



I N P R A C T I C E

Response to Hurricane Katrina

*Lessons learned from multiyear philanthropic
support for disaster relief and recovery*

*Juliet Page
Pam Stevens*

July 2012

Foreword

When Hurricane Katrina landed in 2005, devastating the Gulf Coast and overwhelming the levees in New Orleans, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation had the opportunity to implement our updated strategy for disaster relief and recovery. In addition to immediate relief needs, we committed to addressing the often-neglected medium- and long-term recovery needs of communities impacted by the disaster, as well as supporting preparedness initiatives.

The Katrina disaster laid bare the underlying vulnerabilities of many people, and many individuals and organizations responded by providing philanthropic support for relief and recovery. The Hilton Foundation's post-Katrina grantmaking—more than \$11 million in three separate grantmaking actions—is unusual for its size and its focus on near-term and longer-term recovery in addition to short-term relief.

Here at the Foundation, we're proud of our grantees' success in responding to the disaster in New Orleans. Credit is due to a combination of high-performing grantees and the instincts of the Foundation's trustees and staff, as well as the serendipity of events in New Orleans. This paper endeavors to outline elements of success and establish a shared narrative for the Foundation and our partners.

Many thanks are due to the two authors of this paper: Juliet Page and Pam Stevens. Both have been deeply involved in post-Katrina grantmaking and recovery in New Orleans, and bring their experience and vast knowledge to bear in the following pages. We trust that their insights will serve to advance the conversation on how the nonprofit sector can best provide relief and recovery after disaster strikes.



Steven M. Hilton
Chairman, President & CEO, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
July 2012

Contents

Introduction	4
Disaster Relief Success Factors	6
Limiting Relief Dollars	7
Identifying Local Partners and Landscape Scanning	8
Identifying Opportunities to Transform Systems	9
Balancing Camaraderie and Discretion with Grantees	12
Lessons from the Katrina Response	13
Afterword.....	15

About the Authors

Juliet Page is a Madison, Wisconsin-based philanthropy consultant for grantseeking nonprofit organizations and private foundations. Page came to Madison from New Orleans, where she directed fundraising efforts for the Greater New Orleans Foundation's \$25 million Community Revitalization Program, a fund for affordable and ecologically and historically appropriate housing composed of grants from local and national foundations. She also served as an external advisor to The Rockefeller Foundation for its Rebuilding New Orleans Initiative. Prior to her post-Katrina work in New Orleans, she was director of development for Friends of the High Line, a project to create a public promenade atop a defunct elevated rail line on Manhattan's West Side. She has a Bachelor of Arts from Pitzer College.

Pam Stevens moved to New Orleans in 2007 after more than 14 years as a national grantmaker in youth development and education. Since that time, she has worked with the Grantmakers for Education, Greater New Orleans Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, and New Orleans nonprofits to build more positive communities for families and youth. Stevens is a board member for Kids ReThink New Orleans Schools, a social justice program for middle school students. She was the former executive director of philanthropic programs at Time Warner Inc. in New York where she led the company's giving to afterschool programs, youth media, and education. She has also been a grantmaker at The Wallace Foundation and The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. Stevens was a board member of Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families, Partnership for Active Civic Engagement, and Corporate Voices for Working Families. Stevens started her career as a social worker in Louisiana and Texas and has a Master of Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin.

About the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

The **Conrad N. Hilton Foundation** was created in 1944 by international business pioneer Conrad N. Hilton, who founded Hilton Hotels and left his fortune to help the world's disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The Foundation currently conducts strategic initiatives in six priority areas: providing safe water, ending chronic homelessness, preventing substance abuse, helping children affected by HIV/AIDS, supporting transition-age youth in foster care, and extending Conrad Hilton's support for the work of Catholic Sisters. Following selection by an independent international jury, the Foundation annually awards the \$1.5 million Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize to a nonprofit organization doing extraordinary work to reduce human suffering. From inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$1 billion in grants, distributing \$82 million in 2011. The Foundation's current assets are approximately \$2 billion. For more information, please visit hiltonfoundation.org.

About In Practice

In Practice is a series of knowledge papers published by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. It reports on Foundation program strategies and partnerships, and seeks to help inform the practice of other funders and policymakers working in areas of great human need.

