

As philanthropic organizations formed from assets held for public benefit, conversion foundations should be responsive to the communities they serve. They should also be highly accountable for their stewardship and effective use of these community assets. There are no widely accepted standards for evaluating how well a given foundation is performing, and the autonomy of foundations is generally viewed as a strength of philanthropy. Here are some questions we believe any foundation should be willing and able to answer forthrightly. If your community is served by a foundation formed from assets of a nonprofit hospital or health plan, these questions should serve as the basis for discussion with the foundation about its work and its role in the community.

1. What is the statement of mission or purpose of the foundation?
2. What process led to formulation of the mission statement? What information about the community was considered? Who did the foundation talk to? Is the mission statement subject to periodic review?
3. Who is intended to benefit from activities of the foundation? What will change for them if the foundation is effective? How are the views and experiences of targeted beneficiaries represented in the ongoing work of the foundation?
4. What are the foundation's current goals? What does it seek to accomplish? Within what time period?
5. How does the foundation engage the community it serves in planning, implementation and evaluation of its work? Is there any permanent structure through which the community is represented?
6. Does the foundation undertake program initiatives in support of its goals? If so, how are these designed and developed? How are grantees or other partners selected and supported through their participation in initiative programs? What is the duration of the foundation's commitment to major initiatives? What part of the foundation's resources is allocated annually through these commitments?

7. Does the foundation offer responsive grant programs that seek community approaches to issues of priority interest to the foundation? Does it solicit proposals related to emerging issues? To urgent or emergency needs outside its priority areas? What part of the foundation budget is allocated through these programs?
8. What non-grantmaking activities does the foundation pursue? How do these support the achievement of key strategic goals?
9. How does the board assess and measure its own progress toward organizational goals? What is the time frame or schedule for this evaluation? Is any quantifiable data collected? Are process or qualitative measures used? What role do grantees and other partners play in assessing the foundation's accomplishments? How, and how broadly are the results of self-assessment shared?
10. Who currently serves on the governing board? Has the foundation adopted goals related to diversity on its board, or to the inclusion of people with different backgrounds and points of view? If so, how are these stated, and to what extent are they currently met? Is there a specific commitment to including members with unmet health needs, or representatives of groups the foundation aims to benefit?
11. What skills, qualities and values are considered important in seeking board members? What is the nominating process? Is there an outreach effort to identify leaders who may offer qualities sought by the board? Is there a process through which non-board members can offer themselves or suggest individuals to be considered for service on the board?