



CHAPTER 3

Understanding Your Philanthropy Framework and Operating Archetypes

The Philanthropy Framework and Operating Archetypes were developed by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA) to help philanthropic entities assess the core elements shaping their organizational identity and operating behavior, as well as align their board and staff around core concepts and values. Both tools were developed based on input from dozens of foundations and nonprofit partners worldwide as a result of RPA's multiyear Theory of the Foundation[®] initiative, which seeks to enhance the capacity of philanthropies to effectively align their resources for the impact they envision.

These frameworks also allow organizations to successfully manage important inflection points, allocate resources for maximum impact, and articulate their current state and future vision. This chapter will briefly overview both of these tools, discuss their relevance to philanthropy's changing landscape, and demonstrate how they can be applied to fulfill philanthropies' missions, optimize operations, and bring about meaningful change.

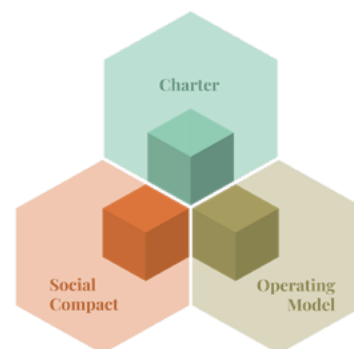
Transformations in the Philanthropy Landscape and the Necessity for New Models

In the ever-changing landscape of philanthropy, philanthropists find themselves grappling with a confluence of challenges. Escalating global issues, shifting norms and attitudes, the growing specter of economic inequity, and ongoing debates about the power and legitimacy of the philanthropic sector collectively demand a reevaluation of traditional approaches. In response, philanthropists are called upon to reimagine their engagement strategies across various dimensions—with their internal talent, organizational processes, systems and structures, collaborators, and impacted communities and individuals.

To meet this pressing need for new organizational design and management models, funders continue to ask how to best leverage their resources to fulfill their missions more effectively. The time is ripe for funders to review and crystallize not only what they seek to accomplish, but also the kind of change they need to make in order to bring about desired results. The Philanthropy Framework and the Operating Archetypes enable them to do just that.

RPA's Philanthropy Framework

Before diving into the Operating Archetypes, it's essential to understand the foundation from which they flow: the Philanthropy Framework. This instrument was developed by RPA to provide emerging and established philanthropic organizations with a structure to align resources for maximum impact. The Framework comprises three main elements: the charter, social compact, and operating model, which define how a philanthropy makes decisions, engages with others in the ecosystem and the broader society, and utilizes its capabilities and resources. In other words, each element shapes a philanthropic organization's identity, purpose, and strategy. Let's break them down.



- **Charter:** A charter defines an organization's scope, form of governance, and decision-making protocols. It establishes the guiding principles that inform the organization's philanthropic efforts and serves as a reference point for trustees, board members, and staff.
- **Social Compact:** The social compact is the implicit or explicit agreement between the organization and society regarding the value the organization aims to create. The compact outlines the expectations and responsibilities of philanthropy in its pursuit of social impact, including the considerations of accountability, legitimacy, and transparency.
- **Operating Model:** The operating model addresses the resources, structures, and systems needed to implement the organization's strategy. It involves the management of financial and nonfinancial resources, as well as the processes and structures necessary to achieve the organization's mission, vision, and goals.

Operating Archetypes

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors published *Operating Archetypes: Philanthropy's New Analytical Tool for Strategic Clarity* as a next-level analytical framework designed to support more thoughtful, effective, equitable philanthropy by helping funders better understand and articulate their distinct position in the philanthropy ecosystem.

Based on extensive, multiyear global research, RPA has distilled eight Operating Archetypes.



Talent Agency

Seeks out, strengthens, and promotes leading individuals. Focused on identifying and supporting exceptional talent to drive change.

