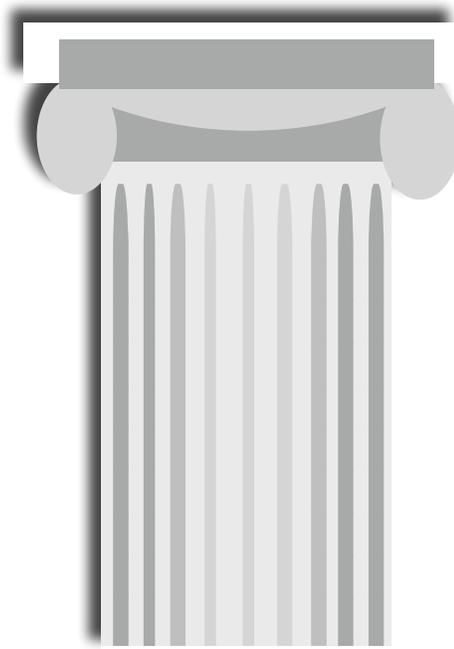


Careers In Foundations For Lawyers



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: INTRODUCTION

Section 2: TYPES OF FOUNDATIONS

Section 3: TYPES OF JOBS IN FOUNDATIONS

Section 4: A QUESTION OF SIZE: BIG V. SMALL FOUNDATIONS

Section 5: HOW LEGAL TRAINING IS USED

Section 6: DECIDING WHICH FOUNDATION IS FOR YOU

Section 7: HOW TO PREPARE FOR A CAREER IN FOUNDATIONS

Section 8: THE HIRING PROCESS

Section 9: REWARDS AND FRUSTRATIONS

Section 10: FOUNDATIONS LAWYERS TELL THEIR STORIES

Section 11: BIBLIOGRAPHY

SECTION 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO FOUNDATION WORK

Foundation philanthropy appeals to many law students interested in building and maintaining public interest programs. The prospect of learning about, selecting, and supporting creative projects attracts students looking for an alternative to traditional legal work. Lawyers can be found playing various roles at foundations. This guide examines the different facets of foundation philanthropy to help you explore the possibilities.

As explained in *Working in Foundations* (listed in the bibliography), the first foundations worked for the benefit of specific institutions, such as hospitals, or focused on the alleviation of particular social problems. The approach to foundation philanthropy expanded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the establishment of general foundations such as the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation. Their broader charters enabled them to address the causes of social issues in addition to working towards their alleviation. For example, foundations now fund nonprofit organizations that seek medical cures in addition to providing money for the maintenance of hospitals.

The post-World War II era saw a tremendous growth in the number of foundations, especially in the 1980s when government regulations on businesses eased and personal wealth increased. The Gates Foundation, which had already vaulted to the status of largest foundation in the world, made a great deal of news recently with the enormous gift from Warren Buffet. Despite this growth, at this point foundation grants comprise a small percentage of the support for nonprofit organizations. Other types of support for nonprofits include government grants, corporate grants, individual donors and religious organizations. The Foundation Center, an organization that provides information on foundation philanthropy, includes data about recent trends in giving on its website, www.fdncenter.org. For example, according to their Foundation

Funding for Children's Health report, grants directed towards the well being of children totaled \$602.8 million in 2003, a significant increase from \$390.6 million in 1999.

SECTION 2

TYPES OF FOUNDATIONS

The Foundation Center defines a private foundation as “a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization having a principal fund that is managed by its own trustees and directors, and that maintains or aids charitable, educational, religious, or other activities serving the public good, primarily by making grants to other nonprofit organizations.” *Working in Foundations* cited other names for a foundation such as “trust” or “endowment.” While not every organization that calls itself a foundation necessarily fits these parameters, all foundations must operate according to the guidelines detailed in the Tax Reform Act of 1969, as amended.

According to the Foundation Center, foundations can be classified by their sources of funding and the services they provide. There are essentially four types of foundations:

1) Operating foundations provide direct services or guide research projects. Few make grants to outside organizations, and the majority of their funds go to internally operated programs; hence, the name operating foundation. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the B.E.L.L. Foundation, which offers programs to assist African American children and teenagers, are two examples of operating foundations. At operating foundations, staff can get more involved in developing programs themselves.

