

Leadership Practices of Emerging Community Foundations in Manitoba

Executive Summary

The nature of effective and adaptable leadership in community foundations is evolving as the roles of community foundations evolve and adapt. There is a gap in the literature supporting the leadership activities of Canadian community foundations. This paper draws from academic and practitioner experience to better understand the factors contributing to leadership development in Manitoba's emerging community foundations (which hold less than \$16 million in trust). The empirical analysis of this research shows that community foundations demonstrate leadership practices regardless of asset size, age, staffing capacity, and makeup of the community served. Through these leadership activities, a community foundation generates value for both the community foundation and the community (Paarlberg et al., 2021). These activities add value by changing long-term community conditions, strengthening a sense of place by building a collective response to community issues, attracting new community capital, and introducing new programming and initiatives (Paarlberg et al., 2021).

Introduction

A community foundation's mission is centred around the community and focused on "mobiliz[ing] the resources of the community to meet the community's needs" (Perry and Mazany, 2014, p. 5). These organizations are place-based in focus and accountable to the community within a specific geographical area (Carman, 2001). A look at the original principles that guided the development of these community-focused institutions in the United States reveals principles grounded in economics, or the acquisition and distribution of wealth

(Bernholz et al., 2005). A community foundation realizes its mission through these grounding principles by flowing its financial assets into the community.

However, as Canadian community foundations move into their second century, the dynamic and changing communities they serve demand a shift and evolution in realizing their mission. To adapt and continue to serve their changing communities, new definitions of community foundation success will shift to focus on the community, not solely the institution, long-term relationships that do not revolve around financial assets, and coordinated impact versus competitive independence (Bernholz et al., 2005). Phillips et al. (2016) articulate this shift by challenging a singular financial lens of community foundation operations, emphasizing a community foundation's critical role in generating and mobilizing community knowledge for positive change. This change, among others, represents the emergence of community foundations' newly defined community leadership role.

The Canadian community foundation landscape is home to 191 foundations that serve more than 90% of the nation's communities (Community Foundations of Canada, 2017). Although in 2012, the ten largest community foundations held 82% of total community foundation financial assets in Canada, it is the total assets of the remaining smaller, emerging community foundations that are experiencing more significant growth (Imagine Canada et al., 2014).

Focusing on this group of community foundations that hold steadily increasing endowed assets, this study aims to make two significant contributions. First, based on a literature review

focused on community foundation leadership, this paper synthesizes a framework of community foundation leadership practices and contributing factors. Second, supported by practitioner interviews, this study provides evidence highlighting how leadership philosophy and practices appear in Manitoba's emerging community foundations. An expanded and enhanced understanding of leadership in emerging community foundations will help advance further research. It will also guide emerging community foundations and capacity-building organizations in targeting resources and development intended to advance mission-aligned and sustainable leadership practices.

This study defines *emerging community foundations* as having less than \$16 million in endowed assets, led by a volunteer board, supported by less than two full-time staff, and established for less than 30 years. The growth in the number of community foundations in Manitoba drove the intentional choice to focus on these organizations. Manitoba holds the greatest concentration of community foundations per capita in Canada (Community Foundations of Canada, 2018). In addition, emerging community foundations are underrepresented in academic and practice-based literature.

Literature Review

The literature review, encompassing academic and practice-based literature, revealed 25 journal articles, white papers, and publications that speak to the past, current, and future of community foundation leadership. The literature explores community foundation leadership's prevalence, demonstration, and impact. The findings are presented in two parts; part one

explores how community foundations demonstrate leadership, and part two highlights the facilitators and challenges to community foundation engagement in leadership activities.

Demonstrating Community Leadership

A community foundation's operations focus on four activities, donor services, grantmaking, managing assets, and community leadership (Graddy and Morgan, 2006; Phillips, 2011). A community foundation's core operational work is driven by a mission to advance the vitality of the geographic or social community it serves (Phillips et al., 2016). Matching donors' interests with community projects through the disbursement of responsive grantmaking generates mission-aligned impact (Perry & Mazany, 2014; Graddy & Morgan, 2006). However, recent reports suggest that community foundations must shift and adapt to how they respond and support community priorities to remain relevant leaders (Graddy and Morgan, 2006).

