

## **Philanthropists Need to Focus on Reason for Grants**

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... In a time of crisis, it is heartening to remember that America is a country rich in charitable giving, home to more than one million nonprofits and 100,000-plus foundations given tax-exempt status in recognition of their role in promoting the public welfare. The urgent need to address the recession is an opportunity to look with fresh eyes at the rights, responsibilities and role of the philanthropic sector.

Debate and controversy over how to respond has already started. In March, the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy issued a report challenging grant makers to do more, arguing for specific benchmarks to maximize our contribution to the common good.

The most controversial benchmark is the goal of steering 50 percent of grant dollars to benefit disadvantaged communities. Broadly defined, these include women and girls, the disabled, rural communities, people of color and low-income populations. They vary from place to place. In Atlanta, African-American children growing up in lead-contaminated housing projects are one. In Appalachia, rural white families trapped in cycles of generational poverty are another.

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