

Self-Evaluation 11.20

What a year this has been! Just as I was beginning to think I had mastered the cycle of the year and the various FFA processes, the pandemic changed everything. No organizations were left untouched as we tried to keep ourselves and program participants/residents healthy. The pandemic has made everyone aware of the vulnerability of aging adults, cracks in residential and health care, and the importance of social determinants of health—particularly mental health, loneliness and isolation. At the same time, it has provided opportunities to rapidly adopt technology in social connection and telehealth and other innovative solutions.

And then George Floyd's death reinforced our awareness that the divide between those with privilege and those without was deep and justice for all far from reality. Where I had been looking forward to conferences in Atlanta and Austin, I came to appreciate how many more programs I could attend (for free or nearly) without travel. While it is harder to network this way, I have been able to attend more programs and get to know other grant makers.

Highlights of this year have been the Innovation Mini-grants, Strategic Implementation Plan, completing the revision of the Board Handbook, drafting a Succession Plan, and creating a board section on the website.

2020 Priorities:

- Finish update to Board Handbook
- Develop a strategic plan
- Seek new grantees consistent with strategic priorities
- Continue to build relationships with existing grantees -focus on outcome assessment and DEI
- Master investment entries in QB
- Sort boxes of past materials

Administrative: I feel that I have mastered the various processes that run this organization, including Quickbooks, bill and grant payments, communicating with grantees, and tracking grants. Marylee has been helpful as I try to master recording the JPMorgan quarterly statements, and handling communication with the IRS about our tax payments and changed fiscal year. Performing these tasks helps me monitor all aspects of the organization. I'm learning more about the investment side of FFA through attending Friends Fiduciary and Ziegler meetings.

I focused on attending programs offered by PEAK grantmaking, Philanthropy Network, Grantmakers in Aging, American Society on Aging and Council of NJ Grantmakers, focusing on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. I was particularly attracted to the Principles of Trust-Based Philanthropy as they are so closely aligned with Quaker and FFA values. I've shared links to articles with the Board. FFA has an opportunity to be an example to other foundations in values-aligned philanthropy.

A document retention policy was approved this year, but I have not yet sorted through the boxes of past documents. Maybe in 2021. All aspects of the board handbook have been updated. We now have a full 10 person board.

We have explored best practices for communicating with the Board-when/what/how often. It was suggested that I create a board section of the website to facilitate sharing and finding documents. This was done successfully for the October meeting. More materials have been added since, and will continue to be posted going forward.

As the pandemic entered our lives, I realized that FFA should have a plan for what to do if I got sick, especially managing operations and passwords, so I created a succession plan with those “keys to the kingdom.”

Grantmaking: I have focused this year on building relationships with current grantees and developing potential grantees. I had hoped to explore how aging is addressed in other Yearly Meetings, but this proved harder than anticipated and will continue as a goal. I feel that progress has been made this year on helping grantees create useful tools for program evaluation. I would like to focus on helping grantees build collaborations/partnerships in the coming year. The challenges presented in 2020 have led many grantmakers to address equity, listen to and know grantees, make larger unrestricted grants, simplify processes, and to be more transparent and responsive. I have received a lot of appreciation for the expertise I bring as a former grantee and executive, with expertise in the field of aging and an orientation toward collaboration, evaluation, and open communication. Going forward I want to focus on listening, honoring the expertise of the organizations, and including board members in more of our conversations.

Most of our grantees had to make adjustments to planned due to the pandemic. Some were able to generate new, creative ways to meet their goals while others ground to a halt. I feel very good about the ways I was able to engage with them to find new pathways, to encourage their efforts, or to assure them of FFA’s flexibility to extend grant periods. Some found that these adjustments led to better outcomes than originally planned. Communication has been via telephone and Zoom as no site visits were possible.

It was very exciting to have rapid board support for making the first Innovation mini-grants and some emergency grants in response to the pandemic. The 11 mini-grants focused on small ideas from front-line staff that made a difference to residents or staff coping with the pandemic, reflecting several FFA values.

There are several aspects of grantmaking which will be explored through the strategic plan, including whether to make a few larger grants, whether to invite proposals on a target area, and how long to fund organizations. It appears that we currently have a good mix of 4-6 repeat and 3 new proposals each cycle. We need to consider when to have these larger strategic conversations in our busy meeting schedule.

Repeat grants this year: Friends Home Kennett, Ralston My Way, Trinitas, JFCS, Friends Home & Village, Friends House Retirement Village, NYYM, AFSC, FSA & Kendal, ARTZPhiladelphia, Friends in the City.

New grants this year: Barclay Friends, Witness to Innocence, National Church Residences, Ujima, Center in the Park, Montco SAAC.

Some needed extensions to complete the funded project and will likely continue in the future: FSA, Friendsview Retirement Community, Quaker Voluntary Service. Others have finished the funded projects: FSA-Kendal, IRIS, Friends in the City, Friends SW Burial Ground and Jaisohn.

I participated in several programs on Age Friendly Communities in NJ, ultimately deciding that it was not a sufficiently good fit for FFA to pursue at this time.

Future: It has been helpful to engage in strategic planning this year. My contributions included planning, organizing, and reporting. We affirmed the key parts of the plan from 2016 and added an implementation plan which will focus and guide our work in the next 2-4 years. Many of the questions raised last year have been addressed, or will be. It will help me allocate my time and help us keep attention on the key issues identified. I think undergoing this process also helped identify a need to make time for these strategic conversations in our annual schedule so that FFA can continue to be responsive to evolving issues. What I am learning is that my position is a balancing act, finding the sweet spot between advising and listening, focusing and opening, new and old, collaboration and accountability, and more.

I think that in 2021 FFA will need to be attentive to the needs of providers who are struggling in the face of a second wave of the pandemic. There are ways that the pandemic is influencing our world that will never return to the old “normal” including more telehealth and a move away from open-concept group living to more home and community-based services, with more attention to the needs of staff for fair pay and emotional support, a need to address social isolation and loneliness as well as mental health in general, and diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels (participant, staff, administration, board). It is an exciting time to be in the field exploring how FFA can have an impact.

2021 Priorities

- Complete board section of website, continue to post materials
- Complete succession plan
- Continue exploration of focus areas, innovation and large grant strategies
- Learn more about other Yearly Meeting aging concerns
- Understand investments better
- Seek innovative solutions to pandemic-related problems
- Explore ways FFA can have impact on social justice issues
- Sort archives

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