

Alliance for Nonprofit Management 2009 Best Practice Awards

We are pleased in the following interviews to present insights and lessons from the winners of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management's 2009 Best Practices Awards. This is a new feature of the awards process, designed to help us all get real value from a process that recognizes the excellence in our community. Thanks to Inca Mohammed of Management Assistance Group in Washington, D.C. and to Rick Cohen of the Nonprofit Quarterly for conducting the interviews, and to Armando Holguin also of NPQ and Summer Spencer of the Alliance for coordinating this work.

You will find many themes that weave through one interview to another. The idea that our practice must remain respectful, fresh, adaptive and responsive shines through but there are also powerful themes about the sparks that occur in collaboration and risk taking and about the need to pay very close attention to organizational goals, history, and social context.

I hope that you enjoy these interviews and my apologies in advance for any flat footedness of editing. The original interviews were much more substantive.

Finally, I think that the committee members will agree with me when I say that we had a truly impressive slate of nominees in each category, exhibiting widespread creativity and commitment to the field. But as you read below, I am sure you will understand why we chose each winner. Many of those on the list will be at the conference. Seek them out. Talk to them about the problems with which you struggle in your own practice. That dialogue and hunger for growth is the soul of our learning community after all.

Ruth McCambridge
Chair, Best Practices Committee
Editor in Chief, The Nonprofit Quarterly

Committee Members

Paul Connolly - *Senior Vice President and Director* - TCC Group
Tom Adams – *President* - TransitionGuides
Jim Vaillancourt - *Senior Consultant* - Center For Nonprofit Management
Carol Lukas – *President* - Fieldstone Alliance
Inca Mohamed - *Executive Director* - Management Assistance Group
Jan Glick - *President* - Jan Glick & Associates

**Winner of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management's
Founders Lifetime Achievement Award**

Rick Cohen's interview with Fran Barrett of Community Resource Exchange

Fran Barrett founded Community Resource Exchange in New York City in 1979 as a way to support community leaders in making change in their neighborhoods. CRE has stayed true to its mission. With a skilled and diverse staff, CRE is at once uniquely tailored to the sometimes much marginalized communities in which it works and attentive to rigorous practice.

Rick Cohen: You have won the award for Founders Lifetime Achievement Award for your leadership at Community Resource Exchange. Can you tell us a little about what the important points of practice were for you in that work?

Fran Barrett: I would say what's been important to me has been to maintain a core of generalists at Community Resource Exchange because the heart of the matter for us is community-based organizations, and many of them have not reached a level of differentiation of functions. In other words, they are still in the "chief-cook-and-bottle-washer-we-do-everything-together-mode," so what we have had to become very astute at is becoming experts in a field of work such as human resources or strategic planning and then to bring that in a practical way to people who can use it. We think of it as sort of arrows in a quiver, we have to have everything at our fingertips, but we can't go in there and kill them with Power Points; we've got to be able to understand the context, or as I say the landscape, of where they are, and if they're in Alaska then we cannot be dressed for the beach. We have to understand where they are and let them lead that.

RC: What does that mean, though, understanding where they are?

FB: We have to be able to understand the level of development in the organization in terms of systems and structure. We have to understand the program first of all to be able to get their confidence that we may actually be helpful. I mean I think one of the biggest issues for everybody in this business is relevance. But once we've established our relevance, presuming we do establish it, then there's this question of understanding. They might have somebody on their board, for example, who is a top notch financial advisor, so their financial systems could be very far along, however, their human resource system or their planning process or their ability to make a decision could be very far back. So what we need to do is look at what they've got and then at where the next potential is and what they have an appetite for. Lots of times we'll see something and they have no interest in it and there's no point in us going there. So we try to accommodate both their mindset and their history and what the organization's values are. You can't go into a group that's a collective and start talking about an HR system which is hierarchical.

RC: I wonder if you might tell us, from your perspective, what lessons you think are most valuable for other capacity builders to take from your work?

FB: I have contempt for tools because I think they bring us to the lowest common denominator. Tools are good to help you prepare for a conversation with a group, but if you're asking them to check off things and you think that tells you what you need to know, you're in big trouble. An over-reliance on tools often replaces thinking and the real work of understanding what an organization is up against. But the sector is going the other way. We want to standardize everything.

RC: Given the diversity of the sector, why are capacity builders going for so much standardization?

