx event; it's about the connections made at the event and everything that happens before and after. It's about establishing a community.

— **Lara Stein**, TEDx

19. View attendees as a community of practice versus stakeholders you will see once a year. During the convening design process, **plan for a post-meeting online presence (virtual community)** to support the community of practice and continually engage attendees.

"We are moving to a situation where people want smaller meetings, more frequent meetings and then, between the meetings having an online place where they can check in with their colleagues and continue the exchange of the ideas. So, if I am too busy to exchange, I can at least read those things. And if I have an idea, at least I have a place to put it so other people can riff off it."

— **Michelle Bruno**, Bruno Group Signature Events

"There needs to be a leader and somebody who cares deeply about making that community of practice work. It will work, if somebody in that group becomes the leader that is really driving communication and coordination. I think the risk is that person doesn't materialize and everybody wonders why somehow everybody who is working on it couldn't actually come together and do something bigger or make a bigger dent. So what I mean by that is … if they had a Kellogg person local who is constantly meeting with the different grantees and sharing what they are doing and then publishing, sharing, tweeting, creating diagrams that show what is going on and get the communication happening, driving the connections with a useful resource, that might work."

— **Chris Conley**, Gravity Tank

20. **Build grantee relationships with transparency**. Share convening evaluation results with the attendees, reporting verbatim quotes anonymously, and take, in response, visible actions to demonstrate that you are listening and care about their feedback.

"At a minimum I think [WKKF should] post those evaluations in an appropriate and anonymous forum. For the attendees I think doing this is very powerful because it provides tremendous transparency. I can't tell you how much trust it engenders in the organization when a group knows that their experience at an event is going to be shared with everybody else there in an anonymous, safe way. First of all that says, 'Wow, these people are gutsy enough to actually do this, warts and all.' And also this is the way that a community needs to work together in order to improve, to be able to say these were the really great things we did. Here are some things that we could improve. Here are some things that there is disagreement about."

— **Adrian Segar**, author, "Conferences that WORK: Creating Events that People Love"

21. With Learning and Impact, **support WKKF's proposed system for knowledge capture at convenings and distribution of knowledge products**. Recognize that every convening not only delivers knowledge to grantees, but also generates knowledge from grantees, and that WKKF will benefit by capturing that knowledge and distributing it to all interested parties.

Community of Practice: Group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

Seed for convening is planted.

Convening Design Team (CDT) is formed.

CDT agrees upon:

· Purpose and objectives.

· Target population.

· Process for obtaining grantee input.

· List of preferred WKKF senior staff to attend.

If repeat event, CDT reviews prior event evaluations & historical data.

Communications works with Meeting Owner to manage post convening virtual community.

CDT meets to recap convening, including all those involved in design process:

· Identifies knowledge products to be shared.

· Cues dissemination process.

· Cues knowledge application to further WKKF mission.

· Determines next steps.

Meeting Services finalizes budget, pays invoices.

Convening runs:

· Program staff opens and hosts convening, engages with grantees.

· Meeting Services manages registration, serve as venue liaison.

· Producer (if assigned) manages audiovisual and all activities on stage.

· Facilitators direct convening content and flow.

Evaluation process begins.

Meeting Services manages logistics:

· Meeting room setups.

· Speaker and attendee travel.

· Rooming list.

· Ground transportation.

· A/V (working with Producer, if one is assigned).

· Food and beverage.

· Print materials and signage (working with Communications).

Invitation sent

Includes reason for invitation, agenda, speaker bios, link to attendee list and pre-reading materials.

CDT finalizes agenda (start and end times, break times).

Meeting Services creates budget estimate and planning timeline.

Meeting owner and architect:

· Develops recommendations for meeting design (tools, exercises).

· Engages convening evaluator.

· Secures facilitators.

· Determines if audio visual producer is needed.

· Creates scope of work.

CONVENING DESIGN TEAM

Meeting Owner
(program staff/consultant)

Meeting Architect

Meeting Services

Communications

Learning and Impact

Convening Evaluator

Producer

Facilitators

Communications:

· Recommends communication plan, taking into consideration:

— How these communications relate to other grantee communications.

— What communication tools work best for this audience.

· Consults on communication tools, particularly technology (web, video, social media).

· Consults on tactics for securing the right audience (who should invite them? Will substitutions be allowed?).

