

Learn By Doing



Learn By Doing

01

Which core capabilities?

Considering the crucial skills for community foundation leaders.

02

How to support learning?

Ways of cultivating core capabilities as a support organization.

03

Experimenting in practice

When starting up, encourage learning-by-doing experiences.

WHICH CORE CAPABILITIES?

Considering the crucial skills for community foundation leaders.

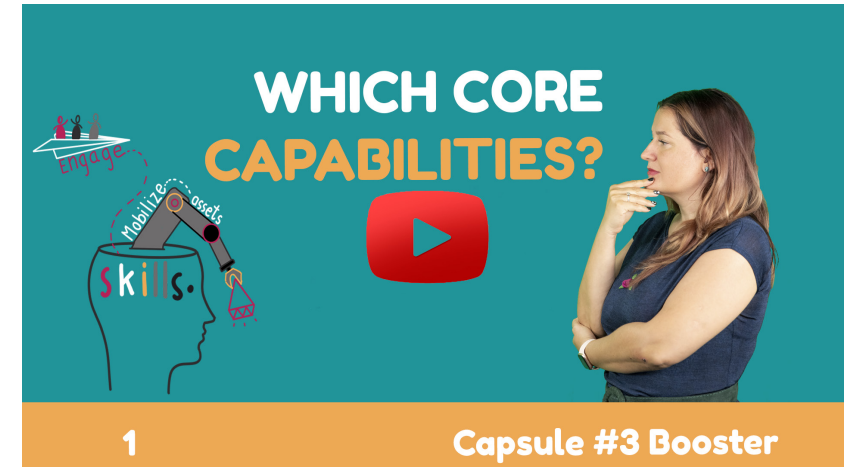
What skills do new community foundation leaders need?

Now that you have your co-adventurers, it's time to start the journey together.

To prepare for this journey, it is helpful to think about the skills that Community Foundation leaders will need, both in the start-up phase and once they have been established, in order to become strategic, impactful organisations in their territories.

These skills are connected to the main functions of a Community Foundation.

A first critical skill is reaching out to other people in the community – specific groups and networks – to map the leaders and assets of that particular territory. It is important to have a constant openness towards the community and its resources, understanding what is already there. This includes fact-checking their intuitions and making decisions based on what is on the ground, not only on their own ideas and perceptions of reality.



Another key skill to develop is identifying, cultivating and mobilizing assets – the capacity to engage with other groups in a way that generates a response to contribute. How can they inspire others to want to come together with their resources and invest them long-term, in order to generate value for the community as a whole?

A third skill is offering support to leaders, initiative groups and drivers of change. These can be NGOs, but they can also be informal leaders, groups or networks that are active in the community. The main way to offer support is through grants, while these can be complemented by support for collaboration, expertise sharing, knowledge and trust building.

Learn By Doing

01

Which core capabilities?

Considering the crucial skills for community foundation leaders.

02

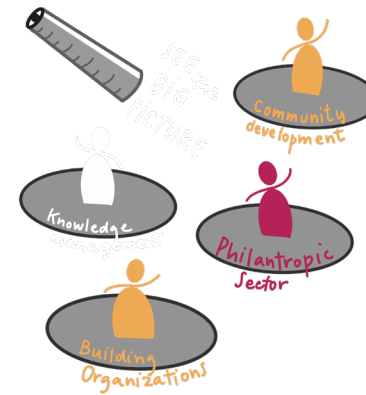
How to support learning?

Ways of cultivating core capabilities as a support organization.

03

Experimenting in practice

When starting up, encourage learning-by-doing experiences.



A fourth skill is related to good governance.

How are decisions structured in the community foundation, once it is set up? Who makes these decisions? What is the role of the founders? What is the role of the board of trustees? How are they connected to the executive leadership and executive team? To what degree does the governance reflect the diversity in the community and is able to build a cohesive position for the Community Foundation?

In summary, we will focus on 4 skill areas in which CFSOs can help local teams to better understand and develop:

1. Community mapping & engagement
2. Asset mobilization
3. Supporting doers
4. Good governance

Learn By Doing

01

Which core capabilities?

Considering the crucial skills for community foundation leaders.

02

How to support learning?

Ways of cultivating core capabilities as a support organization.

03

Experimenting in practice

When starting up, encourage learning-by-doing experiences.

HOW TO SUPPORT LEARNING?

Ways of cultivating core capabilities as a support organization.

How do you help community foundation initiatives cultivate these skills?

These skills are important in the set-up phase, as well as in the first years of the Community Foundation.

The support organisation can think of different ways to approach these areas, depending on the stage in the development of the initiative group and later of the foundation.

The set-up phase is about **building a vision** that will have long-term implications for these areas, and about **testing practical ways of working** in the context of their own communities.



At this starting moment, it is important to offer a structure that gives space for **successful first experiences in the essential functions** of a Community Foundation. It is about testing new ways and being present as a partner on this journey, helping local leaders navigate this experimental phase.

It is good to find a balance between these two types of positions, in negotiation with community foundation leaders, keeping in mind the field building considerations, as they will have an impact in the long-term positioning of the community foundation.

Learn By Doing

01

Which core capabilities?

Considering the crucial skills for community foundation leaders.

02

How to support learning?

Ways of cultivating core capabilities as a support organization.

03

Experimenting in practice

When starting up, encourage learning-by-doing experiences.



What are some roles that the CFSOs can take in this support relationship?

1. They can bring in **new concepts**.
2. They can bring in **inspiration for practice**.
3. They can help Community Foundation Initiative Groups **design their plans through coaching sessions and tools**.
4. They can **provide feedback and be a partner in dialogue** whenever doubts emerge, both conceptual and practical.
5. They can help Community Foundation Initiative Groups **connect with other groups** in their country. And connect to existing community foundations in other countries and compare experiences.

If you want to take a broader perspective, looking from the system of support, the main dilemma is **how much does a CFSO support the needs that the Community Foundation initiative groups are aware of and understand, and how much is a CFSO a conversation-starter for what is possible**, what would be needed in the future, how the context may evolve, and what is important to think through at this stage, even if the practical implications will show up later on.

It is good to find a balance between these two types of positions, in negotiation with community foundation leaders, keeping in mind the field building considerations, as they will have an impact in the long-term positioning of the community foundation.

Learn By Doing

01

Which core capabilities?

Considering the crucial skills for community foundation leaders.

02

How to support learning?

Ways of cultivating core capabilities as a support organization.

03

Experimenting in practice

When starting up, encourage learning-by-doing experiences.

EXPERIMENTING IN PRACTICE

When starting up, encourage learning-by-doing experiences.

Designing a strong accompaniment or support program.

We have defined **four areas of essential skills** that community foundations must have.

We also recommended that the purpose of this phase, before initiative groups register as community foundations, **could be about connecting understanding** with experimenting in practice.

In other words, the start up phase could support the members of the initiative groups to have a direct **experience of how a community foundation works once it is started** - to explore how they fit within the context of the community, how people respond to it, and what type of challenges come up when putting ideas linked with the CF concept in practice.



So rather than designing a curriculum that would be fit for an university program or for conceptually understanding a field, it is important to **design experiences that help the leaders practice, reflect and learn from these experiences, by doing**. This also gives a chance to the CFSO team to respond to the situations that emerge at the local level and adapt their support, as they themselves are also learning by accompanying these experiences.

Next, let's look at how such experiments can be designed. What should they include? What could they look like in action? And how can they be reflected upon and learned from? We will consider this for each of the four areas of critical skills.