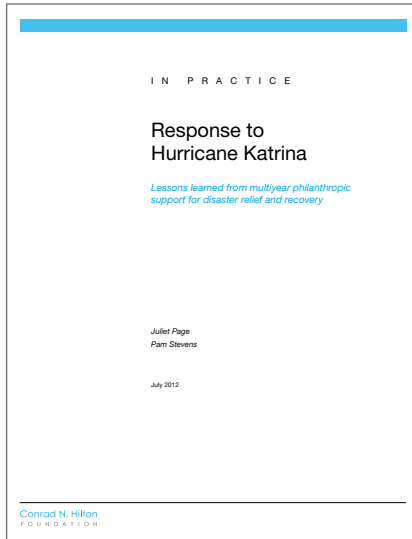


This is a summary of the full In Practice report:



Read the full report at
www.hiltonfoundation.org

Key Findings

Inherent Challenges

- Substandard social services prior to Hurricane Katrina
- Size and scope of the disaster
- Underlying vulnerabilities are intensified by disasters
- Failures of government response at multiple levels

Keys to Success

- Staying true to the organization's core values
- Focusing on solutions to underlying vulnerabilities
- Dividing response into relief and recovery phases
- Respecting the lead and timelines of affected communities
- Developing mutually clear and realistic expectations for evaluating and reporting
- Engaging more informed, and local, people to provide information and suggestions

Response to Hurricane Katrina

This paper is an in-depth analysis of how the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation went about making its funding decisions after Hurricane Katrina and a reflection on the Foundation's experience working with partners in New Orleans.

In 2005, the Hilton Foundation responded immediately to Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast, and to the effects of the related levee breaks in New Orleans. Just prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Foundation had been developing new guidelines that direct funding toward disaster preparedness and long-term recovery, as well as immediate relief. Funding for support of immediate relief and longer-term recovery efforts in New Orleans totaled more than \$11 million over six years.

The success of Hilton Foundation grantee work in New Orleans can be attributed to a number of principles and best practices, including transparency, knowledge, respect, and cooperation and coordination. (For more on these practices, see "Philanthropic Grantmaking for Disasters: Lessons learned at the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation" [2012] by Dr. William Paton.)

Additional Success Factors

Soon after Katrina, the Hilton Foundation adopted a sort of internal "matching" policy for its grantmaking. For every dollar awarded immediately for disaster relief, roughly the same amount would be set aside for future grants that addressed needs related to recovery. Six million dollars in grants was awarded to support the immediate work of national first responders and to assist a local community foundation, and an additional \$5 million was committed to support longer-term recovery efforts.

As part of this recovery, the Foundation made it a priority to improve, rather than simply restore, the ineffective systems that contributed to a cycle of poverty. This increased the likelihood that those in need would have access to better social services relatively soon after returning to the city. The Hilton Foundation also recognized that it needed to engage more knowledgeable people to provide information and suggestions.

The Hilton Foundation made a concerted effort to be present at critical meetings of funders, listened closely to grantees, and stayed engaged in the work along the way.

In 2007, at the conclusion of its relief grants, the Foundation sought opportunities to address the core human service needs of housing, high-quality childcare, and small enterprise development. These grants had several shared characteristics: each provided substantial amounts of funding for grantee organizations over multiple years, each aimed to influence public policy or systems, and each sought to strengthen grantee capacity in some critical way. Finally, grantees were able to use the grants to match or leverage additional funding from other national foundations seeking to bring about recovery in New Orleans.

Timing for a dual relief and recovery rollout also played a central part in the success of the grants. The Foundation made relief grants to established, trusted first responders and then consistently demonstrated a willingness to support the New Orleans nonprofit sector for long-term recovery. Its respect and flexibility in working with its grantees and its willingness to make nontraditional grants, resulted in a remarkably candid dialogue with grantees and, ultimately, in better results.

In future disaster response scenarios, the Hilton Foundation might do well to engage peers earlier in the process in an effort to coordinate its grantmaking and share knowledge. It would also do well to define recovery as including activities that reduce disaster risk. By conceiving of risk reduction as an aspect of disaster recovery, the Foundation would be positioned to take full advantage of its evolving networks and the opportunities to reduce the vulnerability of likely victims in future disasters.

Nevertheless, the Hilton Foundation's work in New Orleans to date has demonstrated that prudent use of philanthropic dollars can not only serve immediate needs following a disaster, but also improve government systems and leverage public dollars in the long term.