



LEADING WITH
Courage

Reshaping Southern Philanthropy for a New Era

Philanthropy
SOUTHEAST



Together for Change

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Acknowledgments

Philanthropy Southeast would like to thank the following members and supporters who provided information and insights that were instrumental in the creation of this report:

Lisa Adkins Blue Grass Community Foundation	Melissa Levesque, Coastal Community Foundation
David Aft, Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia	Felecia Lucky, Black Belt Community Foundation
Erin Baird, Allegany Franciscan Ministries	John Lumpkin, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation
Jennifer Barksdale, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation	Lisa Medellin, Healthcare Georgia Foundation
Elena Conley, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation	Michael Murray, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations
Mark Constantine, Richmond Memorial Health Foundation	Mamie Nicholson, Self Family Foundation
Christopher Cuevas, Laughing Gull Foundation	Lisa O'Mara, LOCUS Impact Investing
Flozell Daniels, Foundation for Louisiana	Gigi Pedraza, Latino Community Fund
Marsha Davis, Tzedek Social Justice Fund	Christine Reeves Strigaro, The Sapelo Foundation
Susan DeVenny, Arras Foundation	Vincent Robinson, The 360 Group
David Dodson, MDC	Monica Rogers, The 360 Group
Robert J. Dortch Jr., Ujima Legacy Fund	Gerry Roll, Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky
Troy Ettel, Turner Foundation	Mark Sherman, Orton Family Foundation
Frank Fernandez, Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta	Allen Smart, PhilanthropywoRx
Kaki Friskics-Warren, The Dan and Margaret Maddox Fund	LaTida Smith, The Winston-Salem Foundation
Linetta Gilbert, Gilbert & Associates	Fay Twersky, The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
Jerry Gonzalez, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation	Joy Vermillion Heinsohn, North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management
Darrin Goss, Coastal Community Foundation	Mijo Vodopic, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Debra Jacobs, The Patterson Foundation	Sherece West-Scantlebury, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation
Kristen Keely-Dinger, The Healing Trust	Kenita Williams, Southern Education Foundation
Mari Kuraishi, Jessie Ball duPont Fund	Rhea Williams-Bishop, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Jennifer Langton, Tzedek Social Justice Fund	
John Lanier, Ray C. Anderson Foundation	

Note: Organizational affiliations listed as of time the individual was interviewed for this report.

Letter From Our President & CEO



Philanthropy in the South works differently than it does in other parts of the United States.

We follow the same rules and have goals similar to our peers across the country. Yet we operate under a different set of conditions.

As Southerners, we are intensely proud of our region's distinct customs and culture—and the unique flavor we've injected into American cuisine, music and art. We care deeply about our communities and our neighbors. And, above all, we are welcoming and generous.

But while we have so much to be proud of, we also must acknowledge our longstanding challenges—dark truths that haunt us from decisions made centuries ago as well as stubborn attitudes and policies that continue to limit the South from reaching its full potential.

Tragically, we have not yet escaped the long shadow of slavery and Jim Crow, which continues to produce persistent inequities and, in turn, holds us back from approaching our true potential.

For generations, these inequities have disproportionately affected people of color in our region. But our inequities aren't limited to race. Throughout the South, where you are

born directly affects your likelihood of educational achievement, your earning potential, and your life expectancy.

Such disparities exist across our nation. But we cannot escape the fact that they are more pronounced here.

This reality hangs over the work of Southern philanthropic organizations. Throughout their history, Southern foundations have operated in broader systems engineered to produce inequity. Many of these organizations exist solely to improve lives and conditions in their communities. However, they have done their work within a power structure that has systematically blunted their impact.

But that is starting to change.

Southern foundations are experiencing a great awakening—a recognition that new approaches are needed to change the systems that have produced massive inequities for generations of Southerners and limited our regional economy.

For some, that awakening began with Hurricane Katrina. For others, it started with the violence in Charlottesville. For still others, it was COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd, and the assault on voting rights.

In almost every case, however, there is growing recognition of the fact that

Southern philanthropy must adapt and lead if we are going to help create a better, more prosperous future for our region.

At Philanthropy Southeast, we've had a front-row seat as our members have taken bold steps to change the way they approach their grantmaking, their leadership, and their relationships. For the past several years, we've been working closely with our members as they have grappled with difficult questions, shared best practices, and charted a new path.

This report offers a first-of-its-kind look at this tectonic shift.

On the following pages, we explore the trends that are shaping Southern philanthropy—and how organizations across our region are adapting to meet the moment.

You get to meet the people and organizations that are driving our region toward a better, more equitable future.

And we discuss the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

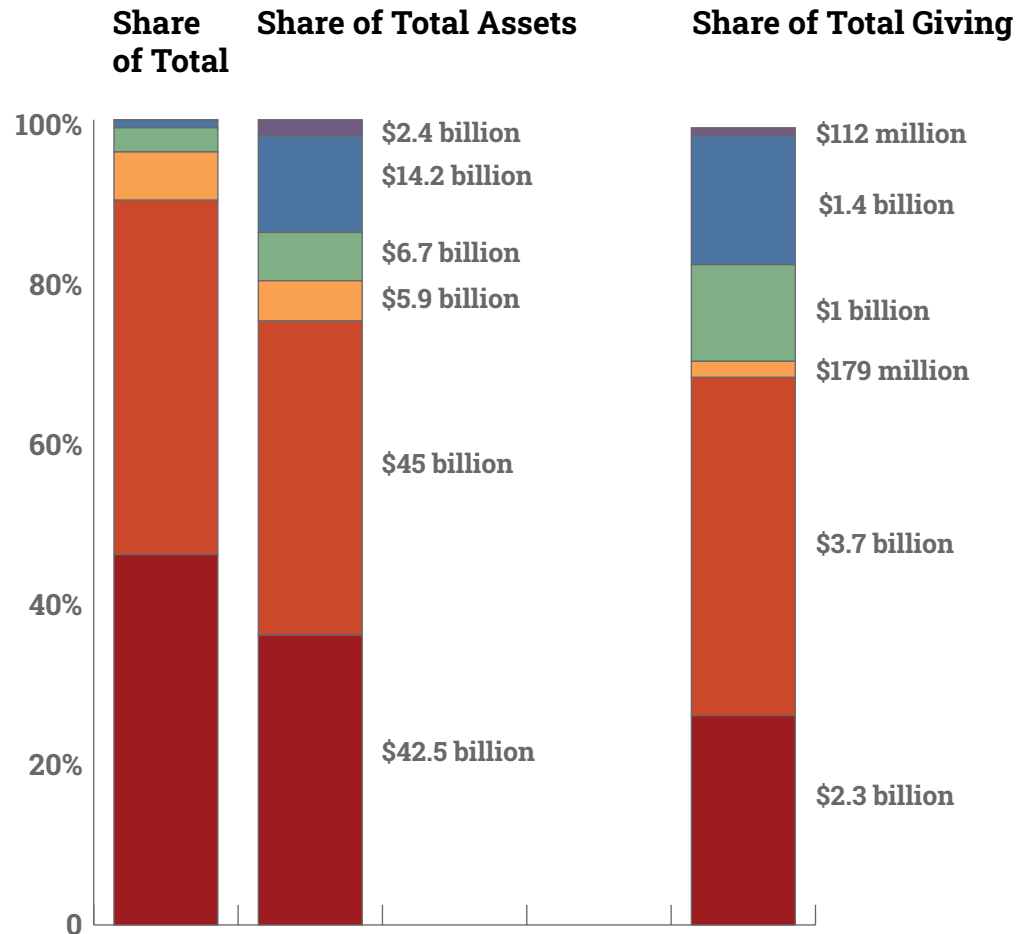
I hope these stories spark ideas and provide inspiration as we confront the pressing challenges of our time.

Janine Lee is President and CEO of Philanthropy Southeast.



Southern Philanthropy by the Numbers

Private, family, and community foundations drive the bulk of grantmaking in Southern states.



- Independent
- Family
- Operating
- Corporate
- Community
- Health Legacy

Source: Candid, 2022. Includes all non-terminated independent, corporate, community, and operating foundations active (awarding at least \$1 in grants) in 2018. Sources of data for these foundations include IRS information returns (Form 990-PF for private organizations, Form-990 for community foundations), foundation reports, and information reported to Candid on annual surveys of foundations. Assets are stated at market value. Total giving amount includes grants, scholarships, and employee matching gifts; it does not include all qualifying distributions, e.g., loans, PRIs, set-asides, and program or other administrative expenses.



Credit: The Healing Trust

Overview

Southern Philanthropy: At a Crossroads

On the surface, Southern philanthropy in 2022 looks a lot like it has for the past several decades.

Private and family foundations dominate the landscape. Together, they hold more than three-quarters of all philanthropic assets and roughly two-thirds of total grantmaking annually.

Much of the South's philanthropic activity is place-based—focusing on supporting communities across a vast 11-state region.

And the work of Southern foundations continues to be complemented by a group of national philanthropies that are looking to move the needle in communities that have long been under-resourced.

But go a bit beneath the surface and you'll notice some big changes afoot.

In a region—and a nation—shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic, awakened by the murder of George Floyd, and divided by politics and ideology, a courageous group of Southern philanthropic organizations are stepping forward to attempt to meet the moment.

They are experimenting with new approaches to philanthropy. They are raising their voices. They are mobilizing communities. They are reframing their work around equity. And they are challenging conventional ideas about the role foundations can and should play.

In turn, they are charting a new course for philanthropy in the South—one that has the potential to transform our field for years to come.

“There's a growing understanding that we need to be more innovative, take more risks, and lead our communities in new ways,”

said Kristen Keely-Dinger, president and CEO of the Healing Trust. “There’s also a recognition that we can be more effective if we start working with our communities and nonprofits differently. We can be more effective if we engage with our communities, develop relationships, and support work that’s already happening rather than demanding and directing.”

Southern philanthropy is truly at a crossroads—as emerging trends and ideas converge with traditional approaches at a pivotal time in our history.

This report takes an inside look at this shift by shining a spotlight at the innovative leaders and organizations that are reimaging Southern philanthropy.

On the following pages, we explore:

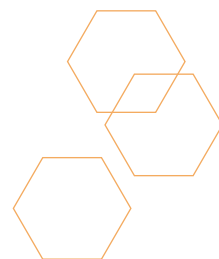
- The cultural, social, and political forces that are influencing Southern communities and the philanthropic organizations that serve them.
- How Southern foundations are centering their work around equity.
- Pioneering approaches to grantmaking and community leadership.
- Emerging funding structures that are working alongside traditional philanthropy to approach social change in exciting new ways.
- How a new generation of leaders is bringing diverse perspectives and new ideas to traditional organizations.
- The trends and dynamics that will define our Southern philanthropy in the future.

Our goal is to elevate those who are pushing the boundaries of traditional philanthropy in pursuit of a more equitable and prosperous South. ●



There’s a growing understanding that we need to be more innovative, take more risks, and lead our communities in new ways.”

- Kristen Keely-Dinger
The Healing Trust



A Conversation With David Dodson

Navigating the tension between moving swiftly and moving deliberately.

David Dodson is one of the South’s most prominent and knowledgeable experts on philanthropy and its work to address the root causes of inequities.