· Compiles attendee contact list via WKKF CRM.

Meeting owner, additional program staff and consultants identify resources for content (speakers, subject matter experts) and invite them to participate.

CDT finalizes meeting design (e.g. half day on topic "X", plenary session on "Y") and proposed knowledge products.

Meeting Services:

· Conducts site research and contracts with venue.

· Establishes and maintains budget.

· Sets up Cvent registration website (incorporating questions to facilitate networking and needs assessment).

CDT consults Learning and Impact on how convening knowledge products will be captured, stored, disseminated and applied.

Convening evaluator develops evaluation plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Implementing all or even some of the recommendations in this report will require the engagement and support of all convening stakeholders, as well as foundation leadership.

To facilitate development of Convenings 2.0, leadership needs to continue to do the following:

1. Recognize the value of convenings and their potential to achieve the organization's goals.

2. Integrate convenings into the organization's strategy and encourage staff to think of them that way.

3. View convenings as part of the ongoing cycle of communications and engagement.

4. Pay as much attention to convening design and evaluation as execution.

5. Recognize that if more collaboration is needed in the design, and additional interactive elements are considered, the planning timeline will need to be longer.

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"As you start to think of possible solutions, make sure those are going in front of attendees or grantees. Don't come out with the answer and say, 'Okay we heard your feedback and here is the answer,' without them ever having participated in the evaluation of potential answers."

— **Chris Conley**, Gravity Tank

FIRST STEPS BASED ON FEEDBACK FROM LEADERSHIP DURING A PREVIEW OF THESE REPORT FINDINGS:

- Gather a small, cross-functional team to discuss this report's recommendations. Agree on a draft implementation plan.
- Present the plan at a future program implementation meeting for open sharing and discussion.
- Convene the existing meeting architects used by WKKF staff for information sharing, role clarification and application of design consistency.

NEAR FUTURE STEPS:

- Clarify convening stakeholder roles and responsibilities.
- Institute a common vocabulary among convening stakeholders *(see Glossary for example)*.
- Review evaluation tools for consistency, and identify common evaluation questions for all convenings, allowing for custom questions to be added.

FUTURE STEPS:

- Determine feasibility of a CRM system.

conclusion
& appendix

We have spent many months interviewing thought leaders and studying best practices in the areas of meeting design, integrated communications, knowledge management and foundation practice. Our resulting recommendations are not revolutionary; they represent a common sense strategy for successful convenings based on WKKF's mission, brand and desire to impact social change.

We found that many organizations desire to take similar steps, but few actually follow through. Most are mired in longstanding traditions for the way meetings should be held, and many lack the internal resources required for substantial change.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has an opportunity to demonstrate convening best practices and have an exponential impact on nonprofit and foundation communities, improving their ability to move the needle for social change. WKKF convenings are the physical delivery of its brand, and attendees who benefit from an effective convening process will seek similar models in their own communities.

FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

"For us it is all about creating some confidence that our convenings are having an impact, because if they are not, then we are not doing our jobs as a foundation, right? So I don't care if we have beautiful environments here and wonderful buildings. I don't care if everybody comes and has great food and cocktails and really comes away with great feelings. If something doesn't happen to change the course of a set of policies, then we have failed."

— **Roger Dower,**
   The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread

Convenings are one of the primary ways in which the foundation communicates with its grantees on an ongoing basis. Consequently, improving convening effectiveness will have a positive impact on grantee relations. More importantly, the better WKKF communicates with its grantees, the more effective these partnerships will be — and the more grantees will be likely to perform in ways that are consistent with the foundation's goals.

Should WKKF choose to adopt some or all of the recommendations in this report, it will require the engagement of all convening stakeholders. While it may never be possible to draw a clear line between a single convening and social change, it is possible to improve the effectiveness of WKKF convenings and the experience of those who attend.

SAMPLE ATTENDEE BILL OF RIGHTS

Special D Events' research confirms that a fundamental shift in the meetings industry is underway. Social, economic and environmental factors are challenging meeting owners to re-think the way they market, design, plan, execute and evaluate events in order to add value for attendees. Whether you attribute this shift to the recent recession, Millennials, new technology or social media, the bottom line is that attendees have increasingly high expectations for meeting organizers, and WKKF is seeking ways to accommodate them.

