
Stronger Together

A Call to Innovation for Funders of Children, Youth, Families, and Older Adults

Discussion Document • October 2008

I. Introduction

We live in a new world. A world where people are living much longer, marrying and having children later, and seeking meaningful ways to continue contributing to society after retirement. Within this world, we are challenging foundations to operate differently:

- ⚙️ To respond to the changing demographics with an approach to funding that cuts across age divisions of the past and looks at the social and economic needs of our society as a whole.
- ⚙️ To think about economics of scope and consider pooling existing resources to increase outcomes for multiple generations in the communities where they live.

For once and for all, we need to put to rest the idea -- promoted by the media and those attempting to influence policy -- that it is a choice between policies and programs for older adults versus children. The rhetoric about intergenerational warfare is spurious. There is no guarantee that cuts to services for one generation would go to support services for another generation, not with many competing economic priorities such as fiscal uncertainty, war, homeland security, and tax cuts. A holistic approach to grantmaking is needed, a com-

PELLING frame that uses a common language of inclusion and shared values. This approach recognizes the profound impact that the generations have on each other. For example, if older adults do not have health insurance, the financial burden will fall on the middle generations and society as a whole; if children do not get the immunizations and treatment they need, we will have parents and grandparents missing work to care for sick children.

On December 10, 2007, the first step in this challenge to foundations took place. The Annie E. Casey Foundation in collaboration with Generations United, Just Partners Inc., Grantmakers in Aging (GIA), and Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families (GCYF) convened a group of leading funders to determine areas of policy convergence that bridge the interests of children, youth, families, and older adults and to develop strategies to promote intergenerational collaboration. Thanks to the generous support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Generations United has drafted this document, highlighting the recommendations from that meeting, to challenge foundations to operate differently within our new world.

*“The web of mutual obligations
between generations is essential
for a civilized society.”*

THOMAS JEFFERSON



II. Recommendations for Areas of Policy Convergence

Those attending the December 10 meeting agreed on eleven key areas of policy convergence across the generations. These areas were not prioritized, so they are presented here in alphabetical order:

Budget and Tax Policy: Discussions of broader budget decisions must include federal, state, and local tax policy and how cuts or increases affect people of all generations. The interconnectedness of people of all ages and the shared values found in a civil society should be a part of any discussion about fiscal priorities and accountability.

Education and Community Engagement for All Ages: Education policy should include issues related to lifelong learning, in addition to meeting the education needs of the nation's children. Education funding, which has historically been identified as an area of intergenerational conflict, has potential for intergenerational solidarity through initiatives like Generations United's Seniors4Kids program, which engages older adults as advocates for early childhood education. Communities will be richer if they offer opportunities that engage people of all ages in volunteerism and civic life.

Environment: All generations share a stake in the condition of the environment. Earth Day was one of the first intergenerational programs that recognized the interconnectedness of the generations and called on societies to protect the environment for future generations. Today's policy discussions promoting cap-and-trade systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have the potential to slow the pace of global climate change while stimulating the development of new technologies, industries, and jobs that will contribute to the growth of the economy. Part of the revenue stream generated from the sale of emission allowances could provide a new source of support for programs targeted to benefit economically disadvantaged people of all ages.

Family and Medical Leave: Discussions about application of family and medical leave should be

broadened to cover a variety of growing issues related to family caregiving and health from infancy to old age.

Family Economic Success: Aging, children, youth, and families leaders could build coalitions around addressing issues of poverty, debt, and downward or upward mobility. Policies should recognize and support intergenerational transfers of money and time to support other generations, such as a grandparent who contributes to their grandchild's college education or provides regular care to his or her grandchild enabling the parents to work without bearing the impact of high child care costs.

Globalization: As we increasingly operate under a global economy, special attention needs to be given to the ways in which children and older people will be uniquely affected. Cross cultural understanding and encouragement of bilingual education are important. Immigration reform must take into consideration extended families and the need for a caregiving workforce.

Grandfamilies/Kinship Care: Supportive policies and services for families where grandparents or other relatives are raising children have clear implications for both young and old. Intergenerational housing, legal assistance, tutoring /mentoring programs, and respite care are examples of supports that help the families survive and thrive.

