



Making Change by Spending Down

INTRODUCTION

In September 2013, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies (ACBP) and GrantCraft, a service of Foundation Center, partnered to tell the story of the ACBP spend down. Few stories of foundation spend downs—that is, spending all of a foundation’s endowment deliberately with the intent of closing—have been publicly told, and none to our knowledge using a primary medium of a blog series. ACBP’s goal was to build on GrantCraft’s strength of sharing funder wisdom by highlighting more than 20 voices connected with the spend down over the 28-month period until it closed its doors. Both organizations value transparency, and so periodic blogs felt more visible and candid than a polished and long final report might be. As Charles Bronfman, the chairman of ACBP, wrote in his first post:

This post is the first in a series—to be penned by executives within ACBP, and beyond—where that transparency is on display and, we hope, informs a significant degree of peer learning within the broader community. Our expectation is that the series will invite much commentary and become a repository of diverse perspectives, creating a continuum of thought and observation and a sustained philanthropic dialogue on spend-down issues—a platform that does not yet exist.

CHARLES BRONFMAN, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



Promoting ongoing learning is a core value for ACBP, and so the foundation very consciously built reflection, learning, and through this partnership, sharing into its spend-down approach. The body of posts produced offers numerous perspectives on the spend down that result in a detailed collective story. We’ve learned a lot. We learned about the tension between striving for sustainable impact and pulling a safety net out from under grantees. We

In this case study:

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Key Info



COUNTRIES:
U.S., Canada, Israel



APPROACHES:
Spend down, Partnership,
Incubation



Indicates a link to
view more online

learned ways that foundation staff shift their approach and roles during a spend down. We learned about the processes by which programmatic goals and operational necessities were implemented, and the balance between foresight and iteration that drove that implementation. And, we confirmed what we thought we might learn: there's no one right way to do or think about spend down, but sharing and listening help build a strategic approach. We didn't reprint most of the blogs in full, but wanted to organize the collection here in this comprehensive case study to give a flavor of all of the voices and perspectives, and to tell the cohesive story of how ACBP is completing a legacy of making change by spending down. The complete story of the foundation is available at acbp.net, and complete blog posts are linked to throughout and available at grantcraft.org.

Finally, as with other GrantCraft resources, we encourage you to read each section and then reflect. How does this resonate with my work? What can I learn from ACBP's thought process and questions? Do I agree with ACBP's approach? If not, how might I have made different decisions? Who might I want to connect with to deepen my understanding?

SPEND-DOWN PHILOSOPHY

My parents were my greatest mentors. They taught me the meaning of philanthropy through their active involvement in so many causes. Creating initiatives to address social, cultural, and community needs now, and facilitating positive change for the future, were and remain guiding principles.

Those principles became the foundation for the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies (ACBP), which my late wife, Andy, and I established in 1985. All along, we believed in creating programs with long-lasting effect and which could and would make a real difference in the world.

At the beginning of the 21st century, after doing our homework about perpetual foundations, Andy; Jeff Solomon, the president of our foundation; and I decided that ACBP should fulfill its mandate by 2016.

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

ACBP operates and supports programs in Canada, Israel, and the United States to strengthen the unity of the Jewish people, to improve the quality of life in Israel, and to promote Canadian heritage. Ultimately, ACBP seeks to span the separations created by geography, culture, and the requirements of daily life with a bridge built on the willingness of individuals in search of community, identity, and meaning. The foundation operates in a framework of continuing innovation, bearing risk, and ongoing emphasis of quality, value creation, and sustainability. It makes grants but also operates its own programs. Core to ACBP's operating foundation strategy has been a readiness to innovate and experiment. The foundation uses its resources and those of partners in the demonstration phase of projects. If the value of the project is proven, ACBP helps it to move to a larger field of stakeholders.

While several other foundations had chosen this course, our decision was privy only to us. But as more foundations chose to be time-limited, we decided to go public in 2008.

CHARLES BRONFMAN, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



“The issue of time is particularly relevant now. We are entering the greatest transition of wealth in human history.” – John Hoover, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

From ACBP’s inception in 1986, it planned to strategically leverage its entire endowment by the year 2016. This decision was a reflection of Andrea and Charles Bronfman’s belief that they could do the most good by empowering the next generation to pick up the gauntlet of innovation and create programs on their own terms. As a foundation committed to creativity and innovation, operating perpetually was not necessary. The board and staff have agreed that as with many investments, there is a time to invest and a time to exit.

The decision to close doors 30 years after opening them had strategic implications. By making the decision to spend down early, ACBP left plenty of time to build and refine its strategy. Initially, this included thinking about investment, impact, and time.

Investment and impact are two major concerns facing every foundation. Investments are managed to produce a return. Returns are spent to have impact—with a portion held for reinvestment. The target spending rate for many foundations in the United States is five percent. This has roots in the federal government’s minimum distribution requirements. In the private foundation world, those favoring a spending plan in excess of the traditional five percent consider a third and fleeting element—time.

The issue of time is particularly relevant now. We are entering the greatest transition of wealth in human history. Foundations as prominent and diverse as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, ours, and others are in the midst of distributing all assets over a finite period. A few are also making a public record of their experiences and lessons.

There are a number of significant factors and realities that any foundation debating time should consider. Here are five that we’ve observed as important to the thought process:



Birthright Israel 13th anniversary event.

- 1 **The living donor effect**
- 2 **Compound social impact v. investment returns**
- 3 **Distribution rates can vary by giving vehicle**
- 4 **It's okay to change course**
- 5 **Philanthropic assets are not finite**

JOHN HOOVER, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



For ACBP, thinking more deeply about time confirmed its initial intention to spend down, and also pointed to an ongoing need to learn, reflect, and iterate its approach to ensure a sound strategy. Marty Linsky, co-founder of Cambridge Leadership Associates, responded to a call from Jeff Solomon in 2010. Jeff said, "We want to do spend down 'right' and want to document our process so other organizations can learn from our experience."

For Jeff and the ACBP team, there was a lot of valuable knowledge and strategy internally, but they knew that without a clear roadmap for spend down, they needed to give a hard look at how it had gone thus far.



ACBP President Jeff Solomon discussed considerations related to spend down with Vincent McGee.

View this video on GrantCraft.



Our first task at Cambridge Leadership Associates (CLA) was to help Charles, Jeff and the ACBP staff turn their aspiration into a more concrete and shared view. What does spending down "right" actually mean? How does it look at the ground level?

What emerged was a desire to encourage ACBP's incubated grantee organizations to work individually and with each other during the spend-down period, with continuing mentorship and advice from ACBP's leadership and program staff, to assure sustainability of their organizations, missions, and people as ACBP funding ended. ACBP was wired to mentor and support and assumed that it would continue to perform those functions for the grantees, albeit perhaps in slightly different forms.

That high-level aspiration was based on values of relationship, commitment, and collegiality embodied by Charles and Jeff.

From CLA's perspective, there was not much available from other spend-down foundations so inextricably focused on sustainability and intense fieldwork. We took what Charles and Jeff started with as our initial marching orders, not knowing what to expect once we began to dig deeper into the internal and external dynamics.

As sustainability became our collective mantra and shared goal, CLA and ACBP designed a set of activities to lead us to that point. Inherent in the concept of “sustainability” was an image that grantee organizations would use the period up to 2016 to prepare themselves for independence with ACBP’s advice, support, and occasional prodding.