FB: I don't know, but I think the business model for consulting -- which is frankly the economic engine for this kind of work -- is based on repetitive use of one thing, that's how for-profit consulting firms make money, they develop something and then they use it over and over again.

FB: I think the way in which that has played out is that very early on, we rejected the financially appealing model of just hiring consultants and then hire someone when a client comes in. We wanted the standardization, so to speak, or the standards, but we wanted the standards in the heads of our staff. And therefore we wanted to be able to invest in staff development and retain staff over a long period of time, because, not to be pompous about it, there's a certain amount of wisdom involved in actually being useful. So what we wanted to do, we hired annualized salaried people who work in a billable environment but they are CRE staff, we discourage anybody from working outside CRE at all and we spend a fair amount of, other peoples' dollars frankly, philanthropic dollars on staff development which is why we don't want people on their own, because the development is done with philanthropic dollars and we're trying to return that to the nonprofit sector. So what we do is pay a lot of attention to who works here, what they know, what they need to know, and try to be as encouraging to each other as we can. We also have people here who have natural areas of expertise, so they sort of inform my thinking, if I was working with a client where I saw that there was a problem in a particular area, I would know there's a colleague with expertise I could talk to about that area. The notion that the standardization and what we hope is a very high bar comes from ourselves, not from tools.

RC: What would you most like others to see as your legacy in capacity building?

FB: I would say it's about poverty, not consulting. I hope I'm not thought of as a great consultant, I hope that's not the point. I've always been focused on a theme of building whose capacity to do what. Random capacity building doesn't interest me. So I guess what I'd like to think is that CRE is a social justice organization that uses consulting to strengthen and help really extraordinary leaders all over the city - and by some reports successfully. That's an important thing. I think every city should have a CRE type of operation, some hub where people can go. And during this downturn we've become more of a convener. In October we convened a large number of clients and we also convened policymaking types and foundations, and we had a "town hall" with 50 or 60 organizations and foundation folks and we said what we want you to do is listen. There was no panel or anything. We just listened to the groups for 2 hours and then we stayed with the funders and said ok, what did you hear? What do you think you should be doing? What should we be doing? What should they be doing?

But one of my other legacies is in the staff. I think one of CRE's successes is smart hiring and we also don't hire by credential. It's a culturally diverse group, but it's also an intellectually diverse group and that eliminates canned thinking. We just try to take each situation as it comes. We deal with about 300 organizations a year so that's a lot of innovation. We do repetitive stuff sometimes where we see an organization that is like a different organization that we worked with six months ago, and we say, gee, you have a very similar problem to this organization. If the organization is okay with us naming them we do, and if not, we don't, but we still talk about the circumstances. A big part of why we are called a resource exchange is because so much of the learning is going to come from the leaders themselves. What we learn we learn on the front lines, we learn from books too and that's all great, but we do learn a lot from the clients, and we convey to other clients what we learned from these clients. And that's important, that's been a hallmark for us.

RC: Are the clients aware that much of the learning does come from their own peers?

FB: We make it clear, and since the downturn we've been offering "action learning sessions" for very small groups, like 3 or 4 people with one of us, and , they do all the talking. I'll sit there and say, that reminds me of something that Peter Block said, or draw them to a book or something like that. But they're saying to each other, I figured that out but it didn't work, or I did try that bookkeeping service but when it came down to X they wouldn't do it.

RC: Are there any people, publications or ideas that particularly informed your approach? What are they and what influence did they have?

FB: Peter Senge is one. He states that organizations are systems as opposed to collections of individuals, and that brought home the notion of leadership because that helped frame our leadership positions, which is that leadership can be learned, it's not some rare gene that a few people are born with. He has helped us see a broader picture, a broader landscape. Who influences you're thinking is hard to say, but certainly Peter Block's Six Conversations , proved useful again and again because so much of what happens -- particularly in small, stressed organizations -- is that the poor interaction between people can get in the way of achieving anything. Peter's stuff is just so refreshing and his last book, *Community*, was particularly great I thought, in terms of getting us somewhere.

Beyond that, I like Thomas Merton and Pablo Ferreira. Ferreira stresses the importance of teaching and listening, the exchange, the idea that you learn and they learn but everybody's in this together, nobody's all that superior. And the quote from Merton: "My true understanding of who I am is hidden from me by my admiration for what I do." It's the notion that we who do good get very caught up with ourselves in terms of maybe the moral high ground. That's a thought I like to keep close. I really do love what I do, but I don't want it to mask who I really am.