2) Independent foundations are the largest group of foundations and include family foundations, limited-purpose foundations, and general foundations. Most have broad charters that allow them to respond to changing social priorities and move into new areas of interest. These foundations normally fund particular subject or geographic areas. The Ford Foundation, for example, has three major program areas: Assets Building and Community Development;

Peace and Social Justice; and Education, Media, Arts, and Culture. The Ford Foundation has program officers in the United States, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Russia. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation focuses its energies and funds on activities in education, environment, global development, performing arts, and population. In addition, this foundation specifically supports disadvantaged communities in the San Francisco Bay Area. Independent foundations receive their funds from families, individuals, or groups of individuals. If a family possesses influence over the foundation, then it is known as a family foundation. A limited-purpose independent foundation, such as the Glaucoma Foundation, funds projects in one or very few subject areas.

3) Community foundations are also known as public charities. These foundations obtain their funds from numerous donors and donate them to nonprofits in a specific municipality or region. Some examples of local community foundations are the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Cambridge Community Foundation.

4) Company-sponsored foundations, or corporate foundations, are established and funded by business corporations. An example is the Goldman-Sachs Foundation. Corporate officials sit on the boards of these foundations. Corporate foundations exist, however, as separate legal entities and are not to be confused with direct-giving programs over which corporations have complete control. These foundations place priority on activities in their region. They often have more intricate bureaucracies and may be more formal than other types of foundations.

Foundations differ structurally in many ways. According to the Foundation Center, one way to distinguish a foundation is to find out whether it is private or public. Private foundations are generally funded from a single source, such as an individual, a family, or a corporation. Public foundations are funded from multiple sources, including private foundations, government agencies, individuals, and fees for service.

3 SECTION

TYPES OF JOBS IN FOUNDATIONS

Each foundation, large or small, has a **governing board**. Among other activities, the board oversees the foundation's finances, develops foundation standards and general policies, hires the CEO, and decides which programs to fund. Some boards review the staff's recommendations regarding which projects to fund, while other boards act as rubber-stamps. The extent of the board's power depends on the size of the foundation and the relationship between the staff and the board.

The highest-ranking staff position is the **CEO**, President, or Executive Director (hereinafter "CEO"). At smaller foundations, the CEO may be the only employee, responsible for the daily operation of the foundation. This often includes reviewing grant applications and managing finances, such as preparing the budget, fundraising, distributing any discretionary funds and tracking investments. These duties are communication intensive, with a great deal of time spent writing letters and making phone calls to board members, prospective programs, and news reporters. At larger foundations, the CEO also oversees the rest of the staff, although all staff members are ultimately answerable to the board. The CEO directs the staff-board relationship, attends board meetings, and may vote if he or she is a board member.

Another position is that of the **program officer**. Program officers at larger foundations handle the nuts and bolts of grantmaking. The program officer reviews grant applications in light of the foundation's mission and helps prepare and present materials, such as funding recommendations, to the board. This responsibility not only involves reading countless proposals and publications from groups requesting funds from the foundation, but also involves researching groups that work on similar issues in order to keep abreast of developments. Program officers write reports on grant recipients. Some program officers may attend board

meetings. Both CEOs and program officers often serve as advocates for the programs they fund, attending meetings and visiting sites. They also network and meet with foundation colleagues and activists working in their subject areas to learn more about current issues arising in their areas. At larger foundations like Pew Charitable Trust, there may be multiple program officers that head specific programs, such as the program officer of the environmental program or the program officer of the health and human services program.

Some large foundations have specific legal positions, such as **General Counsel** or **Director of Legal Services**. Lawyers working in the General Counsel's office handle a variety of issues, some specific to foundations and some not, including employee benefits; contracts; real estate leasing, purchases, and renovations; and intellectual property. Work specific to a foundation includes reviewing grants to ensure that they conform to IRS guidelines and filing reports with state and federal agencies. Foundation lawyers might engage in corporate work related to the foundation's investments, and occasionally litigation. Knowledge of tax law can be helpful in foundation work.

4 SECTION

A QUESTION OF SIZE: BIG V. SMALL FOUNDATIONS

The roles and responsibilities of staff members at foundations depend largely on the size of the foundation. In addition to considering the category of a foundation, consider the size of a foundation. What size fits your interests and goals best? Smaller foundations tend to have lean decision-making processes and thus can be less formal and bureaucratic. One alumnus highlighted the creative opportunity presented by smaller foundations. Program officers and CEOs claim they have the chance to shape policy and make changes because they possess a greater degree of autonomy compared to their colleagues at larger foundations. Many smaller foundations, however, are not as stable as their larger counterparts because of their narrower base of financial

support. Smaller foundations also tend to be younger and less established than the larger foundations.

