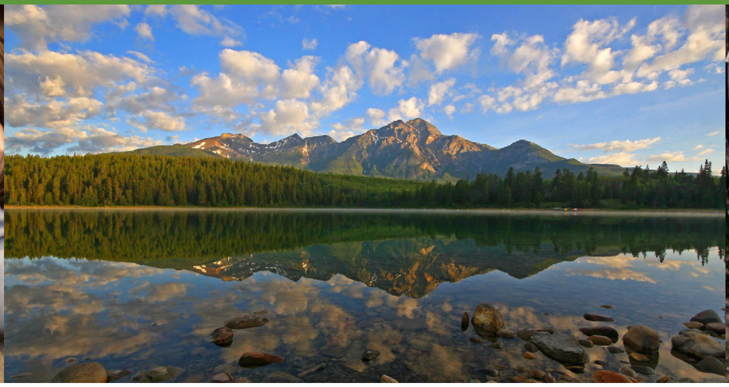
Tracking Progress:

Setting, Collecting, and Reflecting on Implementation Markers

JULY 2018


Outcome-Focused Philanthropy Guide

WILLIAM + FLORA
Hewlett
Foundation

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About the Foundation

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OVERVIEW

Tracking Progress Is Part of Outcome-Focused Philanthropy

Outcome-Focused Philanthropy (OFP) is a framework that guides how we do our philanthropic work, from start to finish. It reflects the foundation's commitments to being rigorous, flexible, adaptive, transparent, and open while staying focused on results and actively learning at every juncture.

OFP reflects our belief in the value of having a foundationwide framework for approaching philanthropic strategy, not least for the shared culture and sense of purpose it fosters. OFP guidance provides practical support for staff members as they work across the life cycle of a philanthropic strategy.

We have organized the OFP strategy life cycle into four stages: *(1)* origination, *(2)* implementation, *(3)* refresh, and *(4)* exit.

Outcome-Focused Philanthropy Terms

GOAL
a general statement of what we want to achieve; our aspiration for the work.

OUTCOME
a specific change we hope to see in furtherance of the goal.

IMPLEMENTATION MARKER
a catchall term referring to particular activities, developments, or events (internal or external) that are useful to track as measures of progress in furtherance of our outcomes and goal.

Each stage reflects the importance of tracking progress and learning along the way.

During strategy **origination**, the OFP Guiding Questions ask not only about goals and outcomes, but they also ask, "What implementation markers will you use to track progress, learn, and consider course corrections?"

As part of strategy **implementation**—as well as during the president's annual strategy update and learning memo process—staff also address the following:

- Have you further specified your outcomes or implementation markers since the strategy was launched or refreshed? If not, why—and when do you anticipate doing so?
- What were your anticipated outcomes and key implementation markers for the past year?
- How did you do against them, and why?
- Are you and your grantees able to collect useful data to track progress and to learn? Are you collaborating with grantees as needed to develop efficient, reliable, and useful data collection tools and systems? If not, why not?

- What refinements or course corrections, if any, are you considering making to your outcomes and implementation markers as a result of everything you have learned to date?

- What are your anticipated outcomes and key implementation markers for next year?

A major part of strategy refresh is also assessing progress to date: answering questions such as *"What are your intended outcomes and implementation markers, and what progress have you made toward them? What have been your key successes and misses?"* among others.

As you can see, tracking progress through implementation markers is emphasized throughout the OFP strategy life cycle. This specific guide for tracking progress is a deeper dive into implementation markers—what they are and how to set, collect, reflect on and use them.

Why Track Progress

If strategy is a road map, our goals and long-term outcomes are the destinations. Once we know where we are going, we need to know if we are getting closer to or farther from our desired destination. To help us do this, staff set implementation markers. Think of implementation markers as the milestones and signposts on our road map. They tell us where we are on the journey, and if we have gone off course. Implementation markers can also be like warning signs for construction—letting us know we need to take a different route because there are roadblocks ahead.

Driving is a linear process. It has a clear starting point, a clear ending point, and a variety of well-established tools, such as maps and GPS, to help us know where we are on our journey. In our philanthropic strategies, by contrast, it takes considerable effort to understand our starting point and articulate where we hope to end up. And tracking progress is not as simple as knowing miles traveled. If anything, in the social sector, we suffer from having too many indicators we could track and not enough useful tools for gathering what would be meaningful to know. Still, we think it is essential for us to be tracking progress rigorously and practically—to be asking ourselves simple questions like, "What are the signs we would expect to see 12 to 18 months from now that would suggest we are on a good path to success?" or sometimes asking the inverse, "What are the signs we would expect to see 12 to 18 months from now that would suggest we are failing in this strategy or have hit a significant impasse?" Answering these questions clarifies our own expectations of progress and helps reduce the risk of confirmation bias.

