

GEO Member Spotlight



Allegany Franciscan Ministries

How Allegany Franciscan Ministries is Acting as a Leader in Building Grantee Capacity

For proponents of grantee-friendly practices, it's easy to be encouraged by the work being done by the staff at Allegany Franciscan Ministries.

Miguel Milanes, regional vice president of Miami-Dade County at AFM, summed up the organization's attitude well in one sentence: "If our grant partners succeed, we succeed."

As part of ensuring the success of grantee partners, AFM maintains an admirable focus on supporting grantee capacity. Among the exciting work being done by AFM is its role in providing nearly all the funding support for the JUMP (Journey to Unlock Management Potential) Capacity Building Initiative, operating in the Tampa Bay region.

By assembling a "leadership team" from each participating organization — typically consisting of staff, board members and, sometimes, volunteers or clients — JUMP establishes an organization-centric, team approach to learning, creating change and strengthening capacity. Team members collaborate during the program's 12-months to develop and work toward measurable goals with support from JUMP's advisory team and other experts, including \$20,000 in financial support. JUMP usually has 4 – 6 participating organizations each year. The third cohort has just graduated and the fourth round is now being planned.

The initiative started in 2008 as a result of listening to nonprofits and how they felt they could build their organizational capacity and improve their services. Even organizations that are not accepted to participate in the cohort are provided with feedback from JUMP partners on how to enhance their organizations' capacities, based on the assessment tool that is used in the program's application.

Cheri Wright-Jones, regional vice president in the Tampa Bay region for AFM, shared that coordinating JUMP as a partnership of supporting organizations — a cross-section of nonprofit capacity-building leaders in the community — has been a successful endeavor and is a contributing factor in its success.



Allegany Franciscan Ministries' staff — including Cheri Wright-Jones, Upendo Shabazz-Phillips and Miguel Milanes — volunteering at a Florida food bank.

From the GEOList Archives:

Engaging Youth in Philanthropy

In 2012, Allegany Franciscan Ministries began a youth philanthropy project to educate youth in a local community about philanthropy and to "give them an opportunity to identify issues and challenges facing their communities and determine how their efforts can have an impact."

Although youth philanthropy doesn't fall directly into the mission of Allegany Franciscan Ministries, there was a considerable amount of volunteer enthusiasm and AFM's flexible, responsive approach allowed them to capitalize on this ardor for the project.

Both in the formative stage and after the project had been implemented, Upendo Shabazz-Phillips, AFM's regional vice president in the Palm Beach area, shared information about the initiative on GEOList — with her later response including two documents on the initiative: the pilot project outline and a spreadsheet of three types of youth philanthropy.

You can find both GEOList postings — "Youth Grantmaking Leadership Program" and "Youth Voices in Grantmaking" by [clicking here](#). (GEO member log-in required)

“It allows the partners, each of whom have specific experiences or fortes, to really do what they do well,” Wright-Jones said.

Wright-Jones shared that through JUMP, AFM has helped to change perceptions about capacity building and sustainability among its grantees. Using JUMP, she’s helped to share the message that success requires “more than just receiving initial dollars. It’s what you do when the dollars come in or — in the absence of dollars — how you continue to ensure that you can meet the demands of those you are serving.”

Evaluation for Learning

The JUMP initiative is just one example of AFM’s important investments in strengthening the capacity of its grantees. The organization also supports grantees to use evaluation for learning and improvement purposes. AFM’s written evaluation philosophy includes “grant partner learning and capacity building” as one of the primary roles for evaluation.

In order to assist grantees in evaluation, AFM offers free one-on-one sessions with an evaluation consultant and webinars on evaluation for grantees.

Upendo Shabazz-Phillips, AFM’s regional vice president in the Palm Beach area, shared that AFM’s work to strengthen grantees in their evaluation methods isn’t only helpful for grant reports; it’s an important skill for grantees to learn as well.

