

Finding Face



Edwards Mother Earth Foundation

By Kendall Clark Baker
April 2, 2019

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The EMEF Energy Efficiency Internal Mission Exit Report

by

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Preface

In 2018 our family foundation, EMEF, approached me with a request to help with writing a story about how our philanthropic mission has impacted upon our family mission. This was prompted by the board's decision to conclude the energy efficiency (EE) granting strategy and to move in exciting new directions.

An EE Exit Report Committee was charged with the task of preparing two reports. One would evaluate EMEF's external, programmatic strategy to affect energy efficiency policy change on a state level. That report was written by Dave Grossman of David Gardiner and Associates. The second report would focus on evaluating EMEF's internal strategic shift of adopting a single focus and its impact upon the EMEF board and family. It is this second one that I was asked to help with.

I retired from the EMEF board in 2012 as part of a leadership succession plan, so I am not fully knowledgeable about what the Foundation worked on in the past seven years. But I did know the early years intimately. During that first decade I took detailed minutes, first in a non-member capacity as recording secretary and later as an officer. Perhaps it was my reputation for writing narrative-style minutes, at times approaching the length of a short story, that got me this present volunteer job! At any rate, these minutes of executive committee and board meetings down to the present constitute one of the sources for FINDING FACE.

PUTTING A FACE ON OUR MISSION

A second major source of information in writing this story was the survey of board members developed by the EE Exit Report Committee in the summer of 2018. Rather than simply asking for rankings on a scale, it invited open-ended reflections in response to several pointed questions. It is thanks to Megan Baker—designer of this narrative survey aimed at three subsets of board members—that this survey generated a wealth of current data.

In the past eight months I have worked closely with members of the EE Exit Report Committee. They have contributed many helpful suggestions that have strengthened the telling of this exceptionally exciting story. I could not have written this without the encouragement, perspective, and support given by Sonia Baker, Scott Baker, Megan Baker, Bruce Reed, Tara Reinertson, and Elizabeth Wong. I am especially grateful to Bruce Reed for his considerable editing skill. I can't imagine a better copy editor. As a consequence of his attention to detail the final report is, I think and hope, more concise, accurate, and useful. But, as the author's acknowledgment of responsibility appearing at the beginning of many books is expressed,

in so many words: "Credit goes to all those who have contributed to this project, but the responsibility for anything that is missing or misstated, and especially for the style of writing, is all mine!"

My choice of title—FINDING FACE—arises from a recurring theme expressed on numerous occasions by those who have served on the board over the years. We are all familiar with the negative term "losing face," and similarly "saving face." I'm offering the positive metaphor of "finding face" to describe the challenge that I think lies at the heart of engaging family members in our shared EMEF mission. When someone says they want to be engaged in a project that "has a face on it," I understand this as a metaphor pointing to something being personally meaningful. E.g., in recent years the board asked EE grantees to provide "human face stories" which are now featured on the EMEF website to demonstrate the program's impact. Whatever directions an organization moves in somehow has to catch the imagination and passions of the individuals involved at the time.

“Without an ever-improving environment,
there is little chance of improving the mind
and body of future generations.”

— from the original EMEF Vision Statement, 1997

An Evolving Organization

As I delved into this task it became apparent to me that the most helpful way to address this was by putting it in historical context. Assessing how the internal life of EMEF has been impacted by its choice of energy efficiency policy change as a granting strategy cannot be understood fully apart from decisions made along the way regarding a host of seemingly unrelated matters—e.g., how leadership is transferred from one generation to another. By telling EMEF’s story from the very beginning the reader will understand better the evolving development from simpler, even primitive, granting methods to the present sophisticated single focus approach. Likewise, this story helps to inform the process by which energy efficiency was adopted as that first single focus, was carried out with numerous tweaks along the way, and eventually was phased out as new programmatic objectives were identified to replace it.

Breaking the story down into geological periods was prompted by repeated reminders of how EMEF has developed in an evolutionary way. Each “age” in the foundation’s life has evolved

out of what was done before. EMEF’s original Vision Statement [Appendix III] speaks in its opening words of “plants, birds, fish, and humans, everything in Nature,” as how apart from “an ever-improving environment, there is little chance of improving the mind and body of future generations.” On one level, of course, it is absurd to compare over 500 million years of the history of life on earth with two decades of an organization’s life. But as a whimsical metaphor, the terms Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic strike me as an apt, and fun, way to organize the EMEF story. These Greek terms referring to the three main eras of complex, multicellular life on Earth literally mean “ancient life,” “middle life,” and “new life.”

Being able to write the EMEF story in this way has been greatly rewarding to me. I hope it will be useful to the board and others in the family as we recall our origins and how we have evolved to this point. I am passionately committed to our family foundation and to its dual mission. In these challenging times, I think the face of the future is considerably brighter because of Edwards Mother Earth Foundation.

Introduction

In 2014 Edwards Mother Earth Foundation (EMEF) made a series of major decisions that would change its course for the future. The “founders” had retired; a new generation of family leadership was in charge. The environmental commitment to address the crisis of global climate disruption was considered to be more urgent than ever and would continue. But the program granting strategy would shift—from Energy Efficiency (EE) to Climate Wise Building (CWB). That same year a new investment policy was adopted that would pave the way for another major shift—from a traditional approach to asset management to mission-related and program-related investments (MRI/PRI).



