

A Call for Foundations to Make Big Changes in Accountability

By Anne W. Howard

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Building Solid Foundations: New Approaches to Substantive Philanthropic Accountability, by Rick Cohen, asks, "What kind of difference should foundations make in our society?" Mr. Cohen looks at what foundations do — and what they ought to do — to deserve tax-exempt status, and to whom they should hold themselves accountable. He presents three arguments against an increase in the federal requirement that foundations disburse at least 5 percent of their assets, on average, every year, and then rebuts each one. In addition, he discusses how and why foundations must diversify their boards; describes how nonprofit groups, foundations, and activists might organize a campaign to "push the philanthropic sector toward a role in promoting democracy"; and explores other issues relevant to foundation accountability.

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