We began our process by having preliminary conversations with several CEOs of the grantee organizations and some members of the ACBP senior staff. What we learned from those initial inquiries was revealing, and challenging to some of our assumptions.

Among our initial findings:

- ◆ *Grantees felt very much in the dark about why ACBP was spending down and what that would mean for them during the spend-down period and beyond.*
- ◆ *Ambiguity generated some anxiety, including at the staff level at ACBP.*
- ◆ *Uniformly, grantee organizations were not enthusiastic about spending time and effort working with each other. They did not see themselves as part of a larger ACBP family with a collective stake in the spend-down process or the future.*
- ◆ *Each grantee organization was on a unique journey, with different internal and external challenges and dynamics, and each was in a different stage of their life cycle. There were nine operating programs and just as many separate stories and distinct sets of interests in the spend-down process. For example, they differed considerably in their dependence on ACBP for administrative, back-office support and those distinctions created vast differences in their views of the spend-down process.*



McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC) Board co-chair Ann Dadson speaks at a conference. MISC develops programs that promote a better understanding of Canada through the study of its heritage.

MARTY LINSKY, CAMBRIDGE LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATES



“We took what Charles and Jeff started with as our initial marching orders, not knowing what to expect once we began to dig deeper into the internal and external dynamics.” – Marty Linsky, Cambridge Leadership Associates

In addressing those findings, Marty worked with the ACBP team to develop a multi-faceted communications strategy, hold meetings to clarify employment status and expectations with staff, conduct site visits to incubated organizations to determine sustainability, and publish an open letter

to grantees, peer funders, other stakeholders, and the wider philanthropic community explaining the decision to spend down and setting expectations for the spend-down period and beyond. This step was an important milestone in clarification and transparency and also served to address and relieve anxiety.

For ACBP, the decision to spend down was intentional and thoughtful from the beginning. The philosophy allowed staff to invest deeply—financially and beyond—in partner organizations and into the foundation’s mission to maximize impact during the foundation’s lifetime.

METHODOLOGY

There’s no roadmap for philanthropy, let alone spend down. ACBP had to figure it out, but it didn’t do it alone. Through networks like the Spend Down Working Group, Council on Foundations, and Jewish Funders Network; outside consultants like Cambridge Leadership Associates and Bridgespan; and the wisdom of staff, advisors, and friends, ACBP explored important aspects of how it would spend down strategically and thoughtfully. There were operational questions to wrestle with regarding staff, investments, changes to program strategy, assets, and even artwork. Capacity building, communication, mentorship, network-building, and sustainability were important program-related concerns.

It didn’t happen overnight. It started with a lot of questioning.

We have been surprised by the limited content available on the process of how foundations spend down, rather than the more broadly discussed topic of why foundations spend down. (We’re glad to see this starting to change, with resources like Duke University’s online spend-down research library).

We therefore went on a mission to consolidate both the process-related experiences of ACBP and other organizations’ research papers and articles relating to spending down. This is the first of two blogs this month that highlights the steps involved and items for consideration that we have organized from our research. This post will highlight strategic priorities, while the next will focus on operational components. We hope these two checklists will help other organizations as they grapple with similar spend-down questions.



The Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues, with ACBP on its board, was founded in 2006 with the mission to generate awareness among the North American Jewish and Israeli public to advance civic equality in Israel, where Israeli Jews and Arabs can contribute, participate, and benefit as full citizens.

Let us be very clear from the outset—the spend-down process is not a perfect science, nor is there a handbook that can mold a perfect strategy. As GrantCraft often shares, and as is a relevant reminder here, philanthropy and its strategies are not a one size fits all. However, we are of the opinion that by asking the right questions, foundations can make sound judgments about their spend down to make it more meaningful, strategic, and able to achieve goals—rather than being deterred by unneeded challenges. Here's our guide to asking the right questions:

1 Evaluate overarching programmatic priorities.

- ◆ *What is the legacy objective, if any? Is it the name of the foundation, the programmatic impact, or both?*
- ◆ *Who will make the legacy decision? The founder(s)? His/her children? Trustees? Staff members? Some combination?*
- ◆ *Will future generations continue the foundation's legacy or impact objectives through other means?*
- ◆ *If there is a living donor, how will s/he engage philanthropically after the spend down takes place (if at all)?*
- ◆ *How might the foundation need to adjust its current programming to meet the legacy objective?*
- ◆ *Will there be an endowment at the close of the foundation? If so, to whom will it be distributed?*

2 Determine when to spend down and how to communicate it.

- ◆ *Should the date drive the program goals or the program goals drive the date?*
- ◆ *Is the foundation's lifespan long enough to make appropriate program planning adjustments?*
- ◆ *Who needs to learn about the foundation's decision to spend down?*
- ◆ *How and when will the spend down be communicated to partners and grantees?*

3 Carry out assessment of current programs.

- ◆ *What types of qualitative and quantitative criteria should be used in the assessment?*
- ◆ *How do those criteria align with the foundation's present and legacy objectives?*
- ◆ *How might the assessment handle comparisons among grantees and within various funding portfolios?*
- ◆ *Should outside consultants or an evaluation firm conduct the assessment?*
- ◆ *Who should be involved in the assessment? Founders? Trustees? Staff? Grantees?*
- ◆ *Should the assessment be carried out anonymously or publicly?*

4 Wind down funding of non-essential grantees.

- ◆ *Has it been clearly communicated to the grantee that funding will soon stop?*
- ◆ *Is a transparent timeline in place for reduction of funding?*
- ◆ *Has the timeline been communicated with adequate lead time to each grantee? If not, can the foundation consider readjusting the schedule?*
- ◆ *How might the foundation assist with transitional support or attract replacement support from other funders?*

5 Enhance capacity and funding for core grantees.

- ◆ *What steps must be taken to ensure core grantees have the financial and operational expertise to continue after the spend down?*
- ◆ *Will the foundation provide capacity building—monetary or in-kind—to enable grantee sustainability in the areas of:*
 - *Fundraising and donor relations management?*
 - *Financial and organizational management?*



Participants in Grand Street's 10th cohort retreat.

- *Governance and board management?*
- *Strategic planning?*
- *Leadership development and staffing?*
- ◆ *Have actionable fundraising plans been created by grantees with reserves in place in case financial goals are not reached?*
- ◆ *How will the foundation and grantees balance responsibilities to search for new partners?*
- ◆ *If the foundation has incubated grantees, how can the grantee mitigate the “branding” effect that often ensues and onboard new partners?*
- ◆ *Are there merger possibilities for incubated grantees in order to consolidate operational capacities?*
- ◆ *Should the foundation use a dashboard or other tool to track and analyze progress of grantee strength and sustainability throughout the spend-down process?*

“The spend-down process is not a perfect science, nor is there a handbook that can mold a perfect strategy.” – Mariah Schuknecht, formerly of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

6 Determine if new program initiatives will be considered.

- ◆ *Will new initiatives invigorate the staff and potentially prevent loss of enthusiasm?*
- ◆ *Is it practical (or necessary) to reduce funding for other grantees to fund new initiatives?*
- ◆ *Can the foundation transition from a grantmaking organization to one that offers non-financial support to grantees through mentorship?*

7 Determine closing and post-close strategies.

- ◆ *How can the foundation spend its time meaningfully capturing lessons learned and networking grantees and funding partners to leverage its investments over the years?*

- ◆ *How should the foundation's successes and impact be celebrated? If there is an event, who will be invited?*
- ◆ *How will the institutional knowledge created and accumulated throughout the foundation's lifespan be preserved?*
- ◆ *Where will this knowledge (and documentation) be archived? By a partner or supporting membership organization?*

MARIAH SCHUKNECHT, FORMERLY OF THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



Adopting a spend-down approach is a big decision that leads to a lot of changes. As ACBP staff started to discuss these and other questions, they determined aspects of how they would approach the actual process of spending down—their new investment strategy. And of course, questions lead to more questions, many of which arose through thinking about the closing details.