A metaphor used informally by several board members over the years to express a wish that our funding strategies be personally meaningful is: “putting a face on it.” At first, working for energy efficiency policy change in several states*, although technical and challenging, was rewarding. It had a “face” on it. But as the years went on and leadership changed, EE no longer caught the imagination of the board as it had at an earlier time. It felt too impersonal. Faceless, even.

As the EE strategy gradually ramped down and finally concluded in 2018, the board authorized a number of steps to learn all that it could from this transition. It was thought that other mid-size foundations and small funders might be interested in our story. Environmental organizations and other groups focused upon energy efficiency might find EMEF’s 11-year program a useful source of information. The larger EMEF family would likely enjoy this story of environmental work done on its behalf.

* Details on the several states involved can be found in the full DGA report (Appendix I).

ONE FACE
EMEF

TWO MISSIONS
Family &
Philanthropic

TWO REPORTS
Internal & External

And, of course, the board wanted a clear record in place for archival purposes, knowing that institutional memory is a key source of information for guiding future decisions.

Two reports were called for by the board. The first one was to evaluate EMEF’s Energy Efficiency Policy Program (the external philanthropic mission).

David Gardiner and Associates (DGA) was commissioned to summarize in detail the history of the Energy Efficiency strategy, including how it met our requirement for measurable results. Organizational partners in several states (grantees) were surveyed for their input. Dave Grossman’s detailed report—titled “Exit Report: EMEF’s EE Policy Program,” is attached as an essential companion piece to this document. [Appendix I]

This second report was to assess how the adoption of a single focus on energy efficiency affected the EMEF board and the larger family (the internal family mission). All EMEF

“ A metaphor used informally by several board members over the years to express a wish that our funding strategies be personally meaningful is: *putting a face on it.*”

board members, past and present, were invited to respond to a number of open-ended questions about the earlier decision to shift to a single mission focus in general, and to an energy efficiency policy change strategy in particular. [Appendix II] How did our programmatic (external) mission strategy on energy efficiency impact upon the collaborative family (internal) mission strategy? What were the family board dynamics leading up to these strategic choices? How did the EE strategy fit into the larger history of EMEF over its 20 plus years of existence? How rewarding was this strategy for family board members who were personally invested on a volunteer basis, and who dedicated a considerable amount of time and energy over the 11-year duration of the EE program? This telling of EMEF’s story is offered as a resource in understanding the transition into and out of the energy efficiency granting strategy.

Primary sources for Finding Face that focus upon the family internal mission are twofold—minutes of past EMEF meetings from the beginning down to the present, and responses to a board member survey. The full survey is attached to this report identifying respondents by number only (without names). And a concise chronology of EMEF history is attached to help the reader keep track of the several interlocking parts of this narrative unfolding since our beginnings in 1997. [Appendix VI]

So, back to the question of “putting a face” on our family foundation and the philanthropic work we are engaged in. This is about “finding face,” including facing up to our future. To do this we are reflecting upon how the Edwards Mother Earth Foundation has both a family face, and is in a continuing process of discerning how to carry out its philanthropic mission in a way that clearly has a human face.

1997-2001

Prehistory

March 3, 1997 marks the official birth date for EMEF. Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State of Washington and an application was made to the Internal Revenue Service for classification as a private family foundation. Bob Edwards transferred a relatively small amount of assets, generating income of about \$100K a year, to get this new foundation off the ground. The original vision stated lofty goals: “improving the mind and body of future generations;” “nurturing the young for the sake of “their children’s future, society, and the environment;” “promoting... tolerance and respect for other’s beliefs;” “seeking ways to achieve harmony and balance in the environment that will maximize quality of life of all sentient beings on earth.” [See Appendix III] As the chosen name implies, the original mission of Edwards Mother Earth Foundation was stated broadly as addressing environmental concerns and building human community.



A FAMILY LEGACY

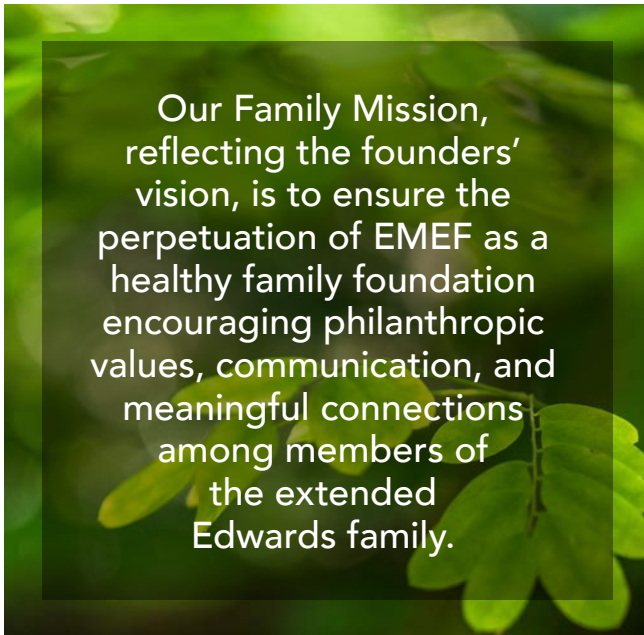
After the death of Bob and Jane Edwards, the 2nd generation made an intentional decision that would shape the future.

