

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Grantee Community Call

**Moderator: Greg Shaw
November 11, 2011
7:00 pm PT**

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. All participants will be able to listen-only until the question and answer session of the call. At that time please press star 1 on your phone keypad. Today's conference is being recorded. If anyone has any objections you may disconnect at this time.

Now I will turn the meeting over to Mr. Greg Shaw. You may begin.

Greg Shaw: Thank you very much and thank you all for joining us. I suppose it's morning or afternoon or evening depending on where you are but we really appreciate you taking the time to dial in and join this call.

My name is Greg Shaw and I lead our work on strengthening grantee partnerships here at the Foundation.

Today you will hear from some of our Foundation's leadership. We have two simple goals for today's call.

One is to really share with you how we're working to strengthen our grantee partnerships. And the second is we've allowed about half an hour to hear from

you and to engage in some dialogue this evening. I'll describe how you do that in just a minute.

Today you'll hear from Jeff Raikes, our Chief Executive Officer, Gary Darmstadt, the Director of the Foundation's family health strategy, Vicki Phillips who is director of our college ready strategy and Sam Dryden, Director of our agricultural development strategy.

Following these updates as I've mentioned we'll have about a half hour to take your questions. And some of you have already sent us questions.

We also had a terrific conference call this morning with the East Coast United States and the UK. Hopefully we have grantees from all over Asia and perhaps the Western Coast of the United States.

So we have already gotten some questions that we'll get to. In addition you'll be able to ask questions on the call today either over the phone or via Twitter.

If you ask a question through Twitter be sure to take your question with the hashtag #gateschat. That's #-G-A-T-E-S-C-H-A-T all one word.

To ask a question over the phone you can start lining up now with a question. Just press star 1 on your phone and that will get you in the queue for a question.

If you wish to withdraw your question and don't want to be called upon press pound 2 and we won't - we will not call on you.

Now it's my pleasure to introduce you to our CEO Jeff Raikes.

Jeff Raikes: Hi there. Thanks Greg and I want to thank all of you for joining us for this call.

I want to begin by setting a little bit of context. First of all I want to acknowledge Greg's role. When I came into the Foundation a little over three years ago as the CEO I thought it was very important that we set a tone of continuously improving our work with our most important partners our grantees.

And so I really wanted to make sure that we are getting the feedback, that we are using all kinds of different communications channels in order to make sure that we're continuously improving.

One of the key moves that I made was to ask Greg who's been a longtime member of our leadership team to step up to a role where he would specifically focus in on how we strengthen these relationships.

And Greg's doing a terrific job. If you haven't already met him I hope you get that opportunity. Both he and I and all of our Leadership Team value the feedback that we get from you in order to continuously improve our relationships.

In addition to set the context and want to say a little bit about what brings us together. And in my view it's clearly that we have a set of shared goals. It can range across a number of areas.

We invest in about 25 different areas all the way from our work in to eradicate polio to helping small older farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to increasing US high school graduation rates and many other areas.

We collectively have big aspirations in order to help serve the lives of those people and really to enable all people to have healthy and productive lives.

And our view is is that requires smart collaboration. These are big goals so we need to tap into your thinking power, your expertise and have that help shape our collective strategies and really make sure that together we're doing the very best work that we can.

We think of this value as smart collaboration. By smart I mean the idea that we strike the right balance so that we are tapping into that expertise, that we are still being disciplined, setting timelines, moving forward so that we're really getting the best of both of our expertise. And so that's a very important part of what we aspire to do.

We want to make sure that we always have clear roles in that smart collaboration so that you know what we should expect of us and we know what we should expect of you.

I also want to make sure that we break down silos. One of the things that I think can happen and I certainly think to some extent it's happened here at the Foundation is that we move very quickly, we grow very rapidly in our divisions but sometimes then we're not getting the best of our collaboration, smart collaboration across those divisions.

And so one of my goals has been to break down those silos. And in the spirit of increased collaboration I want to tell you about some of the new additions to our Leadership Team here.

Trevor Mundel joined us last week from Novartis who's our President of Global Health. Trevor brings great expertise in the pharmaceutical field. And that's going to add a lot to our work.

Dr. Chris Elias who's currently the CEO of PATH will be joining us on February 1 as our President of Global Development.

Between Chris and Trevor I think we've got a great opportunity to raise the level of our work in both discovery and product development as well as delivery and in fact especially in the area of delivery.

What Trevor and Chris and I have talked about is the importance of innovative and integrated delivery where we're thinking across our various program areas.

So I think these are two great examples of how we are working to have smart collaboration break down the silos and ensure that we are getting the best of our collective efforts internally. But of course that really requires that we get the best of our efforts with our key partners, our grantees.