- Leading Resources: Talent identification/spotting, instinct
- Key Capabilities: Nurturing relationships, networking, providing visible platforms or reputation boosts



Think Tank

Applies its in-house expertise and research to develop solutions. Creates and shares knowledge to influence policy, practice, and public opinion.

- Leading Resources: Expertise, research, data, and analysis
- Key Capabilities: Research, analysis, defining problems, developing solutions



Campaign Manager

Pulls together a diverse set of players to implement change. Coordinates and manages coalitions, campaigns, and initiatives to achieve shared goals.

- Leading Resources: Convening power, coalition-building, and management
- Key Capabilities: Visible leadership, advocacy, and communication



Field Builder

Launches or significantly strengthens institutions. Invests in developing organizations, networks, and systems to support a field or sector.

- Leading Resources: Institution- and movement-building, knowledge, capacity development
- Key Capabilities: Vision, relationship-building, sector analysis



Venture Catalyst

Provides early, often unrestricted, funding. Invests in innovative ideas and projects with the potential for transformative impact.

- Leading Resources: Risk capital and flexible early or seed funding
- Key Capabilities: Experimentation, assessment and analysis, investment



Designer

Leverages mainly internal expertise to design programs and approaches. Develops and implements targeted interventions to address specific issues or needs.

- Leading Resources: Expertise, program design and implementation
- Key Capabilities: Influence, knowledge, and implementation



Underwriter

An institutional or private funder who provides “big bet” support. Invests substantial resources in high-potential organizations, initiatives, or movements.

- Leading Resources: Large-scale funding and sustained financial support
- Key Capabilities: Personal conviction, strategic grantmaking, and evaluation



Sower

Provides a large number of grants across a diverse range of individual actors and institutions. Bets on the cumulative effect of this approach to seed wide-ranging change.

- Leading Resources: Reach and networks, flexible and participatory grantmaking
- Key Capabilities: Relationship-building, responsive grantmaking, breadth of vision, identifying potential changemakers

Applying the Philanthropy Framework and Operating Archetypes

The Framework acts as a practical, future-focused analytical framework to empower philanthropists to create a deeper social impact by focusing on organizational legacy, design, role in society, and resource management.

From aligning trustees, boards, and staff around core concepts and values, to assessing ideal philanthropic structures and approaches, to considering how best to deploy resources, the Framework gives philanthropies new tools for analyzing how to make (and periodically review) decisions to evolve with changing times. The Philanthropy Framework serves as a road map for organizations, helping to:

- Assess, validate, or crystallize their identity, structure, and approaches (an organizational “gut check”).
- Align trustees, board members, and staff around core concepts and values.
- Manage organizational inflection points, such as shifts in strategy or leadership transitions.
- Allocate financial and nonfinancial resources to maximize impact.
- Realize aspirational goals by helping identify and articulate the current state and future vision of an organization.

A philanthropy’s Operating Archetype articulates what it seeks to achieve and how it deploys resources, capacities, and relationships to implement its vision and strategy.

Reviewing or evaluating an Operating Archetype, or considering a strategic pivot to a different model, allows funders to intentionally analyze operational implications, including prioritization of resources and capabilities. This analysis would also include the potential advantages and drawbacks of each model. Some components of this inquiry will be particular to the individual funder. After all, each philanthropy has a unique origin story, values, vision, priorities, internal dynamics, tolerance for risk, and preferred communication style. Nonetheless, Operating Archetypes are based on essential commonalities.

Thinking through defining characteristics of the Operating Archetypes will enable funders to amplify strengths, take informed risks, and make more intentional decisions.

Some funders may and do recognize themselves in more than one archetype, especially where different program areas within their philanthropy use different approaches. However, foundations comfortable with a blurred array of archetypes may be limiting their impact, as this complexity can strain staff members, who need to employ disparate skills, activities, and relationships to pull it off. It can also make capturing or assessing impact very difficult.

