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SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Report on the Second Round of the Quality Child Care Initiative (QCCI)

Final Report

Chapter 7. Evolution of QCCI as a Funders' Collaborative

This file contains Chapter 7 of the full report. The complete text of the report and an *Executive Summary* are posted on the web site of Action Alliance for Children at www.4children.org/QCCI.htm.

October 1, 2003

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VII. EVOLUTION OF QCCI AS A FUNDERS' COLLABORATIVE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we examine the evolution of the Quality Child Care Initiative as a regional funders' collaborative and describe the lessons learned from the experiences of participating QCCI funders and grantees over the second round of pooled grantmaking. Among the issues discussed in this chapter are the following:

- The number and types of funders participating and the total level of funding distributed in QCCI's second round of pooled grantmaking.
- Staffing QCCI operations and the administration of QCCI grants over time.
- The composition and role of the QCCI Leadership Team, and how leadership of the initiative evolved over time as a result of turnover within the staffs of participating funders.
- How the QCCI funders went about developing a responsible "exit strategy" as QCCI's pooled grantmaking came to an end.
- A summary of funder perceptions about how QCCI impacted early childhood education philanthropy.
- A summary of grantee perceptions about how QCCI impacted early childhood education practitioners in the San Francisco Bay Area.

BACKGROUND

As described in the *Report on the First Round of the Quality Child Care Initiative* (Deborah Kogan, Jennifer Henderson, et. al, April 30, 2001), the model of collaborative grantmaking developed by QCCI included several key features:

- *The use of an action learning loop* that linked funders and grantees into a learning community in which both funding strategies and practitioner approaches evolved in response to an ongoing assessment of best practices and changing local conditions.

- *The development of a comprehensive vision of the different issues that affect quality child care* and a conceptual framework that explained how these issues fit together.
- *The use of a multi-pronged approach* that not only made direct grants to support individual projects, but also sponsored community forums to identify and discuss priority issues, funded technical assistance and resource grantees, supported grantee convenings around timely issues, and developed strategic partnerships between the philanthropy community and local and state government stakeholders.
- *A commitment to collaborative leadership*, in which staff from participating funders shared their expertise and volunteered their time to lead the work of the collaborative, irrespective of the amount of resources any particular funder brought to the table. As a result, both large and small funders enjoyed equal opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity for QCCI.
- *The design of flexible funding options for participating funders*, including the ability to choose between making a contribution to a pooled grantmaking fund and/or making independent but aligned grants.
- *The design of inclusive opportunities for funder participation that allowed for a range of engagement levels*, from receipt of a package of meeting summaries and shared written materials, to attendance at funder briefings and quarterly ECF meetings, to participation in designing QCCI requests for grant proposals and/or reviewing submitted proposals, to attending action forums and grantee convenings sponsored by the Initiative.
- *A regional focus that recognized the San Francisco Bay Area as an interdependent region* and attempted to pool regional resources and talents in order to promote quality child care on a large geographic scale. By participating in a regional collaborative, funders were able to benefit their local target areas while participating in a project that, in some cases, reached beyond the confines of their own foundation's geographic boundaries.

Below, we discuss how the QCCI's collaborative funding model and its organizational supports evolved during the second round of funding.

PARTICIPATING FUNDERS

As described in previous reports, the funders that came together under QCCI as participants in the first round of collaborative grantmaking were a diverse group. The first-round funders included 16 foundations, eight individual donors, and one local public agency. Among the participating foundations, four were community foundations; the remainder were private foundations. In terms of the size of their total annual giving, the 16 foundations that participated in the first round of QCCI included six small foundations (with less than \$10 million in annual giving), eight medium-sized foundations (with between \$10 million and \$100 million in annual giving), and two large foundations (with annual expenditures of more than \$100 million).

An equally diverse group of 21 funders, listed in Appendix A, contributed to the second round of QCCI grantmaking. As shown in Exhibit VII-1, 12 of the 21 second-round funders were foundations that had previously participated in the first round of QCCI grantmaking. As a result of its open and inclusive practices, QCCI succeeded in expanding the group of second-round funders to include nine foundations that had not previously participated in Round 1. A number of these newcomers were foundations that had been attending the quarterly meetings of ECF for some time, but had not made pooled or aligned contributions during the first QCCI grantmaking cycle. New participants included both small family funds and medium-sized foundations.

