

Transparency Talk

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Glasspockets Find: Bronfman Philanthropies Chooses Transparency for Its Sunset Years

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies (ACBP) has announced the steps it has taken and will continue to take as it prepares to close in 2016.

In 2001, Charles Bronfman and his wife, Andrea--who passed away in 2006--chose 2016 as the year by which ACBP would, as Charles Bronfman and ACBP President Jeffrey

Solomon write in an open letter on the foundation's web site, "accomplish the goal of ensuring that the missions of the organizations that ACBP has incubated would continue." "There has been little written about the dynamics, challenges, and choices that need to be addressed [when a foundation sunsets]," write Bronfman and Solomon in the letter. "[F]or those reasons, we will transparently document our process as it unfolds. We will also take responsibility for stimulating a wider and deeper conversation among donors and professionals in the philanthropic community about the philosophic, strategic, and day-to-day considerations that are involved, and our learning and experiences along the way."

"As with any good investment, there is a time to invest and a time to exit."

– Charles Bronfman and Jeffrey Solomon

Bronfman and Solomon go on to say that they have discussed ACBP's transition plans with grantees, including the support that will be available to them during the process, and that the foundation will continue to provide them with advice and back-office assistance on a regular basis. In addition, the foundation has retained outside advisors to help ensure that the missions of the incubated organizations will be preserved going forward; that the organizations will be in a position to not only survive but thrive; and that the people involved will be treated with sensitivity throughout the transition.

In April 2009, the Foundation Center released *Perpetuity or Limited Lifespan: How Do Family Foundations Decide?* The first large-scale examination of foundation lifespan planning, the study benchmarked the intentions, practices, and attitudes of nearly 1,100 active family foundations in 2008. With 90 percent of family foundations created since 1980, the report found that, while existing in perpetuity continued to be the norm, more than a third were either uncertain about their lifespan or planned to limit their lifespan.

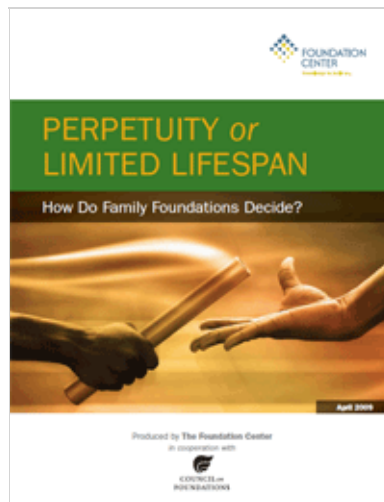
By sharing experiences as they sunset in an honest and open manner, foundations like the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies can--and will--make an invaluable contribution to the field, providing guidance and important insights to many family foundations as they navigate their own transitions in leadership and service.

Please share your thoughts and comments!

-- Mark Foley

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