

GAIL D. McCLURE

Director of Communication
W. K. Kellogg Foundation
Battle Creek, Michigan

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation and Human Resource Development in Information Science

ABSTRACT

Human resource development in information science is an “emerging program priority area” for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and hence a potential area for funding by the Foundation. By understanding how foundations like the W. K. Kellogg Foundation work—their philosophy, their structure, their rules and regulations, their founding, their governing boards, and their past and current projects—a potential grantee can determine if a particular foundation is an appropriate funding source for his or her area of interest.

INFORMATION SCIENCE AS AN EMERGING PROGRAM PRIORITY AREA

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation is interested in libraries for several reasons. At the Foundation, we have what we call an emerging program priority area called Human Resource Development for Management of Information Systems. When we label something as an emerging program priority, we believe the area has some significant social value, and we want to study it and begin to formulate a program around it. For example, the most recent emerging program priority area was family and neighborhoods. Over the past two years, we moved slowly to build our understanding of where we could make a unique

contribution to families and neighborhoods, and we are just now beginning to make grants against that framework.

When people see the phrase “emerging program priority area” in our annual report, they often ask, “What does that mean?” It means we are in an exploration process, and we explore in several ways. We do it by sending people like me to meetings like the Allerton conference, where we listen to what is being said and try to get a sense of what the issues are. We do it by having information science questions embedded in our reviews of related proposals and by asking knowledgeable grantees and fellows what they think critical issues are related to the priority. We also do it by reading and sharing information with other foundations and donors. In general, we try to get an idea of professional, academic, and user perspectives. Then we gradually put a picture together of the issues in the area, and we analyze those issues against our philosophy, goals, and strategies to formulate a plan that will help direct our grantmaking.

The reason that our board decided we should focus our interest on the human resource aspects of information science as an emerging priority area is our focus on social change. We are interested in information science as it can help effect that change. We believe that a fundamental change in information management is needed to better understand the new world of information, especially as it relates to teaching and learning. And while hardware and software technologies are developing quickly, there seems to be a limitation on the development of human resources to manage these new systems and to assist others in accessing and using information in a meaningful way.

Let me give you an idea of how we approach developing an emerging program priority area. We spend a lot of time looking at the institutions and professions that were critical during the development of the country. We find that many of them are struggling at present. Formed in the 19th century and the early part of this century, they are beginning to lose their identity and are struggling to remain relevant to today’s rapidly changing social needs. One example is clearly the public library, which served as the university for the common person during the early part of this century. What are public libraries going to be and do for people in the 21st century? Is there a vision for the public librarian or information scientist, or is such a concept obsolete? Have public libraries, like the farmers’ grange, outlived their original purpose? Are libraries institutions that need reinvigoration and a renaissance? If the answer is yes, then we believe the best way to do that is by developing people to effectively meet the challenge.

We believe that all professions and most institutions in this country represent social contracts between the people they serve and the people who are serving them. Certain rights have been given to professions

and institutions. If you are a professional, you get to police yourself. You get to ask your own questions because we trust that you will ask questions that are in the best interest of society. You get to set your own agenda. That is what professional freedom means, whether you are a doctor, lawyer, or librarian. That is the freedom that people strive for. However, we feel that a lot of professions have become very narcissistic. Their questions often reflect self-interest or institutional bias more than the larger concerns of society.

The Foundation is interested in professional development in information science because we see it potentially as a critical area that could make a substantial contribution to solving social problems. Obviously there is a demand for professional service around new information systems or there would not be so much competition emerging. Therefore, our questions include the following: How relevant are librarians and library schools to the next century? Is your research useful? Is this research being synthesized in a way that allows people to use it? What is the vision driving change from within the profession? From outside the profession? Is there leadership within the area? What kind of students are seeking out the profession? How do you recruit people into the profession and develop those already within it?

We are in the process of trying to answer these and other questions. In about a year, we plan to come up with a program statement on this emerging program priority that will define the types of areas that we want to fund. This is the time for you to try to impact our process in formulating a program. Later, if the program fits with your interests, you may want to approach us with an idea for a grant.

HOW FOUNDATIONS OPERATE

Before approaching any foundation, it is very important to understand something about the philosophy of the foundation. Almost every foundation operates under some kind of philosophical tenet and set of values. These can usually be found in annual reports or in other documents. Glean those out and let them guide you in your approach.