We like to think of these expectations as an attendee "bill of rights," in other words, the quality, deliverables, and experiences meeting organizers must deliver to today's attendees. We recommend that WKKF establish an attendee bill of rights that anchors the WKKF Convening 2.0 process and aligns with WKKF's Identity Pillars to ensure convening designers meet attendee expectations and deliver the promises of the foundation's brand.

WKKF Identity Pillars

Respectful Relationships

Vulnerable Children

Community Engagement with an Emphasis on Place

Practical Application of Knowledge

As we think about creating a WKKF convenings brand, such as "A WKKF CONVENING™" or "WKKF CERTIFIED EVENT™," we have to ask ourselves, "What do we want that brand to mean to a potential attendee?" Brands tell consumers what to expect and guarantee what will be delivered. We trust brands that live up to our expectations and deliver what they promise. In building a convening brand, multiple areas come to mind that might be ripe for standardization and uniform planning methodology. So what should attendees expect when they participate in a WKKF branded event?

Following is a sample attendee bill of rights and how it might be applied to W.K. Kellogg Foundation convening planning, design and execution.

MEETING ATTENDEES' RIGHTS/EXPECTATIONS	WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE/FEELS LIKE AT A WKKF CONVENINNG™
Clear, specific, well-articulated, achievable and relevant meeting objectives.	Every convening will have a purpose, impact and learning statement, and it will be communicated to attendees prior to and at the convening. Convenings will be designed with these objectives in mind and aligned with the organization's learning objectives.
Clarification regarding the meeting organizer's purpose and its expectations of attendees.	Convening communication will reinforce WKKF's focus areas and its commitment to racial equity, as well as clarify expectations for convening attendees.
A meeting location that is convenient for me.	WKKF meeting planners will seek venues easily accessible within the attendees' communities, even if they are non-traditional (non-hotel) venues.
Flexible, attendee-driven meeting design.	The convening design process will include grantee input.
Clarity, accuracy, and relevance of content to my mission and my knowledge level.	A needs assessment will be completed prior to content development.
The application of the principles of adult learning to content delivery.	During the design process, the adult learning principles will be used as a lens to view the process and flow of the agenda.

Applications of relevant and useful technology to enhance the overall experience.	Convening design will incorporate value-added technology that serves the convening purpose.
Approachable and knowledgeable speakers.	Speaker bios and contact data will be available to convening attendees; speakers will be selected not only for their subject matter expertise, but also their ability to effectively present those ideas.
Informative, useful and timely pre- and post-communications.	Convening communication will include the purpose statement and clearly identify who should attend; pre-work or other communications will provide key information to orient attendees to the problem and issues that will be discussed.
Every voice will be heard.	Skilled facilitators will be utilized at every convening to ensure that all attendees have a chance to contribute, as well as to keep the agenda on track.
Delivery of content in languages that I can read and understand.	When needed, WKKF will provide bilingual meeting materials and signage.
Effective interactive meeting elements.	A set proportion of every convening will be interactive and collaborative, using an approved list of effective tools and technology.
Opportunities for dialogue Q & A with content providers and one another.	WKKF will use multiple methods to help attendees create and sustain relationships with each other before and after each convening; there will be opportunities for attendees to express themselves through storytelling, sharing of best practices and provision of opinions.
Sufficient time to process the content.	A minimum period of time will be established for all convening breaks.
Meeting logistics that respect my physical needs.	Attendees will be surveyed in advance regarding dietary and special needs; menus will feature healthy options; a breast feeding area will be available; accommodations will be made for those hearing or mobility impaired.
To sit in comfortable chairs, properly spaced, and be able to see and hear everything clearly.	If warranted by convening size and purpose, an experienced audio/visual producer will be involved in convening design and execution.
Meeting logistics that will have minimally negative environmental impact on the world.	WKKF will seek and give priority to convening venues that model environmentally friendly practices.
Safety precautions, security and disaster planning that will protect all in attendance.	Every convening will have a crisis management plan.
Practical takeaways, ideas and tools that I can immediately employ in my job or life.	Every convening will close with suggested next steps, action items and, when appropriate, an introduction to the post-convening virtual community.
Unless the meeting is a "standalone" event, there will be opportunities for ongoing communication and progress between meetings.	A post-convening virtual community will be established and maintained by a designated, accountable internal or external leader.