Plans were made to continue the foundation in perpetuity—by preserving the financial assets, by expanding the family definition, and by actively recruiting 3rd and 4th generation family members to the board.

Over the years Bob and Jane Edwards had accumulated considerable wealth, prompting their interest in creating a family foundation. Bob was a visionary and entrepreneur and gifted at acquiring valuable properties.

Jane was gifted in literature and arts and was as generous in her giving as Bob was successful in his wealth acquisition. By this time late in life, however, Jane was not able to participate; she died in 1999. Their two children, Sonia Edwards Baker and Jonathan Edwards, joined their father as the founding officers and members of the board. During these first four years the three of them would meet primarily by phone to decide how to disperse to charitable nonprofit organizations the annual amount required by law for a private foundation. Updates were sent to the larger family to keep everyone up to date on these developments.

EMEF's Two Mission Statements



When Bob died in 2001, Sonia and Jon were faced with a huge responsibility. With EMEF now fully funded from the bulk of the estate, resulting in a mid-size foundation generating around \$1.5M annually, it was time to get organized. One option, only briefly considered, would have been to transfer the assets to a larger, established foundation and put EMEF to rest. But Jon and Sonia, with the strong encouragement and active support of their spouses, Marcy and Kendall, decided to keep the original dream alive of building a philanthropic foundation made up of family members.

An urgent task was adding board members. The decision was made to broaden the pool of potential board members by including the Rayl family. Jane was an only child. Bob had one sibling, Ruth, who had died in 1999.

She was a gifted musician, and her husband, Lawrence Rayl, was an engineer. They and their three children—Chris, Michaela, and Meredith—were considered by Bob and Jane to be immediate family. In early years first cousins enjoyed virtually every summer and holidays together. So, it was an obvious way to expand the definition of the EMEF family. An invitation to express interest in joining the EMEF board was sent to children, spouses, and adult grandchildren of the five Edwards-Rayl cousins. All who responded were invited to join.

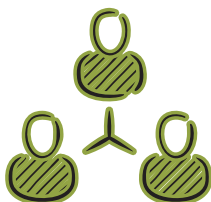
2002-2004

Paleozoic Era (I)

The first meetings of the board during this oldest half of “ancient” time in EMEF’s evolution were preoccupied with developing organizational infrastructure—board member development and future recruitment, creating bylaws, defining operations and procedures, overseeing investments, establishing criteria for granting, identifying needs for staffing. Several key decisions were made that would help shape EMEF for the immediate future and beyond.



Key Decisions to Shape the Future



ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

A commitment was made to develop a collaborative family foundation. This meant that it would be a working board of volunteers. Rather than hire an executive director and program staff who would do most of the work with the board restricting itself to strategic oversight and policy, staffing needs were kept at a minimum.



LEADERSHIP

The founders (2nd generation) declared their intent to maintain primary leadership during these formative early years. A resolution was passed that Sonia and Jon would continue on the board until 2012 with the option of continuing beyond that, and that they would serve on the executive committee as officers until at least 2007.



INVESTMENTS

A commitment was made to invest corpus assets to fund the grant program and continue the foundation in perpetuity. A traditional portfolio strategy was adopted for investing in stocks and bonds with a goal of maximizing the amount of dollars available for granting. However, there was discussion from the very beginnings, repeated annually, of adopting a socially responsible investment strategy, and even consideration of the option of moving toward mission-related investments.



OUTSIDE EXPERTS

Consultants were hired to help the board manage EMEF's administration and grant program and plan for the future. Part time administrative assistance was hired to help coordinate board activities. Investments were managed by a financial management company. From the beginning there was a recognition that outside expertise was required to help educate the board, implement EMEF's strategy, and enhance the family foundation's effectiveness.

Key Decisions to Shape the Future



MISSION STATEMENTS

In addition to a philanthropic (external) mission statement that would be refined and focused as the years unfolded, a family (internal) mission statement was also adopted. A commitment was made to hold these two missions as equally important in guiding the foundation. [Appendix III]



REWARDING A VOLUNTEER BOARD

EMEF board members serve as volunteers. Reimbursement for meeting travel, accommodations, and meal expenses was provided. A modest stipend was established for attending the board meetings. In addition, as an incentive, EMEF started allocating discretionary grants of \$10K annually to each board member for charitable giving of their choice. Subsequently, a grant certificate program for children and grandchildren of board members was developed for the purpose of promoting philanthropic education in the EMEF family and to provide another incentive for volunteer board members.



GRANTING STRATEGY

In the beginning the most simplistic of granting strategies—checkbook philanthropy—was adopted. A large number of favorite causes of board members were funded annually. (This is sometimes referred to as “shotgun philanthropy” because of being scattered, rather than focused.) E.g., in 2003, there were 33 grants approved ranging from \$15K for Camp Fire to \$100K for Cofan Survival Fund, totaling \$1,132,000. This strategy would soon be identified as woefully inadequate for a number of reasons, including promoting an unhealthy competitiveness among board members. EMEF’s checkbook philanthropy strategy is noted here as the first of several more sophisticated approaches to granting that would soon evolve from this humble beginning.