For instance, at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation some key philosophical statements from Mr. Kellogg serve as the basis for our internal discussions and help distinguish us from other foundations. One such statement is, "I believe in helping people help themselves." That puts an emphasis on people and self-help—on empowerment processes. Does your idea relate to that process? Another important statement that I think is relevant to libraries is, "We believe in the application of knowledge to the problems of people." Clearly, libraries have a strong application of knowledge component, but how do they

relate to the problems of people? Is it obvious? Can it be made obvious? Where do the needs of libraries fit with the foundation's philosophy and program goals?

Another one of Mr. Kellogg's statements is, "I'll invest my money in people." We believe that people, even more than institutions, get the job done. Therefore, we want to see people working together to solve problems they face in common. Leaders who form effective partnerships to address critical issues become a catalyst for change, and we want to help empower that type of leader. These are examples of the types of philosophical statements and program preferences that will let you know if your idea is in tune with some of what we, at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, are focused on.

It is also important to know what type of foundation you are dealing with before you approach one. People often do not distinguish between a private foundation and a corporate foundation if it carries the same name as a corporation. If I tell someone from the Battle Creek area that I am with the Kellogg Foundation, they'll say, "Don't you hate it since they automated the assembly line?" Then I'll say, "Well, it hasn't impacted me much. You see the Foundation is totally separate from the Kellogg Company." However, because of the shared name, people often do not distinguish between us, thinking we are a corporate foundation rather than a private one.

IBM has a corporate foundation. They give away approximately \$225 million a year, which is higher than our total last year. As a private foundation, we are one of the larger players, and we are growing so our opportunities are expanding. In addition to private and corporate foundations, there are also community foundations. They often raise their own endowments and take on responsibility for projects that are no longer supported by a tax base. Family foundations are often small and operated by family members as a memorial or trust. In addition to the basic types of foundations—private, corporate, community, and family—we can be distinguished on the basis of how we do business. For instance, a foundation can operate the programs it funds, or it can make grants to others to operate the program or project, or it can do both. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation is a hybrid—we make grants and also operate a limited number of programs ourselves, such as our leadership programs. It is important to know the size, type, and style of the foundation you want to approach; they come in many different varieties.

As part of discerning the philosophy and type of foundation, it is useful to know something about the founder. How was it founded? The philosophy is often tied to information related to the founding. Some foundations are tied very tightly to the founder, and some are not tied to that person or group of people at all. At the W. K. Kellogg

Foundation, we believe that Mr. Kellogg was a genuine philanthropist. We think of the Foundation as an active dynamic legacy of W. K. Kellogg's beliefs. In particular, he believed that people have the power to improve their lot in life and the culture they are living in. He wanted to see new knowledge applied to solving problems. Our grantmaking supports application and utilization of new knowledge but does not support research per se. Ideas that do not reflect these values, regardless of how good they may be, will not be a priority for funding.

Also, it may be helpful to know something about a foundation's board. How does the board operate? Foundation boards vary widely in their composition and practices and preferences. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation has a much more involved board than many foundations. Our board meets monthly and reviews every request. Many foundations do not take this sort of working approach with their boards. Our image of ourselves is tied to the characterization of a very active, working board. We think of ourselves as people who try to stay close to the ground where the practical problems exist. We try to be problem solving in our approach. Our board is formulated with that approach in mind, and we develop our strategic plan based on it. We sell the plan to the board, and then every idea we present must be rationalized against that plan for the board to approve funding. In this process, we have to justify every proposal that we seek funding for to the board. So when you interact with us or want to present an idea to us, know that our staff will always be asking, "How will this set with the board? How can we convince them that this fits with our approved plan?"

WHAT THE W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION FUNDS

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation is a matrix organization, and that influences the scope and range of our program priorities. We have five major grantmaking areas: education, youth, leadership, health, and agricultural and rural development.

