Beyond The Blog: Edition 7

Beyond The Blog is an evolution of The Patterson Foundation’s storytelling approach focused on creating and sharing engaging content featuring the people, organizations, and communities strengthened through the Foundation's work.
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Philanthropy for an Evolving World: Strengthening Communities and Creating Sustainable Impact
Dear Readers,

Strengthening people, organizations, and communities throughout our ever-changing world calls for flexible philanthropy that is adaptable to changing conditions. For The Patterson Foundation, that means undertaking initiatives open to evolution — perhaps in scope, in collaborators, or even in leadership and focus.

Throughout its history, The Patterson Foundation has embraced the challenge of leveraging the evolutionary potential of its work. Rather than arriving with the answer or a narrowly defined goal at the outset of our initiatives, we seek opportunities to collaborate with others who possess the leadership, willingness, readiness, capacity, and culture to create new realities. Our purpose is to optimize combined efforts toward shared aspirations while knowing the ever-changing world can necessitate shifts in the approach to achieving those aspirations over time.

This approach creates the potential to transition initiatives to new leaders who have consistently demonstrated the principles and best practices strengthened by working with the Foundation. In other instances, evolving realities create a natural point for an initiative to conclude its active work. Those initiatives can yield significant learnings that can inform our own work and are shared locally and beyond.

This edition explores The Patterson Foundation's approach to philanthropy that embraces our evolving world. By helping others learn and grow through our collaborations while sharing our own lessons and learnings along the way with our fellow changemakers, philanthropy can evolve in ways that make it stronger and capable of creating a sustainable impact, no matter what the future holds.
Have you joined the Journey, Beyond the Blog by subscribing to TPF’s Newsletter?

- Yes, I receive BTB every month in my email!
- This is my first time here, but I’ll subscribe
- No, but heading to the last page of BTB to sign up!
- No, I’ll stick with social media

"We have an immense flexibility, opportunity, and most importantly, responsibility to demonstrate how change can happen."
The Podcast
Kiarra Louis, Initiative Support Coordinator with The Patterson Foundation, interviews Debra Jacobs, President and CEO, exploring TPF's approach to changing and evolving through various initiatives while continuing to catalyze efforts toward shared aspirations.

"Strengthening people, organizations, and communities throughout our ever-changing world calls for flexible philanthropy that is adaptable to changing conditions."

Click play on the grey bar to listen.
How TPF Listens and Learns
The Patterson Foundation (TPF) has a unique and collaborative approach to philanthropy that, as a Fellow, I've had the honor of experiencing first-hand. I've learned the power of convening, sharing, and collaborating at all stages of a program while exploring how to structure next steps and strategy, ensuring intentionality with each new or recurring item. TPF looks for ways to listen, learn, and evolve -- this may take the form of a Thrive and Dine, Knowledge Sharing Session, or Listening Tour.

Thrive and Dine includes exactly what it sounds like -- collaborating to excel and food! With the understanding a meal is shared, these convenings are always in-person. All cohorts participating in the same TPF endeavor are invited to attend. The timing of this event always takes place following programming or consulting, making it a meaningful gathering where all organizations have encountered success and challenges.

Recently, I wrote a blog about the first Digital Access for All (DA4A) Digital Navigator Thrive and Dine. This event brought attention to the power of discussing challenges as unique organizations may share similar obstacles.

Knowledge Sharing Session (KSS) may be the most widely used terminology for different listening and learning structures. KSSs are used for many purposes throughout many initiatives to gather individuals and organizations involved to learn what is working, share what they have learned, and hear what opportunities there are to grow moving forward. Attendees are in the current cohort while active in a program. This is unlike the Thrive and Dine, a collaborative convening of all cohorts after structured programming or consulting.

While MMI uses KSSs often, another Nonprofit Thrivability endeavor also organized to listen and learn. Read through launched TPF Fellow Abby Rolland’s blog about KSS over Zoom.

TPF Fellow Connor LaGrange wrote how the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading hosted a version of a KSS to ensure "cookies" were shared.

The term KSS has also been present in
Advancing Philanthropic Leadership endeavors during The Future of the Philanthropic Sector: Experiential Learning with The Patterson Foundation (Study Away course) and the Nonprofit Internship Program. Noting these different ways to listen and learn, I took another look at using the term KSS for the Zoom meetings that Interns, supervisors, and TPF Fellows participate in. These Nonprofit Internship Program Zooms, which occur at the beginning and end of the internship timeline, are only open to the lead and student, not multiple organizations as other KSSs. This was a great opportunity to step back, think carefully about our words, and progress forward with more intentional language.

A Listening Tour is a series of Zoom and in-person meetings to learn about a topic associated with a program or initiative. These can happen at various stages to gather information to begin a program or improve for the next. The objective is to encourage sharing of positives and what needs improved.

Listening Tours are incredibly intentional ways to ensure excellence and purpose at the next step of implementation.

Take a look at how Rachel Ploss, TPF Fellow, saw the Listening Tour create future opportunities for Suncoast region nonprofits through the TPF initiative, Fueling Dynamic Fundraising (FDF).

Rachel also participated in the Suncoast Remake Learning Days Listening Tour for 2022.

While TPF does not own the language, TPF’s Aspirations to Actions (A2A initiative) also uses Community Conversations to learn a great deal about community aspirations. This in-person format includes a set of predetermined questions for a group of individuals connected in some way (healthcare, educators, etc.) to identify shared aspirations and grow trust. If you are interested in joining conversations focused on disasters, sign up using this link: Aspirations to Actions Disaster Community Conversation Interest Form.

These are not the only ways that TPF learns. TPF also has a robust offering of Zoom meetings that take the structure of a Webversation or Labinar. Webversations combine the virtual learning platform of a webinar with the dialogue of a conversation, and Labinars combine the engagement and interactivity of a learning lab with the virtual education of a webinar. TPF strives to learn and create spaces for collaboration throughout the dozens of initiatives. With the understanding that these structured formats can be incorporated across all of the unique initiatives, I hope this writing inspires other organizations to implement their own ways to listen, learn, and evolve.
Transitioning Beyond The Patterson Foundation
Throughout its history, The Patterson Foundation has embraced the challenge of leveraging the evolutionary potential of its work. Rather than arriving with the answer or a narrowly defined goal at the outset of our initiatives, we seek opportunities to collaborate with others who possess the leadership, willingness, readiness, capacity, and culture to create new realities.

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