



ACHIEVING IMPACT IN A LIMITED TIME FRAME

Beldon's ten-year horizon for accomplishing its goals carried its own set of advantages and challenges. On the one hand, having a limited time frame created a sense of urgency that led to bolder grant making. On the other hand, it meant the foundation had a smaller margin for error because there was less time to learn from mistakes.. Here's what we learned about achieving impact in a limited time frame:

1. **Learn Quickly.** Having a sunset date means there's limited time to learn from mistakes and adjust course.
2. **Use Evaluation to Refine Strategy.** Develop programmatic benchmarks of success and use external evaluations with anonymous feedback to assess progress. An evaluation that looks at the overall impact of program strategies, rather than just individual grants, will indicate if you're on the right track or need to make changes.
3. **Keep a Tight Focus.** It's better to start with a few areas where you are likely to make a difference than to take on too many issues and then have to pare down.
4. **Be Bold.** Develop or adopt innovative strategies geared to bring change within a limited time frame.
5. **Manage Risk.** Taking chances can lead to breakthrough solutions, but not all bets pay off. Learn from those that don't work out and move on.
6. **Look for Synergy Across Program Areas.** Develop a strategy early on to connect, where possible, the work of major programs in order to achieve greater scale and deeper impact.
7. **Ensure Budget Flexibility.** Allocate assets to allow flexibility to respond to unanticipated funding opportunities or critical needs in the field.
8. **Build the Field.** Hire staff members who can bring other funders to the work.
9. **Use All the Foundation's Resources – Not Just Money.** Capitalize on staff's issue expertise, funder connections, and ability to serve as a sounding board for problems and ideas.