An important fact to note is that larger foundations are more likely to have paid staff. According to the 2005 Grantmakers Salary and Benefits Report of the Council on Foundations, grantmakers with \$100 million or more in assets employed 70.2 percent of all staff in foundations. Staff members at larger foundations tend to have more defined responsibilities. For example, a larger foundation may have a vice president, senior director, senior grants administrator, executive assistant and several directors and program officers for each program division. Because these positions often do not involve legal work, training is not offered to new attorneys. At smaller foundations, staff members frequently share responsibilities. Some smaller foundations may have only one staff person. Thus, the President/Executive Director also serves as program officer, analyzing and selecting programs to fund. All staff members at large and small foundations encounter numerous requests for information and money.

5 SECTION

HOW LEGAL TRAINING IS USED

While many positions at foundations do not strictly require legal or other specialized training, a law degree can open doors to foundation jobs, which are often highly competitive. Lawyers working in foundations report that their employers trust a law degree as an indication of their capacity to do a generalist's work. Employers in philanthropy place a high value on advanced degrees.

Attorneys performing non-legal work at foundations agree that their legal training is particularly helpful for understanding the issues and recognizing the need for legal intervention. Additional legal experience after law school helps attorneys to develop their abilities to write effectively, speak clearly, and gather information. Analytical tools developed in law school

prove especially helpful in conferring with practicing lawyers, professionals and other specialists in the field.

A law degree can also help a lawyer at a foundation recognize a legal issue when it arises and decide when to confer with a practicing lawyer. CEOs or program officers who work with finances and investments find that a general knowledge of the law helps them evaluate strategies and programs. In other words, legal training can make a foundation CEO or program officer a better-informed legal client.

6 SECTION

DECIDING WHICH FOUNDATION IS FOR YOU

The two most important factors in deciding which foundation best suits you are the foundation's **purposes and specific programs** and the foundation's **working environment**. The two factors can be related. Identify the types of programs offered by the foundation and decide if they interest you. Look at the foundation's description of purpose and giving priorities reflected in its annual grants. Talk with current employees about their work. Conduct informational interviews with individuals who have worked there and/or at a comparably sized and programmatically similar foundation. For information on a foundation's purposes and programs call and ask for written material and/or visit its website if it has one.

Other questions you might consider are:

- What is the board's role? Is it active? Do staff and board share responsibilities, or does the board work as a rubber stamp? How much control does the staff have over foundation funds? The more responsibility that you have, the more rewarding the position will be.
- Are program officers involved in long-term planning? Is that something that you want to do or want to avoid?

- How closely tied is the foundation to the funding sources? A foundation closely tied to a single source of funding may or may not be financially stable, and may or may not have autonomy from the funding source.
- How does the foundation do its work? Is it involved in or detached from the programs it funds? The more closely that the foundation works with programs, the more responsibility you'll have, the more skills you'll develop, and the more people you'll meet and get a chance to work with.

7 SECTION

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A CAREER IN FOUNDATIONS

There is no one way for lawyers to prepare themselves to work at a foundation. Some foundations may look for lawyers with experience in the areas that fall within the foundation's funding priorities, while others look for motivation and potential in lawyer-applicants. In all cases, networking is essential if lawyers want to establish careers and advance in foundation philanthropy. Lawyers working in foundations recommend that interested lawyers try to get connected with legal staff at larger foundations or with those running programs funded by the specific foundation. According to an anecdote related by a program officer, a recent law graduate was hired because her thesis concerned people from most of the programs funded by the institution. For lawyers without previous connections to foundation work, it is important to emphasize the skills they bring from their current situation to foundation work, how those skills apply to foundation work and why they are making a move to foundations.

Many lawyers who work at foundations come to their positions after tenure in public interest litigation or nonprofit work. Two-thirds of the CEOs interviewed for the book *Working in Foundations* had served as board members of nonprofit organizations, gaining valuable management and fundraising experience and an understanding of how groups receiving funds

operate. A lawyer interested in working at a foundation should consider joining a nonprofit's board of directors. The lawyers interviewed for *Working in Foundations* had worked an average of 23 years before turning to foundation work. It is possible, however, to work your way into a foundation at an earlier point in your career. Larger foundations offer many entry-level jobs. For example, some large foundations may hire several program assistants every year or every few years.

Many lawyers interviewed by OPIA recommended that interested students demonstrate a commitment to public service. Private sector lawyers should take on *pro bono* work to show enthusiasm and make contacts. Clinical experience at law school also helps develop inter-personal skills and an understanding of the issues involved in various programs.

