

Communications: The Beating Heart of Philanthropy

We philanthropists stand at a crossroads: communications is under-valued and under-funded in the social impact space. If communications is the lifeblood of philanthropy, then it's in need of a serious transfusion.

While program work and institutional work is alive and well, communications programs in the nonprofit sector are suffering. In many academic, scientific and research-based sectors, communications remains hobbled. While we pour investments into program work almost exclusively, basic communications infrastructures are neglected and marketing programs are gutted. Consequently, many critical works in the social impact sector remain obscured behind the scenes. Without stronger communications and marketing programs, the reach of nonprofit organizations will stay limited.

This problem is an opportunity: if investors want their partner organizations to scale, it's time to lead the charge of a new wave of change, in the form of stronger communications programs. The social impact space is changing, as funders begin to rethink the paradigm of institutional funding in favor of more innovative philanthropic strategies.

Strong communications is an impact multiplier. With increased communications and marketing strategies, organizational capacities can improve tremendously, as nonprofits can more readily find partners, collaborators and staff to further their missions. Communications represents the human element of the nonprofit sector: this is how organizations can broadcast their work, reach a bigger audience and develop more sustainable and diverse revenue streams.

To improve communications, funders can provide unrestricted, lump sum funding to reputable and trusted social impact organizations. If this isn't possible, additional, standalone communications funding can go a long way toward creating a more interconnected social impact ecosystem. Even additional budgets, specific to programs or projects, can also help change this paradigm. Nonprofits need to be able to show investors, partners and associate organizations their admirable and life-changing works, and to achieve a wider reach.