Winner of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management

Grantmaker in Capacity Building Award

Inca Mohamed's interview with *Rick Moyers* of the Meyer Foundation and

***Mary Ann Holohean* of Nonprofit Montgomery!**

for their leadership of capacity building programs at the Meyers Foundation

The Meyer Foundation was an early player in foundation-based capacity building programming. Both Rick and Mary Ann have had powerful impacts on organizations in the area in which the foundation functions as well as on the field of capacity building. The relationship between initiator and successor, however, is one of the more notable and heartening elements of this interview.

Inca Mohamed: The two of you have won the Alliance's first ever Grantmaker in Capacity Building Award and it is almost as a tag team since MaryAnn started the capacity building practice at the Meyer Foundation and Rick is carrying it forward. So I'll take you like that -- first MaryAnn and then Rick. Can you tell us a little more about what you think were important points of practice as you all have supported your grantees around capacity building?

Mary Ann Holohean: The Meyer Foundation is a midsize and, from my perspective it is very important that it is a geographically-based, founder. I really believe in doing this work from a geographic framework even if you are national funder focused on that local area. These programs have to grow organically from a set of beliefs about nonprofits and when I came to Meyer there was already a 50-year history of investing in nonprofit leaders and organizations so it wasn't just some the cool thing to do. When I started, capacity building was very much an emerging field but all the work that I was able to do in creating the nonprofit advancement fund really grew out of that 50 years of practice and that set of beliefs.

IM: When you say beliefs what do you mean? What is one of those beliefs?

MAH: Seeing nonprofits as peers. From the beginning there was the sense that there is not an all-knowing funder but you built something out of the leadership emerging from the community. What's really exciting for me today is that when I work in Montgomery County (right outside of D.C.) I meet organizations that started with one person in the basement and Meyer Funded them and now in some cases they are multimillion dollar organizations. That demonstrates a true belief in the knowledge and expertise of the nonprofit leaders themselves. And I guess the other thing that also relates to the values of Meyer's is trust. When I started this work a lot of people asked, "well to do this work you have to have people really put their stuff on the table and not all of it is pretty. There was a history of program officers at Meyer's that were trusted, that people could safely put their junk on the table and it wouldn't be taken advantage of or shared with others. I saw that investing at the moment of change, you have to invest at a time when the board and the staff of the nonprofit have their eye on a particular prize. We started maybe 15 years ago, and we stuck with it over time; you don't come in and just give someone a one time capacity building grant and think that is the whole deal and I like to say that we had a whole bag of tricks that we were able to use and those included management assistance grants, cash flow loans, investment in general operating support, and investment in capital. So you have a bag of tricks you use over time. A couple other things from my perspective that are really important is, I always felt it was important to build a system, a support system at the same time you are working with the grantees or a group of grantees and see the work in the system context and that means two things to me -- one is that you're always thinking about the geographic area and your grantees and your groups of grantees regionally, what can you develop in the region that can support the groups you're trying to help and then nationally. I had the privilege of being in on the creation of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations which really grew out of the work that the six of us were doing in very different ways across the country.

IM: What would you most like others to see as your legacy in capacity building?

MAH: There are two things I guess.

One is a passion. A passion for nonprofits, a passion for nonprofit leaders, a passion for the work. And the second one is, I just want to give you a little quote here, and this is how I see work and the work I was able to do at Meyer and in the field at the time, this is a quote from Philip Seymour Hoffman...he says, "you find people you want to work with and do the hard work together and that itself draws people together like a magnet and you have moments where you are creating together and that is as good as it gets." That was the beauty of the work for me.

IM: Any people or publications that have particularly informed your approach?