Measuring and demonstrating impact is central to all archetypes, although its expression may differ. For Campaign Managers and Think Tanks, assessing the impact of initiatives with specific, time-bound, tangible end products, this task may be straightforward. For other archetypes, including Field Builders, Designers, Talent Agencies, and Sowers, experimental funding decisions and “big bets” may create unexpected results that require a different type of goalpost for impact assessment. For archetypes that favor unrestricted funding—such as Venture Catalyst and Sower—assessment models, frameworks, and metrics can be codeveloped with grantees once their work is underway.

By applying these frameworks for reflection and deep introspective analysis, funders will be able to achieve greater effectiveness and become better positioned, in today’s era of innovation, reevaluation, and expansion, to manage opportunities and risks and bring about meaningful change.

Conclusion

In this rapidly changing philanthropic landscape, understanding your organization's Philanthropy Framework and Operating Archetypes is essential to maximizing your impact and adapting to new opportunities and challenges. Leveraging the resources and insights provided in this chapter will enable you to assess and effectively align your organization's identity, approaches, and resource allocation with your mission and values.

By holding up this analytical mirror and reflecting on your current organizational structure and its aspirational state, as well as embracing new models and prioritizing equity and inclusion, your organization can effectively navigate inflection points, maximize impact through resource allocation, and articulate a clear vision for the future. This can support you and your organization in achieving your stated goals and driving meaningful change in the communities you serve.

Calls to Action for Philanthropy

- **Reflect on your organization's current Philanthropy Framework and Operating Archetype(s).** Analyze how well your organization is aligned with its core values and goals. Ensure that you have a clear understanding of your charter, social compact, and operating model. Use the archetype analysis as a mirror to get a better view of how you can better fit the role you see yourself playing in philanthropy today, including how you can optimize capabilities and resources.
- **Explore opportunities to improve board and staff alignment.** Foster open and effective communication between trustees, board members, and staff. Provide training, professional development opportunities, and resources to build a shared understanding of your organization's framework and archetypes.
- **Consider conducting an organizational assessment.** Use the Philanthropy Framework and Operating Archetypes to review your organization's structures and approaches. Identify areas where improvements can be made to align with your goals and values.
- **Be open to embracing new models in philanthropy.** Learn from the innovative approaches of others, as well as new and emerging models such as participatory grantmaking, spend-down philanthropy, crypto donors, decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs), limited liability companies (LLCs), funder collaboratives, and impact investing.

- **Prioritize equity and inclusivity in your work.** Ensure that the voices of those most affected are included in decision-making processes and that your organization is actively advancing equity.

Additional Resources

[RPA's Philanthropy Framework and Operating Archetypes](#) offer detailed insights into frameworks and archetypes to better understand and implement organizational assessment and strategic decision-making.

[Social Compact in a Changing World](#) is a report that addresses the response of private philanthropy to the rising tide of scrutiny, and outlines strategies foundations have adopted to become more responsive and accountable in fulfilling their respective social compacts.

[Funder Self-Assessment Tool for Alignment](#) is an online self-assessment instrument to help philanthropies get a better understanding of how their internal elements and processes align with external impact.

[Council on Foundations](#) offers resources, best practices, and tools for effective philanthropy. They provide various publications, webinars, and events to help organizations improve their impact.

[Grantmakers for Effective Organizations](#) provides resources and networking opportunities for philanthropic organizations seeking to improve their impact. This member-based organization offers publications, events, and webinars on various topics related to effective grantmaking.



Case Study: Boticário Group Foundation

Since its founding by Miguel Krigsner, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Grupo Boticário and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the Fundação Grupo Boticário (Boticário Group Foundation), has evolved into a leading corporate foundation driven by a mission to promote and enable biodiversity conservation in Brazil. Embodying the Venture Catalyst operating archetype, which seeks to provide early, often unrestricted, funding to organizations or interventions that are new or have little proven track record, Boticário has funded over 1,600 innovative environmental initiatives primarily via grantmaking and other financial instruments. Most recently these have included mentoring and implementing an environmental impact acceleration program to strengthen the business community's impact investing capacity. According to Thiago Piazzetta Valente, a biodiversity economics specialist at Boticário, "We intentionally avoid funding mainstream organizations, opting instead to support and invest in smaller, innovative groups and enterprises with sound scientific ideas related to nature conservation and its socioeconomic benefits."