Tracking progress is the responsibility of program staff. Currently, staff spend a fair amount of time doing so as part of their day-to-day work: checking in with grantees, attending conferences, hosting convenings, participating in collaborations, reading grantee reports, speaking with other funders, paying attention to news sources, conducting due diligence, reading new research, meeting with other nonprofits and policymakers, etc. Staff rely on a wealth of information to make judgments about progress. Much of this progress is often tracked *tacitly*, however; establishing clear, specific, and meaningful implementation markers provides a way of tracking progress *explicitly*. By defining a set of limited implementation markers, program staff identify the most critical signs of progress. By setting targets (when appropriate), staff test expectations for how quickly change can happen. They also help refine staff thinking about what is realistic to accomplish. By articulating trip wires, staff can anticipate what might derail progress altogether. And ultimately, tracking progress through implementation markers, in conjunction with insights from third party evaluations, can help staff take actions, make decisions, and adjust course accordingly.

From the drudgery of monitoring to serving us in planning…

Sarah Lucas is the program officer for Global Development and Population's Evidence-Informed Policymaking (EIP) strategy. Last year, EIP took on the task of developing their implementation markers for the first time. She remembers being downright panicked at first about having to create implementation markers. By the end, she was excited about how useful they became for her team. For her, the "aha" moment came when members of the Effective Philanthropy Group (EPG) asked the team, "What markers would be meaningful?" "What would be feasible?" and "What would be actionable?" These questions pushed her and the team to not just identify markers of progress, but to think about what they would do in response, if the results came back in one direction or another. Setting the markers also helped her think about what they should do in advance—if they really cared about meeting the markers.

For example, one of the strategy's outcomes is to have strong think tanks in sub-Saharan Africa that have a meaningful role in policy processes in their countries, and for Southern think tanks to be recognized as key players on the global stage. Last year, as they anticipated the end of the Think Tank Initiative (TTI), the EIP team needed to figure out the next steps post-initiative. Sarah and the team realized that at this phase, progress no longer meant taking actions to directly support the sustainability of Southern think tanks. Instead, progress meant having "a clear sense of which TTI organizations are at greatest risk after March 2019." And in addition, that "TTI has a good plan to help address this vulnerability." Identifying this implementation marker prompted Sarah to take this question to the TTI Executive Committee. In turn, IDRC, which hosts TTI, undertook a review of all the TTI organizations and assessed their prospects for sustainability. This information in turn fostered a conversation with the Executive Committee about which aspects of sustainability they could still influence in the remaining two years of TTI, and how.

In reflecting on the development of their implementation markers, Sarah said, "the questions took us from the drudgery of monitoring to serving us in planning."

About This Guide

Given the importance of tracking progress, this guide provides more detailed guidelines on implementation markers. What should they look like specifically? How many should there be? How should one go about setting them? When should they be reviewed and how often should they change? All these ques-tions and more are addressed in the following section: Implementation Markers Essentials. An appendix provides sample implementation markers from across program strategies, in addition to those found through the guide.

In addition to this guide, there are a number of other resources staff may find useful. Staff are not required to use these, but they are available for those who would like further guidance. **Supplemental Exercises and Guides for Tracking Progress** includes the following:

- Exercises for Developing Implementation Markers with accompanying worksheets stimulate ideas for specific, meaningful, actionable, and feasible markers.
- Suggestions for Collecting Information identifies different options for gathering data to track against your implementation markers. It also lists a few best practices when it comes to collecting information from grantees.
- Suggestions for Reflecting on Progress outlines potential steps on how and when to reflect on your implementation markers. It suggests how to prepare for reflection and what questions to address during your reflection process.
- Tips for Refreshing Implementation Markers gives a few ideas on how to update your implementation markers.

These tools can be adapted for use in whatever ways make sense for the respective program teams. We hope and expect that they will evolve over time. As program staff and the Effective Philanthropy Group develop other resources and tools, they will be added to this list and made available on Box.

Implementation Marker Essentials

Below are answers to commonly asked questions about implementation markers. Altogether, they provide guidelines for what implementation markers should look like and how they should be used as part of ***Outcome-Focused Philanthropy*** and the president's annual strategy update and learning memo process.

Context and Use

When should staff identify implementation markers?

If a program team is developing a new strategy or refreshing one, they should begin thinking about implementation markers after they have articulated their outcomes. While it is not necessary to include a final set of implementation markers as part of the strategy document, we recommend including some potential or sample implementation markers in the document. For strategies that are being implemented, implementation markers should be identified and updated as part of the president's annual strategy update and learning memo process. Program directors may offer their program team additional timelines and guidance requirements for identifying implementation markers.

How do implementation markers fit into the president's annual strategy update and learning memo process?

Programs are required to list last year's implementation markers, including notations on progress, as part of the president's annual strategy update and learning memo. The narrative portion of the memo should speak to progress more generally, and will likely reference implementation markers. While staff do not need to recount progress against each and every implementation marker in the narrative, they should also avoid cherry-picking those that showed the most success; instead they should choose a fully representative selection of results.

How do implementation markers fit into the annual board book budget memo?

Implementation markers do not play a direct role in the annual board book budget memos. Rather, they inform what's written in them. Unlike the president's strategy update and learning memo, the budget memo does not need to include a list of implementation markers. The narrative portion of the memo should speak to progress generally, and will be informed by progress against implementation markers. The board book progress indicators (e.g., the colored balls) are meant to provide a high-level summary to the board about strategy progress, and likewise should be informed by staff judgment, progress against implementation markers, and information from evaluations and other sources.