Unpacking community leadership reveals an activity that's definition is broad in scope and scale. Researchers position leadership as not linear and one-dimensional but as activities ranging from gathering the community to advocating government for systems reform. This study builds on Ballard's (2007) framework of six themes of community foundation leadership activities: convening, expanding funding, advocacy, building community capacity, internal readiness, and generating community knowledge. The literature review revealed three additional themes: grantmaking, community foundation operations, and strategic investing. Each leadership theme holds various practices of community foundation leadership. These

themes, central to community foundation leadership, are presented and examined in this report in a conceptual framework of community foundation leadership practices.

Convening Community A community foundation's convening activities foster strategic connections, build relationships, and create space for discourse. These connections grow and link-local leadership while working to broker regional solutions (Ballard, 2007). They can also draw together various stakeholders to develop new solutions (Easterling, 2011) and identify niche opportunities (Carman, 2001). Community foundations can take on a neutral or honest role in convening. Neutral convenors prioritize building networks, supporting collaboration, and building partnerships (Kelly & Duncan, 2014; Perry & Mazany, 2014; Phillips et al., 2011; Walk et al., 2021; Wu, 2021). In contrast, honest convening and brokering information are about taking a position and being an honest broker of solutions (Perry & Mazany, 2014; Walk et al., 2021).

Expand Funding A community foundation expands funding by attracting and developing new resources devoted to community enhancement. Examples include maximizing access to government resources (Ballard, 2007), nurturing high-impact philanthropists (Ballard, 2007), and working with donor-advised funds to direct disbursements to neighbourhood-based development (Carman, 2001). In addition, the community foundation can leverage its discretionary funds to match funding dollars, encouraging multiple funders for community projects (Carman, 2001). A more mainstream method of expanding resources is engaging and inviting donors to participate in community

foundation activities (Kelly & Duncan, 2014). Perry and Mazany (2014) challenge community foundations to engage these donors in ways that define the community's diversity, politics, and identity.

Advocacy and Systems Change Advocacy is a method by which community foundations strive to change systems (Walk et al., 2021). This leadership work change can be done by collaborating and partnering for local systems reform and policy solutions (Ballard, 2007). In Canada, policy change leadership is a gap in community foundation practices and strategic priorities (Phillips, 2011).

Building Community Capacity Building community capacity is how a community foundation promotes community performance (Ballard, 2007). Foundations can build the capacity of individuals, organizations, and communities (Easterling, 2011; Wu, 2021). A direct approach is the engagement and support of community leaders in leadership work, including donors and co-investors (National Task Force, 2013).

Building Internal Readiness A community foundation can build its readiness and capacity for leadership by clarifying its mission, aligning it to the mission, and building a board for leadership (Ballard, 2007).

Grantmaking Daly (2008) states that grantmaking activities are how maturing community foundations demonstrate leadership by leveraging their knowledge of the

community. Leadership is also demonstrated through the disbursement of discretionary funds to provide operating and project support for community development organizations and program-related investments (Carman, 2001). Leveraging grants to foster economic development demonstrates community leadership (Kelly & Duncan, 2014).

Community Foundation Operations A community foundation can choose to act strategically on behalf of the community in response to leadership opportunities in the community. (National Task Force, 2013; Walk et al., 2021; Wu, 2021). Developing, testing, and disseminating innovative program models in response to community knowledge demonstrates leadership (Easterling, 2011; Perry & Mazany, 2014). As does creating a new organization focused on a critical community local issue (Easterling, 2011).

Generating Community Knowledge Leadership is realized through engagement and facilitated discourse sparked by collecting community knowledge and the strategic sharing and use of community insights for community benefit and positive change (Phillips et al., 2016; Phillips et al., 2011). Through community assessments, a community foundation can generate meaningful community knowledge (Easterling, 2011; Phillips et al., 2016; Wu, 2021). When the community foundation shares this information with the community, the community builds practical knowledge, which initiates community discourse (Ballard, 2007). The community foundation demonstrates

leadership by publicizing issues that need public and political attention (Easterling, 2011).

Strategic Investing A community foundation's investment practices can signal leadership in the community. For example, impact investing (Kelly & Duncan, 2014) and innovating through social finance (Phillips et al., 2011) are strategic ways a community foundation can demonstrate leadership in their community.

Table 1 presents a conceptual framework of community foundation leadership practices.

Table 1

Conceptual framework of community foundation leadership practices

[insert Table 1: Conceptual framework of community foundation leadership practices]

Facilitators and Challenges of Community Foundation Leadership

Facilitators and challenges contribute to a community foundation's ability to engage in leadership activities. The literature review revealed four factors that can facilitate or challenge the leadership of a community foundation: internal capacity, internal thinking, external influences, and the community foundation's operations. Each factor can contribute to leadership development or be a barrier that distracts a community foundation's commitment to community leadership.

