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April 18, 2013

Dear Friends,

Firelight, and most of our partners, were negatively affected by the economic crash of 2008. While the sudden dip in funding flows caused some organizations to close, other organizations actually started their operations during this tough economic time.

There is a lot we can learn from organizations that were born during the recession. From their start, they had to do more with less, and make smart choices about how to find and utilize scarce resources. As the article below states, lean times build strong organizations. They highlight six traits of organizations born during the recession that will likely lead to their long-term survival and success.

Though the article highlights US-based organizations, we think there are lessons here that can benefit every organization. We hope you find it useful in your work!

Sincerely,  
The Firelight Team

(Open for Proposals) The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) for women-led organizations

(Open for Proposals) Feed the Minds for adult literacy projects

(Resource) Article: Lean Times Build Strong Organizations

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(Open for Proposals) The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)

The AWDF funds local, national, sub-regional and regional organisations in Africa working towards women's empowerment. The AWDF is an institutional capacity-building and programme development fund, which aims to help build a culture of learning and partnerships within the African women's movement. In addition to raising money and awarding grants, the AWDF will attempt to strengthen the organisational capacities of its grantees. The AWDF funds work in six thematic areas:

- Women's Human Rights
- Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods
- Governance, Peace and Security
- Reproductive Health and Rights

- HIV/AIDS
- Arts, Culture and Sports

The AWDF will prioritise programs which develop and promote women's leadership and advocacy across all these themes. These thematic areas have been chosen because they feature very highly on the agenda of the African women's movement.

### **Who can apply?**

- Organisations can be local, national, sub-regional or regional African women's organisations, from any part of Africa.
- Local women's organisations should send in the names of two referees, one of who should be a member of a women's organisation that operates nationally.

### **What types of grants do we support?**

- The AWDF will give grants for projects related to any of the thematic areas specified above. We expect applicants to build in relevant and reasonable running/core costs into their project proposals.
- We will give grants to national and regional organisations for aspects of organisational growth and development such as strategic planning, developing fundraising strategies, communications systems, retreats, governance systems, etc.
- We will give grants for capital costs such as purchase of computers, printers, photocopiers.

### **Frequency of grant making**

AWDF will make grants in three cycles each year. Applications can be sent in at any time.

### **Size of grants**

Organisations can apply for grants ranging from \$5000 – \$50,000. Kindly note that most grants will be for less than the maximum. Grants over \$20,000 will only be made to organisations which operate on a regional basis.

### **Criteria for the review of grant applications:**

- Applying organisations should preferably have been in existence for at least three years.
- Women's organisations have to be led and managed by women.
- National or regional civil society organisations may apply for a women-specific project, but will have to demonstrate that there are women involved in their governance, and that the project will be managed by a senior woman in the organisation.
- Potential grantees should show how the project proposal fits into the organisation's overall strategy for the area of work or community in which it is located.

- Organisations have to demonstrate how their work fits into either a local, national or regional strategy for the empowerment of African women.
- Applying organisations should have basic organisational systems and structures in place. We will look for evidence of effective leadership, planning and networking.
- The organisation should have a clear evaluation and sustainability plan for the project
- The potential to raise additional funding.
- Ability to manage funds and account for them in a transparent manner.

**The AWDF will not support the following projects:**

- Organisations that aim to convert people to any religious belief
- Political parties or women’s wings of political parties
- Individuals
- Government departments
- Scholarships and fellowships for academic studies
- Women’s organisations which are not led by women

**There is no deadline to apply. Proposals can be sent in anytime.**

For more information, please visit: <http://www.awdf.org/the-process/grant-making/grant-application-guidelines>

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(Open for Proposals) Feed the Minds

Feed the Minds (FTM) is a Christian organization that supports non-formal education projects which empower marginalised people in the Global South through our Education for Change programme. The primary beneficiaries of our work with partners are adults; however, a few FTM projects target primarily youth and children.

FTM partners are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or community-based organisations (CBOs) working to support the most marginalised in communities. They range from small local organisations which are new to project management, reporting and fundraising to larger organisations working across several countries. Many of our partners are Christian; some are of different faiths or none.

Literacy is central to our strategy, therefore all projects supported by FTM must have a literacy component. By literacy we mean more than just reading, writing and numeracy; we see literacy as a tool for transformation under a broad definition which embraces IT and other media resources. See FTM’s Literacy Policy for more details (<http://www.feedtheminds.org/downloads/LiteracyPolicy-June2012.pdf>).