STRATEGY
Knowledge for Better Philanthropy

OUTCOME
Staffed foundations of all stripes consume high-quality research about good philanthropic practice.

IMPLEMENTATION MARKER
Increase in the number of website users of philanthropic knowledge producers.

MARKER TYPE
external change

STRATEGY
Open Educational Resources

OUTCOME
Higher education students engage with high-quality course materials suited to their needs, that they can afford.

IMPLEMENTATION MARKER
Number of institutions with OER degree program; percent of faculty that adopt OER as primary course material; content coverage of open textbooks and open courseware.

MARKER TYPE
external changes

Who are these implementation markers for?
While staff need to submit progress on implementation markers to the president, the primary goal of implementation markers is for staff to know how things are going. What they submit should be the same as what they are using themselves to track progress. In reviewing the markers, the president seeks to understand how staff are tracking progress. While the board does not look at implementation markers, there may be occasions when a program might want to share them with a board advisory committee. **It is most important that implementation markers are meaningful to you, as staff.**

Key Ingredients

What is an implementation marker? And how is it different from an outcome?
As OFP articulates, outcomes refer to specific changes we hope to see in the world. In general, the outcomes we hope to achieve through our strategies take years to accomplish. Implementation markers are the interim steps toward these mid- to longer-term outcomes. Implementation markers should answer the question: What could you observe in the next 12 to 18 months that will let you know what progress you are making toward your outcomes?

More specifically, implementation markers can be **activities** we or our grantees need to undertake, such as developing a robust communications strategy. They can be signals of **grantee capacity**, such as the ability of a grantee to successfully weather an executive director transition. They can be **external changes** (e.g., short-term outcomes), such as the number of school districts adopting Open Educational Resources (OER). They can be **contextual factors** that affect our strategies—things we need to be aware of, even if we are not directly trying to affect them, such as the role another country is playing in promoting government transparency. While some may find it confusing for implementation markers to refer to so many different types of things, it is widely framed in this way so that staff can choose whichever types of markers are most useful for them to track. As a reminder, care should also be taken in picking implementation markers that comply with the foundation's restrictions on lobbying and political activities. The appendices have additional examples of implementation markers.

What is a "good" implementation marker?
Implementation markers should be meaningful, specific, feasible to collect, and useful for decision making. A word about each: By meaningful, we mean they should tell staff necessary and important information about progress or lack thereof. Would knowing the answer be helpful? By specific, we mean as clear as possible about the nature and extent of progress. For example, "disseminate research" is not as

STRATEGY
Deeper Learning

IMPLEMENTATION MARKER
Grantees complete Federal/State Policy "report card" and cluster metrics; all grantees commit to using it.

MARKER TYPE
grantee capacity

STRATEGY
International Reproductive Health

IMPLEMENTATION MARKER
Each Advocacy Partner to date has three or more sub-grantees that have identified their own advocacy priorities.

MARKER TYPE
grantee activity

specific as "disseminate research to key policymakers" and still less specific than "disseminate research to 50 key policymakers in key states." Each additional level of specificity forces more clarity of expectations and assumptions. But then how will you know if any marker came to pass? The information gathering must be feasible given time and resources—markers for which we cannot collect information or for which there is a high burden are ultimately unhelpful. On this point, it may be useful to ask grantees about the ease or difficulty of reporting certain information. And lastly, they should be useful for decision making—they should inform potential actions we might take such as additional grants we might make or conversations we might have. There sometimes may be trade-offs staff need to make in selecting implementation markers — a meaningful implementation marker may not always be feasible to gather information on. Staff need to weigh these trade-offs in selecting a portfolio of markers that will meet their needs.

STRATEGY
Madison Initiative

IMPLEMENTATION MARKER
Host a successful partner convening that leads to concrete joint projects and collaborations.

MARKER TYPE
initiativewide internal activity

The most appropriate implementation markers, however, will likely vary by the type of strategy, the stage of the field, and the maturity of the strategy. For example, in the early days of exploring a new strategy, implementation markers may focus more on activities that staff need to undertake, such as conducting landscape analyses. If a field is new or developing, there may be more implementation markers that involve commissioning new research, building networks, or supporting new organizations. Mature strategies or fields are likely to have more existing data to draw on and may include markers that focus more on specific changes or shorter-term outcomes.

Do implementation marker results need to be attributable to staff or our grants?

This depends on the nature of your implementation markers. For markers that are focused on staff activities or grantee activities — such as the development of an evaluation plan—these are directly attributable. For implementation markers that reflect external changes, these are not likely to be directly attributable to our grants or to staff activities: changes that governments, constituents, or others make are often the result of many factors. Implementation markers are about tracking progress against outcomes, and less about understanding the specifics of contribution and attribution. If those questions are important to answer, an evaluation will likely be more appropriate.

STRATEGY
Transparency, Participation, and Accountability

IMPLEMENTATION MARKER
Sub-strategy for service delivery monitoring theme is finalized.

MARKER TYPE
internal activity

At what level should we set implementation markers?