As identified in the literature, the following section outlines each factor, identifying facilitators and challenges that contribute to the development of community foundation leadership.

Internal Capacity Internal capacity is the ability, skills, and resources available to a community foundation as it works to realize its mission.

Facilitator Internal variables such as the organization's age, asset size, structure alignment with the organization's mission, the skillset of staff, and board composition influence a community foundation's leadership abilities (Phillips et al., 2011; Graddy, 2006).

Through extensive consultation with community foundation stakeholders, CF Leads identified the resources, understanding, and skills held by the foundation's staff and board of directors that are critical to leadership ability (National Task Force, 2013). The National Task Force (2013) research identified two of the four first-level building blocks to community leadership by a community foundation to be related to internal capacity, the importance of building relationships and accessing and developing resources necessary to exercise community leadership. Staff must be adaptable and take on various roles, including administrative and financial support, program support, fundraising, communications, and more (Paarlberg et al., 2021). Clutterbuck and Arundel (2017) of the Ontario Nonprofit Network state that the nonprofit sector needs leadership through seven key

roles: builder, thinker, mentor, storyteller, innovator, connector, and steward. In addition to these roles, to support collaborative and authentic community leadership, the board must represent its community's diversity (Paarlberg et al., 2021).

The composition of the board facilitates the foundation's leadership practices. For example, foundations with more minority board members are likelier to say that influencing public policy is important for an effective community foundation (Ostrower, 2006).

To be a community leader, the community foundation must have a strong understanding of its revenue structure but not rely on financial resources alone to generate community impact (Paarlberg et al., 2021). There needs to be a commitment to leveraging other assets (other than financial) within an agreed-upon operating style (Brown, 2003).

How a community foundation shares information throughout its organization is a significant influencer of leadership ability (Leadership and Development, 2019). A foundation must make available accessible training materials on subjects and topics that can, directly and indirectly, build the capacity required to undertake leadership practices. Topics may include conflict transformation, methodologies

for analyzing impact and challenges in leadership development, and research on the intergenerational transfer of power (Leadership and Development, 2020).

Challenges Leadership is time, labour, and resource-intensive, often requiring the development and acquisition of new skills within the foundation (Paarlberg et al., 2021; Leadership and Development, 2019). For these reasons, insufficient staff and organizational structure can impede a foundation's ability to assume a leadership role (Easterling, 2011). An organization structure that prioritizes donor preferences can also challenge leadership ability (Phillips et al., 2011).

A view of top-down leadership with no consideration of bottom-up influence and impact can negatively impact a foundation's leadership ability (Leadership and Development, 2019). Holding onto traditional power and not welcoming and supporting the emergence of new leadership will challenge a foundation to assume and hold onto a positive, facilitative leadership role (Leadership and Development, 2020).

Internal Thinking Internal thinking is the future and reflective thinking and assumptions held by the community foundation's board of directors and staff—the values, culture, and desire to exercise community leadership (National Task Force, 2013).

Facilitators The path to community leadership requires that a community foundation look internally at how its practices align with its values (Walk et al., 2021). National Task Force (2013) research identified two of four first-level building blocks to community leadership by a community foundation to be connected to internal thinking; the ability for the organization to manifest the values, culture and will to exercise leadership, and the importance of building the understanding and skills required to exercise community leadership. How a community foundation prioritizes its work across the four main categories: donor services, grantmaking, managing assets, and community leadership (Morgan and Graddy, 2006; Phillips, 2018) is a facilitator of future leadership activity. Redefining a foundation's primary capital to time or influence versus financial assets is a way to facilitate leadership activity (Walk et al., 2021). A shift in thinking from institution to community and competitive independent work to coordinated impact strengthens the ability of a foundation to assume a leadership role (Bernholz, 2005).

How a community foundation approaches and commits to continuous learning will influence its ability to assume a leadership role. A foundation's board must be willing to listen and accept cues from the community (Paarlberg et al., 2021). This learning can include a commitment to better understanding its community through inquiry, sharing information, and recognizing multiple sources of data and community knowledge (Brown, 2003). It should also include evaluating the

impact of its leadership work (National Task Force, 2013). This learning ensures that a community foundation's strategic direction is responsive and adaptive to its environment, supporting the foundation in assuming a leadership role (Graddy, 2006).

