

Evaluation

WINGSForum 2006

Making a Difference in Philanthropy

*A Meeting of Grantmaker Associations and
Philanthropy Support Organizations from Around the World*

November 16 - 18, 2006
Bangkok, Thailand

By Yumi Sera and Susan Beaudry

January 2007

Prepared for



I. Executive Summary

A. INTRODUCTION

In November 2006, Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support (WINGS) held its global conference, *WINGSForum: Making a Difference in Philanthropy*, in Bangkok, Thailand. The event drew more than 160 participants from all over the world from the philanthropy and grantmaker support field.¹

WINGSForum is a cornerstone event for the organization and is currently held every four years. *WINGSForum* anchors a series of knowledge sharing, learning, and networking activities that take place in different countries or regions and on specific topics of interest to WINGS members. Due to the significance of *WINGSForum*, the WINGS Secretariat sought to commission an evaluation of the event. In addition, the assignment included an evaluation of two meetings of WINGS constituent groups – WINGS-CF (Community Foundations) and WINGS-CI (Corporate Initiative) – that immediately preceded *WINGSForum*.

B. METHODOLOGY

The WINGS Secretariat contracted with Yumi Sera and Susan Beaudry (Evaluation Team) to evaluate the effectiveness, relevancy, and efficiency of *WINGSForum* as a learning and networking opportunity for the WINGS membership. The Evaluation Team was also tasked with making recommendations to the WINGS Secretariat and Coordinating Committee for future gatherings (not only *WINGSForum*, but other, smaller or regional activities).

The agreed upon deliverable was a final report that would include the evaluation of the process of preparing for and implementing *WINGSForum*; an analysis of the event's program offerings and networking opportunities, in terms of their relevance and usefulness to the participants; and an overall commentary on the structure and substance of the meeting.

To meet these criteria, the Evaluation Team used several methodologies, with the following primary resources: 1) Interviews and meetings with participants, Secretariat staff, and members of the Coordinating and Planning committees, 2) Attendance by Ms. Sera at *WINGSForum* 2006, and 3) Written evaluation forms completed by *WINGSForum*, WINGS-CF, and WINGS-CI participants.

In addition to the *WINGSForum* evaluation, members of the Coordinating Committee expressed an interest in surveying the membership in order to better understand their broad interests in the types and frequency of WINGS gatherings. As a result, what started as an evaluation of *WINGSForum* expanded to include feedback from members regarding the kinds of support services they would like to see the network provide as a whole, and the directions they would like to see WINGS move in the future.

¹ For more information on WINGS and proceedings for *WINGSForum*, see the website: www.wingsweb.org

The rate of response for the evaluation form used at each function was as follows:

- WINGS-CF at 40 percent, or 27 out of 68 participants
- WINGS-CI at 25 percent, or 11 out of 44 participants
- WINGSForum at 34 percent, or 54 out of 161 participants

The response rate via the evaluation forms was disappointing. However, the feedback provided through different methodologies with a cross-section of participants provided a rich and substantive set of data for the report.

C. ANALYSIS

In both written evaluations and oral interviews, participants were consistently positive about their overall experience. One participant wrote, “WINGSForum 2006 was an outstanding and rewarding event. Well done!” Comments like this can be found throughout the evaluations.

Participants repeatedly and favorably identified four primary aspects of WINGSForum, as follows:

- **Plenary speakers.** Participants were engaged by the unique and challenging perspectives brought by speakers, as well as finding speakers inspirational and “*offering hope.*”
- **Workshops.** The opportunities to learn from peers about similar challenges and explore relevant topics in-depth were appreciated by participants.
- **Networking.** Sharing knowledge, exploring opportunities for collaboration, and the inspiration that comes from learning about new innovations from peers was an important part of the experience at WINGSForum.
- **Global nature.** The opportunity to network and learn from peers facing similar and diverse challenges and opportunities in different parts of the world was rewarding for participants.

While participants emphasized the rich learning and knowledge sharing that takes place at WINGSForum, the diverse background and experiences of participants also presents a unique set of challenges, including language barriers. Diversity also poses a challenge in addressing a broad set of information needs, based on different experiences and stages of institutional development.

The workshops were a substantive part of the overall program, and thus, merit special attention. Critiques cited that related to the workshops included:

- **Lack of different workshop formats.** With few exceptions, the workshop format used involved a moderator and three presenters. Participants expressed interest in additional formats to help address different learning styles and to help create a more stimulating learning environment.
- **Inexperienced facilitators.** In workshops where facilitators were inexperienced in moderating or had limited knowledge of the subject being presented, participants commented that discussions were unfocused. In other cases, facilitators allowed presenters to spend too much time introducing their own organizations and not maintaining an analytical framework.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are drawn from an analysis of the evaluation forms; meetings and interviews with Coordinating and Planning Committee members and *WINGSForum* participants; document review of similar network and learning activities; and the experiences of the Evaluation Team:

- 1. Clarify and communicate objectives of the activity**
Consistently communicating objectives helps to ensure that participant expectations are aligned with *WINGSForum* objectives, focus participant learning and engagement, aid session coordinators and speakers to meet objectives by focusing their presentations, and improve the evaluation for the event and thus, track the overall effectiveness of *WINGForum*.
- 2. Facilitate networking and track results of networking**
To better articulate and measure the value of the WINGS network, track and document the outcomes of the networking that may be a result of *WINGSForum* and other WINGS programs.
- 3. Disseminate information in different forms to publicize WINGS accomplishments and services**
Provide an annual report and other information to publicize WINGS accomplishments and services and its value to the network.
- 4. In planning workshops, know the target audience to design the workshop**
Workshop planning demands that the organizer needs to think about the audience and specific target groups, select appropriate contents, and find different ways to provide them the knowledge and skills they require.
- 5. Ensure effective facilitation for sessions**
Crucial to the success of the workshop is effective facilitation, particularly in a mixed group where the knowledge and experience base may be diverse.
- 6. Use adequate communication and language tools for a diverse audience**
Adequate tools, such as interpretation and handouts, facilitate learning for a diverse audience.
- 7. Designate and assign key responsibilities during the planning process**
Planning for any event should include attention to three key and distinct functions that carry different responsibilities and require different skills: 1) Fundraising, 2) Programming, and 3) Logistics.
- 8. Consider the Role of *WINGSForum* in the flow of WINGS activities**
Future planning should include discussion on how *WINGSForum* relates to other activities and what follow-up will take place. A strong focus on the principles of knowledge sharing and learning should be employed.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Evaluation Team wishes to thank the WINGS Secretariat in Brussels for the opportunity to learn about the important work of the network and to participate in *WINGSForum* 2006. We also wish to thank the participants and Coordinating and Planning committee members who responded to our requests for information, willingness to be interviewed, and for completing the evaluations. The conversations with the participants were gratifying and inspirational.

Congratulations are also in order for the Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium, the new home of the WINGS Secretariat. It is our hope that this report assists the Secretariat and the WINGS leadership in its next steps and in planning for the future.