Although there was modest turnover in individual funder participation between the first and second rounds of QCCI grantmaking, overall, ECF and the participating QCCI funders retained a stable, core membership over time.¹ This core permitted the collaborative to continue operations with a shared sense of identity and purpose.

Twelve of QCCI's second-round funders had participated in the first round; QCCI successfully expanded the group to include nine new foundations.

¹ QCCI experienced modest turnover and substantial growth in funder participation between its first and second rounds of grantmaking. Three-fourths of the 16 foundations that participated in Round 1 made additional contributions to QCCI to support Round 2 grants. In addition, the total number of foundations that participated during Round 2 increased from 16 to 21 (an increase of 31%).

**Exhibit VII-1
Foundations Participating in QCCI**

Foundation	Round 1		Round 2	
	Pooled Fund	Directly Aligned Grant	Pooled Fund	Directly Aligned Grant
California Endowment	✓		✓	
Center for Ecoliteracy			✓	
The David & Lucile Packard Foundation	✓	✓	✓	
David B. Gold Foundation		✓	✓	
East Bay Community Foundation	✓	✓	✓	
Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund	✓		✓	
The Hearst Foundation, Inc.	✓		✓	
Jennifer Altman Foundation	✓	✓		
Luke B. Hancock Foundation	✓			
Marin Community Foundation	✓		✓	
Miriam & Peter Haas Fund	✓	✓	✓	
Morris Family Foundation		✓		✓
Morris Stulsaft Foundation			✓	
Osborne Family Foundation			✓	
Peninsula Community Foundation	✓		✓	
Penney Family Fund			✓	
The San Francisco Foundation	✓	✓	✓	
S.H. Cowell Foundation	✓	✓		
Tara Fund			✓	
Trio Foundation	✓	✓	✓	
United Way of the Bay Area			✓	
Walter and Elise Haas Fund	✓			
W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation			✓	
Women's Foundation			✓	
Wood-Kaufman Family Trust			✓	

Turnover in the participation of individual funders occurred for a variety of reasons, including program officer turnover, shifts in the priority issues targeted by individual funders, changes in the total value of foundation assets resulting in changes in the levels of planned giving, and incompatibility of individual grantmaking cycles with the timeline for Round 2 contributions.

Perhaps because QCCI had a longer and more illustrious track record as a funders' collaborative by the time of the second round of grantmaking, participating second-round funders appeared to be more comfortable with making grants to the pooled fund, rather than making directly aligned grants. As shown in Exhibit VII-1, only one of the 21 participating funders in Round 2 chose to make a directly aligned grant, rather than a contribution to the pooled fund. Another noticeable shift in funder participation between the first and second round of QCCI grantmaking was the reduced number of individual donors participating in the second round. This shift can perhaps be explained by the less active role played in the early planning stages of Round 2 by the San Francisco Foundation, which had helped to initiate and organize individual donor participation during Round 1.

During the second round of grantmaking, more funders were comfortable contributing to a pooled fund as opposed to making directly aligned grants.

The result of the above participation patterns was that the funders participating in QCCI's Round 2 generated a pooled fund of just over \$2.0 million to support Round 2 grantmaking, which was even larger than the \$1.7 million collected to support Round 1 pooled grantmaking.

EVOLUTION OF QCCI OPERATIONS AND GRANT ADMINISTRATION UNDER ROUND 2

QCCI was fortunate to have a full-time staff director during much of the summer and fall of 2001 when the detailed work plan for the second round of QCCI grantmaking was being developed. The QCCI Director developed the RFP for the first phase of Round 2 grantmaking and held the orientation session for organizations interested in applying for project funds. The QCCI Director, who had been instrumental in leading QCCI's CEL Project during the first round of QCCI grantmaking, also continued to staff QCCI's support for this public-private partnership during the early

stages of Round 2, including providing the logistical support for holding additional regional CEL meetings.