How the foundation board acknowledges the conflict and risks associated with its operations, and more specifically around assuming a leadership role, is a factor that can influence the board's willingness to engage in leadership (Brown, 2003; Paarlberg et al., 2021).

The foundation's ability to align information, assumptions, and thinking about the community with community change goals, ideally supported by a theory of change, will influence its ability to engage in leadership activities (Brown, 2003).

The foundation's ability to work within a long-term and collaborative problem-solving lens, intentionally recognizing how their influence and impact better their community's wellbeing will influence its leadership activities (Kelly & Duncan, 2014; Easterling, 2011).

Challenges The foundation must possess a realistic conception of effective community leadership (Ostrower, 2006) and hold clarity around the foundation's goals (Brown, 2003). If not done correctly, a community foundation's strategy

can constrain the future direction and decision-making of the foundation (Graddy, 2006).

Community foundation work that is narrow and does not consider the more extensive infrastructure required to address community priorities can also be a barrier to community leadership (Easterling & Millesen, 2015). A limited view of systems thinking or prioritizing funding for 'helping projects' over 'changing projects' can limit leadership potential (Leadership and Development, 2020).

Risk aversion (Easterling, 2011), the inability to make a mindset shift that requires taking difficult positions on important issues (Paarlberg et al., 2021), and a lack of conflict management skills (Leadership and Development, 2020) will create leadership challenges to a foundation.

A foundation's use of knowledge in a limited way will restrict its leadership ability (Brown, 2003). A community foundation must be able to build, support, and engage in learning. It is challenging to embrace a leadership role if the foundation does not embrace the complexity of its work and thus leverages strategies framed as linear and causal without regard to the complexity surrounding the issues and systems they are working to address (Patrizi et al., 2013).

External Influences External influences are the effects of the community served and the broader environment on community foundation operations.

Facilitators The foundation's social capacity within the community can affect its ability to influence, facilitate, and lead for greater community impact. Graddy and Wang (2008) found that community social capital is critical to building and growing a community foundation. The community culture also facilitates (or restricts) open, inclusive, and trusting engagement required to support and drive desired change by the foundation (Easterling & Millesen, 2015). If a change in the community's culture is required, the foundation can lead by creating readiness for cultural change by encouraging new thinking and building capacity (Easterling & Millesen, 2015).

Community characteristics such as philanthropic capacity, partner capacity, and the number of local competitors can influence a community foundation's strategic direction and ability to facilitate desired community change and impact (Graddy, 2006). The community's population growth and mobility, income inequality and extent of poverty, political divisiveness, and nature of wealth contribute to the community's priority issues and the ability for philanthropy, including foundations' ability to initiate leadership activities, to address them (Phillips et al., 2011).

Exposure to new thinking and not necessarily top-down influences determines the individual and unique path to community foundation leadership (Walk et al., 2021). This exposure could include access to new thinking from other communities and community foundations (Paarlberg et al., 2021) gleaned from engagement in networking and peer-to-peer connections (Leadership and Development, 2019; Leadership and Development, 2020). Through this learning and development, the foundation can develop an 'edge' that initiates change and support for the foundation's leadership (Easterling, 2011).

External stakeholders, including donors and the greater community, influence a foundation's leadership activities (Paarlberg et al., 2021). A committed donor base allows a foundation to focus on community development versus asset development (Paarlberg et al., 2021). At the same time, an unrestricted fund enables the foundation to demonstrate leadership by responding to the community's changing priorities (Paarlberg et al., 2021). Leadership driven by the community results in an invitation to participate in cross-sector discussions, thus enhancing and demonstrating the foundation's legitimacy within the community (Paarlberg et al., 2021). This legitimacy connects grassroots and community development organizations and enables facilitative leadership (Leadership and Development, 2020).

External influences outside the served community include influence on strategic direction by national competitors (Graddy, 2006), how the political landscape creates space for bottom-up leadership (Phillips et al., 2011), and how macro (top-down) or micro (emerging) events define a foundation's leadership path (Walk et al., 2021).

Challenges Local influences that challenge foundation leadership include demographic changes (Bernholz, 2005), level of social capital (Paarlberg et al., 2021), the presence of other anchor institutions that have already assumed a leadership role (Paarlberg et al., 2021), and the presence of donors who do not see the value in leadership activities and therefore limit the funding available to the foundation (Leadership and Development, 2019). New expectations for public problem-solving (Bernholz, 2005), misunderstanding by the community of the foundation's shifting roles and resources (Paarlberg et al., 2021), and the ability of the foundation to remain flexible to the changing and evolving definition of community (Perry & Mazany, 2014) represent changing community dynamics that will challenge the leadership activities of a foundation.