In sum, although there is no exact way to prepare for a career in foundations, students should work to develop the following:

- **Networking skills.** Alumni, professors, and foundation staff are good contacts to maintain.
- **Writing and speaking skills.**
- **Analytical skills.**
- **Knowledge** of finance, tax law, charitable giving, and general legal procedures.
- **A specific set of interests** that you are both passionate and knowledgeable about.



THE HIRING PROCESS

The hiring process in foundations is often network-intensive. Foundations frequently hire lawyers they've worked with lawyers who have worked with organizations they fund. Small foundations with one or two program officers and a CEO often wait for a staff member to

leave. The low turnover in foundation work makes these positions difficult to obtain. One woman in foundation work called the field hierarchical but not inaccessible.

Some foundations place advertisements in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* and the job circulars of the Regional Grantmakers Associations, which maintain libraries and other resources about grantmaking groups. The *Chronicle of Philanthropy* can be found online at www.philanthropy.com. Check the telephone directory to locate your local Grantmakers Association or visit <http://www.givingforum.org/>. The Council on Foundations has a job bank that can be found at www.cof.org. Also, check www.fdncenter.org for more information. Because of the large volume of résumés they receive, most foundations find it easier to hire through personal and networking contacts. In addition to developing new contacts, a prospective applicant should draw from past relationships by contacting college and law school classmates and through recommendations from alumni/ae.

The Regional Grantmakers Associations have information on salary ranges for program officers and CEOs that can be found in their *Grantmakers Salary and Benefits Report of the Council on Foundations*. According to this report, the median salary was \$115,000 for CEOs and \$70,000 for program officers in 2005. Salary depends largely on the size and type of grantmaker as well as region. The following web sites can provide more detailed information:

http://www.cof.org/files/Documents/Research/2005%20Salary/2005_Salary_and_Benefits_Report_Executive_Summary.pdf and <http://philanthropy.com/stats/>.

9 SECTION

REWARDS AND FRUSTRATIONS

All of the lawyers we spoke with praised foundation and nonprofit work as an opportunity to support public interest work, to meet activists engaged in cutting-edge projects, and to work with committed and extraordinary colleagues. An executive director from a limited-

purpose foundation extolled the variety of his duties, including visiting grantees, training new employees, and conferring with an ad agency.

The lawyers interviewed named other benefits, such as access to more resources than at many public interest organizations, and more control over their schedules than in traditional lawyering. Some lawyers enjoyed escaping the deadlines and pressures of litigation. They found that working at a foundation allowed them to consider a broader perspective and engage in long-term planning in their foundation's area of interest.

According to one lawyer, working as a program officer was rewarding because she could evaluate a set of needs and see how to meet those needs. She was able to encourage and implement creative ideas. Often, lawyers who have worked in direct services to individual clients find that they feel more effective in foundations doing preventive work and capacity building rather than putting out fires.

The removed aspect of foundation work, however, frustrates many lawyers, who miss the excitement of providing direct services on the frontline. Whereas some lawyers feel empowered by preventing the fires, other lawyers enjoy the immediacy and intimacy of putting the fires out. One attorney found a balance between taking the long-term view and engaging in immediate hands-on work by spending half of her time on site visits, visiting clients, and evaluating programs in the field. Other frustrations of foundation work may include difficulties in relationships with grant applicants. For example, attorneys find it difficult to get potential grantees to speak frankly about their organizations.

It can also be tiring and disappointing to be unable to fund all the organizations that deserve funding. One lawyer maintained that, on some days, she felt like she said "no" for a living. Another lawyer found that partisan politics kept shifting in her region and interfered with her long-range planning more than she had expected. Recently, foundations have also suffered criticism for their grantmaking processes. The career ladder in philanthropy does not offer a wide range of opportunities for upward mobility, with the exceptions of moving into a larger foundation or a CEO position.

Yet even in the face of these drawbacks, most foundation lawyers find their jobs extremely fulfilling. In the next chapter several foundation lawyers describe their career paths, the details of their work, and what they find compelling in working for a foundation.

10 SECTION

FOUNDATION LAWYERS TELL THEIR STORIES

~Deborah Schachter~

Deborah Schachter is currently a Senior Program Officer at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Previously, she has worked as Director of the state's Office of Energy and Community Services and a policy advisor to former NH Governor Jeanne Shaheen, as a lobbyist with the New Hampshire's Women's Lobby, and as a civil poverty lawyer with New Hampshire Legal Assistance.

