
Co-Design Project Update Blog Post

- 2 Days in Brooklyn (November 25 & 26, 2018)
- 1 Fabulous consultant
- 5 representatives of Giving Circle and Collective Giving Networks
- Dozens of Bagels
- \$370,000 in total funding raised and
- Hundreds of Post-It Notes later. . .

I'm delighted to report we have a much better idea of where the Co-Design project is headed and the five Co-Design partners are united in our belief that we are aligned around a set of big picture dreams for the field.

To sketch out the broad strokes for those who are just hearing about this, or who have heard just a little bit, the headline is that **the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has taken an interest in our sector**, and their interest typically comes with support and resources and eventually a ton of national attention. They have invested \$250,000 in a 12-month process to enable 5 leaders of networks to work together to design an infrastructure organization to provide support for the collective giving ecosystem. They challenged us to raise the additional \$120,000 that would be required. We were able to do so through appeals to private foundations, some of whom, like W.K.Kellogg Foundation, have supported these networks for years, some support from the networks themselves, some good old-fashioned collective giving, and investments from US Trust and Schwab Charitable, which have generously sponsored Catalist conferences.

The five Co-Design leads are:

- Felicia Herman of Amplifier, a network of giving circles guided by Jewish values based in NYC
- Marsha Morgan of Community Investment Network, a network of African American giving circles based in Birmingham, AL
- Sara Velten of the Latino Community Foundation of California
- Hali Lee, President of Asian American Women's Giving Circle, a member of Catalist. Hali is also in the midst of standing up a network for high net worth

donors of color. She is based in Brooklyn, and it was in her home that we met

- Paula Liang, Vice Chair of Catalist, based in Jacksonville, and a member of two Florida Affiliates.

And none of it would be possible without Isis Krause of Knead Partners who keeps us on task and makes sense of the hundreds of Post It Notes.

We have been meeting for months remotely via Zoom and have conducted 40 something interviews with members of other networks, funders, members of the broader philanthropy field, some grantees, and other stakeholders as part of the “Needs Assessment”. When read a list of the possible supports that might be provided (i.e., technology, capacity building, funding, impact evaluation, staff support, communications/branding and on and on) almost everyone said, “Can I choose them all?” Clearly, there are many needs.

But the organizing wisdom came from Hali at about 10:30 on Day 1. As I recall, what she said was, “This doesn’t have to look like anything that already exists. Let’s build the party we want to go to.” The work we all do is so essentially hopeful, we want to lift it up without organizing the joy out of it. There may have been a group hug at this point.

So, we have an idea of what we think this party should look like, we have a bit more time to refine our ideas through a series of working groups that will involve many of those we have interviewed, a series of pilot projects and a field-wide convening, April 1-2 in Seattle. The Gates Foundation has invited us to use their space on April 1.

Stay tuned. Watch this space. If you know of anyone, man, woman or child, who is thinking of starting a giving circle, please give Paula a shout at pliang@catalistwomen.org One of the pilot projects could be an incubator—we would like to see if we can stand up a bunch of new organizations before the end of the project in September 2019, to prove to the Gates Foundation and our other partners that we can deliver the goods.

To those of you who donated to this project, many, many thanks! Catalist itself, as well as several individual members of our Affiliates made investments, all of which were much appreciated.