While all programs set outcomes at the strategy level, on a day-to-day basis, most programs track progress at the sub-strategy level. As a result, we recommend developing implementation markers at the sub-strat-egy level. (But remember, this differs based on the size of a program; one program's sub-strategy could be another's grant cluster. In general, we advocate using common sense and what is most useful and appropriate for staff.)

It may be useful to also develop implementation markers for the overall strategy: these are markers that cut across sub-strategies. For smaller strategies, for which there are no sub-strategies—such as Knowledge for Better Philanthropy—there will only be markers at the strategy level. Staff also do not need to nest an implementation marker under one specific outcome; some implementation markers may cut across multiple outcomes.

How many implementation markers should we have?

It's important to develop "the minimum set" of implementation markers needed. We know there are many things staff are, or could be, tracking but it will quickly become cumbersome (and increasingly meaningless) to track too much. Again, markers should be meaningful, specific, feasible, and useful. In looking at current practice, staff typically have between two to five implementation markers per sub-strategy. As mentioned before, staff should choose the number they need, but look for the very minimum needed.

How often should implementation markers be reviewed and updated?

We recommend reviewing implementation markers every six months, but at the very least every year. This allows staff to think practically about what actions to take if things are not on track and/or what actions to take to spur things to go in the direction we would like. Markers should be updated on an annual basis and included in what is submitted to the president as part of the president's annual strategy update and learning memo.

What is the time frame for an implementation marker?

Because we think of implementation markers as interim steps toward outcomes, we suggest setting markers with a 12- to 18-month time frame. This allows staff to think very practically about what progress looks like in the short term toward their mid- to longer-term outcomes.

Should implementation markers be consistent every year or should they change?

A strategy's outcomes are usually fairly consistent year after year, since they are typically mid- to longer-term in nature. Implementation markers can be consistent year after year, but they are not expected to be nor should they always be consistent. You should identify at least one thing you want to keep track of year after year that is core to your strategy—such as the number of OER degree programs. Other markers will need to evolve and be more specific to the moment in time, especially for new initiatives that are still exploring various approaches—such as the development of a sub-strategy. Given that grantees and staff are often shifting tactics to accommodate for external changes, we expect many markers to change each year.

What are trip wires, and do we need to include them?

Trip wires are a type of implementation marker. They answer the question, "How would you know if you're failing?" and represent a worst case scenario. While trip wires could simply be the inverse of progress, identifying them helps us anticipate what we might do to mitigate the risks of such scenarios. Trip wires build in potential course correction. Trip wires are not required just as no specific type of marker is required. But a trip wire may be useful in helping staff identify risks and potential course corrections.

Trip Wires as Prompts for Scenario Planning

As part of an exercise to identify tripwires, GD&P's Transparency, Participation, and Accountability team asked, "What could make it go wrong?"regarding their aim for at least 24 countries to fulfill their commitments to global norms and standards around open contracting and beneficial ownership transparency. This question made them realize a trip wire would be if "the U.K. stops or reduces its leadership role in promoting norms and standards on government transparency and accountability." This, in turn, forced the team to ask themselves, "What would we do if that happened?" The question prompted them to identify potential mitigation tactics, such as considering other governments or multilateral donors (e.g., the World Bank) stepping up and playing the leadership role in the global anticorruption campaign.

Requirements and Related Processes

What happens if we do not make the expected progress against our implementation markers?

The foundation recognizes there are many factors that affect whether our strategies make progress — grantee performance, contextual factors like the political or economic environment, the actions of leaders and citizens, etc.—most of which is outside staff control. We do not expect every strategy to hit its targets every year, and staff are not reviewed from that perspective. Staff are accountable for knowing how things are going, learning what is working well and what isn't, being honest with themselves and others including the foundation president and board, and adjusting their actions accordingly. This could include adjustments to grantmaking—to whom and how they make grants, and their actions beyond the grant dollars. And, of course, it tells program staff and directors something important that needs to be addressed if a strategy is consistently falling short in meeting expected progress.

In addition, as part of annual individual performance reviews, program staff set individual goals and activities for the year. These are actions within their control: developing theories of change, convening grantees, managing evaluations, and so forth. Where there is overlap, individual goals and activities should be aligned with the strategies' implementation markers. For example, in an early strategy, identifying new grantees could be both an individual staff goal as well as a strategy implementation marker.

Are we required to share implementation markers with grantees or more broadly?

This is up to the discretion of program directors and officers. For many reasons, it would be helpful for your grantee partners to understand how you are tracking progress. We understand, however, that implementation markers could quickly become out-of-date and certain ones may not be as relevant to share (especially internal markers). At this point in time, we encourage staff to use their own judgment and we will learn from these efforts over time.

When and how should we involve grantees?

For implementation markers that are about grantee activities, grantee capacity, or even short-term outcomes, we encourage staff to confer with grantees in developing appropriate implementation markers and reasonable targets. Staff should also confer with grantees if they need to gather information directly from grantees on the marker—making sure grantees can report the information without undue burden. Staff should also consider when and how to share any gathered data back to grantees. Sharing data back with grantees is not only good practice in terms of making best use of information, but it can also help increase the quality of the information received.

Should we include elements of the Grantee Perception Report (GPR) as part of our implementation markers?

