Ask-Me-Anything
February 1, 2023

History Of Siegel

2007

The Siegel Charitable Foundation is created

2012-2014

Inaugural grantmaking years, with MIT, NYC FIRST, and Scratch at the head

2016-2018

Grew staff, refined mission, launched a visual identity, and grew our portfolio of grants, particularly in computer science, workforce, and internet health

2020

Launched multidimensional infrastructure portfolio area, with a seminal whitepaper

2011

Obtained 501(c)(3) status and were renamed Siegel Family Endowment

2015

Hired founding Executive Director and created our first mission

2019

Katy Knight became Executive Director. Refined our scientific approach to grantmaking

2021-2022

Stood up in-house research team, and brought on inaugural fellows and mission-aligned grantees. Released second whitepaper on schools as community infrastructure and refreshed our workforce strategy
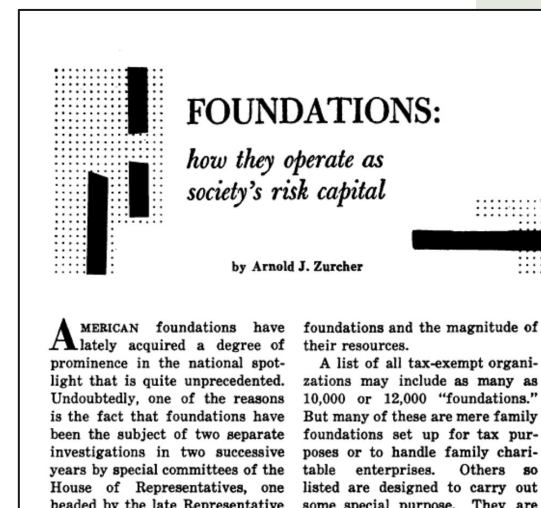
SIEGEL FAMILY ENDOWMENT

Our mission is to understand and shape
the impact of technology on society

Our vision is a world in which all people have
the tools, skills, and context necessary to engage
meaningfully in a rapidly changing society

SIEGEL
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Philosophy: Society's Risk Capital

1 R&D investment for the social sector that can fund, test, and prove out new and emerging solutions

2 Builds on the scholarship of Arnold J. Zurcher and Rob Reich, who argue that foundations are well-suited to "de-risk" solutions for public and private entities and actualize transformative social change

3 Challenge philanthropic norms to take calculated risks, embrace a growth mindset, fund innovators from non-majority backgrounds, and expand beyond short-term metrics

JUST GIVING

WHY PHILANTHROPY IS FAILING DEMOCRACY AND HOW IT CAN DO BETTER

ROB REICH

FOUNDATIONS:
how they operate as society's risk capital

by Arnold J. Zurcher

AMERICAN foundations have lately acquired a degree of prominence in the national spotlight that is quite unprecedented. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons is the fact that foundations have been the subject of two separate investigations in two successive years by special committees of the House of Representatives, one headed by the late Representative foundations and the magnitude of their resources.

A list of all tax-exempt organizations may include as many as 10,000 or 12,000 "foundations." But many of these are mere family foundations set up for tax purposes or to handle family charitable enterprises. Others so listed are designed to carry out some special purpose. They are

Our Approach

Values: How We Work

1

Collaboration

We work closely with grantees and partners in the field to develop strategies and solutions that drive progress for our shared goals. We seek out people and organizations whose work is forward-thinking and true to their core values.

2

Risk & Experiments

We're eager to test and develop new solutions, and push ourselves beyond traditional philanthropy to find promising untested ideas, identify gaps, and reframe conversations about complex issues. We embrace failure, taking it as an opportunity to learn, iterate, and strengthen our practice.

3

Relationship Driven

We have a "people first" approach to our relationships with grantees and partners, and consider a wide range of factors when developing engagement and assessment strategies. We don't ask that our grantees fit a certain mold, or change who they are to fulfill our own objectives.

4

Humility & Trust

Our role as a funder is to lift up the expertise of others. We don't have the answers and are not always positioned to understand or wield the assets of the communities we serve. We operate from a place of trust in our grantee leaders, who know best how to approach challenges and allocate their resources.

Process: Values in Action

Source & Build Relationships

- Proactively cast a wide and nontraditional net to seek out-of-the-box ideas and overlooked changemakers
- Conduct due diligence, leaning on publicly available data as much as possible

Grant & Engage

- Take the lead on writing grant recommendations with input from prospective grantees, a process that aims to serve systematically excluded and smaller orgs that often lack time, capacity, or "funder speak"

Learn & Share

- Offer multiple reporting options, using a mix of quantitative metrics and lived experiences
- Measure and capture findings in published pieces drafted with grantees' partnership and approval
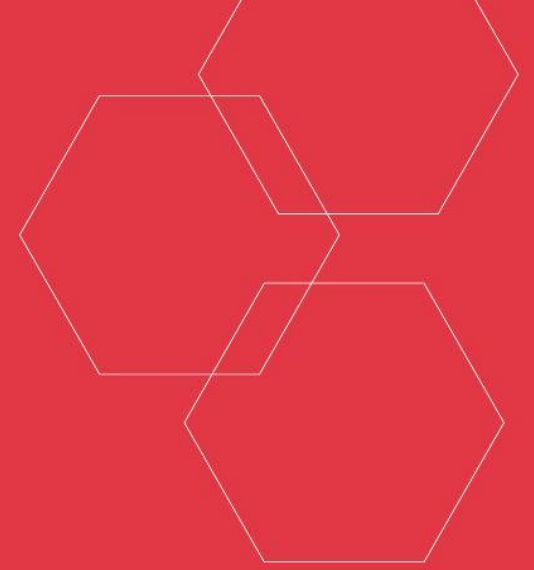- Leverage our research team to collect, make sense of, and disseminate findings to broader community