John Hoover, senior vice president at ACBP, shared some of his questions related to “the end”:

- ◆ *Are all financial obligations, legal issues, and claims resolved?*
- ◆ *How are furniture, equipment, and art to be handled?*
- ◆ *Should arrangements be made for maintaining a website post-close, even if stagnant? If so, how will hosting and maintenance (if needed) be paid over time?*
- ◆ *Have important legacy documents been organized and codified? Where will the relevant documents be archived and stored after closing, and will additional funding be required? Will they be secure, easily accessible, and ready for transfer?*
- ◆ *Who will be the contact person designated for possible future inquiries?*
- ◆ *Will there be a celebration or “life” publication to recognize the milestones and impact of the foundation?*
- ◆ *Have all “wind up” steps that lead to proper dissolution been undertaken?*



The Gift of New York, launched on September 13, 2001, enlisted the tri-states' cultural, sports, and entertainment venues to help families who lost loved ones on 9/11.

◆ *Will the final year be audited? When the foundation issues a final tax return and files with the state's Attorney General indicating all assets have been distributed, will reserves be considered to pay the residual fees and expenses?*

JOHN HOOVER, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



Some questions, like these, don't get answered right away. In fact, part of what ACBP learned is you just have to dive in and start a strategy to be able to make good decisions along the way. ACBP decided that it would close its doors 15 years later. This meant certain decisions and answers could wait, and programs and operations could continue to evolve.

As Mariah's blog suggested, one of the topics ACBP had to wrestle with was if new program initiatives would be considered. The reality is that ACBP didn't want to go in a new direction, but this was a signal to go deeper in the work and innovate within programs that it had already decided to fund. In Canada, the CRB Foundation started programs about Canadian heritage from the ground up as one of its first approaches to funding. In Israel, Keren Karev created new programs to enhance quality of life. In the U.S., ACBP decided to similarly create new initiatives with the goal of inspiring and cultivating next generations.

"Without the annual cushion of ACBP's operating support, financial issues soon became very clear. In our enthusiasm for our mission, we were living beyond our means." – Ann Dadson, Historica Canada

One strategy they supported began in 2002, when Jeff Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies (ACBP), hired me to encourage next generation donors to bring their own ideas and resources to bear on the Jewish world.

After spending a few months surveying the landscape and exploring best practices across the country, we set up a collaborative giving process for next generation donors who wanted to give beyond tables to benefits by more directly funding critical issues in the Jewish world.

SHARNA GOLDSEKER, 21/64



Innovative programming is balanced by longstanding grantees and programs to whom ACBP has offered continual financial but also non-financial—such as mentorship and board service—support to over the years. Because of the deep investment and true partnership, it was important to ACBP to communicate that funding would end with the closure of the foundation and determine jointly with the grantees the schedule of financial support for the remaining years.

In some cases, ACBP also worked directly with a partner to further develop the financial sustainability solution.

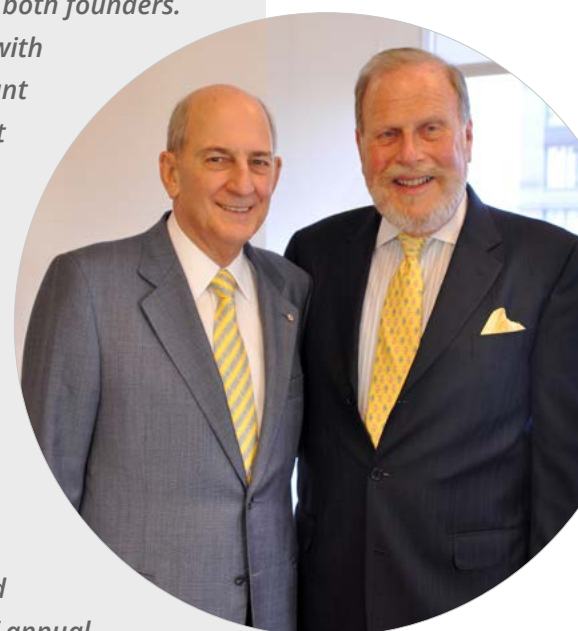
Historica Canada was founded with significant financial commitments from both founders. The largest, in 2000, was a pledge of up to \$25 million from the foundation with the condition that Historica Canada match it dollar for dollar. The full amount was matched within five years, but nearly all the funds were used to support annual operations. Little was set aside for future financial security.

We were aware of the ACBP spend down, and by mutual agreement, ACBP was to pay its pledge over a minimum of several years with its last payment in 2016. We set up payments on a sliding scale between operations and endowment to enable Historica Canada to cover its operational expenses, focus on programming, enhance its brand to attract partnerships to match the pledge, and work toward financial sustainability.

After about five years, we reduced the amount earmarked to operations and increased the amount reserved for an endowment. Later, the full amount of annual payments went to the endowment to support long term development and programming.

But without the annual cushion of ACBP's operating support, financial issues soon became very clear. In our enthusiasm for our mission, we were living beyond our means.

ANN DADSON, HISTORICA CANADA



Charles and Jeff, colleagues for nearly 20 years.

With the financial reality in mind, Historica Canada shifted operational focus to sustainability planning beyond ACBP. ACBP's early disclosure about the spend down gave core grantees an opportunity to expand their thinking about financial and non-financial aspects that had previously relied on ACBP. And, this transparency allowed ACBP to evolve support for the transition period in some circumstances, like providing back-end office support or catalyzing network-building.

Conversations with grantees were mirrored internally at ACBP, as executive leadership had to also work with staff on sustainability.

One example of this was the existence of a full-time human resources manager and an information resources management professional on our staff. While this may appear standard, even mundane, for us it was not. These positions could well have been outsourced, considering the relatively small size of our staff. But their in-house presence underscored the centrality of their roles and the high value placed on personnel in the overall ACBP framework.

JEFF SOLOMON, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



Talent management was as much a result of the methodology used to execute the spend down as as it was an integral part of executing that process, too.

TALENT

As Jeff Solomon said in one of our videos, “the foundation has always had the belief that its only resources were its human resources.” When spending down, there is a strong need for staff to be present and working towards the foundation’s mission, but there is also an end to that work—and to jobs—in sight. For some, accepting a job with an expiration date is an exciting and welcome opportunity.

I arrived at ACBP in September 2013, when the spend down was already well underway. Senior management was fully transparent with me about this before I accepted the job offer, but it did not affect my decision in the least. If anything, it was an added bonus and incentive.