I do want to emphasize that with these organizational changes we are not changing our priorities. We continue to have the same set of priorities that we're working on.

And I want to reassure you that we're continuing to invest in those areas that we're working on with you.

Now as I mentioned at the beginning of my comments I put a great deal of emphasis on us continuing to improve relative to our grantee partners.

And one of the tools that I use to help us in this is to initiate a survey with the Center for Effective Philanthropy that's commonly called a Grantee Perception Report.

When we got the first results from that Grantee Perception Report there was some really obviously things that I felt that we could do in order to improve our work.

For example making sure that you were clear and that we clearly communicated about our grantmaking process, that you know who your contact was at the Foundation, that when you received a grant that you got an orientation call or meeting so that you knew how to work with us and that we were continuing to open up new channels of communications in order to get your feedback and that you were getting timely feedback from us on your periodic reporting.

So those are some of the things that we wanted to do in order to immediately improve our work with our grantees.

But I also wanted to make sure that we took a step back and really understood what were the key commitments that we could make to our grantees in order to make sure that we consistently did our best work together. And that's what the focus of our conversation is today.

Our commitment consists of three key pillars, quality interactions, clarity of communications and working feedback into everything we do.

And I want to make sure that those three pillars are carried through our leadership, our communications, our process, our staff development so that we are taking approach that leads to consistent execution on those pillars.

II think we need to do that of course because our relationships with you are front and center to the goals that we share.

I know that together we see that this is not some popularity contest where it's about how much we like you or you like us. It's really about how we work together to serve those in need that we aspire to.

And so I want to make sure that we carry through in these pillars in order to deliver on that goal of continuous improvement.

To share a little bit about the work that we're doing on these systemic improvements to our grantee relationship I've asked three of our key directors to share some of the great work that they're doing.

We're joined by Gary Darmstadt who's in charge of our family health program. And he's going to talk a little bit about the pillar of feedback.

We're also joined by Vicki Phillips who's in charge of our college ready work and she's going to share some thoughts about the pillar of quality interactions.

And then I'm going to ask Sam Dryden who leads our Agricultural Development Program to speak about our pillar of clear and consistent communications with our grantees.

Again our goal is to share what we have learned from you in order to be able to be a great partner with you.

And we're going to look forward to your feedback as well. But at this time let me turn it over to Gary so that he can share the work that we're doing in the area of feedback. Gary?

Gary Darmstadt: Okay thanks very much Jeff and thank you all for joining us. It's really great to have a chance to talk with you.

And Jeff mentioned the 2009 Grantee Perception Report. And this is something that we all took really seriously.

And following that report I got on the phone with a number of you. I reached out to about 30 different grantee partners and talked with them getting a little bit more information personally over the phone about what are we doing that you like and what are we doing that we could really we could really improve on? And it was really helpful.

And some of the key things that we heard at that time are that you really appreciate the technical knowledge that my team brings to our engagements with you, you like the networks that we're helping to set up across grantees, you like meeting together with them. It's just a great opportunity for learning.

But you pointed out a couple areas that we really needed to improve. You wanted more regularly scheduled calls with us, more regular reach out. You wanted ways to know who to contact under what circumstances. And you indicated that you want us to convene our grantees even more.

And the really important piece of feedback is that you were kind of confused by the forms and the different protocols and our decision-making processes and you aren't totally sure what to expect in working with us.

So we took on a number of these items and Jeff has referenced them already. But a couple of the key changes that we made at that time -- and this is about a year ago now -- where we after you first sent in a letter of intent we called you.

And we went through the grant development process and tried to explain it to you so that it would be more clear, particularly that the narrative and the budget template how to get through those.

And then once we made an award one of our staff reached out and we actually created a PowerPoint that we went through with you that took you through the grant management process and including some feedback on how to get through the annual report effectively, how to present that effectively to us.

We then scheduled once a month phone calls with each one of our grantees and we set out to engage you more often in convenience. And we did that in Delhi, in Ethiopia and Seattle. And we found that our grantees really like coming together around key issues that they identified that they're all working on together.

We held a great convening in Seattle a couple of weeks ago on social and behavior change and on the spread of family health innovations. And this is about a year after implementing those initial changes that I just outlined.

And so we took that opportunity to reach out to our grantees that were there at the convening and asked them some of the same questions, how are we doing, you know, where have we improved and where do you see that we still need to make some further improvements. And again this was super helpful to us.

Some of the areas that you highlighted again were that you want to understand better how to engage with us, what's the appropriate level of engagement that you can expect?

You indicated that sometimes you weren't still completely clear on that and you wanted more transparency in our decision-making process.