There are no requirements to do so, but since this is a source of data that is already collected regularly and comparable across programs and foundations, you can consider whether it might be useful. For example, if the strategy funded quite a bit of research and wanted to be positioned as a leader in building knowledge, then the answer to the GPR question, "To what extent has the foundation advanced the state of knowledge in your field?" may be useful to track as an implementation marker. Or if strengthening relationships with grantees is an important part of how your strategy will make progress in the upcoming year, then grantee response to the GPR question, "How comfortable do you feel approaching the foundation if a problem arises?" might be relevant and useful to include as a marker. It is important, however, to make sure you are including a GPR indicator because it is connected and relevant to your strategy, not just because it is a convenient data source.

If the strategy is part of a funder collaborative, do these implementation marker guidelines still apply?

If your strategy, such as the Fund for Shared Insight, is part of a broader funder collaborative, the principles of the implementation marker guidelines still apply, just as OFP still broadly applies, but with much greater leeway. Staff should still have goals, set outcomes, track progress, and evaluate the work. Staff can be more flexible about the specifics, however, given that there are multiple funder interests at play. Funder collaboratives will not likely use the term "implementation markers" and may instead choose to track "indicators" or "metrics." These might extend beyond the 12- to 18-month time frame, or perhaps the collaborative will choose to focus on shorter-term outcomes and not track internal activities or grantee capacity. But even within a collaborative, staff will still need to track progress and report accordingly to the president in annual strategy update and learning memos. Also, if the funder collaborative is looking for guidance around tracking progress, it is certainly appropriate to share these Hewlett Foundation guidelines.

Developing Shared Markers

The Knowledge for Better Philanthropy strategy has a portfolio of grantees who all produce and disseminate knowledge products. But every year, Lindsay Louie, the program officer, received different types of data from grantees on the reach of their products. For example, some provided the number of downloads per year while others reported cumulative downloads. Lindsay recognized that it would be useful to understand both the aggregate reach of the grantee portfolio as well as compare relative size. This would help her make decisions when faced with potential new grantees. As a result, over the course of six months, she worked with a volunteer group of grantees to pilot a new reporting format that standardized indicators. While the reporting has evolved over the years, this new reporting format has provided useful insight for us and has also been shared back with grantees.

How does tracking progress via implementation markers differ from evaluation?

Implementation markers are meant to help you track progress to inform ongoing decisions. Evaluation is also meant to inform decision making in a strategy. In both cases—tracking progress and evaluating the work—it is important that we pay attention to learning from information, reflecting on it, and adjusting accordingly. The information we gather for implementation markers can feed into evaluations. And early evaluation planning can also help inform what implementation markers we should develop. Evaluation and progress tracking should ideally work in service of each other.

Are there differences? Yes. When we set up implementation markers, we are typically looking to answer descriptive questions about progress—"What happened?" or "How many or how much of x happened?" or "Who participated in y?" For evaluation, we ask questions to answer "why/why not?" and "how?" change happened. Evaluations also ask "compared to what?" and the degree to which we and our grantees contributed to change. We also sometimes use evaluation to identify unexpected outcomes.

There are other differences as well. Importantly, with evaluations we want to make sure that evaluators use multiple methods and data sources. That is not essential to progress tracking—one method or data source is fine. Our evaluations are always conducted by a third party to ensure an independent perspective, while progress tracking can be done by foundation staff or with the help of a third party.

Will I need a consultant to help me with my implementation markers?

No, but you can if it is useful. Implementation markers are meant to be less labor intensive than other forms of data collection. Consider first utilizing support from EPG's Organizational Learning Officer, who can help facilitate the identification of your markers, provide advice on all aspects of data collection, and facilitate reflection on progress. Grants officers are also available to provide research focused on aggregating grant-level data and grantee reporting, including from regranters. In some instances, external consultants may be useful as researchers and analysts in gathering information against your implementation markers—see the **Supplemental Guide: Suggestions for Collecting Information**. But remember that you should never outsource your thinking to consultants. In addition, consultants take time, effort, and resources to manage. And so with all things, it is worth considering whether the benefit is worth the cost.

Tracking progress prompts course correction

Marc Chun is a program officer for Education's Deeper Learning strategy. In 2015, working with grantees, he initiated a new sub-strategy called "Scaling Innovative Practices & Tools for Teaching and Learning." Previous demonstration site work had proven that innovative practices and tools could help students–including those farthest from opportunity–achieve deeper learning competencies. These practices, however, had spread incrementally and had not reached sustained, systematic impact. This new sub-strategy aimed to do so and two implementation markers were created: (*1*) practitioner grantees develop concrete ideas to scale tools and (*2*) practitioner grantees contribute new lessons learned to the field [about these scaling efforts].

One year later, however, progress tracking indicated slow movement on these markers. Through a series of discussions with grantees, consultants identified a couple of reasons for the slow progress. First, grantees did not always know what ideas others were working on and how they might build off each other's work. As a result, Marc worked with a consultant in 2016 to host webinars and an in-person workshop where grantees could share and apply their ideas for scaling practices and tools.