Throughout the Gulf Coast, the natural disaster wrought flooding via 30-foot storm surges in coastal communities, massive acreage loss of forestry and wetlands, power outages to 1.7 million people, and disrupted travel and energy production for the nation.

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall just south of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, in the rural coastal town of Buras, Louisiana. The storm produced winds near 125 mph, making it a Category 3 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale.¹ Throughout the Gulf Coast, the natural disaster wrought flooding via 30-foot storm surges in coastal communities, massive acreage loss of forestry and wetlands, power outages to 1.7 million people, and disrupted travel and energy production for the nation.²

In New Orleans, the storm itself was weaker but overwhelmed a faulty earthen levee system, which failed during the storm, leaving 80 percent of the city flooded by as much as 20 feet of water and damaging 134,000 homes.³ Although estimates of the dead across all states range as high as 2,500 (1,836 were documented), an actual death toll is unknown and will never include deaths from causes that were aggravated by evacuation stress or deaths by suicide in the aftermath.⁴ A majority of the dead were from or died in New Orleans, where many residents, lacking access to private or public transportation, were not able to or chose not to evacuate. The mean age of the dead was 69.⁵ The storm displaced more than one million people in the Gulf Coast region. Many people returned home within days, but up to 600,000 households were still displaced a month later. At their peak, hurricane evacuee shelters housed 273,000 people and, later, FEMA trailers housed at least 114,000 households.⁶

Humanitarian relief was not immediate. In the days and weeks following the storm and levee failures, 30,000 people sought refuge in the Superdome, a football stadium that was not designed for such use;⁷ thousands were stranded in their homes or on rooftops; and incarcerated or institutionalized individuals were remanded or dispersed without record or representation.

Although the deadliest hurricane to make U.S. landfall remains that which devastated Galveston and killed 6,000 people in 1906, Hurricane Katrina is the nation's costliest in dollar terms at potentially \$125 billion and the largest in terms of affected landmass.⁸

Introduction

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation seeks to improve the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people throughout the world. One of its grantmaking priorities is disaster relief, recovery, and risk reduction.

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. The initial grants—largely for traditional disaster relief—would later prove to be the first phase of a multiyear strategy totaling more than \$11 million over six years to support longer-term recovery efforts in New Orleans.

The Hilton Foundation has long had a mandate from its leadership to respond to major disasters that result in human suffering.

