CAPACITY BUILDING CASE STUDY

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION: BUILDING COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY FOR NATIONAL AND PLACE-BASED GRANTEES

THE CHALLENGE

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) partners with a diverse portfolio of grantees across the country seeking to advance programmatic and issue priorities consistent with WKKF's mission.

In conversation with its grantees, WKKF identified a lack of communications infrastructure within their organizations as a barrier to their success. To help strengthen the communications capacity and expertise of its grantees, WKKF engaged Fenton for support.

Fenton was tasked with developing a strategic communications training and technical assistance program that responds to grantee needs and advances their policy, issue and programmatic work.

OUR APPROACH

To first understand the communications challenges grantees were facing, Fenton conducted a needs and skills assessment of grantees to inform the curriculum development. This included a series of stakeholder interviews, a survey distributed to 33 national grantees and 25 place-based grantees, and a digital and social media audit of 10 place-based and national grantee organizations. We found that the grantee's needed support:

To align daily communications activities with a broader strategy.

- Expand understanding of key policies or issues among their target audiences.
- To structure content planning and implement social media best practices.
- Advancing their messaging through storytelling.

As a result, Fenton designed and implemented a comprehensive, nine-month training program for 70 community-based organizations in Louisiana, New Mexico, Mississippi and others that work nationally. The organizations participated in a monthly training series focusing on strategy, message development, digital communications, rapid and crisis response, communicating with funders and other topics to enable them to be better communicators. Fenton held weekly office hours to provide 1:1 communications support to grantees that requested it.

SUCCESS

Following each training, Fenton distributed a survey to solicit feedback on the training content and understand how to tailor the following trainings to better meet to meet the needs of participants. In the surveys, the grantees indicated that they implemented what they learned and made immediate changes to their communications strategies.

"I am constantly thinking about how I can tell our organization's story, or how I can better communicate what we do through stories to help connect the message of our organization with the public. I am more strategic with the ways I use different mediums." - WKKF Grantee

"The media training was invaluable to our organization in the middle of a national formula crisis. It is likely the single most important thing that happened to our org in 2022. It was wonderful to be prepared and for our members to be prepared." -WKKF Grantee

WKKF recognized the value that these trainings provided its grantees and engaged Fenton to develop another curriculum for grantees in Mississippi and New Orleans in 2023.

Building upon our success, we also partnered with WKKF to develop an online Strategic Communication Planning Hub where we adapted our capacity building training content and material into an online curriculum with tools and resources that organizations beyond just WKKF's active grantees can access at any time on their website.