

VETERANS

PHILANTHROPY EXCHANGE



February 24, 2017

Dear Friends,

We are writing to update you on the Veterans Philanthropy Exchange and **invite you to join** us for the **2017 Veterans Philanthropy Exchange Convening at the Anatole Hilton Hotel in Dallas on April 26-27**. The goal of this year's convening is engage in strategic conversations about collaboration and collective action across the philanthropic funder community. Register at cof.org/2017vets.

As we plan the upcoming convening, we would like to hear from you! **We hope you will take a few minutes to fill out a brief survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6DFNHF6> to provide us with an update of your funding priorities and to tell us what you want to get out of the 2017 Summit.**

The Veterans Philanthropy Exchange was formally launched in 2014 as a forum for discussion and information sharing for philanthropic grantmakers and corporate giving programs supporting veterans and military family strategies.

We would like to take this opportunity to do a quick **flashback of the history and original purpose** of the Veterans Philanthropy Exchange. In 2012, a small group of Council on Foundation members gathered with key Obama Administration officials to discuss the important role of philanthropy in supporting the transition of service members returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The funders asked the Council on Foundations to continue engaging the Obama Administration and to help provide a platform for funders to work together and with the public partners. The Council responded by providing the services of its public policy staff and membership tools to support the funders group.

The effort grew in 2013-2014 and gained national visibility when it connected with the White House Joining Forces Initiative in 2014 in the form of the Philanthropy Joining Forces Impact Pledge. The focus has been to highlight the commitment of the philanthropy sector to veteran and military causes across the country. As leaders of the Pledge, we are proud to report that thirty six funders committed over \$270 million in grantmaking!

Now, with the sunset of Joining Forces, the **Exchange is evolving and establishing a refreshed agenda for the next few years**. We are anxious for shared leadership in this learning community we have been building together and continue to believe that the Veterans Philanthropy Exchange can play an important role in stimulating high-level strategy discussions and collaboration. **We invite you to help us shape this community!**

A few notes on our path forward:

Funders only. The Exchange is designed for **philanthropic grantmakers**. While we have, in the past, included nonprofit providers in receptions and certain events, the Exchange is intended for funders. Its

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core mission is to be a learning community that focuses on the roles, opportunities, challenges, and impact that funders have.

Information Exchange. We will continue to value and leverage the leadership and tools provided by the Council on Foundations. The digital community platform hosted on the COF website, and the annual Veterans Philanthropy Exchange Summit are essential to **keeping us connected**, while growing and deepening our individual efforts. More connecting activities can be undertaken as needs and interests arise.

Community Collaboration and Collective Impact. At last year's convening in Washington, DC, our discussions focused on collective impact and collaborative efforts. At **this year's convening in Dallas**, we will be deepening and developing our conversation on the relevance of these important strategies for grant-making programs at the national, regional, and local level. We will quickly review what we have learned over the last several years, focus on "news you can use" in moving ahead, and continue to define the roles the sector might play going forward.

Government and Policy. The Exchange has a strong relationship with government agencies, and we will explore ways that federal government agencies can engage with **funders as stakeholders in public policymaking** and for feedback on emerging policies, actions, and programs.

Affinity Group Support. We would like to **continue to evolve the Veterans Philanthropy Exchange** to support multi-pronged interactions among funders and policymakers on key topic areas (Grantmakers in Health and Grantmakers in Education are good models and have built strong connections with federal agencies and stakeholder groups). As the Exchange continues to grow, our goal is to deepen our learning and partnerships, improve our information sharing, and be certain that being part of the Exchange is valuable to all of us.

I hope this update on the Veterans Philanthropy Exchange is helpful. The formal invitation and registration information for the upcoming Veterans Philanthropy Exchange Summit in April will follow. **For more information on the Summit or on the Exchange, email Stephanie Powers at stephanie.powers@cof.org or call (703) 879-0626.**

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to working together.

Sincerely,

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