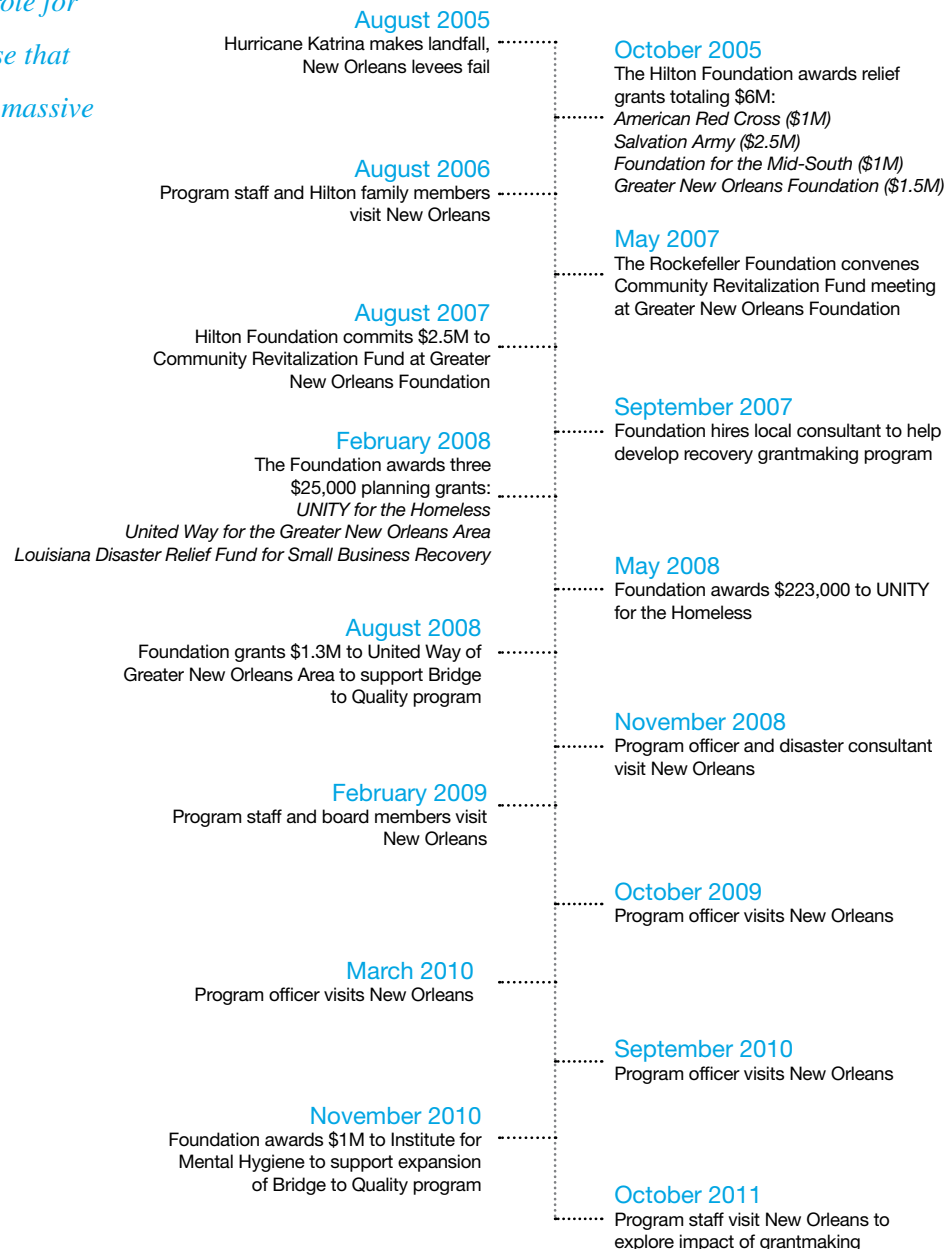
This paper endeavors to share with peer funders and other stakeholders the Foundation's thoughts on factors contributing to high-performing grants and grantees in New Orleans. The paper is not an overall review of the Foundation's track record in disaster-related humanitarian assistance—such a review was completed by Dr. William Paton in March 2012—nor is it a description of its evolving disaster grantmaking.⁹ It is an in-depth analysis of how the Hilton Foundation went about making its funding decisions after Katrina and a reflection on the Foundation's experience working with partners in New Orleans. It is a product of multiple interviews with program staff and grantees, review of proposals, reports, and internal memoranda, and iterative discussions between the authors and the lead program officer.

Although the Hilton family has a history in New Orleans related to the hotel industry, the Hilton Foundation's pre-Katrina grantmaking in the city was not part of a larger Foundation strategy. The grants went primarily to the city's esteemed colleges and universities—including its historically black colleges—and to the Archdiocese for the restoration of St. Louis Cathedral, although they were not detectably leveraged for effecting broader change or influencing public policy.

The Hilton Foundation has long had a mandate from its leadership to respond to major disasters that result in human suffering. Traditionally, swift grants were made to support emergency relief efforts. Just prior to the New Orleans levee failures, however, the Hilton Foundation had been developing new guidelines that direct funding toward disaster preparedness and long-term recovery, as well as immediate relief.

The Hilton Foundation challenged itself to be current in best practice and to identify a unique role for philanthropy in a response that would ultimately include massive federal and state aid.

The failure of government systems to adequately deal with the fallout of the hurricane exposed the underlying vulnerability of several populations and resulted in large-scale human suffering on American soil. The Hilton Foundation challenged itself to be current in best practice and to identify a unique role for philanthropy in a response that would ultimately include massive federal and state aid. The natural sympathy and visceral emotion that Hilton family members brought to the New Orleans work was also an inspiration to staff, who were motivated to honor the compassion of Foundation leaders with a deliberate strategy that extended beyond relief to support the recovery of New Orleans.