Health Care: To effectively care for the health needs of the other generation, one's own health care needs must be met. Children need good health care to grow up to be effective contributors to society and care for those that go before them and for their own children. Older adults need good health care to prevent them from becoming a burden on family resources. Chronic illnesses, including asthma, affect the quality of life experienced by people of all ages.

Technology: Intergenerational strategies can be used to address issues related to technology divides between

generations. All generations need access to current technology and a means to stay connected in an increasingly global society. In particular, programs in which young people teach computer and internet skills to older adults demonstrate a transfer of knowledge from one age group to another.

Transportation and Community Planning

for All Ages: Approaches to improving transportation access can include sharing transportation resources for older and younger people. For example, school buses could help transport older adults who lack transportation to volunteer in the schools and Head Start vans could be used to deliver Meals on Wheels. Community plans for transportation need to extend to other design elements that support cross age connec-

tions such as safe, accessible parks and multigenerational centers rather than age segregated facilities such as senior centers and teen centers.

Workforce: Discussions of workforce policy should include exploring creative approaches such as flexibility and part time options, in addition to the creation of new entry and exit points for younger and older workers enabling them to contribute to the country's productivity. For example, there is a need to create bridges for those coming in and out of the workforce for reasons related to family caregiving, health, and age. The growing interest in enabling older adults to work longer needs to be balanced with providing opportunities for younger adults to find their workplace identity.

Economies of Scope - Using Resources Wisely to Connect Generations

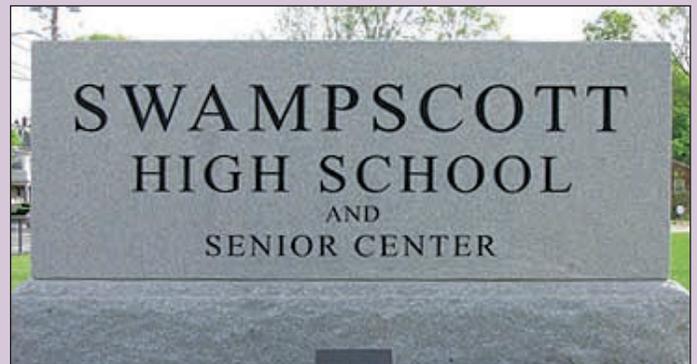
In 2007, the town of Swampscott opened the doors of their new high school, a building that also included the town's new senior center.

Having the senior center at the Swampscott High School has been a blessing. Our older adults use the facility and are thrilled with the opportunities. They walk the indoor track in the morning, take dance and yoga classes in our dance studio, use our exercise room, and attend classes in the computer rooms.

Our partnership with the seniors also includes using their experiences in our classrooms as guest speakers, tutors, and volunteers in the library. Our students volunteer at the center by performing at various senior functions, decorating for the holidays, and providing support to their elders on such things as how to fully use a cell phone, iPod, etc. Last spring our American Studies class provided a breakfast for those senior citizens who had participated in the class as guest lecturers throughout the year.

At first both older adults and students were nervous and intimidated by each other as the new high school opened. Now our students feel supported and the seniors welcomed in our positive relationships. When our budget was cut and we had to share our librarian with the middle school two days a week, it was a group of older adults who volunteered to have training and cover the hours our librarian is not available. This allows us to keep the library open all week long for our students.

Larry Murphy, Principal
Swampscott High School, Swampscott, MA



III.Strategies to Promote Intergenerational Collaboration

To act on these various areas of policy convergence, the December 10 group developed multiple strategies that fall into three main categories:

Collaborative Principles

As a first step, consensus must be reached on a core set of intergenerational principles. Principles that will be used to create and review public policies that serve children, youth, families, and older people. Among the principles may be the following concepts:

- ⊗ a clear definition of intergenerational solidarity that extends beyond the nuclear and extended family;
- ⊗ a commitment to using an intergenerational lens when developing or influencing policy;
- ⊗ a call to include the “missing middle” -- both middle aged people and those of middle income -- in all relevant policy developments and reviews;
- ⊗ a promise to explore solutions which, when possible, avoid means testing and stigmatization while involving and providing benefits to all incomes and ages;
- ⊗ a commitment to promote “economies of scope” -- a single intervention that helps or positively affects multiple issues/populations;
- ⊗ a social contract with children, similar to the one in place with older adults, and
- ⊗ a demonstrated connection between the social contract with children and the contract with older adults.