TWO VIEWS OF ADULT LEARNING THEORY AND PRINCIPLES

The "principles of adult learning" have been around since the 1950s, and have been compiled and explained by many learned educators. There is little dispute among scholars as to what adult learning principles include or their efficacy in practice. Below, we offer you two of what we feel are the most accessible and practical summaries of adult learning principles, one in somewhat formal language, and one in plain talk.

ADULT LEARNING THEORY IN FORMAL LANGUAGE

Part of being an effective educator involves understanding how adults learn best (Lieb 1991). Andragogy (adult learning) is a theory that holds a set of assumptions about how adults learn. Andragogy emphasizes the value of the process of learning. It uses approaches to learning that are **problem-based and collaborative** rather than didactic, and also emphasizes more **equality between the teacher and learner**.

Andragogy as a study of adult learning originated in Europe in 1950s and was then pioneered as a theory and model of adult learning from the 1970s by Malcolm Knowles, an American practitioner and theorist of adult education who defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Zmeyov 1998; Fidishun 2000).

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES?"

Knowles identified the six principles of adult learning outlined below.

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed.

- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences.

- Adults are goal oriented.

- Adults are relevancy (What is in it for me? "WIIIFM") oriented.

- Adults are practical.

- Adult learners like to be respected (as opposed to being "talked down" to by experts).

HOW CAN WKKF USE ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES TO BETTER DESIGN CONVENINGS?

Here are some ways to facilitate learning and collaboration by applying Knowles' Adult Learning Principles:

1. **Adults are internally motivated and self-directed.**

Adult learners resist learning when they feel others are imposing information, ideas or actions on them (Fidishun 2000).

WKKF's role is to facilitate a participant's movement toward more self-directed and responsible learning as well as to foster the participant's internal motivation to learn.

To the extent that a convening is purposed in some way to educate or train, the following suggestions may be employed to improve participant experience:

- Set up a graduated learning program that moves from more to less structure, from less to more responsibility and from more to less direct supervision, at an appropriate pace that is challenging yet not overloading.

- Develop rapport with the participant to optimize facilitator or subject expert approachability and encourage asking of questions and exploration of concepts.

- Show interest in the participant's thoughts and opinions. Actively and carefully listen to any questions asked.

- Lead the participant toward inquiry before supplying too many facts.

- Provide regular constructive and specific feedback (both positive and negative).

- Review goals and acknowledge goal completion.

- Encourage use of resources such as library, journals, Internet and other resources.

- Set projects or tasks for the participants that reflect their interests and that they must complete and "check off" over the course of the convening. For example: to complete an individual or group exercise on topic of choice; to present a case-study based on one of their clients; to design a client educational handout; or to lead a simulated client group activity session.

- Acknowledge the preferred learning style of the participant. A questionnaire might be administered prior to the designing of a convening that will assist participants in identifying preferred learning styles and prompting them to discuss preferences with the designers via a blog or social media.

2. **Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences.**

Adults like to be given the opportunity to use their existing foundations of knowledge and experience, what they have learned and gained "on-the-ground," and apply it to their new learning experiences. So it is incumbent on meeting and training designers to do the following:

- Find out about the participants ahead of time — their interests and past experiences (personal, work and study related).

- Encourage them to draw on those experiences when problem-solving, reflecting and applying logical reasoning processes.

- Facilitate reflective learning opportunities, which Fidishun (2000) suggests can also prompt the participant to examine existing biases or habits based on life experiences and "move them toward a new understanding of information presented" (Page 4).

3. **Adults are goal oriented.**

Adults become ready to learn when "they experience a need to learn it in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems" (Knowles 1980, Page 44, as cited in Fidishun 2000). WKKF convening designers' and facilitators' roles are to facilitate an attendee's readiness for problem-based learning and increase the attendees' awareness of the need for the knowledge or skill presented. As designer and/or facilitator, you can do the following:

- Provide meaningful learning experiences that are clearly linked to personal, client and fieldwork goals as well as assessment and future life goals.

- Provide real case studies (through grantee client contact and reporting) as a basis from which to learn about the theory, concept, functional issues and relevant implications.

- Ask questions that motivate reflection, inquiry and further research.