The founder of MDC’s Passing Gear Philanthropy Institute and a longtime Philanthropy Southeast partner and friend, Dodson recently shared his perspective on how Southern philanthropy is evolving in the face of COVID-19, America’s racial reckoning, and a rapidly changing policy landscape.

It’s impossible to ignore COVID-19’s impact on the South and philanthropy. Can you discuss how Southern foundations have responded?

Initially, we saw a lot of foundations moving swiftly—cutting bureaucracy, making more responsive grants. That was and has been very important.

But as things have progressed, we’ve seen foundations and trustees being challenged to spend more time understanding the landscape.

As a result, there is a simultaneous need to be acting fast and acting slow. The challenge foundations are facing is not to simply respond to what is visible and urgently apparent, but to also go deeper to understand the structural, policy, and mindset challenges about how the South habitually works that are underneath the surface.

This is a moment not just to act quickly. It is a moment to act deeply.

We have now entered an in-between time—a period when we’re transitioning from our initial response of acting quickly to a time where we are working to understand the root causes and act deeply.

Why is it important to slow down?

When you go deeply into understanding why the South has not moved as quickly toward equity on indicators like educational attainment, health attainment, economic vitality, and economic equity, you get to deep historical factors like Jim Crow and extractive economy. So the work must go deeper because the roots of inequity are deeper and more fundamental to the way our society works in the South than they may be in other places.

A foundation also can’t move on fundamental conditions independent of having the trust of the people who are affected. And trust isn’t built quickly.

But you have to balance moving quickly and moving slowly. If you don’t act quickly while you do the slow work, you aren’t addressing immediate needs.

So they’re running two races simultaneously—a marathon and a sprint. That leads to a lot of conflict and tension.

That’s a difficult tension to navigate. How are you seeing it play out?

There is an external pressure in a lot of cases to move more quickly. But if you move too quickly, you can set yourself back.

For some foundations, they’re digging deeply into racial equity and exploring the history and understanding that many of the structures must change significantly in order to change equity outcomes.

Not every foundation can go there or should go there. For some foundations—especially some community foundations—it’s harder for them to be deeply courageous because they always have to balance their actions with their need to satisfy and attract donors.

Some family foundations have a culture of high responsiveness and a deep understanding of why things are the way they are, and they are encouraged and want to fix it. But there are other family foundations where the lived experience of the people who make decisions is still not at the point where they can understand the structural issues.

You also mentioned policy challenges. How are those challenges affecting philanthropy in the South?

We’re about to sail past or through some very challenging policy obstacles. One is new—reproductive health. But there are also other issues, like the student debt issue, that are enormous.

Philanthropy cannot address some of the systemic challenges without some shifts in public policy, which may mean supporting more advocacy organizations.

Raising awareness in the public of why things need to move differently to get equitable outcomes ... those are the kinds of things philanthropy can do more of, and I think we’re seeing a shift where the people who populate foundations are ready to do that.

The work now has ramped up in the degree of difficulty. Everything from the Supreme Court to national and state politics is playing a role in that. And we’re seeing some foundations that are feeling as though they need to step into that space more, either overtly with their voice or figuring out how to create funding mechanisms that work against some of the headwinds that policy has created.



Credit: Blue Grass Community Foundation

Demographic Shifts

A More Diverse South Shifts Philanthropy's Focus

Dalton, Ga., is known by some as the Carpet Capital of the World.

To David Aft, this small city in Georgia's northwest corner is also emblematic of an evolving South — a region where changing demographics are driving philanthropy to reevaluate its values and priorities, rethink programming, and reimagine how to approach a range of sometimes controversial issues.

When Aft became president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia in 1996, about 1 in 25 students in Dalton's public schools were Latino. Today, that ratio is 4 in 5.

This massive population shift started during the 1990s, when Mexican families began immigrating to the community to work in its booming carpet

and flooring factories. A generation later, the children of the first wave of immigrants have grown up, completed their educations, and are putting down roots in Dalton and in neighboring cities and towns.

"The shift that we're seeing in northwest Georgia over the past 25, going on 30 years, is happening in other parts of Georgia and across the South," Aft said. "The world changes, and as foundation leaders, it's our job to adjust to the changes that are happening in our communities."

Indeed, many of the trends shaping philanthropy in the South are influenced by the fact that our region is growing and becoming increasingly diverse. This was underscored by the 2020 census, which in many ways served as a clarion call for philanthropy

to reassess its role to account for changing demographics in our communities — and the opportunities and challenges that come along with it.

The 11 Southern states in the Philanthropy Southeast footprint are home to more than 83.5 million people and account for more than one-quarter of the U.S. population, according to 2020 U.S. census figures.

Those 83.5 million people represent an increase of 9.1 percent over the past decade — and account for nearly one-third of the nation's population growth since 2010.

And as its population grows, the South is becoming more diverse.

In 2010, nearly two-thirds — 65.3 percent — of the South's population was White. In the decade since, the South's White population had dropped

to 53 percent — and Whites accounted for less than half of the South's population under the age of 24.

This shift has significant implications for philanthropy — both for how it approaches grantmaking and how it attracts future investment. In particular, it has prompted philanthropy to dive deeper into issues such as equity, immigration, access to education, health care and broadband services, and participation in our electoral process.

For instance, Jerry Gonzalez, the chief executive officer of the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO) and the GALEO Latino Community Development Fund, believes philanthropy must step up efforts to increase voter access to ensure all communities' voices will be heard.

"These trends in the demographics are only going to continue as time goes on," said Gonzalez, who also has served on the board of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation. "As Georgia has become much more diverse, and much younger, it has led to this hyperpartisanship we are now living with."

These and other issues moving to the forefront has challenged the status quo and caused many foundations and nonprofits to reexamine nearly every aspect of their work.

For example, wealthy White donors have traditionally fueled much of the work of community foundations across the South and have been the founders of the vast majority of private and family foundations. But as the South changes — and becomes home to more people of color — it's not only important for established foundations to better reflect the communities they serve, but also for the table to expand to include more donors of color at community

foundations and more foundation founders who reflect the South's diverse population.

"It's more and more important for folks involved in philanthropy to be better stewards of their message," Aft said. "That message has to be inclusive. It has to strike a tone that builds a bigger ship, not a bigger fence."

"As a community foundation leader, you have to think about your engagement through the lens of your grantmaking, your community partnerships, your donor base, and your board."

By most accounts, philanthropy has been slow to adapt to the demographic changes that have been reshaping the South for decades, a reflection of the fact that many of the leaders of Southern foundations were either out of step with the changes underway in their communities or, in some cases, pushing back against them.

Linetta Gilbert, the former senior program officer for social justice philanthropy at the Ford Foundation and current managing partner at the consulting company Gilbert & Associates, recalls attending a Philanthropy Southeast conference that featured a discussion about the landmark documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, which chronicled the Civil Rights Movement.

After the session, Gilbert discovered a foundation leader in the women's room.

The woman was crying, shaken because the presentation featured an image of her father — the founder of her family's foundation — demonstrating as part of a pro-segregation mob.

In a region where memories of segregation are still fresh, the prospect of a South where people of color will soon be a majority is a massive shift.

But that shift is already well underway, said Aft.

And philanthropy must adapt quickly.

"Don't assume that because you occasionally grant out money to an organization that serves a segment of your community that, somehow, you've built a bridge," Aft said. "It's amazing what can happen when you're open to the idea that the world is changing. We don't always get to call the shots on change, but we can embrace it." ●



A Growing Region

Population growth in the South, 2010-2020

Area	Population (2020)	2010-20 Change
Alabama	5,024,279	5.1%
Arkansas	3,011,524	3.3%
Florida	21,538,187	14.6%
Georgia	10,711,908	10.6%
Kentucky	4,505,836	3.8%
Louisiana	4,657,757	2.7%
Mississippi	2,961,279	-0.2%
North Carolina	10,439,388	9.5%
South Carolina	5,118,425	10.7%
Tennessee	6,910,840	8.9%
Virginia	8,631,393	7.9%
Southeast	83,510,816	9.1%
U.S. Total	331,449,281	7.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Advancing Equity

Credit: Southern Poverty Law Center

Equity Takes Center Stage

As Southern Philanthropy Shifts Resources and Attention to Address Inequities, Challenges and Questions Emerge

Southern philanthropy's relationship with race and equity is complicated.

Generations ago, many Southern foundations actively pursued grantmaking strategies that perpetuated segregation. More recently, some shied away from pursuing work around equity out of fear of alienating donors or key partners. Others simply didn't want to face difficult conversations and truths, opting to stick to the status quo.

"Southern gentility and politeness have often stymied our ability to have these important conversations," said Kenita Williams, chief

operating officer for the Southern Education Foundation in Atlanta. "So, in the past, there was this evading of the race question. There was this discomfort that we just couldn't have those conversations."

But that is changing — and changing quickly.

According to Philanthropy Southeast's 2022 Member Survey, roughly one-half of respondents said equity has become a significant focus of their work since the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd in 2020. That comes on top of another third who say equity had already been a significant focus of their work.

The commitments are coming from foundations large and small — and are fairly consistent across all foundation types.

The trend is leading to changes that go well beyond grantmaking. Philanthropy is rethinking how it hires, who serves in the boardroom, how it manages its investments, how it relates to its communities, and how and when it raises its voice.

"One of the big changes that I've been able to observe is the willingness to be more open, to be more honest, to be more vulnerable, and committed to conversations about race, power, privilege, and equity," Williams said. "We are OK with having tough and courageous

"We are OK with having tough and courageous conversations. We're a lot more comfortable with being uncomfortable."

- Kenita Williams
Southern Education Foundation



Photo Credit: The Arras Foundation



Dr. John Lumpkin

A Corporate Foundation's Bold Investment in Equity

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation has a bold goal: to transform North Carolina into the nation's healthiest state within a generation.

And it's doing so by recognizing that it must center its activities around equity.

That recognition is the result of a deep dive into the factors that affected health outcomes in its state.

As it explored these issues, it discovered that nearly every health care disparity in the state could be directly traced to structures that had connections as far back as the slavery era.

Armed with this knowledge, the foundation made its initial commitment to equity in early 2020, before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

That commitment has since evolved to focus its grantmaking in three key areas:

- Supporting issues that specifically address racial disparities and inequitable impacts on communities of color.
- Supporting place-based initiatives in historically underserved areas of North Carolina.

- Investing in coalitions and initiatives that support specific populations, including Black, Latino, and American Indian communities.

It's a rare commitment from a corporate funder, but the foundation president, Dr. John Lumpkin, believes it can help bring others in his state — and in his field — to the table to take meaningful action on health equity.

"For generations, communities in all corners of our state have experienced the impacts of racism — the policies, practices, and norms that have contributed to immense inequities," Lumpkin said. "A commitment to, and investments in, advancing racial equity must be inclusive of all areas — large and small, urban and rural — if we truly want to realize a vision of everyone having the opportunity to be as healthy as possible."

conversations. We're a lot more comfortable with being uncomfortable."

Seeds of Change

Racial inequity has been a part of the South's fabric since Europeans began colonizing the Americas. And while it predates modern philanthropy, for decades efforts to address race and equity head-on had been the exception, rather than the rule.

While pockets of progress evolved out of the civil rights movement, it was limited. Yet that began to change in August 2005, when Hurricane Katrina upended the Gulf Coast.