As a recent college graduate, I was eager to jump right in to learn and to succeed. Joining ACBP would, I believed, position me on a fast track toward understanding the role of a leader in Jewish foundations. The decision by Charles Bronfman and ACBP president Jeff Solomon to publicly and honestly share their thoughts and strategy related to the spend down resonated with my values, and so with this respect for ACBP’s leadership, I accepted a job with an expiration date.

I was hired to provide needed support to our current programs and funding commitments, which includes determining how to best preserve the stories and lessons from our relationships long after we close our doors.

When I started my position, I inherited old files. I will likely be the last person to read many of these, and how I use them is now my responsibility. Knowing that I will be the last person to inherit them is both daunting and exciting. It is my opportunity to not only build the files, but to use them to preserve the foundation's legacy.

AMANDA LEVINE, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



“Change is about doing things differently—giving up control, negotiating services, determining costs, leveling expectations, and getting buy-in. There is no single driver of change.” – John Hoover, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

Staff like Amanda have been crucial to executing ACBP's mission, especially in the final few years, by sustaining operations and also stepping up to support grantee programs and organizations. As the foundation's approach to closing grantee relationships included more holistic partnership to ensure long-term sustainability, sharing services and resources was key.

As an operating entity, ACBP had the capacity to extend its infrastructure to the programs that were being developed. In essence, we shared services. This allowed missions to thrive without the distraction of developing supportive services. In the private equity space, this type of support is commonly provided by an incubator. In looking at the field, organizations that did not have the benefit of sharing services were spending a disproportionate amount of time building and maintaining these services without the corresponding caliber of talent or resources.

The easy part of freeing up resources to focus on mission is finding the right approach for a given scenario. The hard part is changing existing organization culture to accept that approach. Change is about doing things differently—giving up control, negotiating services, determining costs, leveling expectations, and getting buy-in. There is no single driver of change. It could be boards, funders, staff, or networks. Change starts at the top with the adaption of the belief that how an organization functions today might not be how it should

move forward tomorrow. As a private operating foundation, ACBP leveraged its resources and applied its people, including its founder, to fast-track growth, highlight opportunities, increase focus on mission, and extend its back-office services to core startup grantees.

JOHN HOOVER, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



“We attract new employees who are excited to work in support of our mission and derive professional lessons from a foundation at this late stage of its life.

Working close to a living donor in an organizationally flat structure with

less staff is a unique opportunity.” – Jeff Solomon, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

For some staff, a spend-down environment can instill some fear about the future. For others, it can be an opportunity to reflect, learn, evaluate, and eventually pursue other interests.

While much of the spend-down focus was on external stakeholders, what became increasingly clear was the additional internal challenge of addressing ACBP’s employees. ACBP is a family foundation where staff turnover is low and relationships run deep. A foundation that broadcasts that it’s effectively putting itself out of business in five years creates an unusual situation for employees.

What is the impact on a staff member who knows his or her job has an expiration date? Does this knowledge influence the quality of his or her work? Does he or she start looking for a new job? Moreover, how can the organization ensure it will retain the necessary talent to see itself through to the end?

When staff reductions began, they were spread among different departments, and while each specific circumstance varied, all were related to the decision to spend down the foundation’s assets. As the number of employees began to shrink, other staff members knew their time was soon, but did not know exactly when or how they would be let go.

Senior management was aware of the strained atmosphere created by the spend down and tried to communicate their strategy internally. Despite best efforts, continually evolving plans resulted in the delivery of ambiguous messages that triggered unease among the staff.

While I was not privy to specific timelines for all of our employees, I had a general idea of who was going and when. I had a positive working relationship with many of my colleagues and they turned to me to express their frustrations, concerns, and tears.

JASON SOLOWAY, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



The anxieties that Jason noticed among colleagues and that surfaced in the Cambridge Leadership Associates evaluation were not unknown to leadership. In fact, Jeff's take is that despite best efforts, some stressors for staff are simply unavoidable.

From 2011, when ACBP publicly announced its spend down, to today, the number of employees has declined by 60 percent, or 12 employees. Yet despite the new normal, including a move to a less expansive headquarters office, our work continues in grantmaking and stewardship, and we in fact attract new employees who are excited to work in support of our mission and derive professional lessons from a foundation at this late stage of its life. Working close to a living donor in an organizationally flat structure with less staff is a unique opportunity.

Still, there was and continues to be a natural anxiety permeating the culture. This is to be expected. Transparency, honesty, and generosity are, indeed, mitigating factors. Nevertheless, such mitigation is but one aspect of the human resource culture of a foundation and those of us responsible for the leadership of time-limited foundations should not delude ourselves into believing that stresses are not present.

We need to manage it by expediting decisions and communicating them, or sharing reasons for any ambiguities.

JEFF SOLOMON, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



Each spend-down foundation faces similar challenges in motivating, attracting, and determining the right timeline for phasing out staff. The Atlantic Philanthropies, another foundation nearing the end of its lifespan, offered a guiding principle that resonates with ACBP's approach to staffing.

Upon their departure, we want staff to be recognized and feel respected for their contributions, equipped for their futures, and positive about their experience at Atlantic.

Our human resources challenge was to weave all this together in a way that made clear to all staff that while we depended on their continued concentration and commitment, we also intended to devote significant resources to help them plan their next steps, professionally and personally, and to ensure that they understood all of the transition resources we would be making available to them.

MARIA PIGNATARO NIELSEN, THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES



Jeff, Charles, and other foundation leaders were driven by the principle that staff are—and always have been—the foundation’s best asset, and so giving employees ample time to plan for their departures, offering generous severance packages, and communicating transparently were of utmost importance. This ethos extended, too, to creating a work environment staff could be proud of and enjoy forging ahead in.

Charles is an extraordinarily loyal person, in particular to his staff. Over the years, he has said to me many times, “Why should I enjoy all of this art privately if my staff can enjoy some of it too?” The staff was given the opportunity to choose art that meant a great deal to them. We then decorated the foundation’s space. At worst, featuring art in the office is better than looking at a plain wall, and at best—it makes the staff and guests feel more comfortable. I suppose the staff spends most of their time in office. It’s colorful and it’s bright, and it gives its audience a sense of the breadth of Canadian decorative arts.

FRANKLIN SILVERSTONE, CLARIDGE COLLECTION OF CANADIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS



Project Involvement, an enrichment program, will continue to operate beyond ACBP’s spend down.

COLLABORATION PARTNERS

As the founders of ACBP, Andrea and Charles Bronfman focused deeply on connecting with people through their philanthropy. They never attempted any project alone; they always had a network of advisors and partners who valued their approach and wanted to help them achieve maximum impact. ACBP was born with an end date in mind, and so it became part of their mission to look for other funding partners primarily for the operating programs.

During the heyday of ACBP, Andy and Charles Bronfman, along with Jeff Solomon developed strategies to ensure that every investment the foundation made leveraged all of the resources that we had in our wheelhouse. This included spending more time with grantees to come up with new initiatives, and sharing proposals with like-minded funders.

In a spend-down environment, the collaborative model is even more in focus because a spend-down foundation strives to keep its mission alive through others. It is important to Charles and Jeff that they continue to champion best practices for organizations whose values resonate with those of ACBP.

