



## Member Spotlight

Founded in 2005 after the successful public offering of Zumiez, the action sports apparel and equipment retailer, the Campion Foundation has focused their grantmaking on two programmatic areas: protecting wilderness in Northwest North America and ending homelessness in the state of Washington. The foundation believes that, as well as being good business practice, they have a fiscal responsibility as a tax exempt organization to leverage maximum impact from every dollar granted by investing in highly functioning, efficient organizations. Therefore, capacity building has always been a third area of focus as a way to help the foundation and their grantees achieve better results. Over the past few years, the Campion Foundation launched a professional development grant program and broadened their capacity building program to include strengthening the nonprofit ecosystem all in an effort to support their grantees and help them achieve the best results.

Core to the Campion Foundation's mission is building the capacity of their grantees so that they can achieve their program goals more effectively and efficiently. When they started their capacity building program, they focused on supporting their grantee's fundraising efforts. Over time, the foundation saw that other issues, such as governance or leadership problems, often led to fundraising problems. Therefore, they broadened their capacity building focus to include governance, leadership, strategic planning and financial skills. "Fundraising is still an important indicator, but we realized we must address all areas to achieve the best results," says Melanie Matthews, director of the capacity building program for the past two years.

Just as the foundation saw the need to broaden the scope of their capacity building investments, they also saw the need to support their grantees in continuous personal improvement. In late 2010, they launched a professional development grant program. The program provides grants up to \$5,000 for any employee of an existing grantee to obtain professional development through conferences, classes or workshops. Most impressive is the two-week turnaround on requests. The foundation developed the program so "grantees have the ability to take advantage of professional development opportunities that they didn't budget for but that they don't rely solely on the foundation to fund professional development," Matthews says. About 10 percent of grantees took advantage of the program over the last year and they have room in the budget for about 20 percent of their grantees to use the program every year.

The foundation also works to strengthen the nonprofit ecosystem. Matthews explains, "for nonprofits to achieve the best results, they need to operate in a healthy nonprofit sector." A healthy nonprofit sector has grantmakers committed to and investing in capacity building, with an understanding of what grantmaking practices support grantee success and what an effective nonprofit looks like, has nonprofits that understand what attributes are necessary to be sustainable and has high quality support services, such as nonprofit associations and high caliber consultants. A strong local nonprofit sector provides much needed resources to their grantees and future grantees. Matthews points out that the foundation cannot do this work alone. It requires grantmakers working collaboratively to strengthen the sector and she is thankful to be part of the Statewide Capacity Collaborative, a capacity building funders group in Washington state focused on strengthening the nonprofit ecosystem in the state (the Statewide Capacity Collaborative will be presenting their work during [GEO's 2012 National Conference](#)).

Capacity building is not always easy work to evaluate and positive change takes time and effort. However, as Matthews explains, "sometimes you just have to go for it. Capacity building can be risky but I encourage you to jump in and try. If we all invest in the capacity of our grantees and the sector than our legacy will be great."