Late in 2001, the QCCI Director left her position with QCCI to become a program officer at one of the participating QCCI funders. A consultant was hired to take over QCCI administrative functions. During 2002 and 2003, two different individuals held the role of consultant to QCCI to provide administrative support to the collaborative. Both times this position was filled, QCCI was able to find individuals who had strong backgrounds in child care issues in the San Francisco Bay Area and who were able to interface effectively both with QCCI funders and grantees. As a result, the collaborative was able to maintain relatively seamless staff support of Round 2 operations.

EVOLUTION OF QCCI LEADERSHIP UNDER ROUND 2

The initial members of the QCCI Leadership Team were held in high esteem by the ECF membership and the participating QCCI funders for their high level of expertise in early childhood education, their vision of quality child care, their effectiveness as catalysts in shaping an open learning community of funders and practitioners, their willingness to explore new forms of funder collaboration, and their dedication in volunteering a significant amount of time and energy to an unpaid activity.

This high level of commitment was sustained by four of the long-standing members of the QCCI Leadership Team from the collaborative's initiation in 1997 through the planning and initiation of the second round of QCCI grantmaking in the fall of 2001. However, between 2001 and 2003, the job and organizational affiliations that had supported the members of the QCCI Leadership Team in their roles as leaders of the funders collaborative began to undergo significant changes, due to individual job mobility among the leaders themselves, as well as to organizational and staffing changes within the participating funders. Two of the initial members of the leadership team left their jobs with the participating foundation. The remaining two individuals were increasingly called upon to become involved in new and evolving foundation priorities and initiatives. As a result of these changes, the foundations that had been making significant in-kind contributions to

QCCI by supporting the Leadership Team members in their QCCI functions could no longer do so.

To ensure continuity of leadership for the shared grantmaking program, the individuals on the QCCI Leadership Team agreed to continue to carry out their QCCI fiscal and program leadership responsibilities as individuals until the completion of the Round 2 grantmaking period in the spring of 2003. However, in the fall of 2002, the outgoing QCCI Leadership Team put the ECF membership on notice that, with the conclusion of QCCI, the Early Childhood Funders would need to develop new leadership.

Many of the funders participating in quarterly ECF meetings expressed a strong interest in continuing to collaborate on early childhood education issues in some format after the end of QCCI's Round 2, even if the collaboration would no longer include pooled grantmaking. At this point, participants realized how enmeshed ECF and QCCI had become, and undertook the difficult task of disentangling these two entities so that the formal QCCI grantmaking program could be terminated while leaving open the option of continuing ECF as an ongoing entity with new leadership and the possibility of either informal or formal collaborative activities among participating funders. The QCCI Leadership Team tackled the task of planning for the termination of formal QCCI grantmaking while a group of interested individuals began meeting to plan for the continuation of ECF as an ongoing entity under new leadership.

Many funders expressed a strong interest in continuing to collaborate on early childhood education issues after the end of QCCI's Round 2 grantmaking.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING A RESPONSIBLE EXIT STRATEGY FOR QCCI

Beginning in the spring of 2002, the outgoing Leadership Team began meeting with representatives from early childhood funders who indicated that they were interested in helping to plan for an orderly and responsible transition as the QCCI's pooled funding came to an end. Participants included representatives from some funders that had previously participated either in the first or second round of pooled QCCI grantmaking, as well as some funders that had not previously contributed to QCCI's pooled grantmaking.

Participants identified five elements of a responsible exit strategy for QCCI:

- Short-term transition funding to selected QCCI grantees, including:
 - Small capacity-building grants to enable the leadership and training resource grantees to develop strategic plans for their future funding and organizational survival.
 - Extended short-term support to Working for Quality Child Care, a resource project that had been assisting counties in planning, implementing, and advocating for compensation and retention initiatives for the child care workforce.
- Clear communication with grantees about the planned end of the formal QCCI funders collaborative.
- Dissemination of lessons learned about best practices in funders' collaboratives to participating funders and the broader philanthropic community.
- Dissemination of lessons learned about best practices in supporting quality child care to local stakeholders in the practitioner and funder arenas.
- Discussions with interested funders about which of the functions previously carried out by QCCI might be continued as part of a revitalized ECF group or taken on by individual funders.

A separate ECF transition team began planning for the continuation of the informal information-sharing and educational functions of ECF.