2005-2006

Paleozoic Era (II)

One of the most significant developments in these early days of EMEF was contracting with Foundation Source. Several functions formerly carried out by hired consultants and advisors were consolidated in this decision to “hire” a back-office administrator, such as grantee screening, accounting, check-writing, submission of required reports, compliance with annual allocation requirements, and record keeping. But no service has been more valuable than the professional consultancy provided by this contract.



Page Snow, Chief Philanthropic Officer of Foundation Source, was the first of several consultants provided by our back-office administrator who was to meet regularly with the board. Page guided EMEF through several challenging transitions in our evolving organization. In response to the board expressing dissatisfaction with our “checkbook” approach to granting, Page led the board in a planning process resulting in our adopting a three-team approach. Board member interests coalesced around three focus teams:

Sustainable Construction Practices (regional), Enhancing Biodiversity: oceans, forests, renewable energy (global), and a South Seattle Environmental Justice Project (local).

Board members volunteered for one of the teams. Each team was allocated a portion of

the total annual granting dollars. Decisions about how to distribute those dollars among non-profit organizations working in that particular area were made initially by each team. Teams met separately, identified nonprofit organizations working in their area of concern, and conducted site visits. Meetings of the entire board were devoted to hearing team recommendations and voting to approve these grants. In place of the earlier checkbook approach that had 33 separate and unrelated grants, there were now three focus areas with board members working cooperatively with one another on a team of their preference.

Discussion of socially related investing continued, but few options seemed available at the time that would ensure an adequate rate of return to provide sufficient grant funding and that would protect the assets in perpetuity.

“ Healthy families create healthy philanthropy. The reverse is true also.”

— Page Snow, *Foundation Source*

Once again, a traditional approach to investing was reaffirmed.

By the end of 2006 the 3-team approach began to be questioned. Some board members were asking if we were too spread out in our granting interests to be making a significant dent on the problem at hand—an environmental crisis threatening the future of the planet. Moving to a single mission focus began to be discussed. In the meanwhile, plans were made to continue the 3-team approach through 2007 as new granting strategies were under consideration.

2007-2013

Mesozoic Era

The “middle era” in the life of EMEF was launched in 2007. This would be a time of momentous change resulting in the adoption of a single mission strategy focused upon Energy Efficiency. That year the board met four times—seven full days—on location in Seattle.



This was a two-step process. First, Page Snow led the board in a planning process that resulted in a decision to adopt a single focus mission strategy to respond to the growing crisis of global climate disruption. This decision was prompted both by a commitment to become even more collaborative internally as a family foundation and by a wish to become more effective in our external environmental mission. Secondly, with the assistance of experts in the environmental field, a few months later the single strategy was identified as EE—energy efficiency policy change.

Key to developing the content of a single mission and deciding upon EE as that strategy was finding outside expert advice to guide the board in highly technical and complicated policy advocacy issues. Foundation Source suggested two different consultant firms that would be up to this task. David Gardiner and Associates (DGA) was selected. With David Gardiner having served as Executive Director of the White House Climate Change Task Force under President Clinton during the 1990s, DGA appeared to fill the bill.

Given the national political climate at the time, it was determined that change could best be accomplished at a state level. Also, a great deal of energy policy in this country is set by state public utility commissions. By the end of the year this new strategy had been further honed with the selection of five particular states considered to be ripe for change. Some states were already relatively advanced in environmental policy and would thrive without our intervention. Some were so resistant to change that any intervention would

likely only make a small difference. Given that EMEF could devote approximately \$1M a year to this EE strategy, five states were chosen. Over the eleven years of this program strategy, eight states were phased in and out as EMEF accomplished program goals.

David Gardiner himself worked directly with EMEF throughout the EE strategy, assisted by several outstanding staff. Dave Grossman, author of the Energy Efficiency Exit Report (companion piece to this “Finding Face” reflection), was the primary consultant to EMEF throughout what would become an eleven yearlong project. DGA attended board meetings, usually in person and occasionally by phone; presented research and provided the board with the data to make informed decisions; accompanied board members on site visits to states; led grantee forums; advised on annual granting decisions; organized midyear and annual grantee accountability reports enabling the board to measure success on its EE strategy. The role taken by DGA in EMEF could be likened to what in larger foundations would be program officer staff. The working relationship was truly collaborative with DGA providing the essential professional expertise and the board making program strategy, policy, and administrative decisions. While maintaining boundaries between board and consultants, the relationship came to feel like all were EMEF family. EMEF board and DGA were partners but each understood their roles—DGA as EE program advisor and the EMEF board as program decisionmaker.

It was determined that the EE strategy must be able to show quantifiably measurable results.

“There is a need to replicate some of the efforts made under the EMEF program to expand the traditional efficiency advocacy toolbox, such as the focus on putting a human face on energy efficiency. Hopefully others will pick up the mantle and continue to advance the progress that EMEF helped to spear.”

— EXIT REPORT: EMEF's EE POLICY PROGRAM,
Dave Grossman of David Gardiner and Associates

To allow adequate time to measure success, a five-year commitment was made to this strategy. With the challenges of global climate disruption so great and our resources relatively small, the need to “leverage” our granting was affirmed—being able to show results that exceeded the amount of money we were granting.