The Category 5 storm produced wrenching human suffering and massive property devastation that played out for weeks on television screens across the nation and globe. The daily images revealed an inescapable truth: People of color and marginalized communities had suffered the

brunt of the storm's fury.

Following Katrina, a wave of new investments came into the region, and new organizations, like the Foundation for Louisiana, emerged with missions that aimed to more directly involve people in decision-making that had previously been overlooked and marginalized.

Hurricane Katrina served as a crystallizing event for Southern philanthropy and set in motion a far more proactive and forceful response to all forms of inequity.

Hate-fueled mass shootings in Charleston and Orlando, ugly demonstrations by White supremacists in Charlottesville, and a series of murders of Black and Brown Southerners at the hands of police in the years since have further amplified inequities and prompted more foundations to step back and rethink their work through a different lens.

As this drumbeat of events shook communities across the South, foundations began actively learning about equity and investigating how they might refocus their work to address inequity in new ways.

Even before the racial reckoning of 2020, organizations such as the Danville Regional Foundation and the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation in Virginia, the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg in Florida, and the Coastal Community Foundation in South Carolina were making bold commitments to addressing racial equity through their grantmaking and their community leadership.

"There was a movement in the field even before 2020. It was smaller, but it was real," Williams said. "But now we're starting to see a lot of organizations explicitly focusing on equity, engaging their boards and their staff and their communities on this."



Credit: The Healing Trust



Credit: Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Closing the Income Gap in the South's Largest City

When the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta began developing its new strategic plan, it couldn't ignore one stark fact about its region: Atlanta has the nation's worst income inequality rate.

Some parts of greater Atlanta are thriving and strong. Others lack resources and hope.

So as its staff and board began developing their new strategy, they began exploring the community foundation's role in closing its massive income gap.

"We knew we had to help ensure that every resident in the Metro Atlanta region has a fair shot at a decent life," said Frank Fernandez, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta's president and CEO. "That's obviously a big aspiration — but that's what we endeavored to do with our new strategic plan."

The community foundation also realized that it couldn't achieve this lofty goal without strong partners.

So it joined forces with the United Way of Greater Atlanta to convene the Atlanta Alliance for Equity, a collaborative effort to center racial equity to increase economic mobility and family income in targeted neighborhoods.

This partnership is a key component of what ultimately became Together ATL — the brand name for a strategy that focuses on decreasing the region's income disparity by at least 25 percent over the next five years.

"There's always been this tension in philanthropy between helping people now and investing in systems change," Fernandez said. "But for us, it's both. We decided that we needed to work with others to concentrate efforts and investments in three different communities and go deep."

Over the next five years, the foundation will be working with its donors, community partners, and others in these three communities:

- Southern Cobb County, an area where residents are grappling with issues related to housing affordability and economic mobility.
- Southern Fulton County, addressing the consequences of rapid growth for legacy residents.
- Thomasville, a predominantly Black neighborhood in southeast Atlanta that is challenged by disinvestment, severe poverty, and poor health outcomes.

By focusing on these three communities within Metro Atlanta, the foundation expects to help improve the health of its overall region.

"In order to create equitable communities, we must first acknowledge the historic, systemic disinvestment of communities inhabited primarily by people of color," said Ayana Gabriel, the foundation's vice president of community impact. "Our Together ATL strategy is an important first step to investing in BIPOC communities and working to ensure everyone who calls our region home has access to opportunity and prosperity."

Turning Tides

Then came the murder of George Floyd.

Where Hurricane Katrina had largely revealed the systemic racism that disadvantages and demoralizes marginalized communities, the police officer's knee on Floyd's neck put an anguished human face to the injustice and fear that people of color endure in America.

Many organizations that had stayed on the sidelines, or had only marginally supported social justice and equity causes, could no longer look the other way.

"After the racial reckoning following the murder of George Floyd, more companies, more organizations started putting their money where their mouth is in terms of supporting efforts to address racial injustices and promote racial equity," said Rhea Williams-Bishop, director of Mississippi and NOLA programming for the Kellogg Foundation. "It's one thing to acknowledge it and say, 'We know this is wrong.' But when you say that you're going to help right the wrong and commit dollars long term, that puts us closer to where we need to be."

Organizations that had already been taking an equity journey began accelerating their efforts. Those who were just starting began the process of learning, rethinking their strategies, and taking action.

In turn, the field is having deep conversations about how it uses its power and how it engages in the communities it serves.

"I'm encouraged how more and more funders have used the moment of the pandemic to think a lot more critically about power and racial equity and just showing up differently," said Mark Constantine, president and CEO of Virginia's Richmond Memorial Health Foundation.



Credit: Black Belt Community Foundation

In Alabama's Black Belt, Equity Takes on a Deeper Meaning

"I didn't have the pleasure of the privilege of saying I couldn't. That was life or death for the people we are serving."

- Felecia Lucky
Black Belt Community Foundation

As more Southern foundations embrace approaches like trust-based philanthropy and center their work around equity, they would be wise to follow the lead of Alabama's Black Belt Community Foundation.

These approaches, after all, have been guiding Black Belt's work since its founding in 2004.

"The region we are serving is so accustomed to not being included or hearing people coming in and saying they were going to help and never helping. So, we had to make sure we were talking the talk and walking the walk from day one," said Felecia Lucky, the Black Belt Community Foundation's president and CEO. "That brought us credibility. Now, we're starting to see a place where the community is taking ownership of the work."

At its core, the Black Belt Community Foundation represents community philanthropy in its purest form.

It centers its work in Alabama's Black Belt — a 12-county region that stretches across the middle of the state, from Mississippi

to close to the Georgia line and whose name comes from the region's rich, dark soil. But while the ground is fertile, the region itself is marked by a historical lack of financial resources.

Covering an area that is largely rural and majority Black and Brown, the Black Belt Community Foundation's impact on the region is significant, even though it operates with an endowment that totals only about \$1 million.

Much of the money it raises goes immediately back into the community.

Its tagline: "Taking what we have to make what we need."

"The way we were established and the work that is required in our communities is different than it is for most other community foundations," Lucky said. "Our business model doesn't look like a traditional business model."

Often, that model involves directing its small team and growing network of partners to focus on projects that it considers necessary for the region's survival.

That means mobilizing resources to ensure as many households

as possible in the Black Belt were counted in the census — and finding creative ways to support the patchwork of tiny rural municipalities in its region to access needed CARES Act funding that would have otherwise gone unused.

When a colleague at another foundation told Lucky that he could not have made the decision to direct so much effort into the CARES Act project, she responded that she had no other choice.

"I didn't have the pleasure of the privilege of saying I couldn't. That was life or death for the people we are serving," Lucky said.

And what the foundation lacks in financial resources, it has gained in community trust. For nearly two decades, it has worked deliberately to build relationships, share power, and ensure that the community is fully engaged in its work.

"The decisions are not ours alone," Lucky said. "The decisions are made with the community. When we talk about bringing equity into this work, we don't make a decision without getting input from the rest of the

Fading Focus or Lasting Change?

This thinking is showing up in many of the stories of courage that are profiled in this report. A leading group of Southern foundations is experimenting with models that shift power, build trust, and reposition investments in new ways.

Others are changing their organizational chart, actively embedding equity into their efforts to recruit talent and board members, and pursuing public policy changes.

And as these leading organizations blaze new trails and pursue new approaches, many in the field are wondering whether we're at the beginning of a new way of working – or whether this activity will be short-lived.

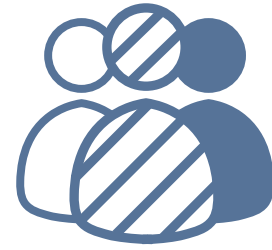
"The jury's still out," said Frank Fernandez, president and CEO of the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. "It's too early to see whether these shifts are temporary or the pendulum's going to swing back."

Fernandez challenges his colleagues to make sure this shift is a lasting one by making a long-term commitment to equity rather than shifting focus elsewhere when it comes time to create their next strategic plans.

Williams offers a similar challenge, saying that change will likely come slowly at first. But rather than mistaking that slow change as a sign that it must focus elsewhere, philanthropy must instead commit to a generational investment.

After all, it will take more than one strategic plan cycle to reverse inequities that have been embedded in the South for centuries.

"We want equity in all things right away, and that is just not realistic," Williams said. "We need to be able to give ourselves the grace to not be impatient. We have to be in this for the long game. We have to recognize and celebrate small and early wins to keep us motivated around this work." ●



Prioritizing DEI

The percentage of Southern foundations that say diversity, equity, and inclusion have a significant impact on their organizational effectiveness and ability to meet philanthropic goals.

Community foundations	88%
Health foundations	82%
Independent foundations	77%
Corporate foundations	75%
Family foundations	73%
Overall	82%



Source: Philanthropy Southeast 2022 Member Survey



Equity Takes Center Stage

About one-third of Philanthropy Southeast members say equity has always been a significant focus of their work—while roughly one-half report that they have started focusing on equity since 2020.

Family



Corporate



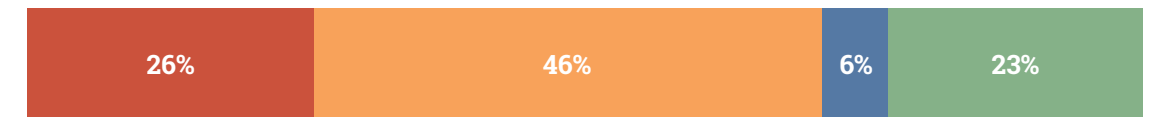
Independent



Community



Health



■ Equity has always been a significant focus
 ■ Has occurred
 ■ Anticipating happening
 ■ Has NOT occurred



From Left: Mari Kuraishi, Christopher Cuevas

Leadership Trends

The Changing Face of Southern Philanthropy

Quite simply, philanthropy has not traditionally reflected the communities it serves.

Executives, program officers, and board members have long profiled as older, White, and straight—especially when compared with the South itself.

But that’s starting to change.

A flurry of retirements by baby boomer-aged top executives—many of whom had held prominent roles in their organizations for decades—has created an opportunity for many foundations to expand their networks and become more intentional about recruiting, hiring, and supporting leaders and board members from all backgrounds.

Nearly 1 in 4 Southern foundations have hired a new top executive in the past two years, according to Philanthropy Southeast’s 2022 Member Survey.

Nearly 3 in 5 have added new staff, and another 13 percent expect to add to their teams in the year ahead.

As a result, the face of the field is undergoing a noticeable transformation. Since the start of 2020, hundreds of Southern foundations have recruited people of color, millennials, and LGBTQ+ individuals to step into prominent leadership roles. Others are becoming more intentional about diversifying their boards.

And a small but growing number of foundations have taken this commitment a step further by creating new roles

that are specifically designed to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into their workplaces, grantmaking, investment practices, and culture.

Robert L. Dortch Jr., co-founder of the Ujima Legacy Fund in Richmond, Va., said while he believes Southern foundations have been slower than their national counterparts to embrace diversity, the recent changes are significant for both the short and the long term.

“When you commit to having diverse perspectives, you open the door to think about so much more than your grantmaking,” Dortch said. “You begin to look at everything from your governance to your operations to your vendor relationships. And when you have the commitment, you can start to help drive change and impact in a way that’s more catalytic.”

In some cases, established White leaders aren’t waiting until retirement to leave their positions, opting to voluntarily step aside with the goal of being replaced by non-White leaders.