Second, feedback from grantees indicated that perhaps they "didn't have the right people in the room." There were many people working on scaling deeper learning practices and tools, but they didn't necessarily identify themselves as being in the deeper learning camp and might not have been representative of the range of school settings across the country. Furthermore, although the focus on practitioners was consistent with the overall strategy, there weren't researchers in the mix.

As a result, in 2017, Marc launched an open grant program to attract and fund new partners for this work. With a slight reframe of the primary objective for this sub-strategy away from "developing ideas" and "contributing lessons," and instead focusing explicitly on "testing theories of diffusion," Marc invited research-practice partnership (RPP) teams to propose projects that they felt they could contribute to the field's collective understanding of how large-scale impact occurs. With researchers and practitioners working as equal partners, they could be better positioned to test theories and build new knowledge. The letter of inquiry process for this new program closed with 47 submissions, the majority of which were potentially new partners that had not been on the radar screen previously, including school districts. The foundation ultimately funded eight RPP teams, all of which included at least one partner organization that had not been an existing grantee.

Overall, annual reflection on progress against implementation markers has led Marc to find specific, actionable next steps to advance his work in a thoughtful, strategic way.

Appendix A: Illustrative Examples for Six Types of Implementation Markers

Note: Two potential ways of listing sample markers are included below. Comprehensive lists could be built out in the future. For now, a few illustrative examples are listed below, taken from existing program markers.

Certain sample implementation markers have been flagged with an asterisk as needing review by the legal department before adoption.

1. *Internal Critical things staff need to accomplish, such as identifying new grantees.*

GD&P/Evidence-Informed Policy
Hewlett has an action plan for use of remaining Think Tank Initiative resources and for deciding how to support think tanks after the initiative ends.

Madison
Reset, adapt, and share the Madison Initiative's strategy in the wake of the 2016 campaign and election (including our goal and problem statements and how we convey them).*

Cyber
Directly curate four to six convenings, providing proof of concept to other potential conveners/participants.

2. *Grantee Activity Important activities grantees or partners are undertaking, such as a convening or critical research.*

GD&P/International Reproductive Health
Marie Stopes Zambia receives one additional source of funding for human-centered design scale activities.

Education/Deeper Learning
Grantees contribute new lessons learned to the field about how to spread/scale deeper learning.

Philanthropy/Knowledge for Better Philanthropy
Number of webinars hosted by grantees.

3. *Grantee Capacity The capacity of important grantees or partners that will enable or hinder change, such as a successful executive director transition for a critical grantee.*

Cyber
Two to four civil society groups form more multidisciplinary cyber teams, as evidenced by increased hiring of technologists, national security, and other experts.

GD&P/International Reproductive Health
Advocacy Partners...put into practice the relevant principles in the foundation's new advocacy strategy (e.g., longer term grants, mutual accountability).

Madison
Increase the number of grantee leaders who are people of color and the number of grantees who are focused on engaging communities and people of color in our democracy.

4. ***Short-Term Outcomes*** *Interim changes staff hope to see around policies, coalitions, initiatives, etc.*

Education/Deeper Learning
150 districts adopt grantee-developed or validated/reviewed instructional materials aligned to deeper learning goals.

GD&P/Transparency, Participation, and Accountability
Countries leading the effort to make public contracting open by default take practical steps to implement their commitments.

GD&P/U.S. Reproductive Health
State TRAP laws (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) that are currently being reviewed will be defeated in light of the Supreme Court decision.*

5. ***Context*** *Contextual factors that might influence the strategy, such as demographic changes or oil prices.*

Madison
Trump administration crosses multiple "bright lines" we have identified that impinge on civil rights and liberties and/or undermine ability to marshal countervailing power against it.*

GD&P/Transparency, Participation, and Accountability
The U.K. stops or reduces its leadership role in promoting norms and standards on government transparency and accountability.

6. ***Trip Wire*** *Trip wires answer the question, "How would we know if we are failing?" and serve as prompts for course correction on your strategy.*

GD&P/Evidence-Informed Policymaking
Inability to identify new grantees to advance the impact-evaluation sub-strategy.

Madison Initiative
Bipartisan Relationship Building program participants experience negative publicity for their participation.

GD&P/International Reproductive Health
Fewer than three Ouagadougou Partnership countries show an increase in modern contraceptive prevalence rate since previous data collection period.

Appendix B: Illustrative Examples for Six Types of Strategies

1. *Field Building*

GD&P/Evidence-Informed Policymaking
EIP team is contributing/facilitating practical learning to the field.

Madison
Group of funders, intermediaries, and NGOs working in electoral reform space begins to broaden.

Education/OER
Attendance at OER-related conferences increases over time.

2. *Networks*

Cyber
Grantees and partners report increased opportunities to participate in cross-silo boot camps, internships, fellowships, and exchanges.

3. *Research*

Education/OER
Number of researchers (faculty and graduate) studying OER increases.

GD&P/International Reproductive Health
At least three randomized control trials of behavioral interventions have results.

GD&P/U.S. Reproductive Health
Research projects will be moving forward on the anticipated timelines with recruiting and data collection expectations being met. Early results will begin to yield insights into women's perceptions of the relationship between economic opportunity and birth control and abortion. These insights will be made available and utilized by advocates.