Family Economic Success & Grandfamilies

Advocates representing children, youth, families, and aging worked together to pass “The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008,” which was signed into law in October. The Act will help thousands of children and youth by promoting permanent families for children in foster care through relative guardianship and adoption, in addition to improving access to supportive services for grandparent- and other relative-headed families (grandfamilies). It is the most significant federal recognition to date of the contribution grandparents and other relatives make in raising our nation’s children and will dramatically increase the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of children and their families.



The Act will provide support for children being raised by grandparents and other relatives and their caregivers by authorizing subsidized guardianship payments to relatives caring for children in foster care. It will also establish kinship navigator programs to help link relative caregivers both inside and outside of the child welfare system to a broad range of services and supports that will help them meet the needs of the children in their care. Additionally, the Act will extend federal support for youth to age 21, help keep brothers and sisters together, improve education and health care coordination for children in foster care, and offer many American Indian children important federal protections and support for the first time.

This Act is the most important reform of the country’s child welfare and foster care system in at least a decade. It unanimously passed both chambers of Congress and is fully funded.

*Generations are not competitors for life's satisfaction:
they are partners in the search for well-being.*

HAROLD SHEPPARD

Collaborative Events

Other strategies to promote intergenerational collaboration involve building connections between aging and children's groups. One way is to create opportunities for inclusion and participation of aging advocates at Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families conferences and children's advocates at Grantmakers In Aging conferences. Another method is an annual convening of grantmakers with equal participant representation from aging, children, youth, and family groups. This convening will look at intergenerational funding efforts and analyze progress and set-backs. Furthermore, it will explore ways to eliminate funding silos by developing a shared agenda between aging and children, youth, and family funders.

Other Collaborative Tools

Another critical collaborative tool is joint grantmaking efforts between leading aging and children's foundations in areas where there is clear convergence between the generations. For other grantmaking efforts, an intergenerational tool may be developed and used by foundations to ensure that their funding is intergenerational friendly.

To facilitate collaboration among funders and advocates, the working group recommended gathering critical data on intergenerational issues and sharing them through an Intergenerational Count report similar to Kids Count. This report would help determine how younger and older members of our society are faring. It could be used to inform next steps in the field and serve as an evaluation for progress in services to children, youth, families, and older adults. Other tools include providing technical assistance, conducting a targeted education campaign, making presentations at key conferences and trainings, and developing public champions for intergenerational strategies in the policy and funding arenas.

Finally, local foundations can be encouraged to (1) use a community framework that includes engagement of older and younger people to maximize impact for children and families and (2) transform neighborhoods by promoting and establishing intergenerational shared sites. These are sites that intentionally use resources to connect generations rather than separate them. Examples include multigenerational centers rather than teen and senior centers, adult and child daycare under the same roof, senior centers in schools, and schools as community learning centers.



Photo by: Edison F.



Photo by: Tina Light



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IV. Conclusion



Grantmakers focused on older adults, children, youth, and families are hereby challenged to take these areas of policy convergence and strategies to the next level. To break out of funding silos and respond to the needs and strengths of all generations by using a holistic approach, an approach that recognizes that in this changing world in which we live, we are stronger together.

For any questions concerning this call to innovation, or if you would like to join in this effort, please contact Sherri Killins, Vice President for Human Development & Operations, Annie E. Casey Foundation, at skillins@aecf.org or (410) 547-6600; and Donna M. Butts, Executive Director, Generations United, at dbutts@gu.org or (202) 289-3979.

Photo by: Sharon Arkin

Somehow, we have to get older people back close to growing children if we are to restore a sense of community, a knowledge of the past, and a sense of the future.

MARGARET MEAD