Kaki Friskics-Warren, executive director of the Dan and Margaret Maddox Fund in Nashville, Tenn., recently announced that she is leaving her position in 2024 in a deliberate move to ensure the foundation practices what it preaches when it comes to equity.

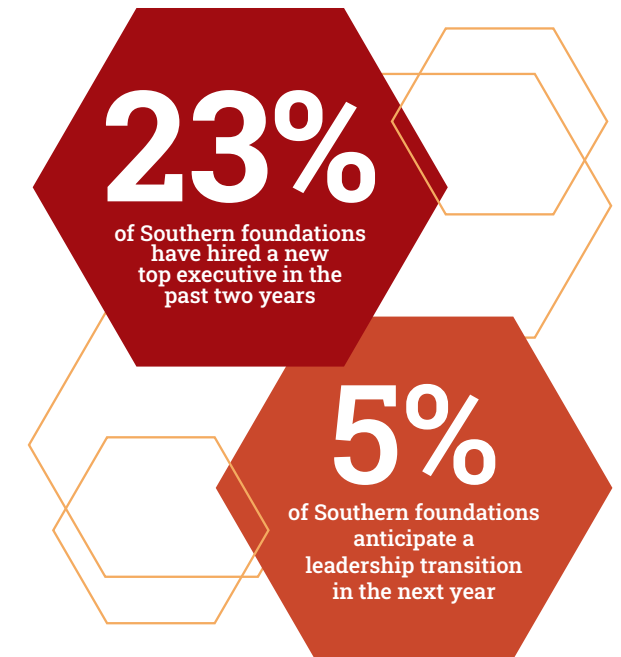
“As long as White people are holding these positions, it doesn’t allow anyone who is a person of color to move into leadership,” Friskics-Warren said. “I feel strongly that I need to get out of the way.”

Friskics-Warren is the exception, rather than the rule. But her decision symbolizes a growing recognition that leaders must be intentional—and, in some cases, selfless—to ensure that they are living their missions.

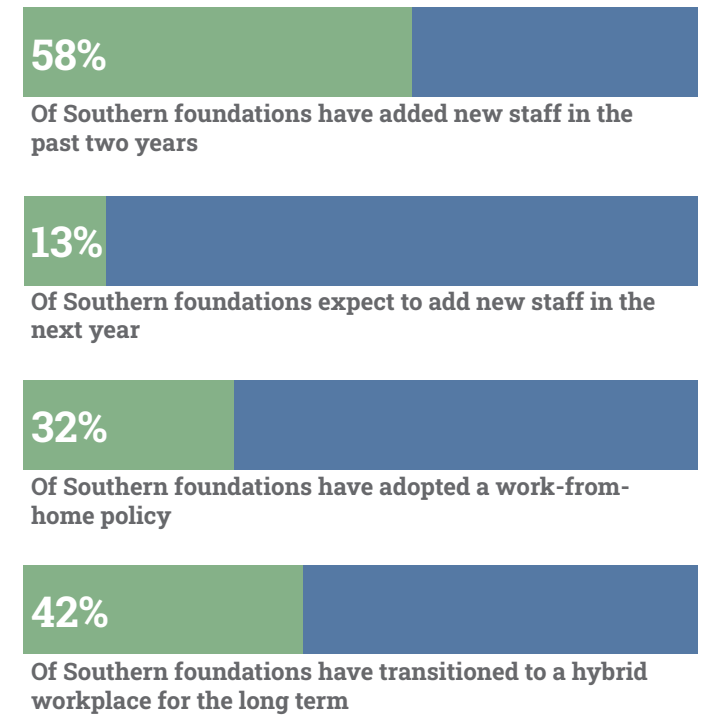
To fully take hold, however, that intentionality must be embraced by entire organizations and extend into their boardrooms, said Vincent Robinson, founder of The 360 Group, an executive search firm that specializes in recruiting and placing diverse leaders in philanthropic organizations.

“We need to create a new environment—one that recognizes and thinks about DEI in all of its forms,” Robinson said. “For this to stick and have a meaningful impact, it comes down to how willing boards are to change and how committed the foundations themselves are to creating cultures where more diverse leaders are going to want to stick with this work for the long haul.” ●

Big Changes at the Top



An Evolving Workforce



Source: Philanthropy Southeast 2022 Member Survey

Southern philanthropy is experiencing a significant changing of the guard as a wave of longtime foundation leaders have chosen to retire or move into new roles.

Their successors include a diverse mix of leaders, some of whom have deep roots in the South—and others who are bringing outside perspectives to their work.

Meet some of these new faces of Southern foundation leadership, including those who are taking on newly created roles and are blazing new trails as founders.



Meet LaTida Smith
President
The Winston-Salem Foundation
Joining the foundation in September 2021, Smith brings years of experience working in leadership roles, including building the Moses Taylor Foundation from the ground up as its first president.
Smith is most excited about the work that is being done to address equity and education and how the foundation can utilize its unique position to create change.
“I love philanthropy,” said Smith. “There is nothing better in the world that I would want to do.”



Meet Frank Fernandez
President & CEO | Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
Fernandez draws from his experiences working in the Atlanta community at the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation in his role leading the South’s largest community foundation.
That on-the-ground perspective helped inform TogetherATL—the foundation’s recently announced strategy to create a more equitable Atlanta.
“There are three basic principles that have led me to do the work that I do,” said Fernandez. “My faith, my experiences, and wanting to do more.”



Meet Christopher Cuevas
Program Officer | LGBTQ+ Equality Fund
Laughing Gull Foundation
After the deadly 2016 shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Cuevas helped organize community care and social services for LGBTQ+ people of color who were survivors of the tragic event, family members, and individuals who lost loved ones.
Today, Cuevas brings what they learned from that work to being the first program officer for Laughing Gull’s LGBTQ+ Equality Fund.
“It is an honor to be able to show up for people and listen to them, impart their wisdom and gifts, and create platforms to help elevate their excellence,” Cuevas said.



Meet Troy Ettel
Executive Director
Turner Foundation Inc.
When Georgia’s Turner Foundation appointed a new executive director in 2020, it didn’t need to go far. Ettel—a program officer at the foundation with a long history of working on environmental issues—was the logical choice.
In leading the environmentally focused foundation, Ettel aims to pay forward the lessons he’s learned throughout his career.
“I am so inspired by positive stories,” said Ettel. “So I use those examples to inspire others and make them feel like they can help change the world.”



Meet Fay Twersky
President and Director
The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
Twersky arrived at the Blank Foundation with an accomplished résumé, which included high-profile roles at the Gates Foundation and Hewlett Foundation.
She’s bringing this experience to a place-based family foundation that is focused on youth development, civic participation, and mental health and well-being.
“We should never take the work we are doing for granted,” said Twersky. “It is a privilege, and we should approach it with a sense of joy and optimism.”



Meet Mamie Nicholson
President
Self Family Foundation
For more than two decades, Nicholson served as program officer for a place-based family foundation in her hometown of Greenwood, S.C.
That deep connection to the Self Family Foundation—and the community—made her the natural choice to become just the third CEO in its history.
“This community is my heart, and the work brings me so much joy,” said Nicholson, who points to the foundation’s longstanding support of after-school programs and building a safer community as being emblematic of the collaborative work she aims to continue.



Meet Gigi Pedraza
Founder and Executive Director
Latino Community Fund Georgia
Pedraza founded the Latino Community Fund in 2017 to advocate for Latino immigrants and families and ensure that nonprofits are distributing resources to help the community thrive.
“There’s not enough people talking about and with the community from our perspective,” said Pedraza. “It was at that moment when I realized that I needed to do something.”



Meet Mari Kuraishi
President | Jessie Ball duPont Fund
As president of Florida’s Jessie Ball duPont Fund, Kuraishi draws on her experience as co-founder of the successful online platform Globalgiving.com.
In her role, Kuraishi is focused on expanding the foundation’s equity grantmaking in a footprint that includes Florida and Virginia—and exploring creative forms of impact investing.
“I just love to learn and do new things,” she said. “I saw an opportunity to challenge myself, and it’s been great.”



Bridging Divides

Credit: Allegany Franciscan Ministries

Southern Philanthropy Looks to Bridge a Widening Political Divide

The scope of America’s deepening political divide hit Molly Talbot-Metz at an unexpected moment.

“I was driving my daughter’s car that has this terrible little radio, and the only thing coming through was a talk radio station,” said Talbot-Metz, president of the Mary Black Foundation in Spartanburg, S.C. “They were talking about racial equity and not in any way that I had been talking about it.”

“I thought, ‘Wow, I’ve been living under a rock.’”

Talbot-Metz had been deeply involved in the Spartanburg Racial Equity Initiative, a

collaborative effort that had included offering racial equity training to local community members. Interest in the equity training had surged after the May 2020 murder of George Floyd, but several months later came a discernable backlash.

“I started to hear from a couple of people in our collaborative that their board members were asking, ‘What’s going on with this? I don’t understand why you’re involved with this?’”

“Then it seemed like everything became political. Preventative practices in a pandemic—something we’d logically promote as a health legacy foundation—were seen as political. Access to

contraception was seen as political. Medicaid expansion, political. We certainly weren’t trying to make political statements, but through the very nature of our work, some have seen it that way.”

An ‘Extremely Challenging Environment’

Talbot-Metz’s experience is far from unique. Across the South, those working in philanthropy have felt the impact of increased political polarization described by some historians as the most glaring since the Civil War.

The deepening divide has led to considerable soul-searching

at many foundations that traditionally have been able to deftly sidestep politics, find middle ground, or simply agree to disagree.

As president of Florida’s Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, Michael Murray has witnessed the polarization accelerate and says it is damaging philanthropy.

“It can be extremely challenging, particularly because there are some people who relish the polarization,” Murray said. “They like the camaraderie that they find by banding together with those that are part of their tribe. That makes the problem much harder to solve.”

Using ‘a Bully Pulpit of Influence’

Perhaps nowhere have these issues been more amplified than in Georgia, where changing demographics have triggered a tumultuous shift from solid red to swing-state purple. That trend—combined with an ongoing state investigation of former President Trump into election meddling and passage of controversial voting laws—has raised the stakes.

For Jerry Gonzalez, the urgency of the moment demands that foundations and relevant nonprofits be more proactive in “looking at every mechanism possible to exert influence to protect our democracy.”

Gonzalez is the chief executive officer of the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO) and the GALEO Latino Community Development Fund. He also serves on the board of trustees of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, a family foundation in North Carolina.

Gonzalez believes it’s essential for foundations to offer more robust support for general operating revenue and ramp

up payouts for grassroots organizations that are actively involved in increasing voter access and protecting against threats to American democracy.

“Beyond that, philanthropy has the power of convening—and a bully pulpit of influence—that many other community organizations don’t have to address many of these situations that we’re facing,” Gonzalez said. “So really we need to look at the whole scope of how philanthropy can engage during this time because, ultimately, preserving democracy is vital to all of the other things that philanthropy cares about.”

Bridging the Gap

The charged political environment has become the new normal — and has the real potential of becoming even more contentious with 2022’s midterm elections and the looming 2024 presidential campaign.

Yet amid that reality, foundations are testing new approaches aimed at finding ways to bridge the divide and reestablish a greater degree of civility, tolerance, and understanding.

