

The Community Foundation in the United States as a Model for Replication in Ukraine: Mechanisms for Wide Community Engagement, Inclusiveness, and Representation of the Interests of Diverse Groups

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Abstract

Ihor Ilko examined the US community foundation experience for lessons applicable to the Ukrainian philanthropic sector, despite differences in their legal and financial environments and scale of operations. Mr. Ilko explains that growing interest in community foundations in Ukraine is due in large part to the decline in the concept of the European welfare state and the resultant attention to non-governmental, decentralized models of social care. Factors identified as key to the successful development of community foundations include: institutional capacity, being deeply rooted in the community, and having the ability to demonstrate leadership within that community.

Ihor Ilko points to the example of Canada where large foundations or national associations have acted as “incubators” for newly established community foundations by providing know-how and matching grants for start up. He indicates that because Ukraine’s nonprofit sector and emerging community foundations reveal growth patterns similar to those experienced by US foundations, they face similar challenges. By way of example, he cites the multi-ethnic environment facing the Carpathian Foundation and the foundation’s efforts to diversify its board, staff, and programs in order to reflect the ethnic identity of the region. Similarly, he cites the common need to establish grant programs reflecting the needs of low-income citizens. Finally, he cites the establishment of regional networks and international associations that encourage information sharing and best practices as critical to the success of community foundations in Ukraine and beyond.

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