

Reflections on Funding Forward 2017: what we learned at the Funders for LGBTQ Issues conference



Carol Cheney, Meyer Memorial Trust

The Funding Forward conference provided a great opportunity to learn about relevant and timely issues that LGBTQ advocates and funders are addressing around the country, while at the same time, reminding us that despite wins for marriage equality, we need to remain vigilant and continue to provide funding resources where funding has not been as equitable (e.g., LGBTQ people of color and Transgender efforts), and to maintain strong levels of support in a time when the backlash is ongoing and growing.



Travis Ward, The Oregon Community Foundation

For the broader funder community, I would start by sharing the reflection that, “LGBTQ lives intersect with your work, whatever your priorities are,” from housing instability to healthcare to racial justice. LGBTQ people are part of every community. Repeatedly, these were the strategies suggested to funders:

1. Quick response grants, mobilizing communities under attack.
2. General support grants, allowing organizations to objectively assess needs.
3. Increased support for grassroots organizations, whether directly or through re-granting.



Katie Carter, Pride Foundation

A key focus at Funding Forward was about how funders can get in formation (à la Beyoncé) to address systemic, pervasive, and complex issues in a coordinated and strategic ways. This was the subject of the closing plenary and it has left me thinking every single day about the ways in which creative thinking about how issues are related, intentional partnerships, and greater alignment among funders is going to be key to making it through this new era. All of our work is connected—and the more we talk to one another, deepen our understanding of the issues we’re working on, and coordinate our effort—the more impact we can make.



Melissa Hansen, The Oregon Community Foundation

I’m still buzzing about the notion that grassroots organizations are the engine of the car, and if we don’t fund the engine, we’re missing something huge. Many grantmaking programs out there that prioritize EDI are focused on supporting the efforts of bigger, more sophisticated, mainstream, often white-led nonprofits. It’s important for us to step back and consider whether such groups are as grounded as grassroots organizations in community issues, are intersectional and culturally-competent, or are nimble enough to respond to what’s happening on the ground right now. It is helpful to know when it might be time to start shifting not only priorities for who gets funding, but expectations of grantees.



Colin Jones, The Collins Foundation

I was really inspired by the extent to which queer movements are centering trans folks and people of color, and collaborating with movements for reproductive, economic, and racial justice. This kind of intersectionality should be a model for not just queer-led foundations, but all of philanthropy, as we think about how to solve seemingly intractable problems.