With this huge step of moving into the single mission strategy focused on EE, the board decided to suspend term limits temporarily so as to ensure continuity of leadership. As in past years there was discussion of moving toward a mission related investment strategy. The board learned about MRI and PRI opportunities as this field began to expand. The market crash of 2008 did not appear to be a major factor in prompting the board not to make any major changes in investment strategy at this time. The balance in the corpus was still considered within an acceptable range, and earnings were sufficient to follow through on the stated granting plans. Nevertheless, thinking it important not to take on too much at one time, the board decided to stay committed to its existing approach to investing.

In order to provide a degree of continuity with prior years, one grantee from each of the three earlier teams was named as a “historical” grant:

Marine Conservation Institute, Cofan Survival Fund, and Environmental Coalition of South Seattle. They were informed that EMEF was embarking on a new single mission strategy, but that each would be receiving \$300K to be spread out in a gradually reduced way over five years (100, 80, 60, 40, 20). Although funding was re-authorized annually, it was like making a 5-year grant that these organizations could count on as they planned for their futures. This was done both out of respect for the charitable environmental organizations we had been funding, and it provided a source of continuing gratification for board members. In effect, these historical grants provided the board members with a “face” on our granting as we headed into the unknown territory of energy efficiency policy change.

An essential leveraging component of the EE strategy was the grantee forum in which representatives from all our organizational partners in several states were brought together for a two-day event. The first of four grantee forums was held in 2009 with subsequent repeats approximately every 18 months (May 2009, October 2010, April 2012, and October 2015). Purposes were to: (a) share their experiences, (b) learn from others doing similar work in other states, (c) discuss common

Leadership cultivation,
recruitment and development was
a major focus during this era of
EMEF's life.

strategies and challenges, (d) make useful connections. DGA

led the forums, and EMEF board members attended as hosts and participated mostly by listening. Assessments by participants in the forums indicated that these were not only a good use of their time, but some even described this as the "best" and "most productive" conference they had ever been to. And for EMEF board members, these forums provided an opportunity to witness firsthand how our granting strategy was releasing "energy" among a diverse group of highly-committed persons dedicated to promoting energy efficiency in their locales.

Several attempts were made with the assistance of Foundation Source to locate other foundations with an environmental mission interested in partnering with us. The intention was to leverage our granting even further. There was one brief partnership after the board had already decided to ramp down the EE strategy. In 2015, as part of a "Human Face Grant Project," EMEF collaborated with the Energy Foundation to support exporting successful ideas from our grantee organizations in Missouri. Other than this brief and limited project, we were unable to find any foundations interested in partnering with us on energy efficiency. EMEF continued as the single foundation in the entire nation devoting the

bulk of its granting resources to energy efficiency policy change.

Leadership cultivation, recruitment and development was a major focus during this era of EMEF's life. Term limits were restored in 2010. EMEF established a 3-year term and 6-year maximum limit to create a timeline for board recruitment and to provide opportunities for new family members to engage in the foundation's work. The first next generation retreat (later renamed orientation workshop) was held in 2011 for young EMEF family members. Later all EMEF family over age 21 were eligible to participate. (Subsequent retreats/workshops were held in 2015 and 2018.) In addition to promoting family relationships, these workshops included a grantmaking exercise and provided education about EMEF family history, the program focus, board responsibilities, the grantmaking process, and the plan to cultivate new board members.

Of special import for the future of EMEF was the development of a leadership succession plan. Many, if not most, family foundations flounder at this point by failing to have a plan in place for transfer of leadership from one generation to another, especially from the founders to those who succeed. Foundation Source guided us through this process. In 2009 a plan providing for perpetuity of the foundation and continuity of leadership was developed by the

founders and approved by the board. Most 2nd generation leaders would conclude as officers in the following year and remain on the board for two more years. Sonia would remain as president until 2012 and then continue on the board as a member-at-large until 2014. With the opportunity for the 3rd and 4th generation to plan for when they would assume total leadership, an era was coming to an end and a new era beginning.

The questions raised at the beginning of this story remain: How did our philanthropic (external) mission strategy on energy efficiency impact upon the family mission? How rewarding was this strategy for family board members who personally invested, on a volunteer basis, a considerable amount of time and energy to energy efficiency policy change? In other words, what was the “face” that personalized this intricately technical and seemingly abstruse strategy?

The board took its pulse every year to determine how engaged members were in the EE strategy. The minutes from the 2008 board meetings state that all individual members had indicated this to be a positive experience. It was noted how the board felt it was getting stronger by engaging in this strategy. This prompted Page Snow to make the observation: “Healthy families create healthy philanthropy. The reverse is true also.”

The first grantee forum (2009) and subsequent forums provided a major source of personal reward for board members. Being able to witness firsthand the profound commitment of persons working on our EE strategy on the ground in their locales was gratifying. In many ways, the “face” on energy efficiency were these environmental leaders with whom board members interacted in phone meetings, site visits, and in the forums.

In April of 2010 during the evaluation session at the conclusion of the board meeting in which members had been commenting upon what was most and least rewarding about the EE strategy, consultant participants noted that EMEF was unique with respect to giving equal attention to philanthropic and family missions.

