

Philanthropy's Promise: Beyond the Giving Pledge

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Last week, more than 60 grantmakers from across the US publicly expressed their intention to maximize the effectiveness and impact of their grants by prioritizing the underserved, and substantially supporting advocacy and community organizing.

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), which is leading the initiative, hopes that more institutional givers will be inspired to sign up by the diverse group of participating grantmakers, which includes the Ford Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation and United Way of Greater Los Angeles.

Perhaps due to the popularity of the Giving Pledge, some people in the sector wonder about or assume a strong and deliberate connection between Philanthropy's Promise and the Giving Pledge. Like millions around the world, NCRP has followed the progress of the Giving Pledge. This Gates-Buffett initiative brings value to the sector by encouraging people of wealth (and others) to think about charity instead of solely living the high life. And by boldly reaching out to their peers, Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett are challenging many of them – especially those that don't yet have a philanthropic track record – to think about their wealth as something to give back and not just to keep. We learned from their approach and applied some tactical ideas to our own initiative, but the inception and objectives of Philanthropy's Promise were not modeled on those of the Giving Pledge. And Philanthropy's Promise was not prompted by the Pledge – we would have taken this initiative regardless of the Giving Pledge.

As for the foundations that are participating in Philanthropy's Promise, NCRP cannot speak about their respective perceptions of the Giving Pledge and whether it influenced their decisions to be part of our initiative. But one thing is clear: all 60+ foundations have expressed, in a variety of ways, an underlying belief in the importance of being intentional about who benefits from their giving and supporting strategies that help address the root causes of social problems, not just alleviate symptoms.

By signing on to Philanthropy's Promise, these grantmakers are sending a strong signal about

their resolve to maximize their contribution to the public good.

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