4. Adults are relevancy oriented.

Adult learners want to know the relevance of what they are learning to what they want to achieve. One way to help participants to see the value of their observations and practical experiences throughout a convening is to use several of the following techniques:

- Ask the participant to do some reflection on, for example, what they expect to learn prior to a given convening experience, on what they learned after the experience, and how they might apply what they learned in the future, or how it will help them to meet their goals back "on the ground" in their daily work with communities.

- Provide some choice of a convening or fieldwork project by suggesting two or more options so that learning is more likely to reflect participant interests.

"I find they (adults) understand more about a topic when it is directly relevant to the work context. This is invaluable as it ties theory to practice."
— **S. Bartholomai**, OT clinical educator, Ipswich Hospital (personal communication, May 31, 2007)

5. Adults are practical.

Through practical fieldwork experiences, interacting with real clients and their real life situations, grantees can be moved from classroom and textbook mode to hands-on problem-solving where they can recognize first-hand how what they are learning applies to life and the work context. As a convening designer or facilitator, you can accomplish this by applying one or more of the following techniques:

- Clearly explain your "common sense" reasoning when making choices about assessments, interventions and exercises, and when prioritizing participant needs.

- Be explicit about how what the participant is learning is useful and applicable to the job and client groups with which they are working.

- Promote active participation by allowing grantees to try things rather than observe. Provide plenty of practice opportunity in assessment, interviewing and intervention processes with ample repetition in order to promote development of skill, confidence and competence.

6. Adult learners like to be respected.

Respect can be demonstrated to your grantees by doing a few simple things:

- Taking interest.

- Acknowledging the wealth of experiences that the participant brings to the convening.

- Regarding them as colleagues who are equal in life experiences.

- Encouraging expression of ideas, reasoning and feedback at every opportunity.

It is important to keep in mind that participants are still developing occupational skills, and that some have progressed further than others. However, with the theory and principles of adult learning in mind, convening designers and presenters can facilitate the learning approach of the participant to move from novice to more sophisticated learning methods. This makes for greater integration of knowledge, information and experience; the participant learns to distinguish what is important when assessing and working within their communities of clients; how to prioritize client needs, goals and caseload; when rules can be put aside and how and when the approach to real-life practice and professional communication emerges from strict modeling of behavior into a personal, unique, effective, practical and professional style (Fidishun 2000, Lieb 1991).

ADULT LEARNING THEORY IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Adult education, formally known as "andragogy," can be defined as the set of specific skills and associated knowledge geared towards the educational development of adults. It emphasizes that fact that adults are self-oriented and expect the responsibility to make their own decisions. Adults don't learn in the same way as children do because their personality structures are almost fully developed at the mature stage of their lives, and they have acquired a series of habits and practices that have become engrained during their lifetime.

Therefore, the learning process must take into account how adults perceive not only what is being taught, but also themselves; this includes, but is not limited to: considering their previous learning experiences, considering their temporal perspective — especially when it comes to short-term application of what is being taught, and matching education to their problems, needs, interests and expectations.

The principles of adult education are as follows:

1. **Adults will only learn when they want to.** Simply put, no adult will learn under pressure. They must be motivated to want to acquire new knowledge or skills that will help them in their work or day-to-day life. Thus, their desire to learn can decrease or increase depending on the approach and methodology that is being used.

2. **Adults will only learn when they feel they need to.** Basically, any attained knowledge will only "make sense" if the adult can see the applicability of what is being learned, and this will usually have to happen at a very early stage in the learning process in order to keep interest alive. Adults only really want to learn that which will help them in the short term.

3. **Adults learn by doing.** No adult enjoys being fed vast amounts of theory with little or no practice. As we grow older, we much prefer a "hands-on" approach to things. The learning will be much more effective if we can take an active role in the learning process. Thus it's important to encourage objective discussion both in analyzing the problem and coming up with a solution.

4. **Adults will only learn by solving problems they can associate with their reality.** If they can't apply what is being learned to some issue they have to deal with in their lives, the learning process will be significantly hindered. Thus adult education must pay less attention to analyzing documented case studies and imaginary scenarios and focus on "real world" problems and practical assimilation of what is being taught.