And you further stress that, you know, this convening role. We heard it a lot at the convening itself that we held here in Seattle a couple of weeks ago. And you reinforced it further at that convening that this is really a great thing that the Foundation is uniquely equipped to do.

Another thing that we're doing besides seeking feedback on how we're doing is to actually engage you earlier in intellectual dialogue around a number of our activities. And this relates to our strategy development process, do we want to brainstorm with you as we design our programs.

And so we did that at our convening in Seattle. And we tried to bring people together and really take them a bit out of their comfort zone and into places where people could really effectively engage with each other and learn from each other.

And this was very well-received. And we personally found it very helpful in the sense that we had a Yale University present a framework that we're developing with them on dissemination of innovations.

And we ask you frankly to poke holes at it, tell us what makes sense, what doesn't and how could we improve upon that. And it was super helpful for of us. And this is something that we aim to utilize in our program designed going

forward particularly around spread of innovations. And it's really important that we get it right.

And so we're going to continue to reach out to you in this way having these intellectual conversations and asking you to engage with us in the development of the tools that we're using.

And we plan to specifically do this a couple more times in 2012 in India and in Ethiopia. We plan to have further convening's around disseminations of innovations in those particular geographies.

So one of the keys things we want to leave you with is that we really want you to challenge our thinking. We want is to ask, you know, when you think something is missing from our strategies are or you're not clear in how we're working with you or what the expectations are. Please reach out and let us know that you're confused or that you want to provide further input.

Continuing to get feedback is going to help us all. It's going to help us in engaging with you. It will help the quality of our interactions with you and ultimately will help all of us to better achieve the impact that we're all seeking together.

So now I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Vicki Phillips to lead their college ready strategy. And she's going to talk more about what she and her team are doing to improve quality interactions between her grantees and the Foundation staff.

Vicki Phillips: Thanks Gary. Hello everyone and let me add my thanks for taking the time to be with us today.

We've been talking a lot of in the College Ready program about what we can do more of, better and differently to improve the quality of interactions with our grantees.

In recent months I've talked to probably 25 or so of our grantees directly. And my team has surveyed all of our district and state partners. And like Gary, I've heard that it's not always easy to work with the Foundation and that you want us to focus on improving how we interact on really two levels.

One level's pretty basic. Jeff and Gary have mentioned those. Be responsive, get really clear about our grantmaking process, make sure we communicate change with much greater transparency helping you to understand the why and the what we're trying to do.

The second level's much deeper, one in which we're really interacting as true partners and shared work.

And both of these levels are certain play important to us and a focus of our work going forward. And I've heard you say that we're slowly but surely improving on those basic interactions.

A great example was brought to my attention recently where one of our grantees in Memphis City Schools has since we did a multi-year grant with them in 2009 been asked to merge with nearby counties - with the nearby county district, Shelby County.

As you can imagine that's an emotionally charged set of issues and processes and it's impacted everyone in their community -- students, parents, teachers, other funders, school officials and many, many more.

We needed to provide quick, clear consistent feedback that we're going to stick with that work and with that community even through the change that they're undertaking and that we won't abandon that work even in the face of this merger as long as they stay committed like we are to effective teaching for of kids and improved outcomes. As long as that remains a top priority we'll remain steadfast in our support of them.

So continuing to improve our basic interactions like being responsive and making ourselves more available is certainly a top priority for the College Ready Team.

But I wanted to spend a little time today talking about that deeper level of engagement where we feel like that we're really in this together working for the long haul. And I wanted to share with you a piece of feedback that I recently received on this front that was incredibly helpful.

I was listening to a group of educators and education advocates and they told me that they thought the Foundation should do a lot more to encourage thought partnership with groups that do not receive funding from across.

That it's not just our funding but often is our voice and our thought partnership and the shared knowledge that we can bring from across our grantees that we can bring to the table that they appreciate.

And I very much appreciated that conversation because it made me realize that we perhaps underestimated the value of that partnership and that sharing of knowledge.

As many of you know we have both our share of critics and endorsers in the debate surrounding US education. But if we can broaden this set of

relationships and leverage then we think bringing our grantees that are already in the fold as well as organizations that are not will only improve our work in the long term.

By the - or as long as we have this shared mission of improving education in the United States what do we have to lose from listening to and actually learning from each other?

So one step we're taking in 2012 to address this is that we're forming a consortium of 15 or so states in which educators and education advocates from those states can come together and talk about learnings and problems and develop scalable solutions. So that actually includes states in which we're investing and states in which we are not.

We've also heard from our grantees that they've like for us to provide an earlier view into our next priorities so that they have a better understanding of this bigger course that we're charting.

