

SIX impact

Increasing the impact of philanthropy

The Funders Node is a SIX programme to support funders as they move away from traditional grantmaking practices and support social innovation to create systemic change.

This programme addresses the lack of shared knowledge and connections globally between foundations; the need for deeper, peer-led learning opportunities; and the absence of social innovation discussions in existing philanthropy forums.

We design and curate focussed, intimate global retreats for foundations, helping them to help each other to answer the questions keeping them awake at night.

We also produce insights for funders to prompt new approaches, challenge funders to address new issues, and push the field forward. These topics include how to use data to address complex challenges, how to support systems change, and the role of strategic foresight.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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“The best thing about the SIX Funders Node has been getting to know individuals and organisations that have similar challenges or questions to those I have. They bring a whole host of experiences and perspectives from their own contexts.

I now ask different kinds of questions, mindful of different models that other funders have explored or implemented and then adapt them to our context. We are all very different organisations with different cultures and different ways of operating. Our own practice in areas - such as labs - is still in the early stage. But the Funders Node is like our own wisdom council to work through problems. By asking different questions and working with your peers, it can give you more confidence or change your approach. For example, JW McConnell Family Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation have been invaluable in shaping our thinking about what ‘labs’ mean and how best to ensure that they are generative, not prescriptive, and responsive to the needs of the stakeholders and community.”

– Katie Wehr, Senior Program Officer



McConnell Foundation



“Tracking and reporting on the current state of innovation around pressing challenges is one of SIX’s core strengths.”

“At last year’s SIX Funders Node gathering, participants identified the opportunity to improve evidence-based decision making, strategic foresight and outcomes measurement using digital data. We also surfaced a concern to protect the ‘digital commons’ - with implications for the governance of social media and democratic decision making.

SIX has recently conducted a global scan of foundation-supported work around the uses and misuses of digital data. The picture is one of diverse and complementary initiatives that, if connected, could augment the effectiveness of individual foundations, and the global practice of systems innovation. It points to a critical need to assert the public interest in the face of accelerated privatization of algorithms.

If tracking and reporting on the current state of innovation around pressing challenges is one of SIX’s core strengths, another is convening the essential conversations that enable natural partnerships to emerge and for our strategies to enable progress toward the UN SDGs.”

– Stephen Huddart, President & CEO