Disaster Relief Success Factors

In the years following the launch of its post-Katrina grantmaking strategy, the Hilton Foundation has witnessed impressive achievements. Grantees in New Orleans have influenced public policy affecting some of the Foundation's key interest demographics—vulnerable children and the homeless—and were able to direct a portion of public funding for recovery to policy reform. The success of the Hilton Foundation's work in New Orleans can be attributed to its adherence to a number of principles and best practices identified, among other places, in "Philanthropic Grantmaking for Disasters: Lessons learned at the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation" (2012) by Dr. William Paton.¹⁰ These include:

Throughout its work in New Orleans, the Hilton Foundation maintained a consistent, if implicit, focus on the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community.

Transparency

Be truthful to your mission, vision, and competencies. Throughout its work in New Orleans, the Hilton Foundation maintained a consistent, if implicit, focus on the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community.

Knowledge

Research and understand the context for your philanthropy, using existing expertise. Listen carefully to your partners to respond to their needs, including by adjusting your own. The Hilton Foundation used programmatic expertise and networks to identify trusted local partners.

Respect

Respect cultural difference and diversity, and local knowledge and accomplishments. Be modest about what you know and can accomplish. Build long-term relationships with your partners, thus understanding and trust. Be reasonable in your requirements from your grantees, proportionate to your support, and mindful of their capacity. The Hilton Foundation was consistently present, flexible, and accommodating with grantees beyond its traditional grantmaking parameters.

Cooperation and Coordination

Recognize that disaster relief and recovery calls for strong collaboration among funders and with many other actors, to maximize synergies and creativity. Ensure timely funding and ensure that funding in high profile crises is not at the expense of "forgotten" ones. The Hilton Foundation worked in concert with other funders and recognized the need for the strategic use of Foundation funds despite pressing relief needs.

The Hilton Foundation's experience in New Orleans also facilitated discoveries that will no doubt prove important in shaping its future disaster response strategies.

The Hilton Foundation adopted a sort of internal “matching” policy for its grantmaking in response to this disaster.

Limiting Relief Dollars

The mandate of Conrad N. Hilton to “relieve the suffering, the distressed and the destitute” demanded an immediate response from the Foundation. At the same time, the Foundation’s assessment that longstanding poverty (rather than the collapse of physical infrastructure or natural misfortune) was responsible for much of the human suffering demanded longer-term investments to address the underlying vulnerability of so many New Orleanians. Balancing these two competing demands, within one week of the disaster the Hilton Foundation adopted a sort of internal “matching” policy for its grantmaking in response to this disaster: 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.

The matching policy for relief and recovery implicitly acknowledged that the vulnerability due to poverty had been aggravated by the total collapse of government systems and surfaced the Foundation’s core value that the very poor, in any disaster or crisis requiring relief, are not complicit in their own suffering and deserve to have their basic needs met and be treated with dignity. By committing itself to the development of a recovery strategy, the Hilton Foundation signaled its willingness to serve as an advocate for changing the ineffective systems responsible for keeping generations entrenched in poverty and vulnerable to disaster.

Six million dollars in grants was awarded to support the immediate work of national first-responders and to assist a local community foundation to restore the nonprofit social service sector in the affected areas. The Foundation provided¹¹:

- \$2.5 million to the Salvation Army for short- and long-term relief and recovery
- \$1 million to the American Red Cross for short-term relief activities
- \$1.5 million to the Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) to target the long-term needs of the New Orleans community—GNOF was housed at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation for a short period
- \$1 million to the Foundation for the Mid-South, specifically for rebuilding the nonprofit social service sector in the Gulf Coast

Because of the scale of the relief efforts of both the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross, there was some frustration among Foundation staff when it came time to assess the impact of the specific grants awarded by the Hilton Foundation to these organizations. Grant reports offered only broad descriptions of the overall response without any reflection on lessons learned. In some cases, funds were not spent in the expected timeframe or were allocated to general operating support and other organizational efforts not related to the Hurricane Katrina response. By its own admission, the Hilton Foundation could have communicated its expectations more clearly, and future correspondence and grant agreements were drafted with a keener eye for aligning expectations.

Defining recovery holistically, the Hilton Foundation made it a priority to build back and improve the substandard social services available before the disaster and to increase the likelihood that those in poverty would have better services in place.

In addition to this \$6 million in grants, the Hilton Foundation notionally committed an additional \$5 million—to be awarded at some point in the future—to support longer-term recovery efforts that demanded the extensive deliberation that the quick action on relief grants lacked. Rather than being a contradiction, the immediate relief strategy bought time and options while satisfying the board’s charitable impulse.