4. *Policy Advocacy/Influence*

Cyber
Our grantees' staff or research directly influences a minimum of one major cyber policy debate each year.

Education/Deeper Learning
Policymakers reference research-based findings and conclusions about deeper learning in policy deliberations.

GD&P/U.S. Reproductive Health
Key policy grantee Center for American Progress demonstrates that its family policy and women's health teams are working closely together to present truly integrated policy proposals and papers [integrating family planning and women's economic opportunity].

5. *Movement/Coalition-Building*

Education/Deeper Learning
Schools participating in California Performance Assessment Collaborative grow in number.

6. *Fundraising or Funder Collaborations*

Cyber
Other foundation or funder investments in the field total 25 percent of our own.

Education/OER
Number of our grants that have multiple funders.

GD&P/Evidence-Informed Policy
No new funders are interested in supporting African think tanks with flexible, core support. (trip wire)

GD&P/International Reproductive Health
The Ouagadougou Partnership attracts a significant new donor to be part of the "core donor" group.

Appendix C: Definitions and Examples of Implementation Markers for Common Strategy Approaches

This appendix contains examples of the kinds of implementation markers that may be used to track progress on common foundation strategies including movement, network, and coalition building; policy advocacy; field building; and funder collaboration. These examples show a range of possible markers. They do not represent an exhaustive list, and because different strategy types share common tactics, there is some overlap. Finally, these examples are not sufficiently specific to be used as written. Programs should use these examples to spark thought and discussion as they identify and hone a small set of markers that are specific, meaningful, and useful for tracking progress.

The following example illustrates the difference between the generic implementation markers provided in this document and a fully developed implementation marker with an appropriate level of specificity.

GENERIC IMPLEMENTATION MARKER

Hold convenings for specific grantees to strengthen strategic alliances and relationships.

SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION MARKERS

By the end of 2018, five to eight research-practice partnerships meet twice in a learning community.

Meeting held in spring 2018 with at least 25 IES grantees focused on measuring interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies.

In this example, the fully developed markers include the number and specific type or set of grantees, as well as the number, type, and purpose of the convening.

Certain sample implementation markers have been flagged with an asterisk as needing review by the legal department before adoption.

MOVEMENT, NETWORK, AND COALITION BUILDING

Movements, networks, and coalitions have a nested structure. Movements are "the dynamic processes by which broad moral issues bubble up and—when successful—change the way people think and act" (Holley, 2012). Movements generate energy around an issue and ultimately influence policies, beliefs, and behaviors. Strong movements have a clearly articulated vision; an organized and authentic base; strong, diverse grassroots leadership; strategic alliances and relationships; and well-developed communications and advocacy infrastructure. Implementation markers will be indicators of progress toward these types of outcomes.

Networks consist of relationships among individuals or organizations within a movement, often for purposes of sharing information and ideas, while coalitions are tightly defined networks with specific policy objectives (Holley, 2012). Implementation markers for networks and coalitions typically focus on membership composition, engagement, and connectivity; capacity of individuals or organizations within the network/coalition; shared purposes or processes; and progress toward shared outcomes.

Examples

Internal

- Portfolio composition is representative of the movement (i.e., geographically, demographically, ideologically diverse)
- Convenings for specific grantees to strengthen strategic alliances and relationships

Grantee activity

- Training for movement leaders on specific skills or topics
- Recruitment and outreach to increase the scale/reach of the network
- Agreement on a common vision and strategy with other key actors
- Commitment to a common action plan with other key actors
- Convenings that promote collaboration, knowledge-sharing, or other strategic purposes
- Joint activities (research, policy analysis, advocacy, events, training) with other key actors
- Information sharing (briefs, reports, data) with other key actors

Grantee capacity

- Staffing levels that are sufficient to carry out action plans
- Fundraising plans to leverage non-Hewlett resources
- Training for staff on campaign tactics, communications strategy, or other specific topics
- Adjustment of tactics in response to challenges or opportunities in the policy environment (e.g., proposed legislation, composition of state or federal legislatures)*

Short-term outcomes

- Growth in membership in total or in any specific demographic
- Changes to issue framing in media
- Changes in specific social norms or public opinion
- Changes in targeted knowledge, attitude, or behavior of policymakers, the public, or other key actors
- Adoption of specific new practices among individuals or organizations targeted by the campaign
- Increasing prevalence of new practices

Using legislation or elector outcomes as implementation markers

At times, legislative or electoral implementation markers (e.g., adoption of new state or federal legislation or increasing number of elected officials who publicly support a campaign) may be useful. However, to ensure these are used appropriately, you must speak with your legal department contact about these markers. For example, asking grantees to track legislative matters in a grant proposal and report may be inappropriate, depending on the grant structure, and could give the wrong impression that our funds are earmarked for lobbying. Your legal department contact will work with you to help ensure the proper use of these types of markers.