This is particularly important for our advocacy partners who have told me several times now that they know we have a big program agenda but they don't always have a clear view of that.

So to address this piece of feedback we're forming a core team of those grantees partners both on the program and advocacy side with whom we have multi-year grants.

This core team is going to be in the loop of all of our communications surrounding our longer term priorities much like we make sure that our own employees and staff stay in that loop.

I want you to know that we're also paying attention to how we can internally be better thought partners and collaborate with each other across the Foundation.

Jeff mentioned to how committed we are to breaking down silos both externally and internally.

As he said we spend a great deal of time engaging in intellectual dialogue here. And we're doing a lot more to challenge each other's thinking and to ask the tough questions and to actually share knowledge across of our programs because global health, global development and education have much to learn from each other.

Like any growth organization we recognize that we need to break down the things that would prevent those important connections from being formed both internally among ourselves and externally with you.

And you know what this really boils down to is that what's good for our relationships internally is also good for our relationships with our grantees. One is really a mirror of the other.

So I think we would all agree that the quality of interactions we have with one another is only as good as our ability to clearly communicate our needs, interests and concerns.

And with that in mind I'm going to introduce my collate Sam Dryden who leads our Agricultural Development Strategy at the Foundation. Sam's going to elaborate on what we're doing to improve how we communicate with you.

Sam Dryden: Thanks Vicki. To build on what you are saying I'd like to talk about the Foundation's commitment delivering clear and inconsistent communications with you our grantees.

This includes clearly communicating our strategy grantmaking process and what grantees can expect from our staff throughout - prior to their grant.

This is particularly relevant for us in the agricultural (unintelligible) program and our grantees because we've just finished our strategy refresh.

The strategy refresh is the process by which each of the Foundation's programs periodically pause to examine their current strategy and consider ways for even greater impact.

For us an important part of the process was our external consultations. This involved consultations with hundreds of experts, other donors, farmers and grantees as well as our critics.

A number of you on this call were part of that process and for that we thank you.

The refresh was an extensive undertaking lasting almost 18 months involving our entire team.

While we faced challenges along the way the process brought us to a stronger place with a clearer understanding of the Foundation's role.

Our role and mission remains essentially the same, the reduction of poverty, although through a sharper focus on the increasing small holder productivity.

Likewise our geographic focus remains on sub Sahara and South Asia and with a sharper focus on those areas with the greatest concentration of poverty.

While our mission and focus remains essentially the same the greatest shift is in how we work.

Our refresh strategy explicitly recognizes the interdependent nature of agricultural development. The challenges of sufficiently increasing productivity to make a meaningful difference are too great for any one organization. But the better coordination, communication and smart collaboration we can in combination make a difference.

This shift in strategy directly impacts you our grantee, so communicating that change clearly is a top priority for us.

Admittedly we could've done a better job communicating the evolution of our thinking through the refresh process and we've heard that from some of our grantees.

I took that feedback to heart. And in August I sent email to each of our grantees outlining the key takeaways and resulting decisions. I included a note in our 2010 Annual Report about it as well.

I received dozens of response to that email and I want to thank those of you that applied. And I already read the thoughtful feedback and we're putting some of those suggestions to work already.

For instance, I heard from one of our grantees in India, the head of PRADAN who said he's optimistic about our focus on women farmers as well as the crops and livestock that matter most to these farm families.

Still he urges us to address what he calls the psychosocial challenges facing women farmers, mainly isolation and exclusion from the rest of society.

Gaining a true understanding and addressing the real issues facing these farmers such as psychosocial issues is one of the Foundations and I'd say development's biggest challenges.

Earlier this year the well-known author, farmer, sage commentator and fellow Kentuckian Wendell Berry visited us at the Foundation. At the conclusion he did what he does best. He cut through it all and playing to our greatest challenge.

He rightfully asked how does the world's largest Foundation based in Seattle connect with the smallest and poorest farmers on the other side of the world? It's something that I and my whole team and I daresay the Foundation think about every day.

I personally understand the issue because for example Jeff)and I both grew up on farms but the kind of large-scale mechanized farming practiced in America's Midwest where Jeff grew up was never really practical for the small tough rocky plots of land I grew up in in Appalachia.

But farmers know their land. They also know their history and culture.

So fully acknowledging this dilemma we answer Wendell's challenge by finding and working with those closest to the ground and those that understand and can translate our strategy. That's you our grantees.

If we listen closely enough to you and to those who work and know their land we hope to assist these farmers' men and women to become more self-sufficient.

In the year ahead we're hoping to increase our interactive dialogue with you and to find more and different ways to interact with you.