After seven years of poverty law practice upon leaving law school, I continued my work in non-profit and low income advocacy on behalf of women and families at the NH Statehouse. Shortly thereafter, I was invited to enter the public sector as the head of a small state agency heavily involved with policy work - in this case, energy policy – serving under then Governor Shaheen.

Working with and for the Governor in this role was terrific, challenging, and fast-paced, but after four years, with two small children at home, I decided I needed a more flexible and forgiving work schedule. I also knew that I wanted to stay engaged with work I cared about, preferably in the nonprofit sector. An opening at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to direct a project seeking to grow charitable giving across the state caught my eye. I had at this time no prior experience in grantmaking, fundraising, or philanthropic work beyond my personal giving. Although the position as advertised was fulltime, I negotiated to accept the position at four-fifths time, to enable me to be home in the after school hours with my children.

Over the more than 5 years that I have been with the Foundation, my job has morphed and evolved several times. The work that I started out doing, tracking giving trends and looking for ways to promote philanthropy, has become an area of expertise, but a much smaller part of my job, which now also entails grantmaking, regional donor and board work, and involvement in various policy issues on behalf of the foundation.

At least a couple of my colleagues here at the Foundation have also come with legal backgrounds, but many others have taken diverse paths to this foundation world of institutional philanthropy. Many have had experience working for other nonprofits and/or in fundraising or grant review. The abilities to analyze, to build trusted relationships, to listen well and to communicate well both verbally and in writing are important in this field, as in most.

For me, getting this job was not only about my education, work experience and abilities, but also – as with so much in life - about relationships and connections. By this I do not mean that I got the job by knowing people, but simply that being involved in the nonprofit and public sectors – still relatively discrete circles here in NH - meant that I have learned of this and other opportunities and been able to have trusted people speak on my behalf. And, in each new professional role, my existing relationships have proven to be a very valuable asset. As for my Harvard Law School degree, it almost certainly aided in my getting this job as well as all of my prior jobs – affording me a certain degree of presumptive credibility (whether warranted or not).

My work is generally fulfilling and interesting. As I review grants, I get to meet and talk with people who are working on behalf of those in need, the arts, the environment, etc. I am always learning something new. In my donor work, I get to engage with folks who have the means to do whatever they wish, but are choosing to invest in their communities. Foundation work affords the rare treat of being involved at the point of intersection of generous donors and committed community and nonprofit leaders – all dedicated to enhancing community well-being in a variety of ways.

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, which is led by an extremely bright president and board committed to policy change efforts in addition to more traditional grantmaking, provides a stimulating work environment. My status as lawyer (inactive) is helpful from time to time, such as in interacting with estate planning attorneys and other professional

advisors to encourage them to discuss charitable planning effectively with their clients. My background also helps me to assess proposals for advocacy or policy work, and I have become the go to person at the Foundation on much of our public policy-related grantmaking and related efforts.

If there is one lesson that I would pass along from my own non-linear career to date, it is that jumping in and doing something you care about, and establishing relationships of respect in that context, will open doors to other opportunities that you might never even have contemplated.

~Susan E. Epstein~

Susan E. Epstein received her J.D. degree from Hofstra Law School in 1979. She has nearly twenty years of experience in nonprofit management She served as the Senior Program Officer for the Robin Hood Foundation beginning in 1994 and she is currently the Director of Jobs and Economic Security at the foundation.

My professional career has followed a richly rewarding path, which I'd describe as ranging from opinion-maker to rainmaker to grantmaker at the Robin Hood Foundation in New York City. It is a rare privilege to give away money and a mind-bending task as well, particularly if one wants to make investments that will have an impact on nonprofit organizations and measurable results on individuals as well. Sometimes one has to make excruciating moral decisions about assisting the young or the old, the sick or the well, the criminal or the innocent.

As a middle class kid growing up lucky and happy in suburbia, I nevertheless had a keen interest in the underbelly of society and a strong urge to join a helping profession. This combination of curiosity and need ultimately led me to law school, following my 1973 college graduation and a three-year stint as a criminal investigator in a collaborative program between the Public Defender Service and Georgetown Law Center in Washington, D.C.

In law school, I gravitated towards the areas of health, family, and criminal law and excelled in a student practice clinic representing indigent clients in criminal misdemeanors.

However, much as I loved hearing people's life stories, crafting defense strategies, and otherwise touching the lives of many adults, I had a sense that I did not have the stomach or the instincts to be a superb litigator on a permanent basis. But I wanted to pursue public interest work in child, family, and poverty issues, and I knew I needed more first-hand life experience. I wanted to observe both human nature and the judicial system, and to have a chance to hone my critical thinking and writing skills, and to reflect on effective ways to fight poverty and economic injustice.

