

For Immediate Release

March 2, 2009

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New Guidelines Target U.S. Foundation Practices

Watchdog group redefines exemplary grantmaking practices

Washington, D.C. - Grantmakers are not delivering as much social benefit as they could, according to the new *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best: Benchmarks to Assess and Enhance Grantmaker Impact* by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. The criteria, to be released on Tuesday at the National Press Club, is the first ever set of measurable guidelines foundations and other grantmaking institutions can use to maximize their contributions to society and make a positive difference in the world today.

More than 120 prominent leaders connected to nonprofits and foundations already have endorsed *Criteria*. They all believe that the world would be a better place if more institutional grantmakers practiced Philanthropy at Its Best.

Criteria has also received support from Representative Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.), senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee who will be speaking at Tuesday's unveiling.

NCRP, however, anticipates considerable resistance to the new guidelines from many of the country's philanthropic organizations and trade associations.

"What we're calling for requires foundations to change the way they do business and acknowledge that they are partners with tax payers and nonprofits," said Aaron Dorfman, executive director of NCRP. "It won't be easy, but important choices almost never are. It will require from the sector real leadership and deep commitment to the greater good."

An important premise of *Criteria* is that foundation assets are partially public dollars due to their tax-exempt nature. There are foundation leaders that share this belief.

"NCRP makes the essential point that organized philanthropy is obligated by its tax advantage to operate on behalf of the common good," said Gayle Williams, executive director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and an early endorser of the criteria. "A great strength of American philanthropy is its diversity, but overall the field invests too small a proportion of its assets in advancing the well-being of low-wealth people and communities."

Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best focuses on values, effectiveness, ethics and commitment. Each criterion is accompanied by benchmarks on hotly contested issues such as payout, general operating support, board composition, compensation, disclosure, mission investing and support for underserved communities.

NCRP also provides a list of foundations that already meet or exceed those benchmarks for which data is available.

"What we offer foundations are reasonable principles and attainable goals," said Niki Jagpal, research and policy director at NCRP and primary author of *Criteria*. "It's important for foundations to know that some of their peers already are paving the way for the rest of the sector."

NCRP is encouraging dialogue among foundation staff and trustees through the discussion questions included in *Criteria* and an online self-assessment test, which will become available on its website in the coming weeks.

Other speakers to join Rep. Becerra at the unveiling of the guidelines on Tuesday will include David R. Jones, president and CEO of the Community Service Society of New York; David Beckwith, executive director of the Needmor Fund in Ohio; Judy Hatcher, executive director of the Environmental Support Center in Washington, D.C.; and Gara LaMarche, president and CEO of The Atlantic Philanthropies.

The *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best* will be available for free download at NCRP's website, where you can also view the list of endorsers and order your copies.

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy in Washington, D.C. is a national watchdog, research and advocacy organization that promotes philanthropy that serves the public good, is responsive to people and communities with the least wealth and opportunity, and is held accountable to the highest standards of integrity and openness. Visit www.ncrp.org.

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Event details:

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy will host a public event releasing the *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best: Benchmarks to Assess and Enhance Grantmaker Impact*, with:

- **The Honorable Xavier Becerra**, Congressman (D-Calif.)
- **Mr. Dave Beckwith**, Executive Director, Needmor Fund
- **Mr. Aaron Dorfman**, Executive Director, NCRP
- **Ms. Judy Hatcher**, Executive Director, Environmental Support Center
- **Mr. David R. Jones**, President & CEO, Community Service Society of New York
- **Mr. Gara LaMarche**, President & CEO, The Atlantic Philanthropies

When:

Tuesday, March 3, 2009

10:00 EST (Registration, along with light refreshments, will begin at 9:30 a.m.)

Where:

Holeman Lounge, National Press Club

529 14th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20045

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