One of the more promising efforts is being undertaken by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, which have developed a program called Bridging the Gap. The effort focuses on increasing religious literacy to bring together people who wouldn’t likely interact, much less engage in meaningful conversations. With religion often a key wedge of political ideology, Murray hopes that the efforts can demonstrate a results-driven model for broader progress.

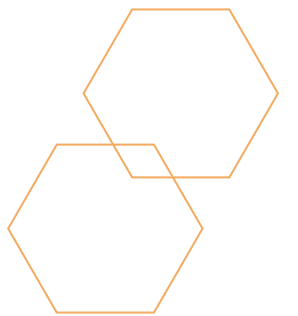
Bridging the Gap has been largely focused on college campuses, where a wide range of people from various backgrounds and faiths live in close proximity. The program aims to engage what Murray describe as “unlikely suspects” — students who are devoutly committed to their religion and are less likely to interact with those outside their inner circle.

Murray points to some early successes in which Muslim and Jewish students with starkly opposing views on Israel-Palestinian relations have learned to discuss the topic in reasonable ways, and even forge friendships.



We certainly weren’t trying to make political statements, but through the very nature of our work, some have seen it that way.”

- Molly Talbot-Metz
Mary Black Foundation



“What we’ve seen so far has been pretty remarkable,” Murray said. “Students who normally would not be in conversation with each other coming together in ways that are actually helping depolarize the campus.”

Uniting a ‘Coalition of the Willing’

Back in Spartanburg, Talbot-Metz and her colleagues are navigating within the ever-evolving political environment with a blend of caution, compromise, and conviction.

Talbot-Metz said the Spartanburg Racial Equity Initiative now focuses on building “a coalition of the willing” and relying more heavily on data to make a case

for supporting specific causes. That data-based approach, Talbot-Metz believes, has less risk of fueling ideological divisions. For instance, the foundation emphasizes data from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that found an 18-year life-expectancy discrepancy between local neighborhoods less than two miles apart from one another.

“I’m not OK with knowing that a child born in this census tract is likely to live 18 years less than a child born in a neighboring census tract. Most people I know are not OK with that either,” she said. “That’s where we can come together to move forward to make progress.” ●

“**What we’ve seen so far has been pretty remarkable.”**

- Michael Murray
The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations



Photo credit: Blue Grass Community Foundation

Graphic courtesy of the Office of Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton



Paths to Progress

There’s plenty of talk these days of “bridging the divide” of polarization and distrust that exists in communities across the country.

In Lexington, Ky., they are taking a literal approach to that work. The “bridges” are more than 22 miles of connected trails and green spaces aimed at facilitating easy access to many parts of the community and creating the opportunities for people of different races, perspectives, and political affiliation to interact.

The Blue Grass Community Foundation has served as a funder, convener, and advocate for many key components of an effort aimed at connecting Lexington’s “red” rural countryside with the city’s “blue” urban core.

“We’re really committed to creating a more generous, vibrant, engaged, and equitable community,” said Lisa Adkins, the foundation’s president and CEO. “Public places and green spaces allow people to come together across divides.”

Such an effort doesn’t happen overnight. These greenspace initiatives have been underway for more than a decade and have always aimed to increase access and improve quality of life.

The newest component, however, has taken on a more intentional framing of driving toward specific

equity goals. That’s embodied in the current focus of creating Town Branch Commons, a two-mile linear greenway that connects neighborhoods to the spine of downtown Lexington.

Next up will be Town Branch Park, a 10-acre urban park, again in the heart of downtown. “It is being designed with great sensitivity to be an inclusive, welcoming space for all,” Adkins said.

While the green spaces allow for spontaneous interactions, there is also purposeful programming aimed at bringing people of different backgrounds together, such as art vendors and shows that occur along some of the trails.

Adkins isn’t under any illusion that the focus on place-based projects offers a cure-all for sharp political and ideological differences.

“The polarization that exists today is certainly significant,” she said. “But maybe because of that polarization there is a hunger for opportunities to come together, to work together, to find commonality.”

“There is a real place and a role for philanthropy to support civic infrastructure. We have extremely progressive donors, we have extremely conservative donors, and everything in between. And we’re committed to developing opportunities and projects where people can put differences aside to come together to make great things happen.”



Evolving and Adapting

Credit: Costal Community Foundation

Evolving and Adapting: Southern Philanthropy Is No Longer Just About Grantmaking

Philanthropy is known for managing its resources conservatively. Most foundations carefully grant 5 percent of their financial capital annually to support nonprofits while being judicious about how and when they raise their voice. But philanthropy is starting to think—and act—more boldly about how it utilizes what Jim Joseph calls the five forms of philanthropic capital: social, moral, intellectual, reputational, and financial. Many in the field now recognize that traditional

philanthropic approaches limit what foundations can accomplish—and that many longtime practices perpetuate inequities that they are actively working to address. As a result, Southern philanthropy is beginning to use and share its capital in new ways. In some cases, it is also rethinking how it relates with the communities it serves by exploring trust-based models and examining ways to share and shift its power. “[Philanthropy] has put a lot of emphasis on the grantmaking aspect of the work,” said Darrin Goss, president and CEO of the Coastal Community Foundation

in South Carolina. “But now, I think we are putting a lot of focus on internal structure—staff and board development—and bringing the community voice into the room. And that leads to different decisions about how we use our assets. I think that’s the new frontier.” As Southern foundation leaders explore this frontier, they’re reassessing how they can leverage their five forms of capital. **Social Capital: Power Shifting and Trust Building** A foundation’s social capital refers to how it uses its

relationships and networks of influence to reach out to and connect disparate groups. Under traditional models, many organizations were cautious about how they used their social capital—gathering information from and forging partnerships with other established organizations, wealthy donors, and mainstream corporate and community leaders. Rather than working closely with the people and organizations that are closest to their mission, these foundations defaulted to trusting and working with those who have financial resources and power. But this approach has, in many cases, come at the expense of building trust and partnerships with and learning from key people in the communities they serve.

“We are beginning to understand the critical need to be in relationships with and listening attentively to people who are in proximity both to challenges and solutions,” said Mark Constantine, president and CEO of the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation in Virginia. “That means changing the traditional philanthropic stance and looking at power through a critical lens and being more explicit about how we can not only share power but give power away. That’s something that is always very hard for foundations. But it’s something that I’m beginning to see happen.”

Moral Capital: Changing the Conversation Foundations have long positioned themselves as neutral players that identify and bring attention to issues and inequities that are often overlooked or misunderstood.

For decades, most philanthropic organizations in the South have taken a measured approach to how they deploy this moral capital. Many have chosen to stay above the fray—worried that they may turn off supporters, community partners, and board members who have different perspectives or are conflict-averse. Community foundations, which are in the unique position of fundraising and answering to living donors, have walked an especially narrow tightrope. But a series of seismic events—including Hurricane Katrina, the murder of George Floyd, COVID-19, and others—has prompted, and at times demanded, a bolder stance.

Across the South, foundations are standing up against inequity and structural racism. Others are raising their voices in defense of democratic ideals and are more willing to speak out on controversial issues such as reproductive health, gun rights, and climate change. Some community foundations are having conversations with their donors about values and priorities—with the goal of creating greater understanding and getting them more actively engaged in the foundations’ programmatic priorities.

“We’re spending time working with our internal staff that are donor-facing on how to have conversations in a way where you can bring donors along with you,” said Melissa Levesque, Coastal Community Foundation’s senior vice president and chief strategy officer. “You can educate them about the equity needs in their own community while also marrying their intent to the process as well. We’re not telling them what they should fund, but we’re providing them with information that

can help them be even more impactful with their giving.”

Intellectual Capital: Building New Networks

Every foundation builds intellectual capital—knowledge gained through its work studying problems, testing solutions, and working with grantees. Foundations often choose to use this capital through publishing research, sharing their opinions through thought leadership, and bringing people together to share and learn.

Some Southern foundations are starting to take it a step further by building networks of nonprofits that provide safe spaces to take deeper dives into issues, create relationships, and learn from each other.

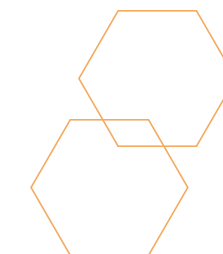
The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, a regional foundation that works in 11 Southern states, initially tested this concept in the 1990s among a group of its grantees. The effort was so well received that “organizations still talk about the impact,” said the foundation’s chief strategy officer, Elena Conley.

Babcock is now expanding its team to curate more opportunities for grantee partners to work together and learn.

“We’re exploring how we can really make sure we’re in deep, authentic relationships with grantee partners, listening to and working with folks on the ground,” Conley said. “What that tangibly means is that we show up for folks when it’s not a grantmaking cycle.”

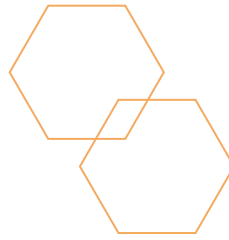
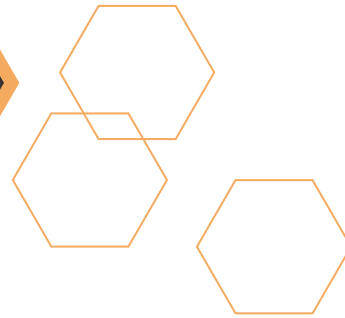
Reputational Capital: Digging Deeper into Advocacy

Because many foundations have a long history of working





Credit: Coastal Community Foundation



on important issues, they develop reputational capital, which can be leveraged to drive others to take action.

Often, that happens through bringing potential partners outside of philanthropy to the table to follow a foundation's lead on championing important issues or coinvest in big projects.

Florida's Patterson Foundation, for example, has used its reputational capital to bring together foundations, nonprofits, business leaders, and local government for the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Not only is it the key funder, but it has also used its reputation to bring a diverse coalition to the table around an important local issue.

Others are committing to advocate and advance public policy that connects with their missions. Coastal Community Foundation, for instance, has been laying the groundwork for a policy and advocacy agenda that is built on community input and trust.

"Advocacy is about taking the breadth of experience that we have in partnering with donors and other stakeholders to really maximize and steward our funds in a way that benefits our community and resolves the problems they're most concerned about," Goss said.

Financial Capital: Rethinking Traditional Grantmaking

Lastly, foundations have financial capital, which they can invest in programs and initiatives that help advance their missions.

In addition to several emerging funding models and approaches (see page 30) that are injecting new forms of financial capital into Southern philanthropy, many organizations are also rethinking how they deploy their grantmaking to better serve the nonprofits they support.

Foundations across the South are reporting that they are moving more of their grantmaking into general operating support, which gives nonprofits the opportunity to decide how to best use these resources rather than being locked into funding specific programs or initiatives. Others are pursuing multiyear grants, accelerated payments, micro-grants, and less onerous grant application processes—moves that are designed to take friction out of the process for nonprofits.

"By taking these steps, you're removing some of the bureaucracy and freeing up resources to do the work," Conley said.

Others are considering more radical approaches that are designed to leverage all of a foundation's resources—not just its annual grantmaking—in support of its mission.

