

Who Is Working Well Together?

DentaQuest Foundation

Aiming to build a national movement, funder focused on oral health supports learning communities of grantees.

Quick Grantmaker Stats

Type of funder	Private foundation
Geography/Issue Area	National/Oral health
When founded	1999
Total assets (as of FY 2013)	\$76 million
Annual giving (as of FY 2013)	\$13.5 million
Number of staff	10
Website	www.dentaquestfoundation.org
Brief description of the program/ practice being discussed	Learning communities as core elements of several national grantmaking initiatives on oral health.

1. Describe the situation or practice.

The DentaQuest Foundation (formerly the Oral Health Foundation) was established in 1999 in Massachusetts and expanded nationally beginning in 2009 to improve the oral health of people across the United States. The foundation collaborates with local and national partners to shape solutions in four key system areas: health policy, financing of oral health care and prevention, accessible and affordable oral health care, and community-based resources.

As the foundation started planning its expansion from a primarily local funder to a national funder in the last decade, it began to embrace the importance of creating learning communities of grantees to share solutions and pursue opportunities for collaboration.

Managing Director Brian Souza explained the shift in thinking: “During the foundation’s first decade, we focused primarily on equipment and infrastructure grants to expand access to care for traditionally underserved populations. While important work, the foundation also wanted to explore applying its resources to addressing the underlying systems issues that were

the root causes of disparities in access to oral health care and oral health status.” Over time, the foundation’s board and staff came to believe that widespread progress on oral health would only be possible if there were an infrastructure to support a national and local network of change agents.

2. What have you tried to do differently?

Learning communities are at the heart of four key funding initiatives of the DentaQuest Foundation:

- *Building on National Convening Power.* The U.S. National Oral Health Alliance is a stand-alone nonprofit formed with funding from the DentaQuest Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to provide a forum where leaders can come together to work on improving access to oral health. The Alliance serves as a platform for leaders from various sectors — including federal and state government, organized dentistry, academia, industry, payers and public health — to come together in a series of colloquia to build common ground and shared messaging on priority areas from prevention and public health infrastructure to financing models.
- *Funding State-Based Network.* Oral Health 2014 is a DentaQuest Foundation initiative that supports state-based organizations working to bring about systems change in the same priority areas of the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance. The foundation supports grantees to gather face-to-face two to four times per year and virtually each month on grantee-led webinars to build capacity in areas such as stakeholder engagement, collaborative planning, advocacy, communications and health equity.
- *Strengthening the Oral Health Safety Net.* This DentaQuest Foundation initiative supports the National Association of Community Health Centers, the National Network for Oral Health Access and 16 primary care associations at the state level to help them improve access to oral care among medically underserved populations. Similar to other programs supported by the grantmaker, grantees come together face-to-face twice per year and virtually on a regular basis for capacity-building on a variety of topics and to share common challenges and resources for improvement.
- *Building Local Leadership.* The National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health initiative — funded by the DentaQuest Foundation, the Washington Dental Service Foundation and the Connecticut Health Foundation — is engaging national professional associations in nursing, pediatrics, physician assisting, family medicine and OB/GYN in adopting a formal commitment to oral health. The initiative prioritizes and supports learning as a core element of its work, convening all professions at an annual symposium as well as individual professions at summits and symposia to share knowledge and solutions.

The foundation’s lead technical assistance partner for these and other initiatives is the Interaction Institute for Social Change, which plays a key role in growing and sustaining its learning communities. Souza said the DentaQuest Foundation is seeking to build and weave a national network of

oral health advocates who are coming together regularly — both virtually and in-person gatherings designed and facilitated by IISC — in a national community of practice and learning.

“Our grantees are sharing experts, resources and ideas in ways we would never have imagined, and it shows what happens when you break down the siloes that keep people from collaborating.”

— Brian Souza, Managing Director, DentaQuest Foundation

3. What has been the result?

By convening and building the capacity of diverse groups of stakeholders at the local, regional and national levels, the DentaQuest Foundation has fostered common understanding of key challenges facing the systems, as well as a vision for how those systems could best function to improve the oral health of all.

“Fairly quickly, specific shared solutions surfaced that had demonstrated promise in shaping health policy to support oral health, in better aligning financing for care, in improving the delivery of care to maximize access and prioritize prevention and in strengthening community supports that improve oral health,” Souza.

Among the results to date:

- More states are implementing effective models to increase oral disease prevention, assessment and treatment for at-risk children (in programs like Head Start) that have proved effective elsewhere.
- State organizations are sharing strategies to influence policy on oral health related to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.
- The common ground messaging of the U.S National Oral Health Alliance is influencing efforts within the federal government to shape national planning on oral health.
- The common curriculum, Smiles for Life, has spread across the country to train thousands (nearly 8,000 in 2013) of primary care providers in oral health in new states.
- Partners across states are sharing technical and expert resources. One example of how this is happening occurred when one state was facing a threat to community water fluoridation. Within days, resources and strategies to fend off the threat were shared across

state lines, and experts from one state traveled to present at hearings in another state.

4. What are your key insights from doing the work?

Souza said grantees are not often accustomed to a grantmaker getting deeply involved in helping them connect to others doing similar work. “As a nonprofit, you get used to a certain relationship with a foundation, so many of them were shocked, some pleasantly and some nervously, about this new approach,” he said.

While the foundation took a lead role in planning learning opportunities and convenings at the outset, it quickly engaged grantees and partners in these responsibilities, increasing their ownership of these efforts. Rather than solely defining its relationship as grantmaker and grantee, the foundation made explicit efforts to talk about the work as a partnership.