AMANDA LEVINE, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



As Charles said, while “we believe that our journey has been unique, there are enough commonalities between us and many other fine foundations that we believe, and hope, that an analysis of our path will be meaningful.” Akin to the way that ACBP approached transparency with grantees, The Lia Fund, another spend-down foundation that made its last grants in 2014, decided to prioritize sustainability of its grantees as its foundation’s end date drew near.

Communication isn’t just about what we said, but what we did to practically support grantees. It was in the best interest of our grantees and also of the foundation to be a resource beyond just our grants to ensure long term sustainability.

For multi-year grants, we focused on grantees’ development and fundraising strategies. We conducted our programmatic due-diligence work at the front-end of the relationship and focused on grantees’ expansion of their funding sources during the second, third, fourth, fifth, up to their final grant. For each grantee report, we asked directly, “What are your plans for replacing our grant at the end of the grant term? Where are you with pursuing other revenue streams?”

BETH ROSALES, THE LIA FUND



On a broader level, there were communities that partnered with ACBP to bring programs to populations that could benefit greatly from the influx of opportunities. In both Israel and Canada, communication and partnership between the existing institutions and the foundation were crucial to the success of the various programs. To ensure the longevity of programs in these countries, ACBP partnered with governments.

ACBP noticed the decline of the length of the school day in Israeli public schools, and that a growing number of families could not afford enrichment opportunities like private tutoring and afterschool activities. One of its first initiatives was to create an enrichment program to extend Israeli day school hours, enabling professionals from various fields to educate beyond the traditional curriculum of reading, writing, and arithmetic. It brought energetic teachers into the classrooms and, as a result, attendance rates increased and the children went on to further their studies and pursue rewarding careers. Now, 23 years later, the program is being absorbed by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry will continue to fund the program through a recently issued tender that will partner another foundation, Sachta Rashi, and the Israel Association of Community Centers to continue operation of the program.

AMBASSADOR IDO AHARONI, CONSUL GENERAL, STATE OF ISRAEL



“Through work on this series, we’ve confirmed what we already thought we knew: knowledge shouldn’t be proprietary. What’s valuable to one could be valuable for all.” – Jen Bokoff, Foundation Center

The Government of Canada supports a wide variety of programs and projects with the aim of enhancing Canadians’ awareness of their country. The opportunity to join with a private foundation created by one of our most public-spirited and community-minded families with a strong commitment to nation-building has benefited Canada.

It has been a special experience to see the extent to which the Heritage Minutes program captured the popular imagination, and continues to live in the universe of social media where it is the subject of affectionate spoofs and the focus of chat groups.

Canada’s richness and prosperity is a direct result of its people. Charles and Andrea Bronfman understood this well and they have both contributed to the building of the Canadian mosaic. Through their generosity and commitment to measurable outcomes they have been innovative in their philanthropic activities and in seeking partnerships. They did it for their love of the country and its future. Ultimately, we as a nation and future waves of Canadians, are grateful for their insight and devotion.

JOHN F. PRATO, CONSUL GENERAL OF CANADA



Network-building has been central to ACBP's community-centric approach. ACBP helped develop institutional knowledge by actively participating in funder networks and more broadly in Jewish community events. Participation allowed ACBP to engage others more deeply in its programs, but also to influence peers and empower actors in the sector to develop and strengthen their own initiatives.

[Jewish Funders Network] became a platform where funders come together to wrestle with issues affecting the Jewish community and to find avenues to collective action and exchange. Networking is not just “schmoozing”; it demands specific structures and platforms. JFN, with support from ACBP, therefore created peer networks and affinity groups around specific funding areas, like disabilities or Jewish education. It also launched matching grant initiatives, funder convenings, and a host of other programs and services to help funders connect with one another. We call it “engineered serendipity.”

ACBP not only supported the creation of JFN's networking infrastructure, but also actively uses the network as a platform. By living in the network, the foundation contributes greatly to its vitality and sets an example for how other funders can take advantage of such a network.

ANDRÉS SPOKOINY, JEWISH FUNDERS NETWORK



In the case of the Green Environment Fund (GEF), ACBP was part of a funder collaborative that deeply exemplified its commitment to building constituencies, drawing strength from connection with peers, and leading funding on issues with fewer supporters.

The two most important learnings from GEF were the importance of having a dynamic strategy and recognizing the opportunity for collective impact. When it was created, GEF looked at what was happening in the environmental field in Israel more strategically to find gaps and determine the opportunities that philanthropy could provide. It already had learned that philanthropy could be a catalyst for organized initiatives, but what emerged was that philanthropy could also be a discrete convener of organizations working in the same space. What was clear was the need for top-down and bottom-up approaches organizing the local grassroots activists and providing capacity building, while allocating funding to national environmental organizations.

Even though most of GEF's funding partners had some experience working in the environmental field, and they had professionalism and logic, most of them did not have the

strategy and mission to sustain the work alone. There was this amazing synergy between the fact that there was finally funding for the environmental field and that there were so many passionate groups with an agenda. It worked because the field was ripe for this type of work. GEF was an example of a partnership promoting partnerships.

SIGAL YANIV FELLER, JEWISH FUNDERS NETWORK ISRAEL



In recent years, ACBP has devoted much of its time to the organizations it has incubated by helping them reach independence. Most recently, 21/64 and Slingshot were registered in New York State and filed for their own 501(c)(3) status. ACBP views its core grantees as not just funding recipients, but as partners. These organizations will become ACBP's living legacy, where one measure of the foundation's success will be the contribution that these incubated organizations and their missions make in the communities they serve.

In 2008, after ACBP's spend down was announced, the trustees generously provided 21/64 with a runway that enabled it to eventually reach sustainability and continue as an independent entity called 21/64 Inc., a nonprofit practice specializing in next generation and multigenerational engagement in philanthropy and family enterprise.

To help us achieve sustainability, ACBP provided 21/64 with financial support to hire a new senior professional so that it could transition from a wholly underwritten program to a 501(c)(3) with diversified revenue streams. ACBP also gave 21/64 the intellectual property it created while it was a program at ACBP, including interactive tools designed to be catalysts for next gen donors, their families, and advisors. During this massive growth phase, ACBP also lent 21/64 beautiful office space and support services.

As 2014 came to a close, 21/64 celebrated its independence with sustainable earned revenue streams. It transitioned completely out of ACBP, and I became the executive director of the new entity, joined by our other program staff, who moved from ACBP to 21/64 including Danielle Oristian York, Barbara Taylor, and Sara Finkelstein.

SHARNA GOLDSEKER, 21/64



Since 1999, more than 500,000 young Jewish adults have participated in the Birthright Israel program, the gift of a 10-day experience in Israel.

For ACBP, partnerships were developed based on shared vision, values, and needs and sustained through trust—a core value that was central to the success of every collaboration.

FIELD-BUILDING

From its inception, ACBP recognized its role in a larger philanthropic sector and committed resources to strengthening it for the future. Through active participation in funder networks and conferences and through direct support and incubation of next-generation philanthropy initiatives, ACBP has made field-building a part of its mission.

We are regularly consulted by other foundations that seek to replicate our approach to investments. In attempting to apply best practices to their governance, financial management, and planning, we have helped to create sustainable entities that will be fulfilling the mandate of ACBP for many years after we close.