Beyond just written communication I'd like to do more calls like these, also take advantage of Web casts, videos and other interactive tools.

I'd also like to remind you communication by definition runs two ways. And we'd like to hear more from you about how much and how often you'd like to hear from us. I promise we will be clear and transparent and I invite you to hold us accountable to that promise. I'd like to take the opportunity to call for another important communication partnership with you, our grantees.

Together we need to redouble our efforts, communicating the importance of investing in agricultural development. I invite you to partner with us to communicate the value of our work. Help us tell the world how investments in small horti-agriculture will feed our growing planet safely, responsibly, and in a manner that empowers farming families and that creates resiliency over the long term.

For example, programs that empower women farmers, programs that invest in the development and responsible use of biotechnology, and programs that build capacity in communing properties. For example, the head of (unintelligible) posts a guest log on the foundations Web site expanding on what he shared with me. I ask more of you to do the same, and to contribute in other ways to our broader communication efforts. We're building on the groundwork of some great work we've done with you over the past five years.

When we launched the agricultural program in 2006, funding for agriculture was faltering. Because of our shared efforts to communicate these values, attention to agriculture development and funding is on the rise. But there is much to do, and funding in agriculture is still seriously threatened. We remain humbled by the challenges before us, as well as the enormous effort of those working to fight hunger and poverty around the world.

We relate to our farming families through you, our grantees. You're our collective voice to the field. Together we can become stronger advocates for our shared priorities. Thank you. And with that, I'll hand it back to Greg, who is now going to share more details about how you'll see our commitments come to you and to life immediately after foundation.

Greg Shaw: Great. Thank you, Sam, and what you've heard from Jeff and Gary, Vicki and Sam are different stories about this commitment that we're making today in terms of a quality interaction with you, clear and consistent communications, and the use of feedback.

What I want to describe now is how we're going to increase the ways that we get impact from our grantees, and I'd invite you to visit our Web site, thegatesfoundation.org. You'll notice at the top of the page a tab that is called "what we are learning". And if you look under "what we are learning", you will see our commitment to grantees.

We're making available now a number of ways to hear from you more regularly. First of all, it's always important for you to have very candid and great conversations with your program officer and with your program staff. That's first and foremost. But in addition, you'll find on this Web site an

opportunity for email. We would invite you to email us at any time, granteesurvey@gatesfoundation.org.

Secondly, we've added an open comment box. You can simply go to the Web site, enter your feedback for us, and submit it. You can do that with or without your name or organization. We just want your ideas and we want your feedback. And then finally, we are also making available on the Web site a link to Ethics Point. Ethics Point is an anonymous reporting service which will provide you a confidential way to report issues that may raise ethical or legal concerns.

Finally, the foundation will conduct its next grantee perception report in the first quarter of 2013. We are very appreciative of your involvement in the GPR, the grantee perception report, in 2009, and we invite you to participate again in 2013. As a follow-up to this call, we will send you this information with direct links to the new portals for feedback.

And at this time I would like to turn this over to feedback and remind you that we'd love to have your questions. I am seeing questions come in over Twitter. We'll get to those in just a moment. We would love for you to press star one on your phone and get in line to ask a question here live over the phone. If you'd like to ask a question on Twitter, simply go to twitter.com and use the hashtag, #gateschat. That's G-A-T-E-S-C-H-A-T.

So while you're doing that, I have a number of questions that were submitted in advance, which we thank you for. And Jeff, I'm going to direct this first question to you. And I'm really kind of paraphrasing a couple of the emails that we've gotten. How we work together with our grantee partners relates very directly to how we work together as colleagues inside the foundation. Could you talk a little about how we as a foundation are working

to improve our internal decision making and collaboration, and how that might improve how we work outside the foundation with partners?

Jeff Raikes: Well, I think, Greg, the elements that we talked about as part of our commitment to our grantees are exceptionally important to our commitment to our colleagues as well. Having very clear, consistent communications, having quality interactions, is important to our internal work and important to how we extend that out to our partners.

You know, some time ago, as I was coming into the foundation, I spent a lot of time meeting with program officers and small groups. I met with our deputy directors. I met with our operations teams. And one of the things that I discovered were some things that I thought we could do to really improve the culture here. That included putting an emphasis on raising the quality of our intellectual dialogue. That included improved manager effectiveness, stronger and smarter collaboration, and finally, clarity of goals, roles, accountability, and decision-making processes - what we sometimes internally called hygiene. It just means we're cleaning things up.

And so those are the kinds of things that I've emphasized internally, but also explained that I think that those same priorities carry over to our external work and are represented in these three pillars that we've described today, which is the ensuring that we have quality interactions, clear, consistent communications, and working feedback into everything we do.

