

Thriving with Transformational Philanthropy



Given the times we are in, significant social, cultural, economic, and environmental change is essential.

- For society to shift, innovation must also occur but first reflection and an engaged shift or awakening of consciousness.
- What is the role that giving, philanthropy or entrepreneurship should be playing in the current field of change?
- What substantive changes or transformation do you see during your lifetime and what advice would you give to the next generation?
- What role should donors play? How about advisors? What about nonprofit leaders? And government leaders?
- Is there some added value when these different players join forces? What do you see or envision? What's the added value?
- How can we engage others and go deeper in ourselves and with others?

We can not afford to waste time, talent, treasure or influence. Giving strategically and advocating in consideration of broad based impacts and large scale potential is essential for true change to manifest now.

"Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow."
– Melody Beattie, May 1, 2000

Transformative Philanthropy – Definition:

Transformative Philanthropy (TP) creatively aims to expand our view of philanthropy to include transformation. TP recognizes the significance of other philanthropic approaches from alleviating suffering, to educating and giving tools for people to help themselves, to creating a more collaborative approach. TP seeks to further clarify and support approaches that aim to bring about transformation at a core level. Seeking transformation is different than seeking change, and though it may at first seem elusive, TP seeks to define itself clearly so that it will lead to concrete and specific strategies. TP also recognizes that many of the complex issues we face can be addressed through addressing things at the core.

There are two levels at which transformation can be clarified and supported. One is at the level of culture and other at the level of consciousness.

**Shifting
Culture**



**Raising
Consciousness**

Transformation of culture would aim to help emerge strongly needed new elements of culture and address the

core of culture itself. As an example, in contemporary Western culture, there is a need for a post-modern moral context, a sense of meaning and purpose for our times. Something that will stand above the prevalence of materialism and narcissism, and will be an authentic metaphor for who we are and where we are going as citizens in the 21st century.

Adopted from EnlightenNext

Transformation of consciousness would aim to free and facilitate the natural development of consciousness away from fear, isolation and self-concern towards greater expansion, inclusivity, and care for others.

-- From Gerard Senehi, EnlightenNext and The Transformative Philanthropy Leadership Circle

In our Flow Funding report with Duane Elgin, Elizabeth Share and Karen Payne, as well as in [our new book](#) with a chapter on Transformative Philanthropy, we defined Transformative Philanthropy:



Properties of Transformational Philanthropy

In the mid-1990s, the National Network of Grantmakers reported that only about 5 percent of American foundation funding was addressing social change. Most funding was still focused on alleviating the symptoms of problems and not the source of the problems themselves. Meanwhile, the major threats to the planet—disease, war, poverty, and environmental degradation—called for greater attention and solution. A new kind of philanthropy was called for—one that worked at a higher level of reflection, analysis, strategy, and funding.

One of the clearest descriptions of transformational philanthropy and how it differs from traditional philanthropy comes from Fran Korten, who was for 20 years a program officer with the Ford Foundation in Asia and is now the Executive Director of the Positive Futures Network:

“Transformational philanthropy is for organizations pursuing a large vision of social change—organizations that see the depth of the ecological and social crisis that is upon us and are working to bring about a deep shift in consciousness in the way we live and in the possibilities we can see for our collective future. Transformational philanthropy is willing to be more daring—to be less specific in its outcomes and more holistic in its frame. As we think about consciousness change, we have to be prepared to pursue long-term goals. Much of traditional philanthropy is aimed much more at the short-term and at more concrete objectives. Communications and convening play a bigger role in transformational philanthropy because of the importance of shifting consciousness and providing support and connections for people pursuing pioneering visions and actions.”

Peter Copen, President of the Copen Family Fund and founder of iEarn (an Internet-based initiative technologically linking teachers and students around the world to work together on social and environmental projects) adds:

"Transformational philanthropy means having a large vision, one that will create a new paradigm – a paradigm that will exponentially reduce suffering (and enhance the evolution) of people and the planet. It also means asking some big and important questions and having the courage to fund projects that live within those questions, not knowing how they will turn out. Why? Because a new paradigm cannot be adequately described or conceived by the language and concepts of the old one."

The following are nine properties of transformational initiatives that have emerged from wide-ranging conversations in the field.

- Recognize that we have entered a time of global change and a historical window of opportunity
- Take a whole-systems, integral perspective
- Build strength by actively embracing diversity
- Tell a bigger story about the nature and purpose of life
- Bring a reflective consciousness into the functioning of systems
- Foster self-organization at the grassroots scale
- Provide leadership that ignites a belief in transformational change
- Approach change in transformational ways
- Recognize and appreciate multiple ways of knowing



Definition of Transformational Philanthropy: From "Transformational Philanthropy" a report and conference in 2001 by Duane Elgin, Elizabeth Share, Tracy Gary and John Levy.

Evolution

charity → social change → social justice → transformational giving

Transformational Philanthropy is a strategy of partnering with organizations and leaders who are conscious of their work in a larger context of societal change. Its leaders and funders work in relationship to a field of practice that includes mapping, alliances, risk taking and experimentation. The goals are long term, and for large scale changes in consciousness and behavior and in systems including communications and convenings, that invite perspective, renewal and new and evolved ways of living and relating.

Transformative projects:

- build strength by actively embracing diversity
- tell a basic story about the nature and purpose of life
- bring a reflective consciousness into the functioning of a system
- foster self-organization at the grass-roots scale
- provides leadership that ignites a belief in transformational change
- approaches the change in transformational ways
- recognizes and appreciates multiple ways of knowing

This model is implemented often through large scale strategic projects that enable the initiators to leverage funding with other partners to create greater impact.



For Transformational Philanthropy see these selected resources:

- Seasons' Fund: <http://www.seasonsfund.org/>
- Tipping Point Fund: <http://www.inspiredlegacies.org/resources/tippingpointfund.htm>

Transformational Gifting

Laura's 30th birthday

"I got the idea for my 'birthday flow fund' from a friend who had done it for his 50th birthday. He sent \$50 to 50 friends. I learned about it when I was 28 years old and planned to send \$30 to 30 friends for my 30th birthday. But I was so excited about the idea that I couldn't wait – so I did it for my 29th birthday. I also couldn't limit it to 30 people. I ended up sending a check for \$30 to 60 people. I asked them to give away my money to an organization or individual, and also to send a check of their own that matched or exceeded my gift.

I figured that my \$3,600 would turn into at least \$7,200 because people would match my check with their own money. I also knew that many would exceed the match and give more. In fact, some people sent a check to each of the groups I recommended, so the money more than doubled.

Sometimes I think that if I did it now, perhaps I wouldn't recommend any organizations so that people could really decide for themselves. But some of the friends and family I sent it to had never really given money away, so they didn't know where to begin. I was surprised and touched that people took it so seriously. It was just \$30! But some people told me that they thought about it for weeks. They felt pressure to pick just the right thing.

When I began to write my letter, the first draft sounded like 'the world is falling apart and we have an obligation to help'. It had an urgent and judgmental tone, which isn't what I wanted at all! So a friend advised me to go for a walk and really get in touch with my own heart. When I came back from that walk, I sat down – and the letter just poured out."