Christine Reeves Strigaro, a consultant and former executive director of Georgia's Sapelo Foundation, is among a growing group of leaders who are looking to realign endowments to invest only in companies whose activities align with a foundation's mission—as well as exploring how to leverage impact investments and other tools to expand what's possible. (see sidebar on page 33)

"There's the saying 'when you're a hammer, you think everything is a nail,'" Strigaro said. "Well, if you're a grantmaker, then everything is a grant. But if you have all of the tools, then imagine the kinds of systemic challenges that we could use philanthropy for and leave this world a better place." ●

A New Model for Building Trust and Sharing Power

As it works to advance social justice in its home community of Asheville, N.C., the Tzedek Social Justice Fund is reimagining every part of how it approaches its work.

And it starts with re-centering its work around building trust and sharing power.

"Philanthropy is built on the systems that have been oppressing people in our community for generations," said Marsha Davis, Tzedek's executive director and director of organizational strategy and practice. "That's why we are thinking differently about our grantmaking. We see it as a first step in a larger process of redistributing money, resources, and power."

Taking a trust-based approach requires deliberate action.

It involves proactive outreach with the goal of building trust and ultimately creating processes that give decision-making power over grantmaking to the community.

"We think it's really important to share decision-making power with those leaders who are most impacted by the systems of oppression we need to end," Davis said. "We've been shifting and also ceding power in our grantmaking by starting a new community-led grantmaking program that distributes a portion of our budget based on what they see to be needs in the area."

And the process doesn't end with the distribution of grants. Tzedek has committed to providing multiyear, unrestricted funding to its grantees and offering support beyond the check by redistributing other resources to the community — including its physical space, skills, networks, and relationships.

As it has taken this approach, Tzedek has also started to rethink the power dynamics within the organization.

"Unlike other organizations, where the executive director is the sole quarter of power, it's really important for us in our organization to split up the power among staff and give

folks a real voice in how we operate," Davis said. "We use an advice model where the people who are closest to the work lead the work and seek advice and feedback from those who are impacted by those decisions."

It has also completely restructured its board by recruiting eight local social justice leaders—including seven women of color—to serve as key strategic advisers to the professional team that is charged with Tzedek's day-to-day work.

And it is taking the sometimes uncomfortable step of communicating differently and being more open about its processes and practices.

That includes rethinking how and when it communicates about its work and decision-making.

"Historically, we were not very transparent at all. It was really sort of muddled," said Jennifer Langton, director of organizational grantmaking and philanthropic partnerships. "Over the past two years, we have really tried to be more transparent and tell the story of how we arrive at decisions. That storytelling and transparency has really helped people gain more trust with us in the community."



We think it's really important to share decision-making power with those leaders who are most impacted by the systems of oppression we need to end."

- Marsha Davis
Tzedek Social Justice Fund



Funding Structures

Credit: The Healing Trust

Emerging Funding and Investment Structures Expand Philanthropy's Potential

Private, family, corporate, and community foundations drive the bulk of philanthropic work across the South.

But an evolving array of funding models and alternative approaches is working alongside these familiar organizational structures—bringing new resources and fresh ideas to a region where both need and opportunity are great.

Some of these models and approaches harness the collective power of individuals who want to make a difference in their communities. Others are the result of institutions outside of philanthropy working closely with foundations for the

greater good. Still others are philanthropic organizations located outside of the South that are stepping up investments in our region.

Together, these efforts are expanding the definition of how philanthropy operates in the South—and they are at least part of the reason behind Philanthropy Southeast's recent name change from the Southeastern Council of Foundations.

The message: Southern philanthropy is no longer just about the work of traditional foundations.

"Philanthropy itself is evolving and changing," said Janine Lee, president and CEO of Philanthropy Southeast. "As a

field, we need to embrace all of these different and new and innovative types of donors."

Here are just some of the emerging structures and models that are changing the complexion of Southern philanthropy.

Health Legacy Foundations

A wave of mergers and acquisitions over the past few decades has transformed health care across the South.

During the past decade alone, there have been more than 900 mergers and acquisitions involving hospitals and health systems nationwide, according to a report by Kaufman Hall.

This flurry of consolidations has had a significant impact on rural communities across the South—many of which have experienced closures, reduced care options, and higher costs.

If there's a silver lining to this trend, it can be found in communities across the South that are home to a growing number of health legacy foundations—institutions that have been created through the transfer of assets from a nonprofit hospital or health care system to a for-profit company. These foundations, also known as health care conversion foundations, are in many cases concentrating investments in rural and historically underserved communities.

A 2021 report by Grantmakers in Health found that nearly one-third of the nation's more than 303 health legacy foundations are headquartered in the South, collectively manage nearly \$8 billion in assets, and are responsible for more than \$318.6 million in grants to Southern communities.

The largest is another newer foundation, North Carolina's Dogwood Health Trust, which made nearly \$40 million in grants in 2020 and has assets approaching \$1.4 billion.

And the impact of these foundations is continuing to grow. The newly created New Hanover Community Endowment will soon begin making grants in North Carolina from an endowment estimated at nearly \$1.3 billion.

Mark Constantine, president and CEO of Virginia's \$310.2 million Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, sees this influx of new investment as the start of a more coordinated effort by philanthropy to improve health equity across the South.

National Funders Focus Attention on Southern Communities

For the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, investing in Southern communities in Mississippi and New Orleans has been part of its DNA for more than 75 years.

Kellogg, based in Battle Creek, Mich., near the headquarters of the Kellogg's cereal company, has been making grants in New Orleans since the 1940s. But after Hurricane Katrina, the foundation took the deliberate step of saying that its work in New Orleans and Mississippi would require a deeper commitment.

"We made a shift to funding for at least a generation because we understood that long-term change takes time," said Rhea Williams-Bishop, Kellogg's director of Mississippi and NOLA programming. "You can't go in and fund immediately after a devastating event and stay one or two years and think something dramatic is going to happen. It takes time."

Kellogg is part of a generation of national funders who have made a long-term investment in Southern communities. More recently—in the wake of both Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and more recently the 2020 murder of George Floyd—they are being joined by other philanthropies that are looking to make a difference here.

A growing number, like Chicago's MacArthur Foundation, are concentrating their work in specific issue areas, like climate and equity, that connect to their larger programmatic work.

As they do, they are discovering—much like Kellogg—that they must invest for the long term and build and nurture relationships in the communities they are looking to support.

"We have to approach this work thoughtfully and build trust at the community level—and that takes real time and investment," said Mijo Vodopic, a senior program officer for MacArthur.

Top Non-Southeast Foundations Giving to the Southeast

Rank	Foundation	State
1	Silicon Valley Community Foundation	California
2	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Washington
3	Anne Ray Foundation	Minnesota
4	Bloomberg Philanthropies Inc.	New York
5	W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Michigan

Source: Candid Ranking based on 2018 figures

"You are seeing not only a growth in the number and size of health legacy foundations, you're also seeing more of a shared voice among health legacy foundations and seeing how the work of health funders intersect in different ways," Constantine said. "People are more aware of how health and well-being affects all of our lives and how it intersects with transportation and poverty and education."

Giving Circles

Robert Dortch, Jr. can remember the encounter vividly.

It happened during a nonprofit board meeting in the early 2010s. Dortch, then an executive at the nonprofit and the only person of color in the room, had talked about the role and importance of Black philanthropy.

He was quickly rebuffed by a board member, who dismissed the topic.

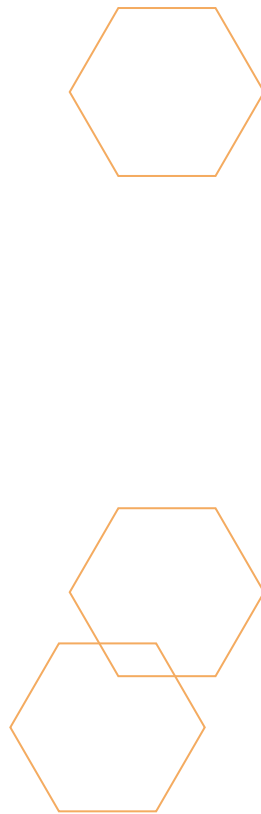
"Black people don't give," the board member said.

Dortch, knowing through personal experience the fallacy of the statement, took it as a challenge: "I said, 'If five years from now we're having the same conversation, shame on me.'"

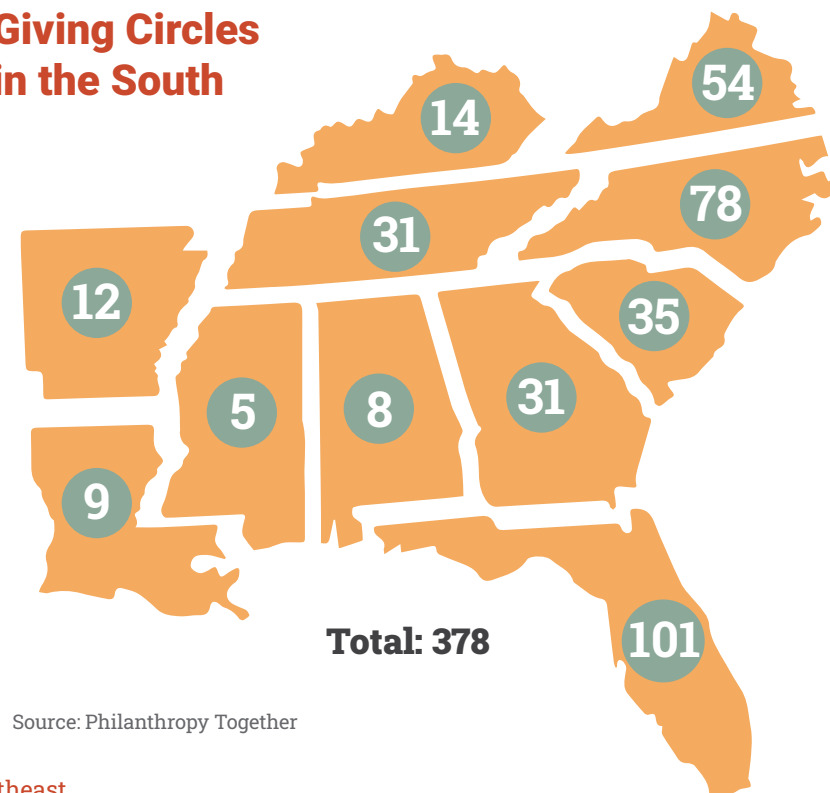
After the meeting, he reached out to a group of fellow Black nonprofit executives in Richmond, Va., and formed what is now the Ujima Legacy Fund—a giving circle of civic-minded Black men who raise and grant money to support education initiatives.

Southern states are home to 378 giving circles, according to a recent report by Philanthropy Together—a figure that has more than doubled since 2016.

As that number has grown, so has the impact of efforts like Ujima, which has granted nearly \$400,000 to nonprofits working to support and uplift youth and young adults in Richmond.



Giving Circles in the South



Source: Philanthropy Together



Unlocking the 95%: A Funder's Case for Multiplying Impact

The Sapelo Foundation isn't content to focus solely on the 5 percent of its endowment devoted to annual grantmaking.

The family foundation based in Savannah, Ga., is on a journey to unlock the other 95 percent – all part of a commitment to align 100 percent of its capital with its mission.

"Our mission is either for the whole organization, or it isn't," said Christine Reeves Strigaro, the family foundation's former executive director.