Greg Shaw: Great. Thank you. And I'll just mention that on Twitter, someone thinks that the indicating the importance of intellectual dialogue, (Alfonso Mendival) says, "For me, smart collaboration means we're open and honest with each other, that we challenge each other's thinking."

The next question we have is also from Twitter, and this is a question from Inclusive Cities. “Do you see social media as a tool in building relationships and discussion between grantees and like-minded organizations? Some of you may have seen Gary Darmstadt on Twitter throughout the day, and we’ll ask Gary to answer that.

Gary Darmstadt: Yes, thanks, Greg, and thanks for this question. Yes, absolutely. I actually personally am getting more involved in social media here at the foundation. I really enjoy writing blogs. In fact, I wrote one this afternoon that hopefully will be posted in a couple of days about a recent trip that I took to India.

And for one, just taking this blog as an example, it’s a way of conveying to people some of the key learning that I had on this trip, some of the key ways in which what I observed in the field actually really touched me personally, and how it connected to some intellectual discussion that we had. This particular blog is going to be about the demographic dividend and the opportunity there that comes through family planning to invest in young people and to change the productivity of nation.

So that’s an example of how we can engage through blogs. I am enjoying Twitter, and I do find that it’s really a way of engaging with people that otherwise I wouldn’t have much opportunity, really, to talk with. And I do find some challenging dialogue and questions that come through Twitter, and I do find that it’s a very effective way to engage. I’ve found some of my grantees, you know, on Twitter now and then, and we can connect that way. And yes, I’m becoming a huge fan of social media.

Greg Shaw: Great. We’re going to go to the phone where (Bill Laures) at Loyola University is either up late or on the West Coast or traveling somewhere else. So (Bill), are you on the line?

(Bill Laures): Yes, I'm up late in Rome. I'm working with Loyola on a new graduate law program on rule of law for development. There are several other grantees which are working on the rule of law agenda, (unintelligible), Landessa, World Justice Project, and all of us see connections with our work with main development issues, and in particular the ones that Gates is emphasizing, global health and agriculture. How do you see us being able to collaborate across those lines?

Jeff Raikes: Well, (Bill), I think that your work on rule of law and how that relates to development and the organizations I've met - I think that's a very important initiative. While it is a small part of the work that we do in global development, the thing that we think is very important is just that we each have good areas of focus and that we connect with each other.

So I would say the key thing is for us to be aware of what you're doing. And I'm sure there are people in our organization that are more deeply aware of the work and of you and that collaboration of organizations and what they're doing. And then we'll try and make sure that we do a good job of working with you to build those connections with our programs in global development.

Greg Shaw: Great. Thank you, Jeff. I'm going to go to a question that was submitted in advance from (William Dann) from CGIAR, one of our agriculture grantees. His question - I'll paraphrase here. The foundation's emphasis on milestones and deliverables tends to be prescriptive, and places a strain on partnerships. This is not a new question, one I think that we all deal with. So I'm going to ask Vicki or Sam how you would respond to that.

Sam Dryden: Well, let me begin by saying that CGIAR, which is the consulting group for international agricultural research, is one of our main partners within agricultural development. It's one of the strongest partners we have in terms of doing upstream research and being able to develop global public goods for broad use by the public and agriculture. We hear often that we're prescriptive, and I would have to say that we do have a vision, and we have a vision as to how collaborations, and smart collaborations in particular, can work.

And so we oftentimes will try to make sure that we're aligned with grantees before we make the grant, and then as we work through the grant, it's not nearly as important that the milestones that we have are ones that we modify as much as it is that we are aligned with them upfront. And so I don't know that - if you're finding that we're prescriptive, it's probably that we didn't do a good enough job upfront of getting our milestones set up front. But we'll try and do a better job of that.

Greg Shaw: Vicki, anything you'd like to add to that, or...?

Vicki Phillips: No, just that I think part of what we're trying to do is get real clarity of what the journey looks like together. And the clearer we can be about our expectations of each other, the more we can have the kind of communication that I think we both desire. But Sam's right. It's a two-way street, and the dialogue back and forth about those milestones and our shared agreement is what's most important.

Sam Dryden: I guess I would say that the one thing we want to try to avoid is managing by milestone, because if we have too many milestones and try to manage that way, it's not nearly as important as it is to have a clear vision up front.

Greg Shaw: And a question in a similar vein, Jeff Raikes today posted on Impatient Optimist blog a piece on commitment to grantees, and there was one response this afternoon, and again I'll just summarize this. It is in a similar vein. And that is why don't we create more flexible approaches, approaches that are flexible and allow, perhaps in his words, a more creative approach on the part of the grantees?