External influences outside the served community include economic pressures (Bernholz, 2005), commercial sector innovation (Bernholz, 2005), changing relationships between sectors (Bernholz, 2005), the level of political capital

(Paarlberg et al., 2021), and changing expectations for regulation and accountability (Bernholz, 2005).

Community Foundation Operations Community foundation operations capture the execution and implementation of the organization's mission and strategy.

Facilitators The foundation must be willing and able to act, to put meaningful solutions into practice (Easterling, 2011). From there, the path to leadership is often not a planned journey. It is an emergent process (Walk et al., 2021). The launch of 'test' projects demonstrates the evolving nature of a foundation's leadership (Paarlberg et al., 2021).

Challenges It is challenging for a foundation to assume a leadership role if it sets into motion a strategy but fails to learn and adapt during its implementation (Patrizi et al., 2013; Brown, 2003). This lack of reflection is closely related to the foundation's ability to measure and conceptualize impact, a critical element of foundation leadership (Paarlberg et al., 2021). A community foundation that evaluates performance on indicators that reinforce linear and casual assumptions will not consider the complexity of the foundation's work and its served community (Patrizi et al., 2013). This omission can negatively impact a foundation's ability to lead.

Although a community assessment will provide insight into numerous priorities, the foundation can be challenged to either spread the funding across multiple priorities or focus its resources, narrowing on one or two priorities (Easterling, 2011). The foundation's ability to follow through and follow up on defined strategies is closely related. For example, a foundation that says one thing but does another will tarnish its reputation and ability to lead in the community (Ostrower, 2006).

Table 2 summarizes the facilitators and challenges to leadership by a community foundation referenced in the literature.

Table 2

Facilitators and challenges to leadership by a community foundation

[Insert Table 2: Facilitators and challenges to leadership by a community foundation]

Methodology: A Focus on Manitoba

The Winnipeg Foundation, established in 1921, held nearly \$1.8 billion in assets in trust in 2022, making it the oldest and one of Canada's largest community foundations (The Winnipeg Foundation, 2022a; The Winnipeg Foundation, 2021). Since 1921, the landscape of community foundations in Manitoba has flourished. With the generous support of the Thomas Sill Foundation, Manitoba experienced rapid growth in community foundations throughout the '80s and '90s (Gibson et al., 2014). As of March 2022, there are 56 community foundations in

Manitoba (Endow Manitoba, 2022a), the largest concentration of community foundations per capita in Canada (Community Foundations of Canada, 2018). Manitoba community foundations prioritize an endowment-focused model to advance their sustainability and growth (Endow Manitoba, 2022b). However, despite this common model, there is great diversity in the size of assets held in trust and the age of the organizations. In 2021, the 55 community foundations outside of the capital city ranged from more than 55 to less than five years old and held assets in trusts of just under \$100 thousand to just over \$18 million (Endow Manitoba, 2021b).

Daly's (2008) study of how the diverse community foundations in the United Kingdom operate revealed that younger community foundations focused on building their assets, while mature community foundations were more likely to explore community leadership activities. Although Manitoba is reflective of the diverse group of community foundations in the United Kingdom, as it relates to the size of assets held in trust and the age of the organizations, further exploration of the leadership activities of these foundations is warranted to develop a better understanding of the practices dedicated to community leadership.

Following the literature review, this study thoroughly investigated publicly available data, including websites, T3010 returns, and social media accounts, to better understand the leadership practices and supporting factors of emerging community foundations in Manitoba. This secondary data review involved searches for keywords, themes, and experiences related to leadership as identified in the literature review. Concurrently, one-on-one interviews were held with the six participating community foundations. These six foundations were selected for their

unique demonstration of leadership. The interviews held open-ended questions grouped into four categories: one, how leadership is defined, thought about, and approached by the board and staff, two, how the foundation demonstrates leadership, both internally and externally, three, how the makeup and characteristics of the community impact the foundation's leadership, and iv) challenges that have arisen when the foundation approaches the topic or activity of leadership.

Table 3 summarizes and highlights several characteristics of the participant community foundations and the communities served.