A separate transition team for the Early Childhood Funders took on responsibility for determining whether and how the funders would continue the informal information-sharing and educational functions of ECF, as well as whether they would attempt any more formal collaborative grantmaking activities or projects in the future.

HOW QCCI INFLUENCED PARTICIPATING FUNDERS

During the spring of 2002, the evaluators surveyed the Round 2 funders on how they thought QCCI had impacted San Francisco Bay Area philanthropic efforts relating to early childhood education. The survey respondents represented a range of large and small foundations and individual donors who had been engaged in QCCI at different levels of involvement, ranging from attendance at ECF meetings to participation in

the QCCI strategic planning processes. Below, we have summarized key findings.

How Did QCCI Add Value to the Philanthropic Community?

Overall, respondents indicated that QCCI had added value to the early childhood philanthropic community. Particularly valuable aspects of QCCI identified by funders included the fact that QCCI:

- Viewed and addressed child care issues from a *regional* perspective.
- Helped document and disseminate information about best practices in the child care field
- Provided grantees with a single point of access to potential funders.

To a lesser extent, funders also felt that QCCI was valuable for helping funders identify gaps and set funding priorities in early childhood education, and for reducing funders' burden with regard to grant solicitation and administration.

How Did QCCI Add Value to the Field of Early Childhood Education Practice?

Funders also felt that QCCI had added value to the child care *practitioner* community, primarily by increasing the visibility of child care issues and promoting their priority on the agenda of state and local decision makers. For instance, QCCI was responsible for stimulating increased state involvement and support for the development and implementation of CELs, and for directly supporting advocacy organizations in their efforts to represent key stakeholder groups (e.g., parents) at public child care debates.

How Did QCCI Influence Independent Grantmaking by QCCI Funders?

Funders responding to the survey indicated that QCCI had had discernible impacts on the participating funders themselves, by reinforcing their decisions to make independent grants in the areas of QCCI's funding priorities. Eight funders reported making independent grants in the

Ninety percent of funders who responded to a survey felt that QCCI had had some or a substantial influence on their independent grantmaking.

facilities development area and nine reported making independent grants in the training and leadership development area.

Overall, three-quarters of the funders felt that QCCI had had “some influence” on their independent grantmaking, while just over 15% reported that QCCI had had a “substantial influence” on their independent grantmaking. Reported types of influence including having an effect on the funders’ *level of grantmaking* related to early childhood education, the *types of grants* made, and the *selection of individual grantees*. Funders indicated that QCCI affirmed that their independent grantmaking was “on the right track,” or helped them make significant grants in the early childhood field, even if that was not one of the funder’s previous areas of major grantmaking.

What Lessons Did QCCI Reveal About How to Organize Future Funders’ Collaboratives?

Funders were largely positive about the lessons they learned from participating in a multi-funder, regional collaborative. Most respondents indicated that they would recommend that their organization participate in other such collaboratives in the future, given that QCCI’s structure allowed participating funders to leverage more money, learn from one another, and make a greater impact on the early childhood education field than would have been possible on an individual basis.

Funders also cited a number of QCCI features that were essential to the success of a regional collaborative, including exceptionally strong but flexible leadership, funding of both individual programs and regional convenings, and funding of both regional and local projects. Funders’ advice for building and sustaining a regional collaborative centered on seeing the “big picture”—i.e., concentrating on securing funder buy-in to a broader vision before attending to individual funder needs. Funders also recommended that regional collaboratives be flexible in terms of their expectations from participating funders, hire a project director with decision making authority, and ensure that *aligned* funding opportunities are available for participating funders.

Finally, funders said that they found it helpful to view QCCI as a time-limited collaborative that could evolve over time to meet changing

Funders felt that QCCI’s structure allowed them to leverage funds, learn from one another, and make a greater impact on the early childhood education field.

regional needs but was not interested in forming a permanent organization concerned with its own institutional survival.

What are the QCCI Funders' Current Priorities?

Looking to the future, funders most often cited their early childhood funding priorities as: increased compensation for and retention of a high quality child care workforce; and training and leadership development for the child care workforce. Funders indicated that potential opportunities for collaboration in the future would most likely center around workforce compensation initiatives; encouraging clear linkages between staff training and compensation; promoting child care in the public policy sphere; and working to increase public and/or private investments in child care.