MAH: Jim Collins's first book, *Built to Last*, and then *Nonprofit Quarterly* and Ruth McCambridge who was something of a mentor to me. Paul Light no question, Robert Templin, now President of Northern Va. CC, what I learned from him was being more tough-minded than I tend to be, I tend to see the good in everybody and Bob was a great model for me in that and also he really understood local scanning. Trabian Shorters, who was my partner in developing the technology center in the region, we made a ton of mistakes, he's now a senior vice president at the Knight Foundation, but we just had an incredible partnership, and we just sparked off with each other and he was just such an important person to me. Sue Fairman, who's at SUNY Albany, something that was very important to me was the competing values framework, and I had learned that when I was in state government, and then Sue was good enough to be a colleague over time. Mary McCormick, who was my boss at the Fund for the City of New York, was a boundary crosser and working there I really understood the importance of crossing the border between philanthropy, government, and nonprofit; and then Jan Masaoka, who was another like Ruth, like an iconic leader for me, taught me so much about community-based nonprofits, ethnic and culturally serving nonprofits and Jan I think more than anybody in the field developed very easily accessible technical assistance materials.

IM: How did you feel when you found out you won?

MAH: It was a thrill really, especially being coupled with Rick, because Rick has taken so many things and created so many things that really were at a whole other level. So that was cool for me, because I love the idea that you start with a history in this case Meyer's history and you evolve over time, that it's not a short term thing. So that was really thrilling to me.

Inca: Now Rick as someone who inherited this work and as Mary Ann has said has taken it to new heights, you could say a little about your points of practice in terms of where you found it, and where it is you've been trying to take it?

Rick Moyers: When I was listening to Mary Ann talk about the program and points of practice, the thing she didn't say but the thing I know she believes is something that the Meyer foundation believes, that when they say half the job is just showing up, I think for grant makers half the job is just learning how to listen. This program was created because Meyer was really good at deep listening to the needs and concerns of grantees. I think every day in this job, if it's done well, you are listening and learning and you have to kind of come to work every day not always believing that you know the right capacity building intervention for an organization. You also have to be willing to take some risks and be willing to not always be right and be willing to adapt yourself to where organizations find themselves. I think it's gracious of Mary Ann to say that I've taken the program to a whole new level, but I have to say, it is the program that was created 15 years ago. I think it's one of the longest continually running capacity building programs in the field that is more or less the same thing that it started out as.

IM: Can you identify the flavor you bring to the work because of what your experiences have been in the nonprofit world before coming into this position.

RM: If there is anything different about the flavor I have tried to bring to the Management Assistance grants themselves is to focus them more tightly so they have a smaller scope of work than in the past and yet we are investing more money now than ever. I think there is a limit to how much capacity building an organization can absorb at one time or how many different fronts you can be attacking on or providing support on so even if it does need it, it is really difficult for an organization to do more development and financial management strengthening and strategic planning all at the same time even if they need all those things. So some of the hardest conversations that I have with executive directors are when people fill out the application and check every box and they say that I need all those things. So there is a process to determine the logical sequence and breaking the work up into manageable pieces.

The real addition though to what MaryAnn was doing is our leadership program. Based on what we learned in Daring to Lead we created something called the Exponent Award which is an annual grant and reorganization program that recognizes 5 of the most effective executive directors in the greater Washington region. We are targeting mid-career people to try to prolong their tenure in the job, to help increase their visibility, help take their organizations to a new level and help them take boarder leadership roles in the community. That has been the flagship of our work for the past few years.

IM: Rick, what are some lessons that are valuable to share with other capacity builders, specifically other funders who focus on this area.

RM: I think it is really important to choose a program of work and then stick with it and build on it over many years. It is confusing to grantees and disruptive and its hard to see the impact of your work if you have one focus for a couple of years and then turn to something else. Part of what has been great about this work is that it builds on 50 years and then 10-15 years on top of that of having the same values and having the same general interests and having a deep commitment to strengthening the management and leadership of our grantees.

IM: What would you want to be known for or respected for?

RM: We have made very modest research grants even though we are not primarily a research funder in order to highlight issues that are critical for the field. To the extent that those issues are now being talked about more, being addressed by other funders - awareness has been raised and I am proud of us for that.

IM: Last question. Are there any people besides Mary Ann, publications or ideas that particularly informed your approach?

RM: First off I would have said Mary Ann. Not a day goes by that I don't remember the role Mary Ann played in creating this program and also there is a sense that Mary Ann serves as my conscience. Because sometimes I am a little more tougher minded and I have to be reminded that it is not all about that. I think Jan Masaoka, Jeanne Bell, and Marla Cornelius from CompassPoint have just been fantastic thinking partners as has Mark at MAG. That work hasn't become public yet, but it has just been tremendous to work with these brilliant people. There is a book called "Executive Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations" by Robert Herman and Richard Heimovics who I have never met but it is a book that really changed my life in terms of what I think effective executive directors are and what characteristics distinguish them from others in the field. I think all the people that Mary Ann cited was one of the ways that we were able figure out that we were going to get along because we tended to have the same friends and admired the same people.