JEFF SOLOMON, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



It also was willing to look to the field for advice and learning, and intentionally integrate that learning into its strategy.

Some of the foundation's operating programs—including Slingshot, 21/64, Reboot, and the Green Environment Fund—had been spun off as independent organizations, taking staff with them.

In this way, we looked to the superb capacity-building example of the Irene Diamond Foundation, which placed its personnel with grantees—aligned with their needs—and made special grants to support positions and ensure employees' economic security and professional growth.

JEFF SOLOMON, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



Strong Cross-Border Collaborations

Collaboration and partnerships across three countries—Canada, Israel, and the United States, is strengthened by having operations on the ground in each country. The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies is the sum of various foundations and family efforts. These were led by operating foundations: The CRB Foundation in Canada, Keren Karev in Israel, and ACBP in the United States.

“Enhancing Canadianism” was the goal set by The CRB Foundation’s founders. The focus was on a single objective: how best to make Canada’s heritage come alive.

“The unity of the Jewish people whose soul is in Jerusalem” was the second founding principle outlined by its founders. The foundation’s name in Hebrew is “Karev,” which means “to bring together.” Keren Karev sought to promote greater understanding and cooperation within Israel and to strengthen the bonds of history and heritage between Jews around the world and Israel.

In 1999, the foundation became internationally known as ACBP and was meant to expand the work of The CRB Foundation in Canada and Keren Karev in Israel, both in existence for more than 10 years at that time.

The three branches of operations are collectively spending down, leaving a legacy of cross-border partnership and collaboration that will continue to operate through its partners even as ACBP’s operations cease.

The Spend Down Working Group (SDWG) is a group of 20-30 funders who connect occasionally to share reflections on practice and leverage connections to answer questions they are facing during their spend down. ACBP appreciated having a cohort of other funders facing some of the same challenges and decisions that it was facing, and using their experiences to inform ACBP's.

Spending down wasn't a tough decision, but because there are only a few foundations that invest in community organizing, exiting the field was. Still, we felt we had some interesting learnings related to programs, technical assistance, and evaluation we wanted to share. In addition, we wrote comprehensive reports on the foundation's activities at five years, ten years, and as we were preparing to close our doors. Because they contain reflections about working as a family foundation, the steps we took to help build the community organizing field, and lessons learned about strengthening our grantees to promote their sustainability, those reports were the most relevant documents to our peers, and we wanted to make them available to people in a way that was easy and convenient.

To that end, we posted our final report on the homepage of our website so that if you searched for FACT, you'd be sent right to the report. Our thinking was that, in an age of information overload, the easier it was to find our most helpful lessons, the better. That final report also includes additional resources that people looking for more in-depth information can explore at their leisure.

We could have shared information on a variety of other things, such as our financial documents, the key lessons learned by board and staff, our experiences working with consultants, and so on. However, what we decided to leave behind for the philanthropic community was information about FACT's core mission—to strengthen the capacity of community organizations that elevate the voices of people with regard to the societal and political issues that concern them, along with the lessons we learned in pursuit of that mission, our failures and successes, and what we achieved in our foundation's lifespan. Learning from our lessons is what will serve the philanthropic community the best.

DIANE FEENEY, FRENCH AMERICAN CHARITABLE TRUST (FACT)



Charles and Jeff agreed—being transparent about ACBP's learnings would indeed help the field the most.

When we began to tackle some of the practical decisions around our own spend down, there wasn't much information for us to integrate into our strategy. We felt like an outlier in the field because we were going through a process that had little definition in existing reports

and resources. So, documentation of our efforts and process felt essential. Since that time, we have shared our ideas about spend down in the two books that Jeff Solomon and I wrote together, at conferences with other spend-down foundations, and in various publications. We also began this blog series in partnership with GrantCraft to share learning more broadly in the field, with our spend-down colleagues and our non-spend-down colleagues.

We chose blogging as our primary documentation medium because it is widely accessible and to the point, innovative, and versatile. We've documented our programs and knowledge; however, in each case we seek to determine if the documentation is better to keep internal or to share publicly. After we spend down, the internal documents will reside in an institute that shares our mission.

Throughout the lifespan of ACBP, we have learned that the assets of a family foundation include not just money, but also capital, time, and human resources. In many cases, that's the power of the living donor. Using convening opportunities with the right people has often advanced our objectives. My job in steering ACBP from the initial stages up through the end game has been an important factor for ensuring impact in the areas that we support.

CHARLES BRONFMAN, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



The *Chronicle of Philanthropy* wrote an article about the blog series, in which Amanda Levine, program associate, was quoted: “We won’t be sharing our stories anymore, but we hope this series can transcend that and that others can feel inspired to write about their experience.” For the ACBP team, the blog series was an intentional decision to transparently share about its spend down, but also to encourage peers in the sector to embrace transparency by sharing their own stories.

“We have learned that the assets of a family foundation include not just money, but also capital, time, and human resources.” – Charles Bronfman, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

GrantCraft, a platform for sharing funder wisdom since 2001, was where ACBP chose to host its blog series beginning in September 2013. The completed series is 28 written blog posts, two videos, a podcast, a hosted event, and of course this case study, and has been accessed more than 24,000 times. Each component went through a rigorous strategic and editorial process to ensure that what was being shared was accurate, candid, useful, and accessible to others. The series itself generated significant interest from and dialogue in the field as well.

I wasn't sure how deep we could go with ACBP in a nuanced conversation about spend down. That's why we started with the idea that we'd just do 12 posts. We quickly realized that when it comes to talking about spend down, there's a lot to discuss.

◆ *There are really, really fascinating challenges to spending down. The close of the Green Environment Fund, for example, was a known consequence of ACBP's spend down, but so was the incubation and growth of 21/64. Jason Soloway's departure was catalyzed by the announcement, but the same can be said for program associate Amanda Levine's arrival and enthusiastic spirit. There are many grey areas when deciding to close doors, and listening to diverse voices weighing in on a range of topics is fascinating.*

◆ *Everything is about timing, and those timing decisions have to work together. Considerations about office leases, planning grant cycles and final grants, communication with stakeholders, staff departures, the last tax filing, distribution of artwork, and plans for delightful retirements all depend on one another. They must be carefully coordinated, and nothing ever goes perfectly. So, being nimble is essential, as is having staff from various roles coordinate early and check in often.*

◆ *Having a point person spend significant time reviewing every paper file and coordinating legacy-related efforts is essential. There's a lot that goes into final decisions related to what is said, saved, transitioned, and discarded, and it's not necessarily a role for senior leadership. Amanda has been a thoughtful partner in this blog effort—an important piece of ACBP's legacy work—because she is able to honor values, organize information, and navigate dynamics with the best interest of the foundation in mind.*

Before this project, I admittedly hadn't engaged very often in thinking about foundations spending down or debating the benefits of a perpetual vs. a time-limited existence. Now, I'm a champion of hosting this conversation more deeply across Foundation Center and continuing to partner with more foundations that are spending down in the future with the intent of building knowledge throughout the field. Why?

◆ *Foundations that are spending down and eventually exiting the field hold incredible knowledge—both about the specific issues where they have focused funding, and about the spend-down process and all of its related considerations. Without intentionally capturing that wealth of knowledge, a lot gets lost. But by documenting what is possible to document and making that accessible, there's potential for others to be more strategic by having access to more experiences and information.*



From the start, Birthright Israel had three simple, interrelated goals: increase and appreciate Jewish identity; connect young Jews to Israel; and connect young Jews to the Jewish people.