“Most organizations don’t have a background in evaluation and aren’t sure what good evaluation looks like and what to measure,” she said. “For them this is a learning experience. It’s an intro course on what to look for and what to measure; how to go about measuring and how to report it.”

In addition to providing technical assistance during the application process and ensuring that evaluation measures are “right-sized” for the grants provided, AFM works with grantees that do have evaluation measures already in place to look for ways to incorporate outcomes that they may already be tracking, in order to reduce the burden on the grantee.

“We want them to view evaluation as a tool and a good thing, not as a punitive thing,” Wright-Jones said. “If they don’t meet an outcome, we can talk together about what needs to happen; how we can work together next year. We try to be a flexible, responsive funder.”

For Eileen Coogan Boyle, AFM’s president and CEO, this is all part of AFM’s commitment to “not placing any undue burden on the people we are serving” and to viewing relationships with grantees as partnerships.

“We try to the best of our ability to close the power gap that is there,” Boyle said. “Looking at evaluation as a learning tool rather than a monitoring tool is a value that we stress”

About Allegany Franciscan Ministries

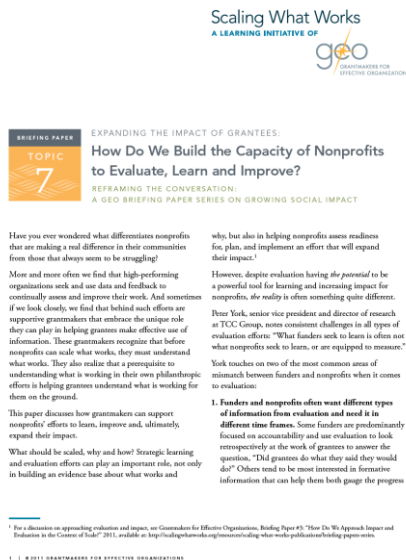
Allegany Franciscan Ministries is a nonprofit Catholic organization that seeks to improve the overall health of individuals by increasing access to health services and information.

Allegany Franciscan Ministries grew out of the health care ministries of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, N.Y., and is a member of Catholic Health East. It provides grants to organizations in the three regions of Florida formerly served by the Sisters' hospitals: Miami-Dade County, Palm Beach, Martin and St. Lucie Counties, and the Tampa Bay area of Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties. Since awarding its first grant in 1998, Allegany Franciscan Ministries has invested over \$60 million in more than 1,300 organizations serving those most in need in its targeted communities. Its annual grantmaking budget averages about \$6 million.

In addition to awarding grants, Allegany Franciscan Ministries' staff and volunteers work collaboratively with its nonprofit community partners and other funders to promote physical, mental, spiritual, societal and cultural health and well-being in the communities it serves.

GEO resources that relate to the topics covered in this member spotlight:

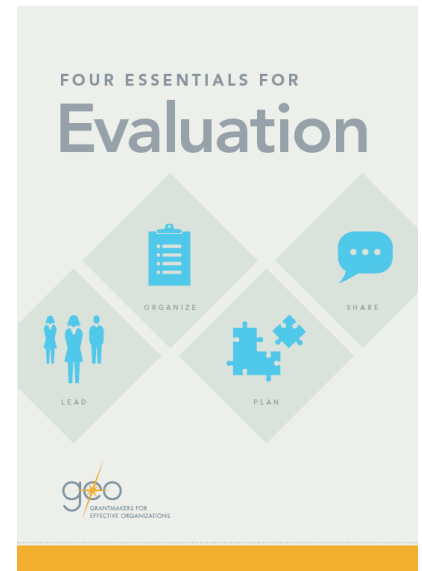
[Expanding the Impact of Grantees: How Do We Build the Capacity of Nonprofits to Evaluate, Learn and Improve?](#)



[Is Grantmaking Getting Smarter?](#)



[Four Essentials for Evaluation](#)



Find these and other resources for grantmakers at www.geofunders.org