Cutting across these five areas are additional priorities, such as community-based programming and family and neighborhoods. Leadership is also a cross-strategy. The people in our Foundation meet in goal groups. We develop strategies around each cell in the matrix. People meet from interdisciplinary programs to debate and discuss program strategies. We do not think any area should be managed solely by the experts in that field. We may put someone who is not an expert in leadership into the leadership group. We do this because we feel that the only way to break down walls and to get the kind of collaboration that we are asking of other people is to try to engage in a similar struggle ourselves. We understand it is not easy, and to hold ourselves

accountable is not always easy either. Emerging program priorities are not on the matrix but have the potential for being included if they grow and develop.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation likes to fund evaluation and dissemination activities as an integral part of a grant. Not all foundations do. We see these as a critical part of the investment. If we give a grant, we hope to learn something that may be of use to others. If we don't evaluate it, how will we know what impact the grant had and what we learned from it. Effective sharing of results is hinged on effective evaluation and documentation. We respond favorably to an idea that is well-formulated, comprehensive, and clear. We also expect ideas to involve collaboration or partnerships. Our experience also teaches us that sustainability past the funding period is important. Evaluation, sustainability, and dissemination are all forms of accountability as well as ways to leverage the Foundation's investment. Evaluation and dissemination are both growing in importance at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. If you are approaching us with a concept or idea for a grant, it is wise to have a notion about how you would evaluate results, sustain activities once the funding is gone, and extend what you have learned to others who could benefit from it.

We receive about 9,000 proposals a year. Out of this number, we fund about 300. Many of the 9,000 proposals come from people who make 500 copies of their proposal and, after they have gone through funding books at the library, send a copy out to everyone on their list, hoping for a hit. This is not the most effective way to approach the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. We prefer that people send a brief concept paper or call us. We are happy to listen and react to an idea in light of our current and always evolving funding priorities, our value system, and other special circumstances. We do not want potential grantees to spend valuable time writing a 70- to 100-page proposal without any guidance or feedback from us.

The 9,000 applicants' proposals take a tremendous amount of review time and threaten to bog us down. Sometimes we decline a request because the project does not fit easily into any of the cells of our matrix. Or, it may be that we have already given six grants in a particular area and have expended that area's allocation for the year. Or maybe we are looking for geographic distribution, and there have been three similar ideas in the Midwest and we are looking to fund something on the East Coast this time. We can help give our applicant important feedback that would let him or her know our preferences ahead of time. Most foundations and grantmaking agencies do not operate this way. For instance, sometimes we run into problems in working with academic people. With their training and experience, they are often used to tight guidelines and to completely developing their idea prior to any feedback

or interaction with the potential funder. It is really hard for them to believe that we just want a telephone call or a one- or two-page statement of an idea first—before a proposal is drafted to see if we are interested and able to entertain the idea at a more detailed level.

I recently received a proposal from the University of the West Indies where I used to work. A colleague there is interested in continuing education for engineers. They need a downlink, and he is asking for a piece of hardware. I will have to tell him we do not fund hardware except if it relates to an overall program that fits into a cell of our matrix. If you send a proposal saying you need a downlink, the answer is going to be, "That's not our priority; we don't fund technology hardware for the sake of technology hardware." It is more effective to hear that after writing one page than to have spent a lot of time preparing a grant and then hear it.

We generally do not fund buildings, either. Yet there are continuing education centers all over the United States with the Kellogg name on them. We built those buildings, not because we wanted to build a building, but because our value system believes in continuing education, a place for all ages at a university, and the strengthening of the link between society and that university. Again, our emphasis is not on the building per se but on how to encourage universities to make a commitment to lifelong learning.

As I mentioned, we fund about 300 new grants a year, so we do a lot of screening of the proposals that come to us unsolicited. We also try to seek out people who are clearly engaged in work that relates to our current priorities and goals—people who we see making a difference, community-based leaders for instance. When we ask community leaders if they ever thought about writing a grant to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, they often reply by saying they do not think they could do it. That is unfortunate as we feel that some of the most deserving causes and innovative people may be intimidated by the grantmaking process. In some cases, we have participated in the grantwriting process all the way from outlining to acquiring technical assistance to help them write a grant. We are not just people sitting at desks reacting to proposals—we are very much involved in developing programs in partnership with grantees to achieve the goals we negotiated with our board.

In summary, I am advising you to know your audience before you draft or submit a proposal to a foundation or other grantmaking group. One of the most effective ways to approach fund raising is by conducting thorough market research before you get too far along with your idea and to develop a contact with a person at the foundation or agency who can help guide you. I have tried to give you a brief overview of the preferences of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, but you need to learn