Jeff Raikes: Yes, I think that's a very - I think that's very important. I think that one of the things that we're trying to do is to be more clear about the range of ways in which we can engage on our strategies and engage with our grantees and be more explicit and more articulate about that. So we have an initiative underway internally which we call "managing for impact", which really lays out the various engagement models that we use with grantees.

And I think that what that will do is that will help us be more clear and consistent in our communications and improve the quality of interactions with our grantees by being more articulate up front about the engagement model that we're choosing. In some cases, we're going to work together very - in a very in depth way.

And in other cases, it'll be very hands off. And I think we have to be very clear about that up front. And I think by having a clear taxonomy of what those engagement models are, and having clear choices that we make together is going to be the way for us to succeed together.

Greg Shaw: Great. Thank you. Go back to the phone. This call is from Thailand. It's (Karen Anderson), and I don't know if you say Unescap, or U-N-E-S-C-A-P, but (Karen), are you on the line?

(Atlana Aliani): This is (Atlana Aliani) on the line from UNESCAP.

Greg Shaw: We really got that name wrong. Please go ahead.

(Atlana Aliani): Okay. Just to add to the discussion, I mean, we have a grant under the special initiative urban poverty project, and we have found the foundation's approach and relationship with us to be very responsive and very flexible, and for that we are very thankful to the foundation. So we have had no problems in that regard.

What I would like to suggest is, I mean - is to have more regular and perhaps more frequent contact with other grantees to promote more cross-fertilization of ideas. Perhaps once in two years or something, the foundation could hold like a grantees forum, where sort of different - all the grantees could get together and share what they're doing and what the new ideas are in their field, and what is beyond the horizon so to speak, the challenges beyond the horizon that they would - we would all together need to address in the near future. Thank you.

Jeff Raikes: Great. Thanks very much, then. I appreciate the feedback. I think you mentioned you work on urban poverty, and (Melanie Walker), who leads that work for us, does a terrific job, and I appreciate you acknowledging the work that she and the team does in urban poverty.

Secondly, I think your point about the opportunity to cross-fertilize ideas across our grantees is an important one, and one that's come up before. I think we need to look at a number of ways to do that, not only meetings where everybody gathers together, but perhaps virtual meetings, and using some of our digital tools to encourage that.

But again, thank you for reminding us of the value that we have in bringing grantees together, and I hope that we're able to dial that up in ways that really contribute to the work.

Greg Shaw: Thanks, Jeff. And Vicki, I'm going to come to you with this question. And we are coming up on time, so I'll remind you, if you have a question, please go to Twitter or go to the phones, star one. This question was presubmitted. It's from (Jenna Fornell) from the Center for Inspired Teaching, and what she's asking is do we and can we connect grantees to policy makers? Can you talk about the ways that we try to connect grantees with policy makers?

Vicki Phillips: Actually we try to do that quite frequently because our grantees are actually the best advocates because they have the first-hand knowledge of what's happening in the field. And they're usually the most impressive people to talk to policy makers.

So we do that in a variety of ways. Sometimes we take a grantee with us in to visit with a policy maker and to share their practice. Sometimes we convene grantees and policy makers together. Sometimes we ask our grantees to (unintelligible) around the issues that they're - foremost in their mind, and the evidence that they're gathering in order to present to policy makers. So there's an array of things that we do, but absolutely. Our grantees are sort of the best line of communication.

Greg Shaw: Great. Thank you. I think that - I think we've taken all the questions that we have from the phone, and I think we've covered most of the themes that have come in on Twitter. So I'll just invite the panel here, if there are any closing thoughts. Otherwise, Jeff, we'll ask you to wrap.

Sam Dryden: I would like to join the comment that Jeff was making about creativity, and I think that we want to encourage grantees to be creative, and I think from an agricultural development perspective, we felt like that our refreshed strategy that the best thing that we can do is to make really clear as to our strategy and to our focus, and that way people - grantees can be creative in their approach to how we do these things, and they can be creative both at being in line as collaborators with us, or they can be in line to be sort of the communicators of our strategy to policy makers. But we think that the creativity comes from clear understanding of our focus.

Greg Shaw: Okay. Gary, did you have a point?

Gary Darmstadt: Yes, just very briefly. I think that's a really important point, and one of the things we try to do in family health is to implement rapid cycles of learning so that we're evaluating - you know, we're implementing, we're evaluating, we're course-correcting as necessary in a continuous virtual cycle of learning. And I think there's a huge amount of creativity involved in that, and we're trying to work better to align our evaluation's frameworks towards that kind of an approach.