Table 3

Characteristics of participant community foundations and the communities served

[Insert Table 3: Characteristics of participant community foundations and the communities served]

Findings

This data collection showcased the experiences of Manitoba's community foundations as it relates to the current knowledge on community foundation leadership. The findings of this study highlight the similarities and differences in how the studied community foundations demonstrate and engage in leadership compared to the current literature.

Demonstrating Leadership

All nine themes of leadership activities, identified in the literature review and presented in Table 1: Conceptual framework of community foundation leadership practices are being acted upon by the studied community foundations. Table 4 summarizes how the participant community foundations demonstrate leadership within the conceptual framework. A Manitoba community foundation leader and research participant shared insight into the diversity of leadership practices of community foundation; “A community foundation board must view its leadership role as just as important as its granting, fund development and governance practices.”

Table 4

Demonstration of leadership by participant community foundations

[Insert Table 4: Demonstration of leadership by participant community foundations]

Convene Community is the most prominent demonstration of leadership with the greatest focus and engagement by the studied community foundations. The activities that make up this leadership theme are diverse. All studied community foundations engaged in acts of *neutral convening and building relationships* and *supporting collaboration*. This high level of engagement compares to only two community foundations that demonstrated engagement in *honest convening* activities. The commitment to community engagement was demonstrated by a community foundation leader and research participant’s insight; “A community foundation must ensure that all voices in the community are heard.”

Research conducted by Endow Manitoba in 2021 supports these findings. Endow Manitoba, an initiative of The Winnipeg Foundation, works to advance the sustainability and growth of Manitoba's community foundation network (Endow Manitoba, 2022b). Endow Manitoba's (2021a) research found that most Manitoba community foundations have engaged in convening activities to build relationships and support collaboration. Outside the capital city, 78% of Manitoba community foundations have hosted a community forum or event in the past five years. This community engagement ranged from events to raise awareness of the community foundation to events with diverse stakeholders to identify and discuss community wellbeing topics. 86% of these community foundations recorded participant feedback, input, and insight during these community forums and used the information to inform its board strategies, grantmaking priorities, or fund development strategies. A Manitoba community foundation leader and research participant emphasized the importance of connecting with community the; "Deep community relationships create community value."

A disconnect between practice and community communication An analysis of the studied community foundation's annual reports reveals that the language used in these annual reports does not demonstrate or connect to the leadership model built from this project's literature review. This disconnect was confirmed by assessing the word frequency of these publicly posted reports, dating back to 2009. The findings show that only 18 of the 32 identified targeted leadership words (keywords embedded within Table 1: Conceptual framework of community foundation leadership practices) do not

appear in any meaningful frequency (less than 0.02%) in the foundation's annual reports. These findings show a significant disconnect between the academic literature and these community foundations' leadership initiatives. Ballard (2007) warns against this disconnect stating that activities not labelled as leadership can lead to inefficiencies, ineffective practices, and leadership practices not being embedded within the organization.

Facilitators and Challenges to Community Foundation Leadership

Various facilitators and challenges to leadership emerged through conversations with community foundation leaders. Interestingly, a Manitoba community foundation leader and research participant shared that "It is when we began to see ourselves as a connector that we were able to be more proactive in our community leadership." Aligning with

The community foundation leaders interviewed summarized what is critical to assuming a leadership role in their community, as summarized in Table 5: Facilitators and challenges to leadership by participant community foundation.

The findings of this study showcase how the leadership practices of emerging community foundations in Manitoba both support and differ from the current literature. A Manitoba community foundation leader and research participant highlights the evolving nature of community foundation leadership; "As a community foundation, we should be looking for different ideas and new ways to look at our community."

Discussion

Staff size is positively associated with more communication and collaboration, convening, soliciting feedback, and offering non-financial technical assistance to grantees (Ostrower, 2006). Ostrower (2006) also noted that a larger staff size was associated with believing it is very important to engage in activities beyond grantmaking to increase impact or to characterize strengthening social change as a grantmaking goal. These are all noted in Table 2: Facilitator and challenges to leadership by a community foundation.

The results of this study reinforce the findings of Ostrower (2006). According to Figure 1: Impact of staff on level of engagement in leadership activities, full-time staff positively contributed to engagement and demonstration of leadership activities in the studied community foundations. Community foundations with full-time staff demonstrated and engaged in leadership activities more often than those with part-time or no staff.