RM: I was excited about the opportunity to be recognized with Mary Ann because she and I have not had an opportunity to talk in a public way about the impact of this program over time and I was excited about that. To the extent of what I said before how it is important to me that these critical issues get highlighted so that we somehow address our chronic under-capitalization issues. Selfishly I view this as way to get more attention to these issues. I was excited about that opportunity.

MA: And I want to tell you how Rick's work plays out in the work that I do now which is not as a funder but as a director of Nonprofit Montgomery! which is trying to build a network of nonprofits within Montgomery County and I will give you two quick examples. The Exponent Award that Rick mentioned was given to Becky Wagner one year, actually the second year of the award program; Becky is head of the InterFaith Works here. Among other things, Becky used that money to create something called Changing the Conversation about Poverty in Montgomery County. That was a series of meetings. Out of that has grown this incredible national model called the Neighbors Campaign and it is bringing together government, philanthropy, community organizing, and nonprofits both large and small. Now that is a chain of work that I think about when I say, find the people you want to work with and do the hard work together. It is just brilliant work and it started with that ability to use money from the Exponent Award. Also Rick had the idea of creating a leverage fund in Montgomery County, a nonprofit advancement fund to support small and emerging nonprofits particularly serving immigrant and ethnic communities. Montgomery County is now the most diverse county in Maryland. Rick putting that money on the table brought the county government to set aside an almost equal amount money and that in turn brought a number of other funders. Both of those examples are to me a tribute to Rick's seriousness about the work and his creativity. I am sure the leverage fund was not easy because that was pretty big investment. It's just a blessing to see his work have such powerful effects on community.

Winners of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management's Innovation Award

Inca Mohamed's interview with *Tim Wolfred* of CompassPoint and *Tom Adams* of Transition Guides

Tim Wolfred and Tom Adams have provided consistent national leadership over a number of years to a network of capacity builders and foundations with an interest in executive leadership transitions. They have worked on numerous high profile studies and trainings on the topic together and with other partners.

Inca Mohamed: Both of you have been nominated for the Alliance for Nonprofit Management Innovators Award for your work on leadership transition. Could you tell me what some of the most important points of the practice are?

Tom Adams: That the point of transition is a moment of opportunity and that the way you approach that means a great deal. When I was with NeighborWorks America as a Deputy Director of Field Operations, we had very high turnover of executive directors in a system of 120 local organizations. These organizations had a lot of resources but couldn't seem to get the executive-board relationship to work in a way that was effective for the organization. We did a five-year study, and concluded that there is no such thing, in most community-based nonprofits, as a routine transition.

Tim Wolfred: Right, executive transition can be a transformational event. Early on, before I got into this work, a search consultant said to me that it is a moment when things become a bit unglued, so it is also an opportunity to glue things back together in new ways. To ask – what does our community really need from us and what strategies and leadership will that require?

IM: Any key lessons you think would be valuable for other capacity builders to take from your work?

TW: The main lesson is to ask that question: capacity building to what end? Executive transition provides an opportunity for deep questioning. What does our community need from us? What do we need to be doing to be more effective in meeting those needs?

TA: We're looking for good beginnings and good endings, and managing the in-between zone. I think that's really something to stay close to, in terms of focus. If the retiring executive is conflicted, then the process is going to be a mess. And so we have to start wherever we can with trying to help the executive get internal, kind of personal clarity.

TW: And that people incorporate the concept of shared leadership. Part of what moves out of this model, I think, when we move into succession planning in particular, is getting away from the singular, heroic, even martyred leader, to a formulation of nonprofit leadership as being collaborative and shared and a real team approach, whereby if any one person steps out, the rest are prepared to carry forward with it. Not everything is tied up in one person.

IM: Are there any people, publications or ideas that particularly inform your approach?

TW: Tom made an allusion to William Bridges who talks about the human side, the psychological side, the emotional side of change.

TA: There have been so many people, foundations and organizations involved in this work. Part of what we bring forward – the stuff of innovation - is the wealth of ideas and insights they brought – this includes, of course, the Alliance Affinity Group on leadership transitions.