Reflect & Iterate

- Routinely collect feedback to ensure our processes are centered on the needs of those we serve
- Evolve our strategies and practice based on what we are learning and hearing from our partners

Approach: Inquiry Driven Grantmaking

Develop and refine inquiry questions
that help guide the development of our relationships

Perform landscape analysis
to better understand the context for our work

Support work in the field
that helps us uncover relevant evidence

Collect and publish findings
to share with our partners in the field

Convene stakeholders
to solicit and synthesize feedback

Apply knowledge and learning
to refining subsequent rounds of inquiry questions

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Our Interest Areas

Key Question

How can schools and communities work together to equitably enable learners
to contribute to and advance in our technology-driven society?

Approach

We support initiatives that build lifelong learning
opportunities, particularly in computer and data
science, and also look beyond content and
pedagogy to consider the whole learner, whole
school, and whole community as stakeholders
and design partners:

1. Schools as community infrastructure
2. Computational thinking; computer and data science
3. Future and frontier skills

Highlighted Grantees

Key Question

How do we promote an equitable innovation economy, one that propels people and their communities toward lasting economic prosperity?

Approach

We support programs that seek to put equity at the center of our economy via

1. Community-driven innovation led by proximate leaders
2. Sustainable solutions to financing skills training programs
3. Expanding and diversifying access to empowering social connections and social capital

Highlighted Grantees
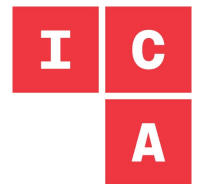
Key Question

How might we leverage physical, digital, and social natures of infrastructure to create a more prosperous, equitable, and resilient society?

Approach

We support initiatives that:

1. Leverage a multidimensional approach to equitably strengthen all dimensions of infrastructure

2. Ensure technology, the infrastructure of tomorrow, is designed, developed, and deployed in the public interest

3. Imagine alternative digital and data futures that place community at the center

Highlighted Grantees

Special Initiatives

Effective Philanthropy

We support the strengthening of our sector by investing in both the philanthropic community and the capacity of the nonprofits we serve

Public Interest Technology

As technology's role in our world continues to expand, we aim to ensure all people have equal access to and are able to benefit from digital technologies, which we believe are the infrastructure of tomorrow

Our Research

Our research aligns with our mission: to understand and shape the impact of technology on society

Approach

Knowledge: Develop a body of information that advances understanding in or across our fields of study, and can lead to better decision-making both for ourselves and cross-sector stakeholders

Insights: Produce research outputs that synthesize existing knowledge, and build new frameworks

Networks: Support and contribute to networks of researchers to share ideas, combine and recombine hunches, and work across ideological and disciplinary boundaries

Key Research Areas

Intelligence
How can humans and machines learn, work, and build together?

Information
How can we harness data, information, and knowledge for good, and prevent bias and disinformation?

Design
How do we design our systems to better serve our collective needs?

Innovation
What kind of ecosystems and tools best support innovative people to build community wealth?

Decisions
How do we make better decisions as a society?

Development
How do we develop our potential as individuals and as a society?

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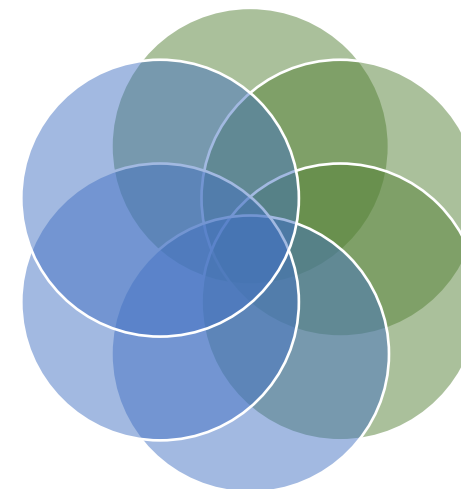
Research Fellows 2022-2023

Our Partnerships

Our Grantee Partners

1

Community-driven

They rely on teachers, staff, and local knowledge to build their programs and drive their work

2

Systems entrepreneurs

They set their sights and orient their programs toward the types of change they'd like to see at the systems level

3

Field builders

They work in tandem with others, recognizing that long-term change will be achieved by an ecosystem of coordinated players rather than one silver bullet

4

Out-of-the-box thinkers

We believe philanthropy is society's risk capital, and take risks on big ideas that have the power to transform the system

*NOTE: these represent some, but not all, of the qualities we look for in prospective grantees

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Where We Work

What Drives Us

1. Local insights, national reach
2. Overlap of inquiry questions and opportunity
3. Grantee interest and scale

Regions of Interest

We remain dedicated to our home in New York City, but also have a presence in Atlanta where we're experimenting with an ecosystem approach to grantmaking and in rural areas where we're focused on revitalizing communities

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Q&A