In early 2011 the board still spoke in terms of a five-year EE plan, but it began to ask how it would know when it had completed its goals and when the services of DGA would no longer be required. For the first time there was discussion of continuing the EE strategy on a year-to-year basis as long as the board could determine progress was still being made. It appeared there was less consensus about the EE strategy than in prior years. However, in a board survey conducted during the summer of 2011 in which 11 persons had been interviewed by phone, the summary assessment was that “the current board members are very enthusiastic about the work with energy efficiency.” Later that year the board reaffirmed

its decision to continue its single EE focus until at least March of 2016—four years beyond the original five.

During the Spring board meeting in 2012, Sonia as president announced the need to hold a planning session during the Fall meeting to consider what steps to take beyond EE. The question continued to be raised about how we can know when our work is completed in a particular state. At the October annual meeting, in keeping with the leadership succession plan, Sonia stepped down from the presidency, and the three remaining 2nd generation members retired from the board.

The final year of this “middle” era in EMEF’s life was a time of transition. New leadership began to bring fresh ideas about how to move ahead with new programmatic initiatives. There was waning interest in the EE strategy that by now had been the primary programmatic focus for six years. As the board considered its EE objectives to have been accomplished in a particular state, plans were made to phase out gradually with a minimum of disruption to

21 board members—past & present—responded to a survey assessing the impact of the EE strategy.

While there were differing opinions about how personally meaningful energy efficiency was, all but one affirmed the importance of having a single program focus strategy.

our environmental partners in that location. By the following year, 2014, the board would develop a plan to ramp down the EE strategy and bring it to a conclusion within four years.

In addition to the above observations that are taken from the board minutes, the survey conducted

in late 2018 provides a retrospective with a bit of distance from the original events. Respondents were self-identified according to whether they served on the board (a) prior to the shift to a single focus (one respondent), (b) during the transition from a multiple-focus to single focus strategy (11 respondents), or (c) only after the shift had been made to a single focus (9 respondents). It is best to read the entire verbatim survey responses and to draw one’s own conclusions. [Appendix II] Nevertheless, the following is an attempt to venture a few brief comments about patterns of response.

The eleven respondents who had served on the board during the transition from a multiple focus to a single focus strategy, for the most

TWO BOARD MEMBER RESPONSES TO ENERGY EFFICIENCY

“ I loved it! Even though it was intangible and wonky, I felt it did the best job of making a difference in addressing the health of our climate.”

“ My interest in serving on the board increased when it switched from EE to Green Building.”

part, were positive in their assessment of this move. All but one felt this strengthened the board and improved our effectiveness. A sampling of responses demonstrates this consensus. One said that this enabled EMEF to “make an impact with our granting dollars in the area of global warming.” Another said it helped “to avoid competition between board members.” Yet another said that this change “enhanced board member collaboration.”

With the earlier multiple focus approach, however, it was observed that “sometimes we got stuck and the three teams fought.” Another commented on the negative impact on the family mission: “With multiple focus areas, each with its proponents, the family portion of the mission wasn’t being realized.”

The perceived advantage of moving to a single mission focus was that “we achieved unity intentionally within the board.” “It helped to create a culture of one board pulling together in one direction.” “Shifting to a single focus has helped EMEF board meetings become much more efficient.” While one respondent acknowledged that this move to a single focus was not embraced by everyone, nevertheless “to become most effective with our resources seemed very important, strategic, smart.”

When it comes to embracing energy efficiency policy change in particular as the content for the single mission focus, the responses of the board members who made that decision were more varied. Some were enthusiastic. “I loved it! Even though it was intangible and wonky, I felt it did the best job of making a significant, measurable difference in addressing the health of our climate.” Another said, “It was awesome! It worked! ... I kept learning SO MUCH about how strategic energy policies can save Planet Earth.”

Others were positive, but more reserved in their appraisal. “I was fully supportive (because of our belief that) we could have the most climate disruption impact in that granting area per granting dollar.” “Though at times I felt challenged by the learning curve of understanding the technical aspects of Energy Efficiency Policy, I was supportive of this single focus.” “It was a challenging subject matter, but I enjoyed the journey.” “I had a mixed reaction... (but) when I saw how much our effort to reduce the carbon footprint made a significant difference, I was convinced we had made the right decision.” One person observed that EMEF took on a project that other environmental foundations were avoiding,

and that as a result of our efforts “energy efficient utilities are now commonly accepted in our states.”

The one exception in the above group of eleven who was part of the transition objected to both a single mission focus, and to energy efficiency policy change in particular. “I did not like how it changed the board experience and I left the board sometime in the year after the switch. I didn’t like the topic. I felt we had handed over all of our power to a consulting firm. I had been passionate about supporting a diversity of causes that would otherwise never have a chance to receive funding and this had a really different feel.”

