

Trilogy Grant Program

Grant Type: **Dollar and nondollar support**

Dollar Amount: **\$22,500**

Foundation Name: **The Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation**

What was your objective with the grant or initiative?

The foundation wanted a way to simplify the process for those nonprofits it knew well and wanted to support more closely, so the foundation created a multiyear funding program called the Trilogy grants, which are 3-year, \$7,500 per year grants. In addition to the money, grantees are invited to come to a convening breakfast, initially held once a year but now held twice each year. For each convening, the foundation chooses two topics, and attendees are invited to give a presentation or serve on a panel to lead the group discussion. Popular topics have included “Effective Use of Social Media,” “Volunteer Management,” and “Evaluation.”

What were the results of this grant or initiative?

The foundation has received strong positive feedback for the multiyear funding, which allows organizations to apply for a grant once and then prepare a short progress report for the second and third years. The Trilogy breakfasts have become a popular part of these grants, too. Only about a dozen organizations are eligible to attend, so the group is intimate, and plenty of time is available for people to get to know each other and learn about what the other attendee organizations do.

During a meeting, the attendees decided that once a year was not enough; by the end of the breakfast, they had organized a second meeting with meeting space, put forth an idea for an outside field expert, and came up with additional topics to discuss. Another positive result is that, because of these events, several organizations have found opportunities for collaboration.

Why would you say this grant or initiative had outsized impact?

The Trilogy convening breakfasts have had great impact because of their low cost—breakfast for 20 people runs about \$200, and the foundation has been able to find free meeting space—and their multiple positive outcomes. Attendees have reported that these convenings allow them:

- ▶ To spend time looking outward instead of inward
- ▶ To hear how other nonprofits are working on solving shared problems
- ▶ To think about potential collaborations.
- ▶ To share their knowledge as experts

As a funder with a grant budget of \$200,000 to \$225,000 per year, the foundation had been looking for ways to do more than just give money. These convenings have given the foundation’s founder an opportunity to spend quality time with some of the foundation’s grantees and learn from them without going on a dozen site visits. For less than \$250 per meeting plus time spent organizing and preparing, The Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation has been able to provide a vehicle for sharing and collaboration that is valued by the attendees.



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