

## A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION *CONTINUED*

MARCH 25, 2009

### NOTES

**BLAIR DIMOCK** reported on the Ontario Trillium Foundation's interviews with 100 nonprofit leaders in Ontario. The report, "Challenges and Opportunities for Ontario's Not-for-Profit Sector during Tough Economic Times," may be found at [www.trilliumfoundation.org/cms/en/challenging\\_times.aspx](http://www.trilliumfoundation.org/cms/en/challenging_times.aspx).

**MICHELLE BALDWIN** reported on the National Critical Conversation she attended in Ottawa in January ([www.cvsrd.org/eng/sustainability-leadership/sl\\_critcon.html#panel3](http://www.cvsrd.org/eng/sustainability-leadership/sl_critcon.html#panel3)) and on action taken in London since the community's last conversation in December.

**FUNDERS PANEL**, consisting of

- Martha Powell, London Community Foundation (LCF)
- Kelly McManus, United Way of London & Middlesex (UW)
- Sheila Simpson, The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)

1. How have funders been affected by the economic situation?

- UW:
  - United Way exceeded its fundraising goal. This was a good news story; however these are not dollars but pledges, so not sure that will actually receive all the funds promised
  - Experiencing an increase in designations, so there is less money for the Community Fund
  - Investments are down
  - Don't know what the fundraising climate will be like when we launch our next campaign in September
- LCF
  - As endowment foundation have taken a hit
  - Suspended small grant program
  - Using funds for urgent needs grant – not a call for proposals; reaching out to current organizations
  - Need to develop a new model, to look at ways to attract new dollars; develop partnerships
- OTF
  - Funds come from government - \$110M for 2009.
  - They make good news stories happen for the government for not a lot of money
  - Across province application are slightly lower that last year at this time

## 2. What are funders hearing from their stakeholders?

- UW
  - 37 agencies funded this year, and we were able to maintain level of support – no increase and organizations are pleased that this has happened
  - At the same time, service levels are increasing
  - Watching increasing competition for funding
- LCF
  - Hearing concern that 2010 will be worse
  - Hearing concern from donors for the organizations they have supported
- OTF
  - Everyone wants funding for a fund developer
  - Still competing for limited amount of money
  - Organization need to be creative, collaborative
  - Important to revert to core services
- Question: Can the OTF foresee any change in grant guidelines in helping organization build core capacity rather than coming up with new programs?
  - OTF: Organizations need to become more resilient; OTF is open to finding processes that will help this to happen.

## 3. What are funders doing to respond to the situation?

- UW
  - Communication, communication, communication
  - Need to be frank with agencies about how not sure what will happen; need to plan together
  - Half of agencies came in with same funding proposals as last year
  - Regular dialogue is taking place
  - Initiated an Agencies Relations Task Force
  - Working with allocations volunteers to have strong rationale for decisions being made
- LCF
  - LCF is more long term
  - Question is what does LCF do in the meantime
  - Not business as usual
- OTF
  - Gathering information about what organizations want OTF to do
  - Future Fund introduced a few years ago
    - 1<sup>st</sup> year focus on Environment; matched small group with larger
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> year focus on Social Economy & Innovation – will be repeated in 2009
  - Looking at processes and what can be changed
  - Working towards online submissions; piloting this in Thames Valley; more streamlined

## 4. What do funders need from stakeholders and the community?

- OTF
  - Do need to hear about ways organizations can organize themselves or make changes
  - Happy to take the lead in bringing people together

- Question: Would a local or regional conversation be useful?
  - Suggestion that peer-to-peer circles would be best
  - No conclusion arrived at re. regional conversation
- LCF
  - Collaboration, shared human services initiative, more openness to these ideas
  - Funders are open to these models
  - Example of Centre for Social Innovation (Toronto) for organizations with 5 or fewer staff; in study phase for London
  - Let Pillar know about space possibilities and info can be shared
  - Thinking has shifted – past goal was for organizations to each have their own place; now: is this wise or can we share space?
- Further comments
  - OTF has a role in identifying where share opportunities exist and getting people together
  - Pillar receives 3-4 calls per month on how to start a nonprofit or charity – making sure they do market research beforehand; sometimes duplication

## 5. How can funders and nonprofits collaborate in tough economic times?

- LCF
  - Need to hear from organizations about what they need from us
- OTF
  - Think differently about who to collaborate with
  - Be open, get together, learn about each other – this can result in unexpected new connections
  - Include the corporate community
- Discussion
  - Idea of various groups needing, for example, 5 hours of staffing a week coming together to share staff
  - Need funders to help identify these opportunities
  - In some communities, a nonprofit has been created to provide administrative services
  - Let others know what services you have to share
  - Note that City is a partner in identifying space and working with organizations
  - Need to bring people from the ministry- funded groups together; they are not well-represented here
  - What other forums are there for bringing nonprofits and business together?
    - Pillar Community Innovation Awards
    - ENGAGED! London (LCF program)
    - This is an important question – we need a dialogue about strategy on engaging the corporate sector; OTF interested in helping to pursue this.

## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

- Need to provide services for basic needs
- Focus on messaging of core mission statements
- Need for services is increasing

- Organizations are looking for ways to diversify funding base
  - The more diverse the sources, the better to hold steady
- Look to leaders (Pillar, foundations) to assist with connectivity and communication
- Difficulty in finding support from the corporate sector
  - Need to fill gaps between for- and not-for-profits
  - Where do we start?
    - More conversation & communication between nonprofit and business
- Organizations worry about what's coming
- Think about what resources are you using to get resources; what gives the most bang for the buck
- Useful to develop volunteer database of baby boomers retiring and with special skills
- Be more creative with roles of volunteers to fill gaps in staffing
  - Pointed out that this is not acceptable in some organizations
- Use technology in creative way to find volunteers
- Treat volunteers with the same respect as staff: training, recognition, engagement
- Look at unions for volunteers
- Reassess skills available amongst volunteer and staff and what they're willing to do – flexibility
  - Develop skills inventory
- Connect with
  - LAVA, London and Area Association for Volunteer Administration, <http://www.londonava.com>
  - LRFRE, London & Region Fund Raising Executives, <http://www.lrfre.on.ca>
  - IABC, International Association of Business Communicators, <http://london.iabc.com>
  - HRPLD, Human Resources Professionals London & District, <http://www.hrpld.ca>