So I clerked. I spent a year in family court and a year in criminal court. I learned an immeasurable amount about policy issues affecting poor families and children, and about the community-based groups and government regulations and agencies designed to assist them. The opinion-maker function I performed as a law clerk informed my work as a grantmaker almost as much as the decade I later spent as a rainmaker in New York City not-for-profit organization.

Prior to joining Robin Hood's staff, I ran a large New York City domestic violence program, which shelters more than 100 families daily. My legal training and temperament were great preparation for not-for-profit management, program planning and development, and fund-raising. My head for detail helped keep contracts, budgets, human resources issues and legal matters current and organized. My obvious commitment to delivering quality health, education, and social services to those in need kept the revenue flowing and the agency in the black. My organization became a Robin Hood grantee under my leadership. Five years ago, when I told the Robin Hood Foundation I was interested in being a grantmaker instead of a grant-grubber, Robin Hood hired me as a Program Officer.

As a grantmaker, one of the greatest challenges I face is developing funding strategies for New York City poverty-fighting programs. I work in the areas of supportive housing, HIV/AIDS, family violence, food and hunger, and job training. I manage a portfolio of about 40 grant recipients and recommend awards of about \$4 million annually. I also assist grantees in the areas of fund-raising, evaluation, and board and program development.

One of the toughest things to figure out is how to get the biggest bang for the buck. Does one fund short-term, low-intervention job search activities for unemployed workers, or long-term high-intervention skills-based job training programs for adults with significant barriers to

employment? Does one fund domestic violence programs that are shelter-based or non-residential programs that offer legal assistance but no housing? There are no easy answers, but program officers try to discern whether certain approaches are more or less effective in New York City or in a given community.

Robin Hood's particular approach to grantmaking and to offering technical assistance to grantees is a good fit for me for several reasons. First, the foundation supports direct services, which I think are a priority in this city. Second, the foundation values community and leadership-building and it is very gratifying to watch a bunch of neighborhood groups collaborate through referrals, thereby offering a broad spectrum of services by using each other. Third, the foundation funds New York City groups only. Therefore, program officers do not make determinations on applications and paperwork alone. Rather, we go into the field, doing site visits and talking with staff board, and clients. I like the action and immediacy of this aspect of grantmaking. I have visited needle exchange programs at midnight and soup kitchens at dawn to see the real thing. And this effort allows me to better understand and assist in addressing management and service delivery issues as well.

Lastly, because Robin Hood generally supports grant recipients for several years, I have a chance to learn about the best practices and to participate in a regular evaluation and planning process with a vast array of groups on an ongoing basis.

There are some frustrating aspects to philanthropy too. Sometimes there is a political undercurrent to the decision-making process. Board members may have pet projects that they push, and relationships among community leaders, board members, and foundation staff sometimes obfuscate issues of both eligibility of grantees and quality of programs. I have seen charismatic executive directors get awards that may have been overly generous, and I have seen industrious executive directors who are more humdrum get grants that are arguably too modest.

I am also aware of how very difficult and expensive program assessment can be, yet I believe both qualitative and quantitative evaluations are necessary for smart and successful grantmaking. My last frustration is that I wish I had more money to distribute; one can make a little go a long way.

In sum, I think philanthropy is a wonderful and versatile field. It allows one to be responsive to proposals and to take initiative with particular program models. And philanthropy combines critical thinking and writing with opportunities to examine and modify crisis intervention techniques and prevention programs. It's useful and honorable work, and a great way to use a law degree.

~Kathleen Welch~

Kathleen Welch has worked as an advocate for clean energy policies, as executive director of the National Association for Public Interest Law, and as government relations counsel for the Legal Services Corporation. Currently she is the deputy director of the Environment Program at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Over the course of 18 years working as an organizer, advocate, and nonprofit manager, along with my legal training, I developed a critical set of skills and experiences that have helped shaped my work at the Pew Charitable Trusts. Originally a private foundation, a few years ago the Trusts became a public charity, which allows the organization to both engage in grant making and operate projects directly. The Trusts were established by the founders of the Sun Oil Company, and today it is one of the largest institutions serving the public interest by providing information, advancing policy solutions and supporting civic life. The Trusts will invest \$204 million in fiscal year 2006 to provide organizations and citizens with fact-based research and practical solutions for challenging issues.