As a Venture Catalyst, Boticário often relies on an extensive network of external experts from the nonprofit and public sectors to help it assess and formulate needs, goals, and strategies for interventions. Piazzetta Valente stated that the foundation "is unique because its 30-year record and strong relationships have resulted in access to government, NGOs, entrepreneurs, universities, and people from rural communities to distill and implement the best, most interesting and innovative solutions." The foundation's longstanding reputation and a robust ecosystem of collaborators and supporters are thus central to the foundation's networked operating approach.

Although regulations governing foundations in Brazil restrict Boticário to a more centralized operating approach for decisions on funding, the foundation intentionally collaborates, co-creates and incorporates input from partners while developing and implementing initiatives. One such project is the Viva Água Movement, which brings together actors from different sectors to address water safety and climate change adaptation through nature-based solutions in the Miringuava River basin and the Guanabara Bay Hydrographic Region, two major Brazilian metropolitan areas.

Additionally, the foundation relies on external input from community leaders who have lived experience and place-based knowledge to facilitate and accelerate innovative programs in issue areas both within and outside the foundation's expertise. "We are building multi-stakeholder movements with solid and trusted governance for specific territories," says Piazzetta Valente.

“We realized early on that to do so effectively and to achieve our mission, we need to connect with broader ecosystems and use our philanthropic resources as flexible, catalytic capital for impact entrepreneurship.” This broad, inclusive coalition representing a wide range of sectors, experiences and approaches is integral to Boticário’s social compact and identity as a Venture Catalyst. Building trust and legitimacy with external partners, as well as reinforcing its capacity to take risks and fund innovation, is central to how the foundation fulfills its operating archetype.

While Boticário works in a defined thematic area of biodiversity conservation, its operating approach to programming within this sphere is broad and responsive, enabling it to leverage the built-in experimentation and flexibility of the Venture Catalyst operating archetype. For example, the foundation has been working at the intersection of biodiversity conservation and fields of economic development, gastronomy, nutrition, tourism, health, education and more. According to Piazzetta Valente, investing in entrepreneurial ideas related to quality-of-life issues, and finding links between them and biodiversity conservation, has allowed the Boticário to “...not only support unexpected solutions and ideas of promising but little-known enterprises, but also to build a vested community dedicated to the cause.”

Closely connected to trust and in line with the Venture Catalyst identity, Boticário leverages transparency and communication as essential components of its social compact and operating behavior to further promote awareness about biodiversity, source new ideas and strengthen trust within target communities. It helps to be crystal clear and demonstrate how biodiversity conservation impacts community members’ general well-being. For these reasons, the foundation broadly shares information about its work and learnings on social media, in local news outlets, and through other avenues depending on the initiative, and uses accessible language to do so. Boticário’s sterling reputation is partially a result of this longstanding transparency, which enables the foundation to leverage its influence, networks, and relationships as a Venture Catalyst.

Tackling such intersecting systems challenges requires not just a risk-embracing, entrepreneurial and connected approach to funding today, but a long-term strategic outlook to foresee the issues and solutions of tomorrow. As a true Venture Catalyst, Boticário is able to straddle both funding early-stage entrepreneurial projects and providing flexible, longer-term financial support to achieve sustainability of important initiatives and meaningful impact over a longer trajectory. Utilizing the Venture Catalyst operating archetype has allowed the foundation to not only leverage cutting-edge ideas and unexpected intersections between sectors and thematic areas, but also to center its partners and grantees in developing solutions to combat the loss of biodiversity and related negative impact on communities in Brazil.