With the next grouping of respondents—the nine who came onto the board after 2007 when the transition to EE had already occurred—there is, in agreement with the earlier grouping, a positive assessment of having a single focus mission strategy. “All the board directors are on the same team working toward a common goal.” “Regardless of the area of focus, limiting the board’s grant making function to a single area is clearly an effective strategy for narrowing down the subject matter competence needed to be an effective board member.” “Everyone participating in the same project created an environment of collaboration rather than competition.” “The single focus strategy ... allows me to read the proposals with a clearer focus on what to look for and how to rank preferences based on board priorities.” “I think it is healthy for EMEF to have a single focus. It potentially allows us to maximize our energies and our funds.” “The board over time

develops a level of expertise in the single focus subject matter. I always came away from board meetings with a renewed sense of fire and passion for EMEF.”

In contrast to the earlier group, however, those persons not directly engaged in the original decision to adopt the EE single focus were negative in their assessment of energy efficiency policy change. “I think there was attrition among board directors because the topic was too dry. This is not a criticism of a single focus, per se, but of EE as the topic.” “It seemed to me that many board members were not as passionate about EE as they were about other areas that would also fit into the overall goals of EMEF.” “I prefer to work in the world of tangible projects rather than policy. My personal experience and interest in energy/climate wise construction practices was a positive factor for my interest in the board.” “My interest in serving on the board increased when it switched from EE to Green Building.”

Even among this group of later board members, however, EE was not without its supporters. “I am satisfied with the results in EMEF EE program strategy and believe this has made a difference.” “I believe it was a strategy that produced tangible results and made a difference.” And one reported that the particular choice of program focus was not determinative of that person’s interest in being a part of EMEF. “I think a single focus is more productive for the board. Neither Energy Efficiency or Green Building influence my interest either way in serving on the board.”

TWO RESPONSES TO ADOPTING A SINGLE MISSION PROGRAM FOCUS

“ It helped to create a culture of one board pulling together in one direction.”

“ It potentially allows us to maximize our energies and our funds.”

Finally, hearing from the one respondent who had briefly served as a board member in the earliest years prior to the adoption of the three-team approach, we find corroboration of most of what others have reported. The checkbook philanthropy approach to granting was not satisfying. “I felt that my effort was spread too thinly across the different investment options and that we were only superficially making an impact.” How did the multi-focus strategy affect the board meetings? “We often couldn’t get deep enough into an issue to have a substantive debate.” And what is this person’s response to knowing that EMEF has since shifted to a single focus strategy? “I have been thinking about joining again. I believe much of this interest is because of the opportunity to go deeper into an issue and possibly have a more meaningful impact.”

As stated earlier, one is encouraged to read the entire verbatim survey responses and to draw one’s own conclusions. But in an attempt to summarize these responses, or at least to highlight major themes, the following is ventured. With one exception, there appears to be unanimity in affirming the importance of a single program focus strategy. Whether that

single focus is EE or CWB or even something else, there is a broad consensus that this is the most effective way to make a positive difference with the resources available to EMEF. There is widespread agreement that a single focus encourages all board members to work towards a common goal and to become proficient in one program area; that board meetings were run more efficiently as a result and this supported better family board dynamics; and that EMEF generated more program impact using our limited funding by focusing on one issue area.

Still, there were some downsides expressed regarding a single program focus. At least one person chose to leave the board because of this decision. One challenge with any decision is that it rules out, at least for the time being, a range of other potential program opportunities that might be of greater interest to some members of the board. And given that EMEF has a collaborative working board of volunteers, some members have found it difficult to dedicate the time needed toward developing and maintaining a high level of program expertise which the EMEF single focus model demands.

2014-PRESENT

Cenozoic Era

The year 2014 marks another huge shift in the evolution of EMEF. Under new leadership several decisions were made to alter the course of the family foundation. A new mission strategy of Climate Wise Building (CWB) was adopted. The following year Ecotrust was hired to serve as EMEF's CWB consultant. At the same time a plan was developed for the EE strategy to be gradually ramped down and ended within four years. Also, of major import was adopting an impact investment strategy and hiring a new investment advisor (Caprock Group).

The Bullitt Center, one of the world's "greenest" buildings, was now the official site for EMEF—the first time we had a physical office outside of a board member's home. In 2014 EMEF created its website. That same year the annual newsletter (which was started in 2009) featured an interview with four 4th generation board members. Bruce Reed was hired as Operations Director—a position defined as part time and non-executive in reaffirming the commitment to continue a collaborative working board model of governance. Because this most recent time period is beyond the purview of this particular "Finding Face" report, the historical narrative will end here. For a detailed record of the opinions and feelings of the new board about the momentous changes it had initiated, one is encouraged to review the minutes of the October 2014 annual meeting. [Appendix IV]



Putting a Face on the EMEF Mission

Concluding Observations

What can be concluded about the Energy Efficiency strategy with respect to how it has impacted upon the EMEF family mission?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to answer this question definitively. There is something inherently subjective in assessing how rewarding this strategy has been for the EMEF family. Some family members have chosen not to become involved because of disagreement with this course of action. One member withdrew from the board. Some have been less than enthusiastic about EE in particular, but have remained actively engaged in EMEF out of an interest in building the internal organization of the family foundation. For some board members, EE has been a passion. For the overwhelming majority of those involved in making the decision to adopt a single program strategy focused upon energy efficiency policy change, this has been considered a positive development.