Defining recovery holistically, the Hilton Foundation made it a priority to build back and improve the substandard social services available before the disaster and to increase the likelihood that those in poverty would have better services in place relatively soon after returning to the city. The result was that even while the Hilton Foundation was making an early commitment to emergency supports such as those provided in initial grants to the American Red Cross and Salvation Army, it was quickly mobilizing a search for longer-term strategies. Those longer-term strategies would include two initial grants to community foundations in the region—the Greater New Orleans Foundation and the Foundation for the Mid-South. In both cases, the grants were made to support recovery as defined by those with local expertise rather than based on a definition imposed by the Foundation.

By pushing for a dual relief-recovery mix, the Foundation was able to make resources available while the definition of recovery was evolving. The decision not to define recovery empowered grantees to define it for their own communities and on timelines that were informed by the reality of complex rebuilding efforts.

Identifying Local Partners and Landscape Scanning

Between the complicated nature of the domestic disaster, media coverage with a remarkably focused lens on potential and real corruption, and the geographic distance of the Foundation from the disaster zone, it seemed logical for the Foundation to identify trusted national and local partners to help inform its recovery grantmaking. While some of its trustees had prior experience with supporting organizations in New Orleans, other trustees and staff were quick to acknowledge that the Foundation’s knowledge of the city was insufficient in this situation. The Hilton Foundation recognized that every community has insider/outsider dynamics and, good as its intentions were, it needed to engage more knowledgeable people to provide information and suggestions. In the 18 months following the levee failures, staff:

- Conducted a thorough landscape scan of past grantees. By initiating contact, the Hilton Foundation was able to temper expectations and obtain accurate status updates from past grantees.
- Visited New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast.
- Met with Grantmakers for Children, Youth & Families (GCYF) colleagues, who helped identify needs of the region’s most vulnerable residents. Participation by Hilton Foundation trustees and staff in this affinity group resulted in professional

Through these practices, it became clear to Foundation staff that New Orleans' neediest residents were experiencing staggering increases in rates of homelessness and family dissolution.

connections and networks that supported the Foundation's interest in this emergency situation. This connection came at a relatively minimal cost considering the resulting benefit.

- Identified a knowledgeable colleague in a commensurately sized foundation doing work in the region. The relatively equal footing allowed for a candid dialogue.
- Engaged a senior local consultant with experience in the Hilton Foundation's traditional domain of basic human services.
- Responded compassionately but clearly to multiple funding inquiries that were not ultimately appropriate for consideration.
- Routinely deliberated with senior leadership within the Foundation without letting the high-profile nature of the disaster work detract from other funding priorities.

Through these practices, it became clear to Foundation staff that New Orleans' neediest residents were experiencing staggering increases in rates of homelessness and family dissolution. With the confidence borne of a thorough assessment of needs, the Hilton Foundation was poised to develop its recovery grantmaking plans.

Identifying Opportunities to Transform Systems

Made plain by the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was an underlying vulnerability of poor people in New Orleans. The Hilton Foundation recognized that the baseline of social safety net programs, driven either by government policy or by other charitable services, was simply lower in New Orleans than the Foundation anticipated.

In 2007, at the conclusion of the 2005–2006 relief grants, the Hilton Foundation decided to seek opportunities to address the core human service needs with which Hilton staff and trustees were familiar: housing, high-quality childcare and small enterprise development.

By having a flexible timeline and working closely with a local consultant, the Hilton Foundation was able to identify two high-performing indigenous organizations working in homelessness and childcare—two fields with pre-disaster challenges and complex relationships to government funding sources. The Hilton Foundation further capitalized a fund for affordable housing at a community foundation; this community foundation's recovery grantmaking was supervised and executed by a seasoned community development professional hired by The Rockefeller Foundation. Finally, the Hilton Foundation supported an organization focused on small business recovery statewide.

The Hilton Foundation decided to seek opportunities to address the core human service needs with which Hilton staff and trustees were familiar: housing, high-quality childcare and small enterprise development.