5. **Experience can (and most likely will) interfere in adult education.** No person likes to be told that his or her "tried and tested" way of doing things is "wrong." Thus, in order to avoid this pitfall, any new information being presented must be integrated with adult learners' own experiences in such a way as to complement or even supplement what they already know. Categorically labeling something as the "right" or "best" way is rarely productive.

6. **Adults learn better in an informal environment.** Mature adults won't put up with a "schoolhouse lecturer" who demands that they sit up straight in their desks. They require a more relaxed atmosphere, one that will stimulate them to participate, thus allowing them to accept every ounce of new knowledge as a product that will solve an issue they are dealing with.

7. **Adults need feedback.** If one thing is preserved from their childhood days, it's the constant need to know how well they are doing. So, it's important that convening learning exercises provide adults with constructive feedback through the use of artifices such as self-evaluation questionnaires, technology and activities.

8. **Adults require a variety of teaching methods.** It's important to use different approaches when trying to pass on knowledge to adults. The use of audiovisual materials is highly recommended, as is the use of interactive activities such as role-playing, mock classes and presentations from the adult learners themselves. One of the most effective techniques that can be used to finish a learning module is to have the adults, either individually or in groups, prepare a small (five-minute) presentation on some aspect or subject that was covered. This will help the facilitator or designer to get an idea of how well the information has been absorbed, as well as allow the "students" to put into practice some of what they have learned in a controlled environment.

As you can see, the adult must not be seen as a mere "object," subject to adaptation and change according to the needs of a pre-prepared convening environment and an agenda to which the adult learner has contributed little or nothing. Instead, he or she should be viewed as the subject of an ever-changing process, an agent who can transform reality according to his or her need and interests.

Our research was conducted in four phases: initial research, environmental scan for best practices, analysis of findings and report/recommendations.

PHASE ONE: INITIAL RESEARCH

- Review/reference WKKF reports and documentation:
  - WKKF Identity Guides.
  - WKKF Master Convening Calendar.
- Study agendas and evaluations from multiple WKKF convenings:
  - America Healing (2012).
  - Food and Society conference (2006).
  - Food and Community conference (2012).
  - Mississippi Grantee convening (2012).
  - New Mexico Grantee convening (2011 and 2012).
  - P3 Wisdom Gathering (2008).
  - Racial Equity convening (2012).
- Conduct interviews with key WKKF stakeholders:
  - Personal meetings/interviews with nine WKKF staff.
  - Written surveys of 21 WKKF program staff (12 actually responded).
- Attend WKKF Michigan Communities in Action meeting (October 2012).

PHASE TWO: ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN FOR BEST PRACTICES

- Review relevant external books, reports and articles (see Bibliography).
- Attend Meetings Tech Expo (October 2012).
- Conduct cursory Internet research to look for ideas, best practices and people who might be able to articulate them, in the areas of adult learning, meeting design and logistics knowledge management, technology and communications.
- Facilitate 20- to 60-minute in-person or telephone interviews with 35 external subject matter experts from six countries (see the Acknowledgment section of this report for complete list).
- Lead telephone interviews with five WKKF peer foundations:
  - The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
  - The Kresge Foundation.
  - The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
  - Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.
  - The David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

- Conduct telephone interviews with five additional foundations that focus on vulnerable populations or were identified by the Center for Effective Philanthropy as having exemplary relationships with their grantees and/or hosting well-regarded convenings:

  - Colorado Health Foundation.

  - S.H. Cowell Foundation.

  - The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread.

  - The Lumina Foundation.

  - Wallace Foundation.

PHASE THREE: ANALYSIS

- Analyze interviewer transcripts.

- Compile excerpts from transcripts delineating best practices and innovative ideas.

- Analyze empirical data for practices and ideas mentioned across all interviews (most mentioned = most important).

- Summarize findings for review.

PHASE FOUR: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Compile and summarize findings.

- Develop a set of recommendations based on best practices.

- Create a recommended implementation plan.

- Write and design a draft inclusive document.

- Obtain input from WKKF staff and outside thought leaders.

- Publish report for WKKF staff.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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GLOSSARY

Agenda | A list or program of things to be done.

Community of Practice | A group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

Communications for Development | A systematic, planned and evidence-based strategic process to promote positive and measurable individual behavior and social change that is an integral part of development programs, policy advocacy and humanitarian work.