It should not be surprising that a new generation of leadership would find the EE strategy of a former generation wanting. That is why an organization changes leadership—to bring fresh perspectives and interests. Change is essential to the continuing vitality of any organism. Without change, there is no perpetuity.

For the overwhelming majority of those involved in making the decision to adopt a single program strategy focused upon energy efficiency policy change, this has been considered a positive development.

What is surprising is that this EE strategy continued as long as it did—six years beyond the initial commitment to a five-year project, eleven years in all. This was due neither to board inattentiveness nor allowing the mission to shift away from the EE focus. Progress on this strategy was carefully monitored by the board throughout. Program decisions were made and evaluated annually as the board was looking ahead. Four years into the EE program a decision was made to continue this strategy until 2016. States were phased out as the board determined our work there had been completed, and new states were added that showed promise for our intervention. Discussion continued throughout the entire history of EE about when we would know we had achieved our goals and could move on to another strategy. DGA brought its expertise to these discussions, helping the board assess options for redirecting its efforts, including how to bring

the EE strategy to a conclusion. During the entire eleven years of the EE program, the board was responsible for managing the program including making strategic decisions.

What general observations about our family mission might be made in reflecting upon the overall context for the EE strategy, namely

the history of EMEF up to the early days of the present era?

- **Two Missions:** EMEF's internal family mission (i.e. family engagement, education, and collaboration) and external philanthropic mission (i.e. program impact) are equally valued. Strategic decisions are made in consideration of how one impacts the other.
- **Evolutionary, not Revolutionary:** The growth of EMEF manifests a coherent development, never a radical break from its past. Movement from one approach to another is carefully orchestrated with old and new program strategies intentionally overlapping. Embarking upon a new investment strategy likewise grows out of a concern for a socially responsible approach going back to the beginning. In addition, the field of impact investing grew and matured significantly over the past 20 years providing more opportunities for EMEF to embrace this strategy.

It should not be surprising that a new generation of leadership would find the EE strategy of a former generation wanting. That is why an organization changes leadership—to bring fresh perspectives and interests. Change is essential to the continuing vitality of any organism. Without change, there is no perpetuity.

- **Collaborative Board:** The governance model of a working board of volunteers driving the work of the foundation, as opposed to an executive director/staff driven model, has consistently been reaffirmed. Reliance upon outstanding administrative assistance and back office resources is recognized as essential to a collaborative board model.
- **Outside Expertise:** From the beginning there has been a healthy dependence upon outside expertise for carrying out the EMEF mission(s). Both internal organizational development and external philanthropic development have been informed by experts with the board maintaining control of program strategy, policy and tactics.
- **Respect for Partners:** EMEF has never seen itself as taking on the world's environmental challenges in isolation. Organizational partners (grantees, vendors, consultants) are valued. The philanthropic mission has always been approached as a team project.
- **Valuing Leadership:** Continuity of leadership and development of new leadership have been key to EMEF's growth. Transferring leadership from the founder's generation to a new generation has been critical to our continuing success. Developing a robust nomination process to help identify and groom leaders has helped support EMEF's program success and continuity.
- **Single Focus:** The evolution of a granting strategy from checkbook philanthropy to a single focus has made EMEF more effective as an agent of environmental change, as well as more cohesive as a family. Although there were some challenges in adopting a single focus, for EMEF this strategic shift helped support better board dynamics and the EE program's success.
- **Planning Process:** This, too, is evolutionary. Programmatic decisions are gradually implemented, constantly evaluated and adjusted, and eventually phased out as new initiatives are identified. Beginnings and endings overlap. EMEF has always looked at least five years down the road, updating that five year plan each year, to ensure that mission objectives are being fulfilled in response to the changing times.
- **Long Haul:** Even as the strategy for investing assets has changed from traditional to impact investing, the principle of perpetuity has been reaffirmed. Also, careful attention given to family values expresses a commitment to perpetuity of EMEF. For EMEF perpetuity is important in two ways: supporting an ever-expanding multi-generational family moving into the future, and growing EMEF's financial assets to support program activities.



Finally,
**How do we put a face
upon EMEF?**

Mission always involves both head and heart. Although highly subjective, it is essential that we find ways to make our investment in addressing the crisis of global climate disruption personally rewarding. This includes, as our original vision states, "harmony and balance in the environment that will maximize quality of life of all sentient beings on earth." But ultimately, when push comes to shove, what we are giving our heart and soul to in our family foundation is intimately personal.

EMEF has a human face—that of our children and grandchildren and nieces and nephews, and their children and grandchildren, both in the EMEF family, and in the human family represented in our logo with joined arms embracing our precious mother earth.

Appendices

- Appendix I Exit Report: EMEF's Energy Efficiency Policy Program,
by Dave Grossman, DGA
- Appendix II Board Member Responses to Energy Efficiency Exit Survey
- Appendix III EMEF's Evolving Mission Statements
- Appendix IV Minutes of October 2014 Planning Retreat and Annual Meeting
- Appendix V Letter from Board to DGA at Conclusion of Energy Efficiency Strategy,
and DGA's Response
- Appendix VI A Chronology of EMEF (1997-2018)

Contact:

For the printed version of this Finding Face Report you may request access to the listed Appendix material from Bruce Reed, EMEF Operations Director at reedemef@gmail.com.



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