◆ firelight

In fulfilling its mission, Firelight seeks to support grantee-partners over a long-enough time to enable them to enhance their programs for children and families and strengthen their capacity as organizations. Firelight also aims to identify and support new emerging groups.

However, faced with limited resources, Firelight continually weighs the addition of new grantee-partners against the need to sustain existing partnerships. Therefore, Firelight has taken a proactive approach to prepare groups to transition out of Firelight's funding portfolio in order to make room for other worthy organizations to receive our support.

This approach has a defined length of partnership and investment in building the organizational capacity of partners. Firelight believes that a period of funding between five and nine years is typically long enough for organizations to reach a level where they can sustain their work and graduate from Firelight funding.

Our partnerships progress through four stages of growth and development:

STAGE 1: Find & Invest
In this stage, Firelight and our partner organizations are getting to know each other. We conduct a site visit to better understand an organization and its context before we award the first grant. We use organizational assessment tools to learn more in-depth about the strengths and challenges facing the organization. From this assessment, we work with the partner to develop a plan as to how the organization can strengthen its management and programming. Common issues addressed in the first stage of partnership include Financial Management, Community Mobilizing, and Resource Mobilization. We link new partners into our network of partners and facilitate cross-learning opportunities.

STAGE 2: Develop Stability
In the second stage of partnership, we hope to see organizations growing and thriving. Through periodic organizational and programmatic assessments, we track our partners' progress and identify areas for continued support. We then work with organizations on key issues identified through the assessments. By this stage, we want to see organizations actively planning for the conclusion of Firelight support, either by securing other donors, or developing income-generating activities that financially support their work. Firelight's staff and consultants are there to support partners in the hard work and planning of this process.

STAGE 3: Build Impact
The final stage of the funding partnership is a time for organizations to be consolidating and building upon their strengths. We expect to see organizations actively reaching out in areas where they need continued support. As well, we hope to see strong systems in place for sustaining the organization's work beyond Firelight's financial support. Often organizations at this stage of partnership have grown and begin mentoring some of Firelight's newer or smaller partners.

STAGE 4: Sustain

Our goal is for partners to reach this stage, where they have found sustainable methods to continue programs that were previously supported by Firelight funding. Organizations that have graduated from Firelight funding that deeply resonate with Firelight's values often remain key members of Firelight's network. Some organizations go on to serve as mentors for struggling organizations or become intermediary community grantmakers to reach even smaller CBOs in the country.

The model provides a clear framework, which supports community organizations with:

- **Clear Expectations:** Firelight staff communicate a set of expectations that guide partnership between Firelight and its partners. The expectations ensure alignment in the partnership and provide clear guidance for evaluating the partnership. Partnerships can be concluded early if evaluation of the partner shows serious concerns in relation to the partnership expectations.

- **Stability and Long-term Planning:** Transforming children's lives takes time, effort, and diligence. When organizations work within a clear timeframe, they can make realistic plans for their programs. They can also take a long-term view to creating change.

- **Time to Develop**: Organizational development also takes time. A partnership spanning five to nine years provides a long-enough period to strengthen organizational capacity for the long term.

- **Preparation for Exit**: The defined time frame also helps both Firelight and grantee-partners to know when partnership will conclude. This creates space for discussion and support for preparing for the end of the funding relationship.

- **Ability to Measure Change:** The length of partnership provides time for Firelight to observe, learn with, and document the work of our partners. It also allows Firelight to allow time to measure outcomes and assess the organizational and program development of the organization.

STAGES	STAGE 1			STAGE 2			STAGE 3			STAGE 4
YEARS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
GRANTMAKING	• Due diligence to determine fit, approach, and track record • Grant size determined by absorptive capacity • Introduction to Firelight partnership expectations • Set clear program objectives and outcomes for the stage • Engage partners in developing M&E framework			• Insights from evaluation determine whether partnership continues and shape stage 2 programming • Grant sizes increase to match capacity • Set clear program objectives and outcomes for the stage • Deeper engagement around program sustainability • Engage partners in developing M&E framework			• Insights from evaluation determine whether partnership continues and shape stage 3 programming • Team assessment informs decision on 1, 2 or 3 year exit • Grant sizes increase to match capacity • Set clear program objectives and outcomes for the stage • Engage partners in developing M&E framework			• Lead Partner • Community Grantmaker

CAPACITY BUILDING	• Site visits at start and end of stage
	• Capacity assessment and plan
	• Mentoring, training, peer learning
	• Information resources
	• Organization-specific capacity building plan developed based on assessments. Typical areas of focus include:
	  o Financial Management
	  o Community mobilization
	  o Resource mobilization
	  o Basics of program planning, monitoring and evaluation
	  o Governance
				• Site visits at start and end of stage
				• Capacity assessment and plan
				• Mentoring, training, peer learning
				• Information resources
				• Capacity building plans tend to focus on:
				  o Leadership and management
				  o Organizational Sustainability
				  o Documentation
				  o Data management and analysis
							• Site Visits at start and end of stage
							• Capacity assessment and plan
							• Mentoring, training, peer learning
							• Information resources
							• Capacity building on plans tend to focus on:
							  o Learning and adaptation
							  o Advocacy
							  o Networking
							  o Presentation
										• Technical consultant
										• Network convener or participant
										• Access to informational resources
										• Presentation at national, regional or international conferences

LEARNING AND EVALUATION	• Annual reports document outputs • Evaluation of outcomes at end of three years • Organizational capacity assessment • Program Development Assessment • M&E Capacity Assessment			• Annual reports document outputs • Evaluation of outcomes at end of three years • Organizational capacity assessment • Program Development Assessment • M&E Capacity Assessment			• Annual reports document outputs • Evaluation of outcomes at end of stage • Organizational capacity assessment • Program Development Assessment • M&E Capacity Assessment			• M&E consultant

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