**Winner of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management's
Cultural Competency Award**

**Inca Mohamed interviews *Beth Applegate* of Applegate Consulting Group and
Alfredo Vergara – Lobo of Vergara-Lobo Associates**

Alfredo and Beth are interviewed as representatives of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management's Cultural Competency Initiative. The initiative, through trainings, the promotion of internal dialogue and the authoring of an upcoming book, Embracing Cultural Competency: A Roadmap for Nonprofit Capacity Builders, has spearheaded efforts to have capacity builders acknowledge that cultural identity and dynamics matter greatly in capacity building. Other members of this group are Patricia St. Onge, Vickie Asakura, Monika Moss, and Brigitte Rouson.

Inca Mohamed: What are the important points of practice in the work that you all did in cultural competence?

Alfredo Vergara-Lobo: First, I would say that this work starts with really deep questioning of the effects and artifacts of dominant culture. I would call much of the work we suggest a decentralizing effort, for lack of better term, of white identity. When you start thinking this way even about things like fundraising for instance, it is powerful. You ask how fundraising is invented by a dominant culture and what kind of metrics are created by the way it is constructed. Then you start really thinking well may be we are trying to put a square peg in a round hole? So asking the dominant norm question in every aspect of practice is important and playing the choice that to consider that as a possibility because as much as it may be a reality if a client is not ready to talk about it you are not going to force him but at least you can offer the possibility of that level of examination.

Beth Applegate: To build on what Alfredo has already said as the person who contributed to this book from a white identity I do think it is really important that in our work as capacity builders that we see our white identity as not neutral. Many of the norms that are operating at the unconscious level individually and organizationally are coming out of a white norm and so I think it is very important for those of us who are white and doing this work that we understand that our identity is not neutral.

IM: Part of you all getting this award was the way you kept the issue alive within the Alliance and as an outsider made really important contributions to the Alliance and I was wondering if both of you could talk a little bit about what was behind your commitment.

BA: There has been lot of work done within the Alliance as an organization around issues of cultural competency and we have learned a lot over a number of years from developing the training, from writing the book and from the dialog of where is the Alliance on the issue of being culturally competent.

Part of the reason that I have committed to this work through the Alliance is that I really feel that the Alliance is making an earnest and sincere effort to walk its path.

AVL: I remember going to the Alliance conferences back a number of years and not seeing myself as a member. I think there was a Latino identity in the Alliance but it was a little more East Coast-based and what that means is **different brothers and sisters who are Latinos from more of the Caribbean side of things. What you might not have seen were Mexican, Central American or Asian practitioners.** So, I sort of didn't see what I was seeing everyday in my practice here whenever I went to the conference. Cultural competence is now beginning to look like a movement within the Alliance that in some ways may be reinvention of the Alliance.

IM: What lessons do you think are most valuable for other capacity builders to take from the work that six of you undertook?

AVL: Spend more time in learning about and understanding your clients' cultural reality – look beyond the broadest interpretations to the reality. In a Latino organization here in California, for instance, you may have an executive director who is Chicana and a lot of line workers who are immigrants and those two folks have a very different reality and understanding about their cultures and their backgrounds and organizational life so the work with that organization requires digging deeper.

IM: What would you like to see as your legacy for capacity building?

AVL: In terms of capacity building cultural competence acknowledges both real-life experience and social justice as central. This is a critical understanding. The other point I would make is more specifically to my cultural background. In Latin America, the diversity typically boggles the minds of outsiders from other cultural backgrounds. Why is that important to me? Because in this country I am a Latino and that not only hinders me but also hinders people who think that way and so we need to move away from whatever hinders us so we can recognize all the different flavors, spices and faith that each cultural background makes.

IM: Are there any people, publications, ideas that particularly inform the approach that you all took, any other writers, any other models that you think influenced you all as a group and that you think people should be aware of.

AV: I have several but I will just start with Paul Kivel's "Uprooting Racism" and Paul Hawken's 'Blessed Unrest'.

BA: I agree and I am also very influenced by Tim Wise and several books, 'White Like Me' and 'Speaking Treason Fluently'. And, of course, listening to and learning from the people who are activists and social justice educators and academics and ministers and all kinds of people who are dealing with race and class and homophobia in their ongoing work has been very influential.