- ◆ *Since we started the series, I've heard increasing interest in the topics the posts are raising. From questions around severance and hiring to operational questions around assets and distribution of remaining funds to strategic questions about preparing grantees and providing final capacity boosts, there are a ton of issues specific to foundations with an end in sight. Funders often feel that their situation is unique, yet these blogs allowed for connections around common themes.*
- ◆ *Through work with other time-limited foundations—like the palliative care special collection of resources that we developed with Atlantic Philanthropies and the webinar for nonprofits that we hosted with the Lia Fund—and of course through work on this series, we've confirmed what we already thought we knew: knowledge shouldn't be proprietary. What's valuable to one could be valuable for all, and we want to leverage our platforms to promote increased transparency.*
- ◆ *Partnering with a foundation for field-building takes trust, which needs to be built over time. The ACBP team and the GrantCraft team built it together, but it took many months. In this case, my "do-over" would be to have done a planning retreat with more stakeholders much earlier in the process, because we discovered so many commonalities later in the game than I would have liked. From this, a learning, too! Trust can be built quickly (and sometimes has to be when time is limited), and nearly always comes from a place of people appreciating people. Taking a step back and not diving right into work, but instead getting to know one another's personalities and styles, leads to more thoughtful and productive work in the long run. This will very much be woven into GrantCraft's field-building approach going forward, where a getting-to-know-you component will intentionally be built into every project.*

JEN BOKOFF, FOUNDATION CENTER



There isn't any one correct course or lifespan for a philanthropic foundation. Personal and family considerations will lead to different conclusions about any foundation's ideal lifespan. I would only encourage that this needs to be a discussion among donors and their families rather than a default in legal filings.

So rather than advocating for one course or the other, we are, by example and open discussion here and elsewhere, putting time limiting out there within the range of

available and serious options for any foundation that is nearing a turning point, defined generationally, financially, and/or in terms of mission.

CHARLES BRONFMAN, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



LEGACY

The Bronfman name connotes a legacy of philanthropic action. ACBP has both learned from and contributed to various other family philanthropy efforts.

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies is not the only time-limited foundation within the Bronfman family's philanthropy. The Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation (SSBFF) was established in 1952 by Sam and Saidye Bronfman in their hometown of Montreal. While this family foundation no longer has living donors, each of their four children has sat on its Board of Directors at one point. Today, third-generation family members living in Montreal and the United States who have some separate as well as common interests also sit on the board. This board encourages collaboration among all of its members. Even though many have set up their own vehicles for giving, their involvement on the board of SSBFF has offered them the opportunity to learn together, bringing their own experiences to the table to create a shared model. [...] After active grantmaking ended in 2004, the Foundation set up two \$1 million endowments with the Canada Council for the Arts that the Council has full control over.

NANCY ROSENFELD, CLAUDINE AND STEPHEN BRONFMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION



“Deciding to close ACBP and direct his philanthropy through other channels shows how my father respected generational differences and transitions, and also a changing world in which new challenges emerge and demand new philanthropic responses and approaches.” – Stephen Bronfman, Claudine and Stephen Bronfman Family Foundation

The decision to spend down was a decision that celebrated the independent philanthropic drive of other Bronfman generations. It came with the knowledge that the family's philanthropy wouldn't end, but with the anticipation of it taking on new vision, direction, and leadership from other family members at the right time.

Philanthropy—as my father often says—is in the Bronfman DNA, and we are fortunate to be able to practice it generously and expansively. Representing this philanthropic tradition properly and effectively is a responsibility I embrace and will pass on to my own children.

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies' (ACBP) focus on Canadian heritage, Jewish community and Israeli culture, education, and society-building is critical. Its footprint will be long lasting, especially as it helps to put its major grantees on paths toward sustainability after it shuts its doors in 2016.

The work and mission of ACBP has always and rightly reflected the interests and passions of my father and his late wife, Andrea. I have my own, and I expect my own children to one day chart their own direction as well.

Deciding to close ACBP and direct his philanthropy through other channels shows how my father respected generational differences and transitions, and also a changing world in which new challenges emerge and demand new philanthropic responses and approaches.

The decision reflects a philanthropic mindset to not burden a new generation with certain strictures, missions, and infrastructures. It empowers us to pursue our own visions and approaches to effect positive change. This is a desirable outcome.



STEPHEN BRONFMAN, CLAUDINE AND STEPHEN BRONFMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION



#NextGenDonors-the title of the research collaboration of 21/64 and the Johnson Center for Philanthropy—profile poster is a tool that helps users understand the events and conditions that have shaped the current generations.

A common theme that runs through many branches of the Bronfman family's philanthropy is the tie to Judaism and Israel. Charles' father, Samuel Bronfman, played a role in forming the Combined Jewish Appeal out of the Jewish Federation in Montreal. Since Andrea and Charles started ACBP, one grantmaking focus has been on strengthening the unity of the Jewish people. Next generations of Jews who have engaged in some of ACBP's programs will manifest the principles that the family has valued through other continuing efforts directly tied to the family and beyond.

REFLECTION AND LEARNING

Over the 30 years of ACBP's existence, more than \$340,000,000 in grants (and much more in program services and in-kind support) went to 1,820 partners in four countries. More than 85 staff have been part of the ACBP family, and those staff have attended hundreds of meetings with peers and grantees. When the series started, the goal for ACBP wasn't necessarily to learn or celebrate, but to share. But, in writing this series, all of these happened.

There were many reflections on what went well. Communication with grantees and the ubiquitous value placed on staff were points of pride that emerged throughout the series:

As we at the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies rapidly approach our sunset date, we have been reflecting on those many examples of achieving our foundation's objectives that go well beyond the grant.

Among the broad areas of impact are:

- 1 Field-building**
- 2 Leveraging individual board members' time and talents to support objectives**
- 3 Creating intellectual capital**
- 4 Encouraging others through convening, teaching, and influencing**
- 5 Building infrastructure for social entrepreneurs**
- 6 Mentoring and encouraging professional staff to provide field leadership**
- 7 Use of the corpus of the Foundation for program-related investments**

Ultimately, each of these non-grantmaking steps are components of the power of private philanthropy and its ability for influence and impact. To us, they weren't optional; they were a crucial piece of how we approached and defined our legacy.

JEFF SOLOMON, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



ACBP incubated initiatives that helped connect younger generations to philanthropy. It also became a major advocate of the concepts of strategic philanthropy and networked giving. ACBP's support of giving circles, for examples, bore fruits, as now this philanthropic vehicle is connecting more and more young funders to collective giving. JFN was one beneficiary of these efforts; the entire community benefited, too by gaining the participation of an engaged new generation of funders, which is now revitalizing the Jewish philanthropic landscape.

ANDRÉS SPOKOINY, JEWISH FUNDERS NETWORK



Perhaps the biggest “aha” was that ACBP contributions resulted in, as Sharna Goldseker phrased it, “double bottom-line returns.” Many of the foundation’s programs and investments engaged the next generation, which then reinfused funding into support of other next generation Jews.

There was also candid reflection on what might have been done differently.