All four areas presented terrific opportunities for philanthropic dollars to reform underperforming systems. On the advice of local counsel, the Hilton Foundation allowed for a lengthier-than-normal timeline for proposal development. Grantees appreciated the invitation to “ask for what you really need” and to work with a program officer as “a partner, not a police officer.” The Foundation decided to make \$25,000 planning grants that allowed the two organizations that received these grants the time and money to develop thoughtful program proposals that were later approved for funding.¹² In addition, a grant was made to the local community foundation in New Orleans.

Bridge to Quality Program

The Foundation granted \$25,000 for planning and then \$1.3 million to the Greater New Orleans Rebuild Child Care Collaborative to support the Bridge to Quality Program¹³, designed to help rebuild quality childcare facilities that met requirements for the 2007 School Readiness tax incentives. Bridge to Quality, later credited with the reinvention of publicly subsidized childcare, has since received an additional \$1 million in funding from the Hilton Foundation.

The Bridge to Quality Program was designed to leverage public dollars made available in 2008 when Louisiana became only the 15th state to establish a system for rating the quality of care provided at childcare centers on a scale of zero to five. This rating system works in conjunction with a package of tax credits for for-profit childcare centers. Indications are that the grants increased the quality of care provided at centers serving large numbers of disadvantaged children.

Although many childcare centers have been slow to adopt the changes, the incremental improvements are inspiring. Quality childcare is one of the most effective ways to improve school performance and thereby to increase high school graduation rates, job performance, and adult productivity. Some findings also suggest that the benefits of high-quality childcare are even greater for disadvantaged children.

UNITY of Greater New Orleans

The Foundation granted \$25,000 for planning and then \$223,000 to UNITY of Greater New Orleans, a collaborative that provides housing and multiple services for people experiencing homelessness. The grant was used for capacity building, including expansion of fundraising and public communications around the need to include permanent supportive housing in plans for rebuilding the city. A long-range development plan and a schedule for donor communications were established.

Evidence suggests that the support of the Hilton Foundation allowed UNITY to build a solid infrastructure for long-term resource-building and to increase its self-generated capacity to reduce the homelessness threatening New Orleans’ recovery. During the larger grant period, UNITY’s grant revenue increased 20 percent and contributions increased

by 30 percent, while the portion of revenue from federal sources has gone down seven percent—documenting a diversification of UNITY’s funding base while increasing overall funding. Anecdotally, the Foundation understands that public consciousness has been raised around the rights of very poor people to return to New Orleans, and ideally to better conditions.

Anecdotally, the Foundation understands that public consciousness has been raised around the rights of very poor people to return to New Orleans, and ideally to better conditions.

Greater New Orleans Foundation

The Foundation granted \$2.5 million to the Community Revitalization Fund (CR Fund) at the Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) to strengthen the affordable housing sector in New Orleans, increase housing production, promote smart growth principles and build the grantee’s ability to respond to future challenges. With 134,000 housing units damaged in the disaster and an underperforming affordable housing production system before the storm, GNOF has been able to make grants that have been transformative for the city.

In its first three years, the CR Fund awarded 52 grants totaling \$17 million to local nonprofit, government and advocacy groups to support the rehabilitation and creation of affordable housing for 8,500 families in Orleans Parish. Additionally, the creation of a major funding stream and the participation of seasoned national funders—the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation and The Kresge Foundation were, among others, contributors to the CR Fund—have strengthened the community foundation’s ability to engage government and other civic leadership. The ascendancy of philanthropy’s expertise, informed by experience in other cities with similar community development challenges, has been a notable and positive ancillary outcome to the grant.

Grants to these three programs, while in disparate fields of childcare, homelessness and housing, had several shared characteristics: they provided substantial amounts of funding for each organization over multiple years; each aimed to influence public policy or systems; and each ultimately sought to strengthen the grantee’s capacity in some critical way. Finally, each of the grantees was able to use the grants to match or leverage additional grants from other national foundations seeking to bring about recovery in New Orleans.

The Foundation understood that participating in the New Orleans recovery would not fit neatly into its usual time frames or existing portfolios.