Convening | Program-related gathering that brings together an external group of participants for a clear purpose and generates insights or action beyond what any single participant could achieve on his/her own.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) | Computer software system to manage an organization's interactions with current and future customers, members and more.

Experiential Learning | Learning through reflection or direct experience. Example: learning to ride a bicycle by riding a bicycle vs. reading about how to ride a bicycle.

Facilitator | A person who guides the participants through a set of interactions that will help them achieve their shared goals.

Flip Teaching (or Flipped Classroom) | A form that encompasses any use of technology to leverage the learning in a classroom so the instructor can spend more time interacting with students instead of lecturing. It is also known as backwards classroom, reverse instruction, flipping the classroom and reverse teaching.

Gamification | The use of game-thinking and game mechanics in non-game contexts in order to engage users and solve problems.

Hybrid Meeting/Event | A meeting/event that combines a live, in-person event with a virtual, online component.

Impact Statement | A WKKF impact statement explains key details of what success will look like for a project. The statement should be no longer than 475 characters (with spaces), clearly state the desired impact, explain what the impact will look like and "under promise and over deliver." In other words, the statement should clearly state the project's potential but not predict unrealistic outcomes.*

Knowledge Management | A process that formalizes the management and use of an enterprise's intellectual assets. Promotes a collaborative and integrative approach to the creation, capture, organization, dissemination and use of information assets, including the tacit, uncaptured knowledge of people.

Knowledge Product | Organizational knowledge and expertise that are effectively created, located, captured and shared through an explicit form. A valuable strategic asset that can be leveraged for improved performance.

Knowledge Capture | The practice of making tacit knowledge explicit. Turns knowledge that is resident in the mind of the individual into an explicit representation available to the enterprise (e.g., a manual, podcast, website and more).

Knowledge Organization/Storage | The classification and categorization of knowledge for navigation, storage and retrieval.

Knowledge Dissemination | The distribution or sharing of knowledge products.

Knowledge Application | The use of knowledge that has been disseminated in a meaningful activity that furthers the organization's mission.

Learning Statement | A WKKF learning statement sets clear expectations for the type of learning most crucial to the grant or project. The statement should be no longer than 475 characters (with spaces), clearly state the project's learning agenda, and explain the connection to WKKF's broader learning agenda.*

Live Stream/Webcast | Broadcasting live audio and/or video of an event over the Web to either the public or a select audience.

Meeting Architect | The role of a person who designs the content and format of meetings in order to achieve the desired participant behavior.

Meeting Architecture | The task of designing the meeting experience, its content, format and context, in order to facilitate the desired reinforcement or change in participant behavior and thus provide greater value for stakeholders. Like an architect that helps the homeowner build a house, a meeting architect helps the meeting owner to build a meeting in four phases:

1. Identifying the meeting objectives: expressed known objectives and unexpressed potential objectives.
2. Designing the meeting based on those objectives using conceptual, human, artistic, technical and technological tools.
3. Executing the meeting.
4. Assessing the measured end results and reporting.

Meeting Architecture Tools | Tools that the meeting architect has at his/her disposal before, during and after the convening:

Conceptual Tools | The format, virtual or real, like presentations, open space, and room layout.

Human Tools | Individuals engaged as facilitators and speakers.

Artistic Tools | The use of color, music, décor, light and design.

Technical Tools | Audiovisual aids, stage construction and furniture.

Technology Tools | Facilitation technology, live stream, webcast, networking tools, online applications such as blogs, chats and other computer programs.

Meeting Design | A purposeful process to conceptualize and execute an event, taking into consideration the interests of all stakeholders, to achieve measurable, sustainable change associated with specific goals.

Open Space Meeting | A meeting in which participants create and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions around a central theme of strategic importance. Sometimes called an "unconference."

Purpose Statement | A WKKF purpose statement is not a sentence. Rather, it consists of two linked clauses. The first is "the charitable intent" clause, which seeks to convey the larger charitable purpose. The second is a descriptive clause that highlights what the grantee seeks to achieve. It includes details such as the age, race or geographic location of those served by the grant.*

Subject Matter Expert (SME) | An individual that is an expert in a particular area or topic.

*Source: "The Why, Who and How of WKKF: Purpose, Impact and Learning Statements" by Tom Springer, WKKF project manager, shared with WKKF staff in 2012.

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