Specifically, ACBP annual grantmaking ended in 2012 with no less than three years notice to each of the grantees. For the six smaller incubated projects, an aggregate sum was determined by 2010 for their continued support through 2016. In each case, the program's management was given the choice of the time over which this sum would be distributed.

In retrospect, it is an error to believe that management best knows its revenue flow needs. Whereas each grantee would have benefited from a longer term phase-down approach, each chose to complete their ACBP funding within three years and several have regretted that decision.

JEFF SOLOMON, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



And in the video featuring Jeff and Vincent McGee, the president of Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, Jeff shared:

In losing the support positions we become even more aware of the human resource implications of a spend down. The staff shouldn't be getting the shocks from decisions that are sometimes made hastily and without full thought. That's part of the job of the senior manager.

JEFF SOLOMON, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



“For a foundation with staff, infrastructure, and visibility, thought leadership is both a responsibility and a way of achieving broader impact.” – Andrés Spokoiny, Jewish Funders Network

Candid reflection was the intention of each post, but seldom the outcome of a first draft. The writing process involved conversations throughout laden with clarifying questions and the favorite, “but why?” Many of the authors, and certainly the series’ editors (the authors of this case study), had “aha” moments in their writing—where something belatedly occurred to them to share or that they hadn’t realized might be interesting to others. By reflecting candidly on a variety of thought processes and experiences from many perspectives, ACBP somewhat unexpectedly learned from itself during its sharing process. Celebration was never a large item on ACBP’s spend-down checklist, as humbleness and focus on being proactive and innovative with grantees was very much woven

into the fabric of the foundation. But, as the end approaches, closing becomes a reality, and as Spend Down Working Group peers the Paul Rapoport Foundation experienced, a farewell is quite appropriate.

In 2009 when the board and staff of the Paul Rapoport Foundation decided to spend out in five years, we focused initially on conveying our decision to our grantees with total transparency. We then looked to develop effective guidelines, assist applicants in creating strong grant applications, and work with grantees to develop viable exit strategies once our final multi-year grants concluded. We were so focused on these activities that we were all taken by surprise when we realized it was 2014 and that our grantmaking was actually completed. After 27 years of supporting all of the major organizations in New York's lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual (LGTB) communities—providing start-up funding to many, ongoing general operating support to many more, and essential infrastructure development in our final spend-out period—the actual closing date was upon us.

Throughout the preceding decades the Foundation's board and staff had engaged a number of excellent organizational consultants to help us with strategic planning, including during our final spend-out decision. All of them—either formally or informally—reached out to us to urge us to plan for some sort of closure, not just for board and staff, but for all our grantees as well. So while we had had this idea in the back of our minds during the spend-out process, when we realized that our closing was imminent, the desire to hold some final event for the community suddenly became vitally important to us as a way to deal with the harsh realities of closing.

We chose to hold a farewell event to which all of our grantees over the past 27 years would be invited and we specifically reached out not only to current grantee staff, but to those former grantee staff members who had worked so closely with us to develop successful grant proposals in the early years of the LGTB community's growth. We also invited fellow grantmakers from private and public funding sources, who had traveled with the Foundation on its journey from the early days when we were one of very few foundations funding AIDS programs in New York, to our final years of making grants specifically to organizations serving LGTB communities of color. And, of course, we invited our former board members who had worked so thoughtfully and so hard to create the Foundation and its funding strategies over the years.

JANE SCHWARTZ, PAUL RAPOPORT FOUNDATION



Similarly, in December 2015, the last month of official ACBP operations, the foundation will bring together family, staff, peer funders, grantees, incubated organizations, other organizations in the field in the three countries with operations, and future leaders for a final celebration and collective reflection.

In this sense, a large part of ACBP's intentional legacy is creating a virtuous circle of giving back to communities it set out to serve by empowering others to do the same. This cycle, of continuing to support the communities and causes most important to the family, came through in many aspects of the spend-down process, from how empowerment goes beyond grant dollars, to how art was dispersed.

Charles is interested in engaging other donors and members of communities he is passionate about all over the world. When innovators in the field of next generation engagement, Jewish identity and peoplehood, environment, and health come to Charles with novel ideas, he often meets with them to brainstorm around leveraging donor resources and optimizing service to communities in need.

AMANDA LEVINE, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES




What we see in the office currently will be the last of the Claridge Collection. I divided and continue to divide objects in Charles' collection to go up for auction. Charles is committed to Historica Canada, a program of ACBP that promotes Canadianism. As his collection was largely comprised of Canadian artists, Charles decided that it was appropriate and intentional to auction the objects and give the proceeds to this core commitment. Its mission is what Charles' collection does: celebrates and shares the cultural joys of Canada.

FRANKLIN SILVERSTONE, CLARIDGE COLLECTION OF CANADIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS



CONCLUSION

While we were writing this case study, we struggled with pinpointing ACBP's identity, because it's never been about the foundation alone. When ACBP was founded, there were two guiding principles that shaped its grantmaking, but more importantly, that shaped the development of the nine incubated entities. They were the enhancement of Canadianism and the unity of the



Jewish people whose soul is in Jerusalem. And as the foundation and its work grew, so did the lenses of work involving the next generation, leadership, knowledge, and culture. Identity is a composite of experiences, values, learning, mistakes, and relationships. It's what defines an entity to its core. ACBP sought to build community in a way that was meaningful with personal values and good talent.

In Canada, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies is known as The CRB Foundation; in Israel, it's Keren Karev. While the names may be different across borders, the people-based, beyond-the-check, partnership-driven approach that celebrates innovation, learning, culture, place, and community is the same everywhere. The spend down manifested in a deep commitment to celebrating and enlivening these pillars of identity with grantees, peers, and other partners.

ACBP's identity is what it funds. It funds programs that enhance Jewish identity and experience. It collaborates with the next generation to encourage learning, questioning, and leadership. It celebrates history through cultural preservation and display. It leverages networks across geographies, generations, and backgrounds to deepen knowledge and innovation.

When ACBP no longer funds, it doesn't mean it will lose its identity. The legacy was always intended to be the programs it funded and incubated, along with a desire for the next generation to engage philanthropically and support their individual commitments and passions.

The overarching theme of ACBP's journey and of philanthropy, more broadly, is evolution. We know that the field of venture philanthropy will keep growing just as it has for the past 30 years. The topic of spend down is still relatively new. I hold no brief about its wisdom compared to that of a longer-lasting lifespan. For us, it was the right decision. We know that our peers will continue to think strategically about their place in the philanthropic landscape. The fact that we are seeing more foundations helping to solve the problems they identify through strategies reflecting their values sets a good example for others. I know we will continue to see societal growth through the power of philanthropy.

CHARLES BRONFMAN, THE ANDREA AND CHARLES BRONFMAN PHILANTHROPIES



A spend-down foundation shares insight into its decision-making, challenges, questions, and philosophy as it prepares to close its doors.

GRANTCRAFT, a service of Foundation Center, harnesses the practical wisdom of funders worldwide to improve the practice of philanthropy. Visit grantcraft.org to access our free resource library.

This case study was written by Jen Bokoff, director of GrantCraft, Foundation Center and Amanda Levine, program associate, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies.

Photos provided courtesy of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies and its partners unless otherwise noted. Photo on p. 28 by Lisa Helfert.

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