Figure 1

Impact of staff on level of engagement in leadership activities

[Insert Figure 1: Impact of staff on level of engagement in leadership activities]

The community's population growth and mobility, income inequality and extent of poverty, political divisiveness, and nature of wealth contribute to the community's priority issues and the ability of philanthropy to address them (Phillips et al., 2011). Research conducted by Ostrower (2006) found that community foundations in metropolitan areas were more likely to

host grantee convenings or solicit grantee feedback than community foundations in rural areas. Understanding the community it serves supports a community foundation in building relationships and generating community impact (Phillips et al., 2011). In addition, as noted earlier, these activities are examples of a community foundation's demonstrated leadership.

According to Statistics Canada, a metropolitan area has a population of at least 100,000 (Statistics Canada, 2016). A complete 100% of studied community foundations fall outside metropolitan areas. In addition, 100% of studied community foundations participate in convening activities. This observation suggests that the distinction between rural and metropolitan populations may not significantly influence a community foundation's level of engagement in convening activities.

Figure 2: Impact of community population change on engagement in leadership activities implies that change in community population does not significantly impact an emerging community foundation's demonstration or level of leadership. Communities with shrinking populations and growing populations appear to be home to community foundations that demonstrate similar levels of leadership through various activities.

Figure 2

Impact of community population change on engagement in leadership activities

[Insert Figure 2: Impact of community population change on engagement in leadership activities]

According to Graddy and Morgan's (2006) framework of community foundation operations, younger community foundations tend to focus more on building up endowed assets, while mature community foundations are more likely to explore community leadership activities. As Figure 3: Impact of foundation age on engagement in leadership activities shows, age is not a facilitating factor in engagement or demonstration of leadership activities.

Figure 3

Impact of foundation age on engagement in leadership activities

[Insert Figure 3: Impact of foundation age on engagement in leadership activities]

Being a storyteller, communicating effectively with various audiences is a crucial strategy for demonstrating leadership (Clutterbuck & Arundel, 2017). From 2013 to 2021, the studied community foundations increased the volume of information they shared with the community via their corporate websites. The number of website pages increased by 1029% during this time frame. This positive increase exemplifies what Walk et al. (2021) describe as emergent and iterative leadership. This research by Walk et al. (2021) noted that leadership is not drastic or jarring; instead, it "emerges from ongoing efforts to strengthen the organization and its community." (Walk et al., 2021, p. 28). The change in the community foundation's online communication with its community demonstrates an emerging change in leadership. In support of this growth and evolution, a Manitoba community foundation leader and research participant shared, "Our work is constantly evolving. As a result of the tools provided by Endow

Manitoba and the advice and encouragement they generously share, we are always expanding our thinking.”

Conclusion

Inherent to community foundations is a paradox, the need to be philanthropy-led (supported by donors) while remaining community-responsive (Harrow et al., 2016). Adding to the organization's complexity, community foundations must reflect critically on their community change and impact (Brown et al., 2003). Through trust-based relationships with donors and community-serving organizations, the distribution of grants by community foundations has resulted in community achievements (Brown et al., 2003). Lessons have been learned throughout this work, and various community foundation stakeholders have garnered energy and commitment for further impact. Calls for greater impact and recognizing community change work's complexity encourage community foundations to reflect on how they think, act, and learn (Brown et al., 2003). In addition, an increase in the competition for space in the philanthropic lens of donors is also challenging community foundations to take a more active leadership role (Bernholz et al., 2005).

To achieve more meaningful improvements to the wellbeing of their communities, community foundations will need to do more than grantmaking (Easterling & Millisen, 2015). Often referred to as community leadership, these proactive community change strategies include collaboration, innovation, capacity building, and advocacy, to name only a few (Easterling, 2011). This expanded view of community foundation work highlights the organization's unique

role in the community. Community foundations are organizations that hold the ability to facilitate collective action by strengthening engagement, support, and relationships across the community they serve. At their best, community foundations cross sectors with ease, understand their community's landscape, are experienced convenors, respect, tap into and amplify the wisdom and voices in their community, contribute to and leverage needed resources, are comfortable in the public policy arena and are critical parts of the local accountability system (Ballard, 2007).

This study answered the question posed by Ballard (2007), are emerging community foundations embracing leadership activities but not defining them? The short answer is yes. This study illustrates leadership's incremental and constantly evolving nature, as defined by Walk et al. (2021). Regardless of a community foundation's size, location, age, and community served, these organizations find innovative and impactful ways to lead alongside their community. They are working with numerous partners in creative ways to build resilient and vibrant communities that generations will enjoy. As the Transatlantic Community Foundation Network (2000) found in its work, these non-granting activities of a community foundation can produce the most significant impact.