Balancing Camaraderie and Discretion with Grantees

When envisioning and executing its scope of work in the region, the Hilton Foundation made every effort to be present at critical meetings of funders, listened closely to grantees and stayed engaged in the work along the way—not just at granting or reporting deadlines. Even with its strong camaraderie with grantees, it did not announce or discuss an exit strategy or the Foundation’s budget limitations for the project. The discretion regarding the internal decision-making processes at the Foundation served two purposes: it placed individual trustees and staff “above the fray” from inappropriate appeals and it obviated a forum for attempting to influence the Foundation’s agenda. These decisions were reinforced by the experiences of some peer funders where announcing exit strategies and budgets only served to increase unproductive competition among grantees.

The Foundation understood that participating in the New Orleans recovery would not fit neatly into its usual time frames or existing portfolios. In contrast to some peer funders, the Hilton Foundation assigned a single staff person at all times to its New Orleans work. This served to make it easier for nonprofits to navigate the Foundation’s interests. It also meant calling on staff to incorporate trustees’ expertise and time in ways that differed from their usual involvement.

Lessons from the Katrina Response

The multiple stages of relief and recovery are clearer in retrospect—and only now is the Hilton Foundation able to see when the most rewarding and measurable effects of philanthropy occurred. The Foundation's experiences and conclusions may help to inform future disaster response.

The Foundation's 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.

Stay True to the Organization's Core Values

In the stressed setting of this disaster, all decisions concerning relief and recovery emanated from Hilton Foundation core values, which were in evidence throughout the multiyear recovery process and remained consistent across the staff.

Focus on Providing Solutions to Underlying Vulnerabilities

Its strategy to focus on key underlying vulnerabilities, combined with the diligence of both its trustees and staff, were hallmarks of its response. By making grants in areas where government was inadequate even prior to the disaster, the Hilton Foundation sought to take on some of the city's most intractable issues—affordable housing production, housing for the homeless, and high-quality childcare for working parents.

Divide the Response into Distinct Relief and Recovery Phases

Judicious and propitious timing for a dual relief and recovery rollout also played a central part in the success of the grants. The Foundation's emphasis on working with empirical knowledge did not preclude immediate response—it made grants to established, trusted first responders because it could not conduct its usual process of looking for and analyzing information before fashioning a response.

Respect the Lead and Timelines of Affected Communities, and Be Willing to Make Nontraditional Grants

Despite a desperate situation in a complex post-disaster setting, the Hilton Foundation maintained equanimity and did not act desperately. It did not want to wait until recovery was well under way before trying to support the New Orleans nonprofit sector. Instead, it bought time by making relief grants and then consistently demonstrated a willingness to listen and wait. 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.

The Hilton Foundation believes that its faith in the community and deference to local partners have contributed to the effectiveness of its recovery grantmaking in New Orleans.

Develop Mutually Clear and Realistic Expectations for Evaluation and Reporting

Emergency relief efforts are difficult to measure and track, given the nature and pace of the work, and the wide range of funders involved. In its response to Hurricane Katrina, the Hilton Foundation learned that emergency relief grantees have a different capacity for monitoring and reporting the use of specific funds. Proactive conversations from the initial stages are essential to clarifying mutual expectations and defining feasible requirements for time frames, reporting, and funding allocations.

Engage More Knowledgeable, and Local, People to Provide Information and Suggestions

The Hilton Foundation believes that its faith in the community and deference to local partners have contributed to the effectiveness of its recovery grantmaking in New Orleans. Although race and class relations pose obvious challenges to a holistic recovery for New Orleans, the ultimate beneficiaries of the grants awarded by the Hilton Foundation appear to be reflective of the region's real demographics. At the same time, the Foundation realized that the organizations with which it partnered were often led by white people, and it missed an opportunity to engage the city's black leadership in a more direct and intentional way.

Afterword

For all of philanthropy, there is a story coming out of New Orleans that will influence the field for a long time. For the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, its lessons connect most firmly to a very intentional strategy dividing its response into relief and recovery phases and in respecting the lead and timelines of the affected community. Successes in the first and second phases of the Foundation's response were attributed to the combination of the values of the Foundation, the staff's competence in identifying effective grantees, a genuine affection for the city, and a little luck.

For the Hilton Foundation, its lessons connect most firmly to a very intentional strategy dividing its response into relief and recovery phases and in respecting the lead and timelines of the affected community.