To accomplish its goal, the foundation has started a journey to reexamine how to reinvest its endowment in companies that align with not only its own mission, but also the missions of its grantee partners. It has also launched a process to use a portion of its capital for program-related investments – below-market-rate or zero-percent interest loans – via community financial development institutions (CDFIs) or other

entities that accept loans. Entrepreneurship and housing are common focus areas of CDFIs, which provide both loans and wrap-around services to lenders that otherwise tend to struggle finding loans from more traditional sources, often due to systemic barriers. In turn, CDFIs are invaluable partners for building intergenerational wealth that can fuel other desired outcomes in housing, health and education.

"Imagine if our field not only gave at least 5 percent in grants – the legal minimum for endowed private foundations – but also committed to give at least 1 percent more in the form of recyclable loans that could build up CDFIs – an industry that only has a fraction of its assets in the South," Strigaro said. "To move those investments through a network – almost like creating a mutual fund for program-related investments – would create an honest-to-God movement. It could be seen as a fiduciary opportunity and fiduciary responsibility, to leverage more resources toward our missions."



To move those investments through a network—almost like creating a mutual fund for program-related investments—would create an honest-to-God movement."

- Christine Reeves Strigaro
Philanthropic Consultant



Impact Investing

A small but growing number of Southern foundations are also expanding their footprint—and impact—through impact investing.

Working with financial partners like LOCUS Impact Investing, they are leveraging capital in their endowments along with outside investments to provide financing and loans to support nonprofits and projects beyond what's possible through traditional grantmaking.

"More foundations are pursuing impact investing because it allows you to bring a lot more dollars to the table than your grantmaking," said LOCUS Vice President Lisa O'Mara. "You may not have enough assets to do a \$1 million grant, but you probably have enough assets to do a \$1 million loan."

These low-interest loans, for example, can be used to help provide bridge capital for nonprofits as they await government funding or to help them get over the hump for a capital project.

Once the money is repaid, it can get recycled to support other nonprofits.

"It's one more tool that you can use in your community to create impact," O'Mara said. "Foundations, as they start to go down this road, may begin to discover local impact investing as a tool to help alongside traditional grantmaking practices."

While traditional grantmaking remains a big part of Southern philanthropy, these new options are expanding what's possible—and opening the door to greater impact. ●

“**People are more aware of how health and well-being affects all of our lives and how it intersects with transportation and poverty and education.**”

- Mark Constantine
Richmond Memorial Health Foundation



Credit: Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky

Building Bridges Between Philanthropy and Government

Government has long been a black box to many in philanthropy. But increasingly, government is recognizing the value of partnering with foundations and others in philanthropy to coordinate efforts to create a stronger social safety net, respond to crises, and pursue systemic solutions to longstanding problems.

That's what led the NC Office of Strategic Partnerships and some foundations in North Carolina to create a new position within the state's government: philanthropy liaison.

Joy Vermillion Heinsohn, formerly assistant director at the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem, is the first such liaison—working to forge partnerships and foster collaboration between philanthropy, research institutions, and nonprofits.

"My job is about trying to build and create resources for both state government and philanthropy to learn more about one another, understand how the other works, and identify ways that we might be able to work better together," Vermillion Heinsohn said.

Early work has aimed to coordinate efforts around the American Rescue Plan and address digital equity.

And while such positions are still rare at the state and federal levels, Vermillion Heinsohn said she has been hearing from other states that are interested in exploring similar efforts to build bridges between government and philanthropy.

Photo Credit (clockwise from top right):
The Allegany Franciscan Ministries (2),
The Arthur M. Blank Foundation,
Ray C. Anderson Foundation



Rural Communities

Credit: Healthcare Georgia Foundation

Bringing Overdue Attention to Rural Communities

Don't forget about rural philanthropy. That message is top of mind among many of those working at Southern foundations and nonprofits focused on doing good in small towns, farming communities, and other sparsely populated areas. The plea has merit. While roughly 1 in 5 Americans call rural communities home, just 1 in 20 domestic grant dollars flow to these communities, according to a 2015 report on grantmaking by large foundations by the Economic Research Service. This lack of support to rural communities explains the National Center for Responsive Philanthropy's

finding that foundations nationwide invested only 56 cents per person in the South for every dollar they invested nationally. Allen Smart, who through his consulting practice PhilanthropywoRx has spent much of his career focused on elevating rural philanthropy, views the 1 in 20 figure as an optimistic estimate, with some projections putting the percentage of dollars going to rural causes closer to 1 percent. Further, Smart said in recent years that America's deepening political divide—which is often characterized in terms of rural vs. urban sensibilities—hasn't helped engage funders that have a national reach.

"I think it has created even more of a kind of knowledge gap and a bias for national funders against rural areas," Smart said. "It's safe to say that the majority of people working at national funders are from urban areas and are likely politically progressive. So the idea that they would be investing money or giving rural places a fair shake, well, that's a stretch." Yet a fair shake is what Smart argues rural philanthropy deserves—and a growing number of Southern funders are taking notice by investing in efforts to advance health, equity, and economic development in rural communities. "Even just a few years ago there was almost no conversation

about racial equity, rural communities of color," Smart said. "Now we are seeing those conversations happen, and some funders starting to work through an equity lens in rural areas."

Addressing the Equity Gap

Equity has been at the core of the Healthcare Georgia Foundation's Two Georgias Initiative—a five-year effort to drive health care innovation in 11 rural counties across the state.

Planning grants were awarded to rural community-health coalitions seeking to address health disparities, improve health, and expand access to quality health care services for residents in the 11 communities. The foundation subsequently awarded the coalitions \$1.1 million to implement their Community Health Improvement Plans.

The effort directly targeted Georgia's gaping health equity divide, which is largely defined by the refrain of "there is Atlanta and then there is the rest of Georgia." The initiative

offered each community the opportunity to identify its most pressing challenges and delivered ongoing coaching and support to help them address those challenges.

The foundation incubated the effort through partnerships with Emory University, the Partnership for Southern Equity, and Georgia Health Decisions that provided wraparound support, training, and evaluation tools to each community.

Even before the project got off the ground in 2017, the foundation discovered it had to grapple with the systemic challenges that exist within philanthropy, said Healthcare Georgia Foundation director of programs Lisa Medellin. Medellin's team quickly learned that activities that are seemingly routine in urban areas can pose daunting challenges in rural areas.

Case in point: Clay County—one of the state's poorest communities—which when the program began did not have any nonprofits that could serve as a fiscal agent for administering the grant.

While other grantmakers might have gone elsewhere, Medellin was moved by the passion of the county's only primary care physician, who had learned of the grant and emphasized the desperate need. So the foundation got creative and identified an organization in a nearby county to serve as a potential fiscal agent.

That—and Medellin's advocacy for the community to the foundation's board of directors—led to Clay County ultimately becoming part of the cohort.

"So it was really about re-imagining how philanthropy really can show up," Medellin said. "We quickly learned we had to have a lot of flexibility as funders. We need to be more innovative, more creative, more open to risk taking.

"A lot of funders are shy about investing in rural communities because they think it's going to be too much work. But that doesn't mean you do nothing because it might take a lot of time or you get pushback."

"We quickly learned we had to have a lot of flexibility as funders. We need to be more innovative, more creative, more open to risk taking."

-Lisa Medellin
Healthcare Georgia Foundation

Moving On to Move Forward

The Arras Foundation realized it needed to change in order to change its community



Credit: Arras Foundation



Credit: Arras Foundation

Lancaster, S.C., has followed the well-worn arc of many rural communities across the Southeast over the past century.

The arc begins with a booming textile industry that paid family-supporting wages and promised opportunity for generations to follow. As time went on, its textile mills suffered steady decline as foreign competition, evolving technology, and other economic factors squeezed the industry.

What followed was economic hardship, growing social ills, waning political clout, and the persistent brain drain of young people seeking opportunities elsewhere.

Similar dynamics have strained foundations working in countless Southern rural communities to address mounting challenges while providing hope for better days ahead.

The Arras Foundation, which serves Lancaster and surrounding communities, has answered the call by

rethinking everything—including its role as a community leader and partner.

“As part of that rethinking, it has shifted from a traditional grantmaker to a proactive convener committed to seeking out and hearing from all sectors of the community,” said Susan DeVenny, president and CEO of the foundation.

“There was almost a community mentality of ‘my voice doesn’t matter,’” DeVenny said. “We knew we needed to reinvigorate everyone.”

To do that, the foundation gathered feedback from thousands of its residents, including a targeted outreach to more than 600 young people.

“It was a real light-bulb moment realizing that our young people did not feel or perceive opportunity past high school,” DeVenny said. “And much of that was rooted in our textile history and their own family histories where there had always been some security and a job at the mill.”

Through its outreach, the foundation gained deep insight into the needs and aspirations

of community residents. Yet when it came time to take action, the foundation made the strategic decision to “not reinvent the wheel.” Instead, it chose to seek out existing expertise and programming that could make a significant impact with limited funding and resources.

That led Arras to the Orton Family Foundation, a private foundation in Vermont that has developed Community Heart and Soul, a replicable roadmap for rural communities and small towns looking to boost engagement and act on community improvements that garner a broad base of support.

Orton’s approach centers on conversations stemming from two straightforward questions:

- What do you love about the community?
- What is the future you envision for it?

The approach shifts thinking toward the aspirational and actionable, as opposed to identifying problems or focusing on divisive politics. As a result, people from differing backgrounds, economic status,

and political perspectives find what they have in common with their neighbors and then identify concrete ways to make improvements.

“There is definitely some magic to the method,” said Arras’s DeVenny.

The approach has inspired two communities near Lancaster—Fort Lawn and Kershaw—to implement plans for a range of community improvements and new recreational assets.

To address the challenges facing young people, Arras built off of an AmeriCorps program called the College Advising Corps, which places a recent college graduate into high schools to be a resource and a “near peer” to high school juniors and seniors.

Paired with College Advising Corps has been a reinvigorated college internship program that has placed 62 interns in a range of roles since 2016.

With these and other efforts underway, DeVenny said the community is beginning to come together to chart a new course toward prosperity.

‘We Googled it’

The challenges that Healthcare Georgia encountered are an everyday reality for many foundations based in rural communities. Some have concluded that progress has to be homegrown.

That DIY spirit is what led Gerry Roll and others to create the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky in 2006.

“A lot of the motivation to establish the community foundation came from the fact that philanthropy is not responsive to rural America,” said Roll, the foundation’s CEO. “We knew we needed to take control of what was going on here. So we started this community foundation. We didn’t know what a community foundation was. We didn’t even have a model. We Googled it.”

Google searches turned up insights from the Aspen Institute, which had developed a framework for effective rural philanthropy. The foundation’s organizers adopted many aspects of a traditional community foundation, but took a unique focus by dividing key priorities into “three buckets of community building, capacity building, and asset building.”

The foundation initially gained traction with a pledge from a local coal company of \$50,000 per year for five years. Since then, the foundation has secured more than \$45 million and administered nearly 6,200 grants.

Much of the focus is on issues such as food security, economic development, affordable housing, and education access. Yet the foundation is also working in areas that defy stereotypes of rural America, putting resources behind equity initiatives and LGBTQ+ rights.

“If we looked at equity through the lens of race, place, and class, then we would start moving the needle on some real issues,” Roll said. “It’s starting to feel like some of our youth who left this area because they couldn’t be who they really are see change happening, and are willing to come back because they love their home and they want to see it succeed.”