In looking deeper into how community foundations demonstrate leadership, the studied community foundations showed acts of leadership within each of the nine identified leadership themes in various ways and to varying degrees of intensity and intentionality. This level of engagement aligns with research conducted by Wu (2021), which found that foundations tend

to specialize in one or a few leadership capacities, not necessarily engaging in all noted in Table 1: Conceptual framework of community foundation leadership practices. Just as Wu (2021) noted, this varying level of engagement emphasizes the need to unpack and define these leadership concepts carefully. Identifying and acknowledging the leadership work of community foundations will support donors, grantees, the foundation's board, and the greater community to recognize and value its leadership activities and impact. Without this acknowledgement, Ballard (2007) warns that activities not labelled as leadership can lead to inefficiencies, ineffective practices, and leadership practices not being embedded within the organization.

Interestingly all studied community foundations spoke of the need for the foundation to raise their awareness and profile in the community. However, the practice-based and academic literature suggests a slightly different approach, shifting from an all-encompassing (capturing the entire community with a message about the community foundation) to a more targeted and intentional strategy. Examples of more intentional community convening and engagement that strengthens the leadership of a community foundation while enhancing community impact include: engaging donors in ways that define the diversity, politics, and identity of the community (Perry & Mazany, 2014), fostering strategic relationships, connections, and partnerships to identify niche opportunities and develop and broker new solutions (Ballard, 2007; Perry & Mazany, 2014; Wu, 2021, Phillips et al., 2011; Easterling, 2011; Carman, 2001), publicizing issues that need more public and political attention (Easterling, 2011), and generating knowledge of the community (Phillips et al., 2016; Wu, 2021). There is no doubt value in broad-based, community-wide engagement strategies for the community foundation

and the community. However, the academic literature suggests to the participating community foundations that a more targeted and intentional strategy may accelerate the leadership development of the foundation and thereby enhance the foundation's positive impact on community wellbeing.

Further Study

Community foundations that do not engage in leadership activities risk not being accountable to the community (Guo & Musso, 2007). However, as referenced in the literature and shared by the community foundation leaders interviewed in this study, community foundations face several factors and challenges when contemplating their leadership role in the community. Given that emerging community foundations are working with limited human resource capacity and financial resources and are continuously striving to engage and connect with their community, an important future research question should be, what leadership activities of a community foundation will generate the greatest impact? A critical follow-up question becomes, what capacities are required of these foundations to engage in these activities? Exploring this research question would expand the methodology and findings of this study to include consultation with those community foundations that may not be engaging in or demonstrating leadership activities. This analysis may reveal why or provide greater insight into barriers to community foundations assuming a leadership role.

Wu's (2021) research produced an interconnected framework showcasing leadership themes, each theme flowing into the other themes and each theme accepting input from the other

themes. To better understand which leadership theme will most impact community wellbeing, a proposed hypothesis may be that a community foundation must first *Build Internal Readiness* required to lead. With the establishment of internal capacity, *Fostering Participation* (generating community knowledge and community convening) becomes the critical leadership theme for emerging community foundations. Before introducing and refining the other leadership activities, these foundations should dedicate the time, energy, and resources to develop their ability to generate community knowledge and convene with the community. With established internal readiness and engagement in fostering community participation, a community foundation can build upon its leadership capacity, which can better support and facilitate its granting, priorities, and ability to bolster community capabilities and expand its funding, strategic planning, and influence.

Figure 4

Wu (2021) conceptual framework of leadership for community foundations

[Insert Figure 4: Wu (2021) conceptual framework of leadership for community foundations]

Figure 5

Proposed conceptual framework of leadership for community foundations that prioritizes internal readiness to maximize community impact

[Insert Figure 5: Wu (2021) conceptual framework of leadership for community foundations]

Limitations

The sample of six community foundations to study in Manitoba is small. Although they do an excellent job of representing the diversity of community foundations in Manitoba, a more significant sample from across Canada would strengthen the viability of the research findings. In addition, interviews with both board members and staff, grantees, donors, and community members at large would strengthen the understanding of the real and perceived value and the leadership role the community foundation holds in the community.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author confirms that there are no known conflicts of interest. Although the author works for a community foundation, the relationship with the employer and the studied community foundations did not impact the information shared or the analysis of the data and the research findings.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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