In future disaster response scenarios, the Hilton Foundation would do well to consider engaging peers earlier in the process in an effort to coordinate its grantmaking and share knowledge. It would also do well to define "recovery" more holistically as including activities that encourage and facilitate necessary adjustments to reduce disaster risk. This would bring the Foundation into alignment with the definition used by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2004) and adopted in the report of the International Evaluation Group of the World Bank (2006). By conceiving of risk reduction as an aspect of disaster recovery, the Hilton 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.

These opportunities often only present themselves after sustained engagement with local partners over the course of the recovery effort. As of now, it is difficult for the Hilton Foundation to justify continued investment in New Orleans along these lines, given that risk reduction was not an explicit part of the original grantmaking plan.

Nevertheless, the Hilton Foundation's work in New Orleans to date has demonstrated that prudent use of philanthropic dollars can in fact improve government systems and leverage public dollars, and there are two attractive opportunities for other foundations with interests in the region to invest intentionally in advocacy and public policy work.

Opportunity one: If New Orleans is to attract and maintain a diversified workforce that includes young families, it must continue to increase capacity for quality childcare and education. Grants from the Hilton Foundation have helped build childcare resources, advocate for higher-quality care, and encourage a new funding mechanism from the state to support this high quality. The Hilton Foundation is especially grateful that the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is helping to support the ongoing development of Bridge to Quality. Continued advocacy is required, however, to ensure that the state of Louisiana continues to support the tax incentive package that is crucial to the sustainability of the quality improvements enabled by Bridge to Quality. Although the project no longer fits well within any of the Hilton Foundation's grantmaking priorities, there is an opportunity for the Hilton Foundation to exercise its power as a convener and use other tools beyond grantmaking to ensure that other funders who are focused on early childhood education in Louisiana will recognize the importance of supporting such advocacy efforts.

Philanthropic organizations can leverage their credibility and knowledge to influence the use of public funding for addressing relief, recovery, and enduring changes to policy.

Opportunity two: As evidenced by the Foundation's response to Hurricane Katrina, philanthropic organizations can leverage their credibility and knowledge to influence the use of public funding for addressing relief, recovery, and enduring changes to policy. These principles of holistic response can be applied to other disasters. For example, the Deepwater Horizon Offshore Drilling Unit—under lease to British Petroleum (BP)—exploded on April 20, 2010, and resulted in a massive offshore oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. It is one of the most damaging environmental disasters in U.S. history. A \$20 billion fund has been established to compensate victims of the oil spill; claims by states and federal fines will be excluded from the fund and paid separately, potentially adding an additional \$20 billion or more into the mix. There is a tremendous opportunity for philanthropy to influence the way in which this stunning amount of public dollars is ultimately used.

Endnotes

- ¹ <http://www.katrina.noaa.gov>
- ² <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/special-reports/katrina.html>
- ³ <http://www.gnocdc.org/Factsforfeatures/HurricaneKatrinaImpact/index.html>
- ⁴ <http://www.katrinelist.columbia.edu>
- ⁵ http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/katrina/deceasedreports/KatrinaDeaths_082008.pdf
- ⁶ <http://www.gnocdc.org/Factsforfeatures/HurricaneKatrinaImpact/index.html>
- ⁷ <http://superdome.com/uploads/SUPERDOMEMEDIKIT81011final.pdf>
- ⁸ <http://www.katrina.noaa.gov>
- ⁹ http://hiltonfoundation.org/images/stories/Downloads/In_Practice_Philanthropic_Grantmaking_for_Disaster_2011.pdf
- ¹⁰ See especially the discussion of principles, best practices and codes of conduct for donors (pp. 10-14) and the Best Practice Checklist for private foundations making grants in disasters (pp.28-29). http://hiltonfoundation.org/images/stories/Downloads/In_Practice_Philanthropic_Grantmaking_for_Disaster_2011.pdf
- ¹¹ On a parallel track, in 2006, the Ursuline Academy secured a \$1 million grant for the restoration of its campus from the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters.
- ¹² The Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation (now named the Foundation for Louisiana) also received a \$25,000 planning grant but ultimately chose not to submit a proposal for small enterprise development work.
- ¹³ The United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area was the initial grantee for the Bridge to Quality before the project became permanently hosted by the Institute for Mental Hygiene.