FTM invites applications for projects of £1,000 - £25,000 for 1-3 years duration.

When a project is approved and funds are secured, the organisation becomes a partner of FTM.

All partners are invited to join the FTM network which shares good practice and materials among FTM partners. FTM supports cross-organisational learning, through its network, which includes actively encouraging organisations including FTM, to work together and share good practice. Membership of FTM's network is reviewed every 2 years.

FTM provides a range of organisational support to partners including incorporating and strengthening literacy, project management, monitoring and evaluation, financial management, communications and fundraising. This support varies according to the needs of our partners and the resources available.

Towards the end of the particular project, the partnership with FTM will be reviewed. If appropriate, the partner might be invited to submit an additional application for another project. Feed the Minds looks for projects which link closely with our core values: Partnership, Creativity, Integrity, Diversity.

Literacy is central to our strategy; therefore all projects supported by FTM must have a literacy component.

**FTM supports projects under the following categories:**

- Civic education for adults to actively engage in community issues including local decision making, demanding their rights, governance, voter education, participation in democratic processes, environmental responsibility.
- Health awareness-raising, prevention and education projects which adopt a holistic, inclusive and compassionate approach, including HIV & AIDS (see FTM's HIV & AIDS Policy), maternal and reproductive health.
- Peacebuilding projects in fragile states, including trauma-healing, conflict resolution, training church leaders, inter-religious dialogue.
- Theological education which links spiritual and community issues. This includes support for existing Theological Education by Extension (TEE) programmes strengthening the role of Church leaders in addressing issues in marginalised communities such as food security, peacebuilding, HIV and AIDS etc.
- Vocational training for adults of low economic status who have limited access to employment and income opportunities. Evidence of the need for the skill to be taught must be provided and realistic opportunities for sustainable income generation should be demonstrated. The trainers must have relevant and demonstrable expertise.

FTM will also consider innovative projects that do not fit into the above categories but which reflect the core values of FTM.

**FTM supports projects which:**

- bring about meaningful changes in the lives of the beneficiaries
- have a literacy component which strengthens communities and civil society arise from a locally identified need and are appropriate to local context and culture
- engage target groups in active learning
- use participatory approaches to achieve clear outcomes
- involve local people in decision-making throughout the project
- recognise the important role that women play in development
- are sustainable and have an impact that continues beyond the funding period
- build the capacity of partner organisations and local communities target marginalised communities
- are cost-effective
- prioritise indigenous literature and / or knowledge

**FTM does not support projects which:**

- include more than 15% for capital expenditure (e.g. buildings, vehicles or IT equipment)
- focus primarily on the provision of materials (e.g. books for libraries, uniforms for orphans)
- focus primarily on providing healthcare, agriculture, animal husbandry, shelter, food
- include funding for micro-credit fund doctoral or other research provide school fees or scholarships
- provide free distribution of journals or periodicals
- primarily focus on Bible translation
- bribes, coerces or entices people to convert to any religious belief
- support for journals, periodicals or magazines
- are developed and managed by organisations based in the Global North
- are aimed primarily at raising awareness of development issues in the Global North
- are not in line with FTM's HIV & AIDS Policy  
(<http://www.feedtheminds.org/downloads/HIVandAIDS-policy-September2012.pdf>)

**Feed the Minds has recently changed the way they accept applications; these are now accepted on an ongoing basis throughout the year.** An organisation may apply for either a Small (£1,000-£10,000) or Large Project (£10,001-£25,000), but not both. There are application forms for small and large projects on their website:  
<http://www.feedtheminds.org/get%20funding.html>

(Resource) Lean Times Build Strong Organizations

"Charities Started During the Recession Find Success Despite the Odds"

By Debra E. Blum

*This article is from the April 7, 2013 edition of the Chronicle of Philanthropy*

Earl Martin Phalen started a charity in 2009, one of the worst times ever to start raising money. Now his organization, Summer Advantage USA, serves more than 4,600 needy kids in four states and expects to raise \$10-million this year to continue to expand its academic programs.

Like many other founders of nonprofits created in the Great Recession, Mr. Phalen says he learned that thrift and perseverance are essential to success—and he'll never give them up.