Context

- Changes in opposition tactics*
- Event that elevates public awareness of the issue*
- Changes in support (financial, political) from other key actors*
- Changes in political will or public policy that create new opportunities*

Trip wires

- Changes in political will or public policy that create new impediments to progress
- Event that galvanizes opposition support on the issue
- Loss of support (financial, political) from other key actors
- Inability to identify new grantees or partners

POLICY ADVOCACY

Many movements seek to effect changes in policy, but tracking progress toward these changes can be challenging. Advocacy strategies, tactics, and outcomes change frequently in response to changes in the policy environment. Because policy change is often a long-term outcome, it is useful to tie implementation markers to interim outcomes such as strengthened capacity of advocacy organizations, strengthened alliances among key actors in the advocacy network, or changes in social norms or public opinion (ORS Impact, 2010).

Examples

Internal

- Convenings for specific grantees with common policy objectives

Grantee activity

- Training for campaign leaders on specific topics or skills
- Convenings with other coalition members for targeted purposes such as collaboration or knowledge-sharing
- Shared agreement on issue framing, campaign strategies, and action plans among coalition members
- Joint activities (research, policy analysis, advocacy, events, training) with other key actors
- Routine information sharing (briefs, reports, data) with other key actors

Grantee capacity

- Training for staff and volunteers on specific topics or skills such as policy research and development, communications strategy, advocacy tactics
- Adjustment of tactics in response to challenges and opportunities in the policy environment (e.g., proposed legislation, composition of state or federal legislatures)*

- Resource sharing (money, staff time) among coalition members
- Growth in coalition membership
- Growth in volunteer support
- Increased number/dollars of financial contributions from individuals and/or organizations

Short-term outcomes

- Increasing media coverage of specific policy issue
- Increasing public support for specific policy change
- Increasing number of elected officials who publicly support the campaign*
- Changes to targeted local, state, or federal policies*
- Adoption of new state or federal legislation*

Context

- Changes in opposition tactics or messaging
- Event that elevates public awareness of the issue
- Changes in support (financial, political) from other key actors
- Changes in political will or public policy that create new opportunities

Trip wires

- Changes in political will or public policy that create new impediments to progress
- Event that galvanizes opposition support on the issue
- Loss of support (financial, political) from other key actors
- Inability to identify new grantees or partners

FIELD BUILDING

A field is "a branch of knowledge, policy and practice composed of a multiplicity of actors in relationship with each other." Fields are composed of multiple actors with different and complementary roles (e.g., funders, researchers, advocates, policymakers), connected through a network (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2013). Components of a strong field include a shared identity among actors in the field, standards of practice, a shared base of research and knowledge, leadership and grassroots support, funding, and supporting policy (The Bridgespan Group, 2009).

Examples

Internal

- Completion of a field scan
- Development of a research agenda
- Commissions for research to address specific topics germane to the field

- Portfolio composition that is representative of the field (i.e., geographically, demographically, ideologically diverse)
- Convenings for specific grantees to strengthen relationships and share knowledge

Grantee activity

- Development of high-quality curriculum for specific actors in the field
- Development of standards of practice with other actors in the field
- Specific research or dissemination activities
- Participation in a community of practice
- Convenings that promote collaboration, knowledge-sharing, or other strategic purposes
- Joint activities (research, policy analysis, events, training) with other key actors
- Information sharing (briefs, reports, data) with other key actors

Grantee capacity

- Development of communications plans to disseminate research/knowledge
- Increase in number of donors contributing to the organization

Short-term outcomes

- Publication of early results of piloted approaches are distributed, consumed, and debated in the sector
- Scaling of pilot approaches
- Changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior of policymakers or other key actors in the field

Context

- Event that elevates public awareness of discourse in the field
- Changes in support (financial, political) from other key actors
- Changes in public discourse, political will, or public policy that create new opportunities to build the field

Trip wires

- Changes in public discourse, political will, or public policy that create new impediments to progress
- Loss of support (financial, political) from other key actors
- Inability to identify new grantees or partners

FUNDER COLLABORATION

Many strategies involve engaging new funders. Implementation markers may be focused on the establishment of specific types of collaboratives or may be straightforward counts of funders and/or dollars.

Examples

- Grant to fund or establish a fiscal sponsor program within a public charity
- Commitment to serve as the project host for a donor collaborative
- Coordination of a funders table
- Recruitment of new funding partners to a donor collaborative
- Development of a shared strategy with partners in a donor collaborative
- Increase in dollars leveraged through funder collaborative
- Trip wire: Transitions within participating foundations trigger changes in commitment to funder collaborative

RESEARCH

It takes time for research to produce influence, and it can be difficult to measure the extent to which a particular report or study influences the field. Questions of influence are typically better suited to evaluation than to monitoring. Implementation markers for research will likely focus mostly on dissemination.

Examples

- New research studies commissioned
- Development of strategic communications plan for sharing new research through multiple distribution channels
- Dissemination of new research through multiple distribution channels, e.g., conferences, online trainings/webinars, social media, books/reports, in-person trainings/workshops, briefs, blogs, practitioner journals, learning communities/communities of practice, academic journals, consulting engagements, short web videos, executive education programs (Harder+Company, 2013)
- Research cited in media, policy, or academic publications (blogs, CRS reports, journals, etc.)
- Research presented at conferences or other convenings
- *Context:* Government agencies adopt policies that are more favorable to evidence and research about what works
- *Trip wire:* Government agencies adopt policies hostile to evidence

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