Roll hasn’t given up on engaging larger national donors, but at the same time isn’t slowing down when it comes to building a regional network committed to addressing the many issues facing Appalachian communities.

“I am seeing real change in my community where I live, where my children grew up, and where my grandchildren are,” Roll said. “Not a huge sweeping change, but the little changes that collectively bring us to a better place. I think if broader philanthropy could take a minute to come and see us, to come and look, they might be surprised by what they find.”





Emerging Trends

Credit: Groundswell

Southern Philanthropy Increases Its Focus on Addressing the Climate Crisis

Steamy, sweltering summers and menacing hurricane seasons are nothing new in the South.

But over the past several decades, climate change has been raising the stakes — along with temperatures and water levels — across the region.

Consider that the average summer temperature in Atlanta has increased three degrees since 1970. Experts predict that by 2053, the number of days the city will swelter under a heat index reaching 100 each year will double from 16 to 32.

Meanwhile, a report released in June from NASA echoed warnings that hurricanes will grow increasingly intense — “due to global warming,

global climate models predict hurricanes will likely cause more intense rainfall and have an increased coastal flood risk due to higher storm surge rising seas.”

“We’re seeing strengthening storms, they arrive quicker, they move differently,” said Flozell Daniels, president and CEO of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and the former leader of the climate-focused Foundation for Louisiana. “We realized something was happening and that we need to develop a philanthropic response.”

The devastation and despair wrought by 2005’s Hurricane Katrina served as a catalyst for a robust and evolving philanthropic response in

Louisiana. Daniels points to the establishment of the Climate Resiliency Fund that supports major investments in climate change and environmental justice issues, as well as an initiative, LA Safe, that enlisted broad community and stakeholder engagement to reimagine how to use philanthropic and government resources to drive meaningful change.

Yet for years, other communities lagged behind. Today, that is changing as a small but growing number of foundations and nonprofits across the South commit more resources, investment, and thinking to address the worsening climate crisis.

Serving Up Solutions

“What the South can do is lead on solving the problem,” said John Lanier, executive director of the Ray C. Anderson Foundation, based in Georgia. “We can’t solve it entirely on our own, but we have our own greenhouse gas emissions that we can eliminate. It’s about bringing climate solutions to the table.”

The centerpiece of that table for Lanier’s foundation is focusing on the measurable target known as drawdown. Drawdown is the point in the future when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline, thereby stopping catastrophic climate change.

The foundation funded collaborative research conducted by Georgia Tech, the University of Georgia, Georgia State, and Emory University aimed at regionalizing the methodology of Project Drawdown. The result was a list of 20 high-impact solutions that can serve as a guide for communities and corporations to take action — and hopefully serve as a roadmap for the entire region.

“I hope that what we’ve done in Georgia can be influential in other states and other places,” Lanier said. “Certainly within our region, I would imagine that climate solutions that work in Georgia probably would work pretty well in Alabama and Mississippi and Florida and South Carolina and North Carolina.”

National Funders Look South

While a smattering of local and regional foundations are ramping up climate-associated investments, some larger national funders such as the MacArthur Foundation are also recognizing the dire need in Southern communities.

A few years back, the MacArthur Foundation sensed it was “left on the sidelines or not properly engaged in the climate fight,” said Mijo Vodopic, a MacArthur senior program officer.

That realization led to investments in the South and Midwest, with an initial focus in Georgia, where the foundation saw that efforts to further social justice and equity intersected with a range of issues spawned by the climate crisis.

MacArthur has since made climate-related commitments in Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and the Carolinas, often adapting the focus to align with specific needs, priorities, and perspectives in different regions and communities.

“We realized there are folks that were being left out of the conversation on climate that should be part of the solution-setting agenda,” Vodopic said.

The result has been an evolution of thinking beyond simply curbing emissions to have a broader conversation focused on the how modernizing the infrastructure of the rural South connects with climate issues.

That shift in framing opened the door to people from across the political spectrum to find common ground on issues such as improving the efficiency of rural electric co-ops or addressing how spotty broadband access often limits the potential for communities to diversify their economies in ways that could introduce greener practices and industries.

‘An Emerging Trend’

Also joining the effort to combat the climate crisis are a growing number of faith-based organizations. A prime example is Catholic-affiliated Allegany Franciscan Ministries, a mission-based health ministry in Florida.

In recent years, the organization has evolved from more traditional health care philanthropy to a more holistic mission driven by the social determinants of health. To that end, the connection between climate issues and overall health and wellness, combined with Allegany’s focus on several coastal and metro areas, has made addressing climate change a logical next step.

Over the next year, the organization will explore ways to optimize impact by streamlining and adapting its grantmaking policies. Director of Grants Erin Baird said the aim is to create more flexibility and ease for potential applicants while allowing Allegany to more nimbly fund work around emerging issues like climate and social justice.

“We’re looking ahead and seeing climate philanthropy as an emerging trend,” Baird said.

A similar exercise is taking place in Sarasota, Fla., where rising sea levels and increased risks of rivers and streams overflowing their banks have created urgency around addressing climate change.

Much like other funders throughout the South, the Patterson Foundation is spending time listening to voices from every sector of the four-county community it serves to gain greater understanding of local impacts and possible solutions.

“I will tell you we are not going to solve the problem — that is not our job,” said Debra Jacobs, president and CEO. “Our job is really to convene those who care and those who should care to learn about what the realities are and create a space for conversations that people will say, well, let’s work on this area where we can make a real impact.” ●

5 Emerging Trends to Watch

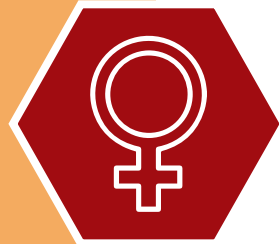
As Southern philanthropy looks to the future, it will face new challenges and opportunities.

Here are some of the issues and trends that are likely to shape philanthropy in our region in the years ahead:



Bridging the digital divide – The COVID-19 pandemic further revealed inequities created by poor or nonexistent internet service in both rural and urban communities. Research from the Pew Charitable Trust found roughly 1 in 5 parents with homebound schoolchildren said it is very or somewhat likely their children will not be able complete their schoolwork because they do not have access to a computer at home or have to use public Wi-Fi to finish their schoolwork.

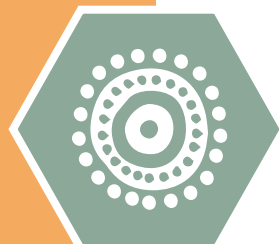
A number of Southern foundations—including Florida’s Patterson Foundation—are already making investments to bridge the digital divide in their communities. More are expected to follow suit.



Women's health equity – The U.S. Supreme Court’s historic Dobbs v. Jackson ruling has put a focus on women’s health, drawing attention to the disproportionate outcomes low-income and uninsured women, and women of color, face across the South. Some foundations across the region—including New Morning, the Quantum Foundation, and Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust—are already committed to addressing women’s health equity.



Democracy – The growing partisan divide, election deniers, voter suppression efforts, and gerrymandering appear likely to pose an ongoing threat to American democracy. Philanthropy will continue to wrestle with its role when it comes to engaging some aspects of the political process, building on current work to drive voter registration, protect voting rights, and ensure that our nation’s founding principles remain intact.



Indigenous causes – Conversations about communities of color have too often overlooked indigenous people. Growing awareness about the horrific legacy of murdered and missing Indigenous people has added urgency to finding philanthropic answers to the range of challenges to indigenous communities while ensuring that all voices are heard in issues ranging from land use to educational access.



Civic journalism – A Northwestern University report found that more than one-quarter of U.S. newspapers have closed since 2005—and the remaining number is expected to decrease by another third by 2025. In Georgia, 17 counties lack a newspaper, according to the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta.

In the face of this growing crisis, foundations are creating civic journalism funds, supporting nonprofit news operations, and coming together to ensure that a free and independent press continues to serve communities across the region. In 2019 alone, foundations granted more than \$734 million to support journalism in the South—a figure that will likely grow in the coming years.

The Next Step: Shaping a New Narrative



Philanthropy has a historic opportunity to write a new narrative about the American South.

As we’ve seen throughout this report, we are at a moment in time when philanthropy is taking significant steps to build a stronger, more equitable South. We are changing the way we interact with our communities. We are raising our voices to amplify our grantmaking. And we are acting more purposefully and courageously.

Now, our challenge is to keep it up to build on our progress.

As I reflect on the turbulent time we’re living through, I see echoes of the 1960s. That landmark decade saw advocates rally together to push for desegregation and protest the Vietnam War. It brought the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the landmark Voting Rights Act.

For a brief time, it felt as though everything was changing. We witnessed real progress and scored tangible victories. But the movement ultimately slowed down and we saw decades of retrenchment. Many of these hard-fought gains eroded over time.

The argument can be made that much of the progress proved unsustainable because the underlying systems—many of them grounded in racism

and oppression—remained. If our quest was to get to the proverbial mountaintop, we ultimately found ourselves snowed in at varying elevations, sometimes dangerously backsliding.

Now, as we find ourselves at a similar inflection point, what should give us all hope is that we are far better equipped to complete our ascent.

Philanthropy in the South is much stronger, much more diverse, and much more resourced than it was six decades ago. There’s a lot more thinking about new models. There’s a lot more thinking about who’s at the table and who’s making the decisions than there was before.

Importantly, there is also much more focus on systems change—an awareness in and of itself that promises to make solutions more durable through addressing underlying issues and putting in place processes to continually measure progress.

Southern foundations of all types—community foundations, family foundations, health legacy foundations, and corporate funders—are making strong and meaningful commitments to centering their work around equity, sharing their power and resources in new ways, and using all forms of capital to push for change.

But our work is not done. In fact, it is just beginning.

We must commit to getting all of this to scale and making sure we sustain and build these efforts so we can truly bring about systemic change. We must ensure that the new generation of innovative and diverse leaders who have taken the helm have the support they need to succeed. We must push against deeply entrenched systems that have been designed to maintain the status quo.

The past several years have been far from easy. And the years ahead will bring new challenges and obstacles—as well as new opportunities.

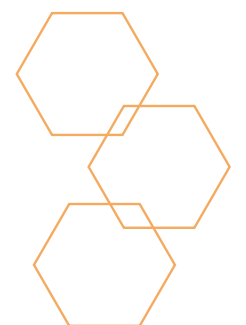
But if we persevere, we can truly write that new narrative. That story will focus on how we’ve created a more loving, just, and healthier South—one where we are finally able to fully actualize our power and beauty.

Robert L. Dortch Jr. is co-founder of the Ujima Legacy Fund in Richmond and chair of Philanthropy Southeast.



We must commit to getting all of this to scale and making sure we sustain and build these efforts so we can truly bring about systemic change.”

- Robert Dortch Jr.





Philanthropy **SOUTHEAST**



Together for Change





Philanthropy Southeast is the premier philanthropic network for courageous leaders, ideas, and resources focused on the American South and U.S. Caribbean territories. We connect our members to experts, innovations, and best practices in philanthropy while promoting peer-to-peer learning and leadership development. By coming together, we spark transformative work that achieves lasting impact, advances equity, and builds a brighter future for the South, its communities, and all its people.



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Philanthropy Southeast

100 Peachtree St., NW, Suite 2080, Atlanta GA 30303

-  PhilanthropySoutheast.org
-  404-524-0911
-  twitter.com/philanthropySE
-  facebook.com/PhilanthropySoutheast