The Trusts Environment Program is focused on reducing the scope and severity of three major global environmental problems – climate change, the erosion of wilderness, and the destruction of the world's marine environment. As the deputy of the program, I help design and manage campaigns and large-scale initiatives aimed at strengthening environmental policy at the regional, national and international levels of government. My particular focus is on global warming and energy policy, but I also help oversee our marine and wilderness work. On a day

to day basis, my work involves meeting with advocates on strategy, writing proposals and reports for approval by the Trusts board, monitoring program effectiveness, engaging other donors, and keeping abreast of scientific and policy developments.

There are many opportunities for lawyers in foundations, ranging from working with the general counsel, to serving as officers or associates in particular program areas. Most of the larger foundations value legal training and look for both training and practical experience in the field. Smaller and medium-sized foundations may or may not seek lawyers, depending on their programmatic focus and the nature of their work.

The most rewarding aspect of working for the Pew Charitable Trusts is the opportunity to really make a difference on the world's most pressing environmental problems. It is both a privilege and an amazing opportunity to work in an organization that is staffed with incredibly talented lawyers, scientists and policy experts, and to have the support from the institution to tackle complicated challenges. Solving climate change, protecting large tracts of wilderness, or saving the world's fisheries is hard, slow and occasionally frustrating work. But I have the benefit of working for an institution that is committed to making measurable progress in every one of these areas, and to developing the strategies and partnerships that make real progress possible.

Finding employment and internships in foundations or large public charities can be challenging, largely because there is tremendous demand for a limited number of jobs. The most important thing students can do is to go out and get experience – as early in your career as possible – in the issue areas you most care about and want to work in. Practical experience, substantive knowledge and expertise, and relationships in the field are probably the most important ingredients to successfully landing one of these positions. Foundations hire people who know the issues and know the leaders in the field. Early networking throughout law school can be hugely important, and there is no substitute for real experience on the ground.

~John W. Corwin~

John W. Corwin received his J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1973. He has over four years of experience in not-for-profit management. He served as the Executive Director of the Glaucoma Foundation from 1995-2000.

After 22 years of practicing public interest law, I moved to my current position as Executive Director of The Glaucoma Foundation. On the surface, the change may seem dramatic; one person I met early on in the fundraising profession reacted with “Oh, so you’re from another planet.” And, in fact, the way I spend my time from day to day is, as described below, dramatically different from that of a typical lawyer. But for me (and evidently The Foundation), this change made sense.

I went to law school in an era when many did so to make the world a better place. I was privileged to spend my entire legal career in the pursuit of this goal, through jobs in the areas of poverty law, constitutional law, environmental protection, and consumer protection.

As an Executive Director, of course, I no longer represent clients. My responsibilities span the breadth of the organization’s existence: defining the mission, program development and execution, public relations, fundraising, running the business --all aspects of administration -- all within the context of being responsive to the Board of Directors and the public at large. Variety is a guaranteed feature of this work.

To my surprise, the commonalities with my prior work are numerous; I have not thrown away my prior experience. The basic challenge for me is to persuasively articulate and effectively communicate a simple but powerful idea to those who can either benefit from it or help The Foundation achieve its goals. In this particular case, the idea is: Glaucoma is the leading cause of *preventable* blindness; almost all cases of blindness from this disease could have been avoided by early detection and treatment; everyone, everywhere should have regular eye exams; and research, which we fund, is leading the race for the cure.

Our audiences are the general public, especially groups at risk (particularly those over 45, people of African descent, and those with a family history of glaucoma), the media, donors, and potential donors. I spend most of my time communicating with people – on the telephone, in meetings, at conferences, and through written correspondence. In essence, I am a salesman, and the “product” is the prevention of blindness – through education and through research that we fund.

My legal training comes in handy because I still need the same skills of communication. As a lawyer, one must be able to influence the thinking and actions of the judge, the adversary, sometimes the public, and even the clients. In my current work, I seek to educate and motivate members of the public to obtain regular eye exams – a practice that is surprisingly far from common – and to inspire donors and potential donors to be as excited as I am about how much we are doing, and can do, to preserve the gift of sight.

In addition, in my previous employment as Chief of the New York State Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Frauds and Protection, I gained a fair degree of experience in relating to members of the press. That background proved to be useful as I set out to make “glaucoma” a household word. While this task is a work-in-progress as I write this, we have enjoyed tremendous success in obtaining national press coverage of our efforts to eradicate blindness caused by glaucoma. The administrative and supervisory experience in the Bureau also serves me well as an Executive Director.