"It's nice that the economy may be improving now," he says, "but I think we will always continue to have a lean structure, be careful with our investments, and be tightly focused with our programs."

Charities born in the recession could enjoy greater success in the long run than those started in good times, say nonprofit experts, because they were forced to put in practice many of the ideas, such as strong focus on the mission, that benefit groups of any age, size, or era.

"The state of the economy meant it was necessary from the beginning to adopt best practices that don't always seem as urgent in better times," says Peter Kim, a manager in the New York office of the nonprofit consulting company, the Bridgespan Group.

Garrett Neiman, who co-founded CollegeSpring, an SAT-tutoring charity, in 2008, says that looking back he is glad he was forced to make hard decisions about how and where to spend the group's limited time and money.

"Starting a nonprofit in that environment hardened us," Mr. Neiman says. "We learned to hustle more."

### **Nimble and Hardnosed**

Plenty of other nonprofits were also getting started in the downturn.

A total of more than 122,000 groups were founded in the worst years of the recession, 2008 and 2009, though charity creation showed signs of reaching new lows last year when just 45,000 groups were approved by the Internal Revenue Service.

Many of those that survived their infancy in a harsh economic climate share some traits. The four- and five-year-old start-ups that have flourished are likely to be both nimble and hardnosed, says Mr. Kim, willing to cancel special events, for example, if they don't produce enough revenue compared with their costs.

And the charities that have so far made it are probably blessed with "a perfect marriage of a crackerjack idea and a highly committed founder," according to Leslie Crutchfield, a consultant who co-wrote the book, *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*.

Common ingredients for early success, even in a down economy, include:

**Emphasizing what the nonprofit does best.** ProInspire, founded in 2009, toyed with ditching its focus on helping young professionals with two to five years business experience move to the nonprofit world in favor of casting a much wider net. Law firms approached the group, for example, seeking to enroll laid-off employees in the program.

"We decided early on not to chase current opportunities at the expense of our long-term goals, even if it meant more revenue right away," says ProInspire's founder, Monisha Kapila. "We had a concept we wanted to prove and a core mission to protect."

**Measuring and quickly sharing results of the group's programs.** Mr. Neiman says one of CollegeSpring's biggest selling points was the result of its first 50-student pilot program in 2008, showing an average test-score gain among participants of about 200 points. "In a time when you're fighting for limited resources," he says, "having a clear model to demonstrate success, return-on-investment, gives you an advantage."

**Building a strong and active board.** The News Literacy Project, a group created five years ago to give students a critical understanding of the news media, landed Vivian Schiller as its board chair. At the time, she was general manager at NYTimes.com, and she later became chief digital strategist at NBC News and head of NPR.

The news project's founder, Alan Miller, credits Ms. Schiller's leadership with helping the group land a \$200,000 Ford Foundation grant in its first year.

**Keeping overhead expenses in check.** Summer Advantage USA has no office, instead relying on computers and other technology to link its seven full-time employees. The group also saves money marketing its programs by enlisting parents, teachers, and others at participating schools as volunteers to spread the word.

**Capitalizing on social media to engage supporters.** Pencils of Promise, founded in 2008 to build schools in developing countries, decided one of its top priorities was to

create a digital footprint interesting enough to draw grass-roots support, especially among young people, and impressive enough to attract corporate sponsors. It has made its Web site a hub of digital activity—with, for example, an opportunity for supporters to “donate Twitter status” by posting already composed tweets about the charity.

**Cultivating a go-for-it attitude.** Joey Feinstein, who started the environmental charity Climate Cycle in 2008, literally “reached for the stars,” he says, when he asked the entertainer Jack Johnson to perform at the group’s first fundraiser, a bike race. The Grammy-nominated singer declined, but the bold request did land Climate Cycle one of its first substantial gifts—a \$2,500 donation from Mr. Johnson’s foundation—and an invitation to participate in a charity expo at two of his concerts.

Bold thinking by a motivated leader is often the impetus behind a charity start-up in the first place. Mr. Phalen says a mentor had advised him against starting Summer Advantage when the economy was in such a mess. But seeing the need, he says, he persisted.

“I knew the financial circumstances would be hard,” Mr. Phalen says, “But my thought was, If I’m going to sit on the sidelines when it’s raining outside, then shame on me.”

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As part of the Firelight Foundation’s Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides “Newsflashes” to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash/>. We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org).

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