Greg Shaw: Great. Thank you. And our final comments there, I'll have (Rajiv Joshi) to join us from the global call to action against poverty. (Rajiv), are you on the line?

(Rajiv Joshi): I am.

Greg Shaw: Please ask your question. Go ahead.

(Rajiv Joshi): Thank you very much, and I very much appreciate the opportunity to just hear more about some of what you're trying to do. I would really appreciate

hearing a little bit more about how you also listen to beneficiaries, and it's great to hear about how you're engaging with grantees, but it would be really great to hear a little bit more about how you incorporate beneficiary feedback into your programs and development of initiatives.

Gary Darmstadt: Yes, maybe I'll just jump in and begin this. So this is a very important question, and in family health for example, we're working in the state of Behar, where we're trying to really change the dialogue indicators on health and survival for women and newborns and children throughout the state, and we engage in really quite a long process of getting out into the field ourselves, and seeing the condition for ourselves, talking with women, talking with families, talking with village leaders, etcetera, and trying to really understand what are the problems that they're really facing, and what are the solutions that they really need, and what are their ideas around what some of those solutions might be?

You know, I firmly believe that our work really begins there out in the community with people and understanding their problems, and we then go through a process of trying to design solutions specifically with that in mind, so that when we come up with a solution it will be one that the community wants to adopt, wants to take up and utilize, and thereby have greater impact.

Vicki Phillips: So this is Vicki. I think we have a good example in the United States to where we've been working on a lot of initiatives surrounding teachers, particularly trying to figure out how to help them be more effective in our classrooms. And we've been both listening to teachers, so we've conducted a survey of about 40,000 of them last year, another 10,000 this year, to see what their wants and needs are.

We've also been researching with them. We've been conducting a big research study about what makes teachers there most effective, and 3,000 teachers are engaged in that research with us. And perhaps most importantly, we've been co-designing with teachers, actually having them help co-design some of the instructional tools and supports that they believe will help them help their students meet higher academic standards.

And then for all of the sort of emerging innovations that we're doing where we're investing in some gain-based work for students and some new kinds of online courses, we're actually putting both students and teachers in intentional feedback loops so that we can more rapidly prototype what works, what doesn't, what helps them meet the goals that are being set for them by schools and districts, so very committed to the kind of feedback that allows those that are going to be most impacted and benefit from the work to have a strong voice and say.

Jeff Raikes: Sam, I know that one of the things that I think your team does very well is the engagement with farmers and farm organizations. You want to just comment about that as well?

Sam Dryden: Yes. Thanks, Jeff. I'll take an example of with the CGIAR. We work with the CG - with small holder farmers in developing new products. And so in our breeding, what we have is we call it participatory breeding. And what we do is we sit with farmers, and we actually talk about the types of products that we're looking to develop, and see how they think that they'll be able to incorporate that into their holdings.

I mean, you have to remember that our beneficiaries are fairly unique. I mean, they live and they survive on a plot of land that's probably about the size of 18 football fields. So it's a very small plot of land that they're dealing

with, and they grow a variety of different crops, and so for us to be of benefit to them, we have to understand their needs. And that's why participatory breeding's a big part of our work.

Greg Shaw: Okay. And that does - that's our final question. Jeff, if you'd like to wrap.

Jeff Raikes: Great. One thing I - a question that came up this morning I want to address really quickly, and that is that by choosing the combination of Sam, Vicki, and Gary, who represent respectively agriculture, US education, and family health, I think it was a question from World Vision US is that they noticed that we didn't have somebody from water sanitation and hygiene on as a part of this briefing, and they wondered if there was something being signaled by that.

I do want to emphasize there's nothing signaled by that. If I had the program directors for each of our strategies here, we'd have about 20 or so people, and it just wouldn't be manageable. So I don't want anybody to be confused about the prioritization and I wanted to specifically answer that question that came from World Vision US.

In closing, I want to say on behalf of all of us here at the foundation how much we really appreciate that you've made yourself available, that you've asked valuable questions, and that you're a part of our work together, committed to strengthening relationships that can really help us and you achieve greater impact.

I do want you to feel free to continue to communicate with us. Greg gave you the email alias, and you'll also find it on our Web site so you can send us a note. You can also go to our Web site to the "what we're learning" tab, and select our commitment to grantees, learn more about what we've talked about

in this call, and have the opportunity to use the dialogue box there to give us additional information.

And again on the Web site you'll find a recording and transcript of this call. We hope to have that available tomorrow. So again, we thank you very much. In our work together to serve the needs of people around the world, we hope that together we can be more impactful and enable all people to have healthy and productive lives. So again, thank you very much.

Coordinator: Thank you all for participating in today's conference. You may disconnect your line and have a great day or a great evening.

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