The differences between the practice of law and foundation work are also dramatic. Being responsible for leading an organization; drawing up and meeting a budget; developing productive working relationships with the 28 members of our Board of Directors; cultivating both individual and institutional donors; and transforming lofty ideas into concrete action are challenges very different from responding to the needs of a client. The Foundation is relatively young (founded in 1984) and there remains tremendous creative opportunity to forge a path and figure out how to raise public awareness of glaucoma to the level it deserves, and how to motivate donors large and small to provide the necessary support for the research that will eradicate blindness caused by this disease.

There are no Federal Rules of Civil Procedure on how to do this. We start simply with the mission, and everything flows from that focal point. Our Board and staff are engaged in a highly exciting and creative process. It doesn't provide the kind of predictability and control that lawyers often like, but it does offer the best adventure I have ever experienced.

SECTION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Listed below are some of the resources that can help you learn about foundations:

Chronicle of Philanthropy. Monthly newspaper of the nonprofit world.
<http://philanthropy.com/>

Foundation Directory. (1997). Published by the Foundation Center. Available in most libraries. Foundation Directory Database, <http://fconline.fdncenter.org/>. Offers descriptions of grant makers.

National Directory of Nonprofit Organizations. (1997). Brief entries on hundreds of thousands of organizations. Latest version: 2006, 19th edition.

Boris, Elizabeth Trocolli; Arlene Kaplan Daniels; and Teresa Jean Odendahl. *Working in Foundations: Career Patterns of Women and Men* Foundation Center: New York, 1985. (Available in the Public Interest Resource Center of OPIA.)

Nauffts, Mitchell F., ed. *Foundation Fundamentals, A Guide to Grantseekers* 5th ed., Foundation Center: New York, 1994. (Available in the Public Interest Resource Center of OPIA. Latest version: 2004, 7th edition.)

Council on Foundations- A nonprofit membership association of grant making foundations and corporations with a mission to promote responsible and effective philanthropy by assisting existing and future grant makers. 1828 L St. NW, Washington DC 20036. Phone: 202-466-6512. Email: infoserv@cof.org. Web address: <http://www.cof.org/>

Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Ave., New York NY 10013 and 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington DC 20036. The center offers Comsearch printouts, which are updated annually. Web address: <http://www.fdncenter.org>. Website provides comprehensive guides to foundation work.

Websites

A list of some foundations in the US. For a detailed list, go to:

http://dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/issues_and_causes/philanthropy/organizations/grant_making_foundations/

<http://www.aecf.org>

Annie E. Casey Foundation

<http://www.avdfdn.org/>

Arthur Vining Davis Foundations

<http://www.ashoka.org>

Ashoka

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/>

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

<http://www.carnegie.org/>

Carnegie Corporation of New York

<http://www.cmwf.org/>

Commonwealth Fund

<http://www.fordfound.org>

Ford Foundation

<http://www.fdncenter.org>

Foundation Center

<http://www.foundations.org>

Foundations On-Line

<http://www.foundationsource.com/>

Foundation Source

<http://www.gundfdn.org>

George Gund Foundation

<http://www.glaucomafoundation.org/>

Glaucoma Foundation

<http://www.handsnet.org>

HandsNet

<http://www.hfp.heinz.org/index.html>

Heinz Family Philanthropies

<http://www.hewlett.org/>

Hewlett Foundation, William and Flora

<http://www.independentsector.org/>

Independent Sector

<http://www.nonprofits.org>

Internet Nonprofit Center, Idealist

<http://www.kff.org/>

Kaiser Family Foundation

<http://www.kettering.org/>

Kettering Foundation

<http://www.kresge.org/>

Kresge Foundation

<http://www.macfdn.org/>
MacArthur Foundation, John D. and Catherine T.

<http://www.mott.org/>
Mott Foundation, Charles Steward

<http://www.packard.org/home.aspx>
Packard Foundation, David and Lucille

<http://www.philanthropy-journal.org/plhome/plmeta.htm>
Philanthropy Journal

<http://www.rbf.org>
Rockefeller Brothers Fund

<http://www.sloan.org/>
Sloan Foundation, Alfred P.

<http://www.unfoundation.org/>
United Nations Foundation

<http://www.mellon.org/>
Mellon Foundation, Andrew W.

<http://www.soros.org/>
Open Society Institute-New York

<http://www.pewtrusts.com/>
Pew Charitable Trust

<http://www.rwjf.org/>
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

<http://www.rockfound.org>
Rockefeller Foundation

<http://www.epn.org/>
Twentieth Century Fund

<http://www.wkkf.org>
W.K. Kellogg Foundation