Souza added that some grantees initially felt overwhelmed by the volume of work and interactions associated with their involvement in these learning communities. “But we quickly saw that anxiety subside to the point where they are now beginning to run the show themselves,” Souza said.

Funders Can Learn Together, Too

At the same time that it provides opportunities for grantees to be part of collaborative learning communities, the DentaQuest Foundation makes certain it is practicing what it preaches. The foundation is one of more than two dozen national and regional philanthropic organizations that meet quarterly as a Funders Oral Health Policy Group. Participating organizations are strong and active voices in community health and national health policy discussions. Through their collaboration, they are creating new opportunities for public-private partnerships focused on systems change for better oral health in communities across the United States. The DentaQuest Foundation is the fiscal agent for this group. See more at: <http://dentaquestfoundation.org/programs-partnerships/national-partnerships/funders-oral-health-policy-group>.

Jim Joseph Foundation

Grantmaker focused on education for Jewish young people embraces multiyear grants, funder collaboration as priorities.

Quick Grantmaker Stats

Type of funder	Private foundation
Geography/Issue Area	National/Jewish education
When founded	2006
Annual giving	\$35.7 million
Number of staff	15
Website	www.jimjosephfoundation.org
Brief description of the program/ practice being discussed	Funder collaborations and multiyear grants supporting grantees to grow, sustain their work.

1. Describe the situation or practice.

The Shimon Ben Joseph Foundation, commonly known as the Jim Joseph Foundation, is devoted exclusively to supporting Jewish education for youth and young adults who are residents of the United States. The foundation pursues this work through three strategic funding priorities: 1) increase the number and quality of Jewish educators; 2) expand opportunities for effective Jewish learning; and 3) build a strong field for Jewish education.

Over the last several years, the foundation has adopted several core strategies that it believes contribute substantially to the success and sustainability of grantees. Among these strategies are collaborative funding arrangements with other grantmakers to provide grantees with higher levels of support.

2. What have you tried to do differently?

The Jim Joseph Foundation actively pursues collaborative funding arrangements among grantmakers supporting education for Jewish youth and young adults. In the view of the foundation, collaborative funding often better positions grantees to reach financial sustainability and ultimately to identify other, more varied sources of support. Additionally, the foundation believes that a collaborative funding structure offers a rich learning environment for grantmakers and their partners.

The foundation currently is leading a funder collaborative that is a follow-up initiative to its 2013 report, [Effective Strategies for Educating and Engaging](#)

[Jewish Teens](#). The community is a forum for national and local funders to learn about best practices and to share ideas about teen education and engagement, prior to exploring various funding options.

Working in concert with the Jim Joseph Foundation, every local funder in the collaborative makes specific commitments as part of its participation. For example, each local funder commits to “invest time and resources in a comprehensive local planning effort with volunteer leaders, practitioners and teens to develop new, community-based Jewish teen education and engagement initiatives and to strengthen existing offerings.” These funders also agree to build coalitions of other local funders to support this work.

In addition to collaborative funding, the Jim Joseph Foundation focuses on making major, multiyear grants to a small group of core grantees. As of late 2013, 82 percent of the foundation’s granted dollars were awarded as multiyear grants of three years or more.

“As a national funder, the Jim Joseph Foundation is committed to taking a leadership role in coordinating and sharing learning with our funding colleagues, identifying opportunities for co-investing in their efforts, and helping to fuel a national conversation about the importance of Jewish teen education and engagement.”

— Chip Edelsberg, Executive Director, Jim Joseph Foundation

3. What has been the result?

The funder collaborative for Jewish teen education and engagement already has led to one collaborative funding arrangement between the foundation and a community funder seeking to implement a local initiative, with four more potential collaborations actively under development. Today, this funder collaborative includes representatives from 14 foundations and federations — national and local funders representing a diversity of Jewish communities.

“There’s no question that the Jim Joseph Foundation leads its foundation peers in the importance of collaborative work with grantees and in the importance of seed money leading to sustainability,” said Morlie Levin, CEO of NEXT: A Division of Birthright Israel Foundation. “They are deliberative about funding; they are making large strategic bets; and over time, through the

power of their results, they are able to galvanize a large consortium of funders to support big ideas.”

4. What are your key insights from doing the work?

The Jim Joseph Foundation has been involved in numerous funder collaboratives, but the funder collaborative for Jewish teen education and engagement is its largest to date. “We are all learning together as we go,” Program Officer Josh Miller observed in a recent blog post about the effort. Less than a year after the initiative was launched, Miller offered some early insights on what makes funder collaboration work.

Among his key insights was the need to “document shared understanding” among partners. Working together to develop shared measures and to define expectations and roles of participants were important early activities for the collaborative. “This work proved especially valuable for our local funding partners as they began talking about the collaborative with their local stakeholders,” Miller wrote.

Other Funder Partnerships

In addition to its participation in the funder collaborative for Jewish teen education and engagement, the Jim Joseph Foundation participates in numerous collaborations with other funders focused on specific projects or grantees. For example, in 2012 the Jim Joseph Foundation and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation initiated a collaborative investment of \$6 million to kick off a larger campaign to enable Moishe House to double its reach by 2016. Moishe House, a pluralistic international organization, provides meaningful Jewish experiences to young adults in their 20s. The Jim Joseph Foundation specifically offered up to a \$3 million, dollar-for-dollar match to Moishe House for all funds raised from local Jewish Federations and individuals over a four and half year period.