

Learning from the North American Community Foundations' Experience: Strategies, Models and Best Practices for Italian Banking Foundations

Thomas Bastianel, Emerging Leader, International Fellows Program ~ 2011

Abstract

Italian banking foundations, created through the privatization of savings banks in the 1990s, are some of the biggest foundations in Europe. Italian bank foundations are similar to community foundations in being grant making organizations with a local focus. However Italian bank foundations have been less effective in pursuing their objectives than community foundations. Italian banking foundations have been hindered in part because of their low visibility with the public, but also because of their limited experience in philanthropic enterprise versus asset management. They also suffer from a continuing mistrust on the part of communities which associate the foundations with the banks from which the foundations originated.

Drawing on lessons from community foundations around the world, Thomas Bastianel finds pragmatic insights to help Italian bank foundations strengthen their community relationships. The paper doesn't aim to provide a theoretical framework, but instead a list of practical proposals which may be easily adapted by a bank-origin foundation. Bastianel groups useful practices into three headings: commitment, representativeness, and donors. He argues that actions such as the launch of a small grants program, the creation of a Youth Advisory Committee, and the sponsorship of a public cause could help Italian bank foundations build legitimacy in their communities.

The paper ends with a case study of the successful Brooklyn Community Foundation: a bank-origin foundation in the United States which decided to change its status into a legally organized public community foundation.

To request the full version of the paper, please click [here](#)