HOW QCCI INFLUENCED THE EARLY CHILD CARE FIELD IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

A grantee survey in 2002/2003—administered to each Round 2 grantee as it completed its funded project—complemented the funder survey by identifying how stakeholders felt that QCCI had changed the local landscape in terms of issues and activities related to quality child care. The purposes of the grantee survey were to: (1) explore how QCCI grants have influenced practitioners, and (2) provide useful feedback from grantees on QCCI's pooled grantmaking process, its most important features, and potential areas for improvement. In addition, as part of the survey, we invited each grantee to provide their perspective on the highest priority issues currently facing the early childhood education field and to suggest how the philanthropic community might make a contribution to these issues.

In total, 16 of QCCI's 19 Round 2 grantees completed our survey, including three local chapters of Parent Voices and eight local organizations funded to support projects to improve the compensation and retention of the child care workforce. Other respondents included five of the resource organizations funded to support compensation and retention projects or various aspects of leadership and training for the child care workforce.

How Did QCCI Influence Grantee Organizations?

Grantees described a number of ways in which the QCCI grant influenced them. The most often cited impact was simply that QCCI enabled them to undertake new, improved, or expanded activities or sustain existing activities related to quality child care. However, QCCI also was influential on an organizational level in that grantees were assisted in planning for agency growth and survival, and were linked to other local organizations and funders interested in quality child care. On an informational level, grantees felt that QCCI provided them with an understanding of regional issues and challenges, as well as with best practices culled from the field.

Grantees greatly appreciated the flexibility of QCCI funding that allowed them to revise and adapt activities to a changing local context.

What Made QCCI Support Valuable or Distinctive?

We asked grantees to reflect on what they felt made QCCI most valuable and distinctive. Their responses indicate quite a bit of overlap between what they felt was valuable and what they felt was distinctive. For instance, several grantees greatly appreciated the *flexibility* of QCCI funding as both valuable and distinctive; this flexibility allowed them to “revise and adapt our activities to the changing local context.” This flexibility also imparted the message that QCCI trusted grantees as experts in the field, and to do what was necessary or best to meet their original project goals.

Grantees felt that QCCI was distinctive in the attention it gave to issues such as community organizing and child care services for children with disabilities.

Grantees also felt that QCCI was distinctive in that it: (1) gave attention to issues that other funders did not, such as advocacy, community organizing, and child care services for children with disabilities; (2) awarded grants that showed a high level of timeliness and *responsiveness* to current local trends, conditions, and ongoing work, such as CARES; and (3) instituted modest and streamlined administrative oversight and reporting requirements. Grantees felt that QCCI provided valuable and interesting information at grantee orientations and convenings, and that the QCCI evaluator provided valuable assistance in developing relevant outcome measures as part of their grants.

How Could the QCCI Grantmaking Process Have Been Improved?

When asked how the QCCI grant process might have been improved, several grantees were hard pressed to think of a single thing. However, among the suggestions recorded were that grantees would have liked more updates from other counties, more information on ECF's ongoing role in supporting quality child care in the Bay Area, and more assistance finding additional funding support given that QCCI's pooled funding was at an end.

What are the Priority Issues for the Field of Early Childhood Education?

Finally, grantees were asked what they perceived to be the priority issues for the early childhood education field and the contributions they thought philanthropy could make. Priority issues were as follows:

- Helping to maintain access to affordable child care in the face of state and federal budget cuts.
- Sustaining child care teachers, providers, infrastructure, and families during economic downturn.
- Maintaining and extending compensation initiatives and provider training to protect and improve quality of care and support the child care workforce.

Grantees felt that the philanthropic community should continue to support innovative projects that build on existing efforts and need time to bring about change (including CARES programs); support advocacy efforts to help protect hard-won child care quality improvements from deep funding cuts; and help broaden the child care discussion to include voices not always heard—such as those of parents and teachers. Grantees also felt that the philanthropic community should reach out to the private sector to show the economic benefits of quality child care, and convene regional partners to develop new strategies for promoting quality child care in the current economic and political context.

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