**Winner of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management's
Community Impact Award**

Rick Cohen's interview with *Chris Van Bergeijk* of Hawaii Community Foundation

This award is made to three foundations: The Hawaii Community Foundation, Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation, and the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation. These three have joined forces to help Hawaii nonprofits become stronger by providing them with a variety of customized consultative services aimed at a more thoughtful approach to overall capitalization needs as it is connected to their effectiveness.

Rick Cohen: The Hawaii Community Foundation, Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation and Harold K.L. Castle Foundation have won an award for community impact from the Alliance for Nonprofit Management for a program that focused on helping nonprofits with their capital structures. Can you tell us a little more about what you think were important points of practice in that work?

Chris Van Bergeijk: We were very surprised and honored by the award. I don't know a lot about why we were chosen but I would guess that it has to do with the fact that this has been an all too rare example of foundations working together to figure out what our grantees really need and then collaborating on a very focused set of activities to meet that need. The timing was important. Two of the private foundations wanted to make some real changes in their grantmaking. Where they had been focused on providing capital grants, they were looking to figure out how to support capacity building a little bit more. So I sort of raised this as, "What do you all think about bringing the Nonprofit Finance Fund in here and having them work with bunch of our grantees who have facility issues? It was a sage way for them to progress because they could still link the work to the capital frame.

The Nonprofit Finance Fund did a wonderful job of working with everyone and they made sure that the other two funders were in the loop all the time. We paid attention to everyone's portfolios in deciding upon a list of invitees. One of the foundation partners on early childhood education. They fund a lot of preschools. The other focused on a particular geographic area as well as higher education. We said you guys take those types of groups and, as the community foundation, we focused on the rest. So we just kind of puzzle pieced the group together.

Long story short, it all worked so well that we're going to start another round this fall because the feedback that we received from the grantees that have gone through the nonprofit business analysis that is the central component of this program is that it was enormously valuable. And, of course, Hawaii is a small place - word gets around really fast.

RC: I wonder if you might tell us, from your perspective, what lessons you think are most valuable for other capacity builders to take from your work?

CVB: One of the lessons I took away from it was that when you have a germ of an idea, start talking with each other early so that you can plan together versus figuring it all out in isolation and then trying to sell the idea. It's just more useful to sit down and ask potential partners to think through the problem and figure how we can seize opportunity together.

In working like this, we came up with a strategy that allowed each foundation to provide support that honored the strategic focus of that foundation.

RC: What would you most like others to see as your legacy in capacity building?

CVB: Well, we have tried always to be multifaceted and constantly adapting. When I first came to the foundation in 2000 we started the whole organizational effectiveness program from scratch but it has evolved a lot. To help it move in the right direction we are not only in constant touch with our own grantees but are constantly talking to those investigating the needs and challenges in the sector now. Those needs and challenges are different than they were 5 to 10 years ago.

But with our grantees, we never do something without trying to create some evaluative or reflection point and the better your relationship with folks the more you get both negative and positive reactions, but we also want to pay attention to what happens when the support we provide is used. The final phase of evaluation would be not just whether people like the business thinking, or even whether they take the help, put it into practice and change their behavior but it is finally, whether those changes add beneficially to the organization and the community. That is the \$64,000 question.

RC: Are there any people, publications or ideas that particularly informed your approach? What are they and what influence did they have?

CVB: Lately I have been reading a lot around education reform and have been reading Daniel Pink's book "A Whole New Mind" and Tony Wagner's "The Global Achievement Gap" which is about 21st Centuries Skills that are not being taught in our Schools and that has been influencing my thinking. I have also been tracking what Nonprofit Finance Fund does and the writings of Clara Miller. This stuff feels native to me because my life before I came to the foundation from community development lending so I am really interested in the community finance aspect.

RC: Was there anything that effected your thinking on how to get foundation to work together?

CVB: I set out last year with my only strategic goal for the program side of our foundation, to look for more opportunities for partnerships that involved funding. We can't take our dollars and give them to another foundation so they regrant them. We really needed to find places where we can ride shotgun with other funders. None of these efforts so far are large but, for instance, we are co-funding with a group called Peoples Fund that does social change grantmaking to really small groups. They tapped into the kind of community groups that we at the community foundation don't see as often. So we developed a model where we just basically come in and match their granting making. This NFF thing was another great way to put resources and people together to respond to a common set of issues we were all seeing among the groups we funded.