



Rockefeller
Brothers Fund

Philanthropy for an Interdependent World



March
2014

THE POCANTICO CENTER
**Conference Outcomes
Assessment**

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Introduction

In an effort to capture the outcomes and impact of Pocantico conferences, staff initiated a conference assessment project which involved conducting an in-depth review of conferences convened at Pocantico between 1994 and 2012. During that period, the conference center hosted a total of 1,015 conferences, retreats, or meetings. Until now, conference evaluations had been based solely on Pocantico staff observations of aspects such as how well meetings were organized and executed and numerical statistics—for example, the number of international participants, repeat conveners, overnights, etc. This assessment establishes a set of criteria for evaluating the outcomes of program-related conferences on the Fund’s fields of work and provides a rich set of examples that reinforce the value of Pocantico as an extension of the Fund’s grantmaking.

Background

The Pocantico Center has complemented and extended the impact of the Fund’s grantmaking since its opening in 1994. The conference center provides a setting where nonprofit organizations and public sector institutions can bring together people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to engage in critical issues, create new levels of understanding, and develop creative solutions.

Programs for conferences are designed by RBF staff, grantees, and other groups whose objectives are consistent with those of the Fund. Conference applications are reviewed based on five criteria:

1. Direct and strong relationship of the conference to the RBF’s program objectives
2. Diversity of perspectives, range of opinions, and breadth of experience that will be represented
3. Involvement of skilled, experienced conference leaders, organizers, or facilitators
4. Clarity of conference objectives, of the agenda that will accomplish those objectives and, as appropriate, of the steps to be taken following the conference
5. Demonstrated added value of having The Pocantico Center as the site of the meeting¹

Convening has long been one of the Fund’s distinctive styles of grantmaking. For this reason, the RBF board of trustees’ decision to create a conference center in the Coach Barn was a perfect solution for adaptively reusing the first and third floors of the building while providing a significant opportunity to leverage the foundation’s grantmaking and continue the Rockefeller family’s longtime use of the estate for philanthropic meetings.

The conference center has proven to be an important asset for the Fund’s program staff, who frequently organize Pocantico meetings related to their program development and grantmaking or attend or support meetings organized by grantees and other partners. This dates back to the inaugural conference, which was convened by Michael Northrop in April 1994 on the topic of global warming.

Not only have Pocantico meetings leveraged the Fund’s grantmaking, but internal meetings have also informed and

“Convenings at The Pocantico Center have helped to germinate many of the strategies, campaigns, institutions, and coalitions that the Sustainable Development program and others in the field now support.... The Pocantico Center has been and will continue to be a core part of this program”.

—2010 *Sustainable Development program review paper*

¹ See <http://www.rbf.org/content/conferences> for more information regarding conferences.

refined the Fund’s work. These meetings have been instrumental in shaping the evolution of the Fund’s current programs and advancing program strategies. In some instances, an entire program was restructured or perhaps just a particular portfolio of grants in a program. For example: 1) a series of meetings on the Nonprofit Sector began in 1995 to address the long-term questions of nonprofit sector infrastructure and concluded in 2005 with a meeting that brought to a close the RBF’s focus on this work; and 2) a meeting convened by the Fund’s Global Governance staff in 2004 served as the basis for restructuring its portfolio of grants related to global standards.

Methodology and Criteria

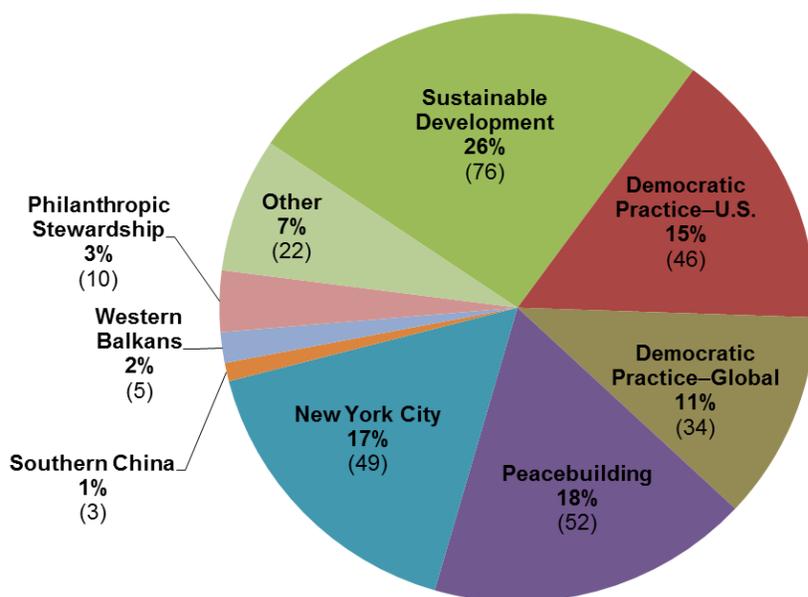
The Fund defines impact as a contribution to social change, including changes in understanding, behavior, capacity, public engagement, and public policy. Conference impact, then, must be viewed in the context of the larger program goals, as a single conference alone is unlikely to create the enduring, tangible changes we seek.

The focus of this study is the nearly 300 meetings² that were convened or sponsored by the Fund’s program staff between 1994 and 2012. This represents 29 percent of the total number of meetings held at Pocantico during this time.

Although the Pocantico staff initiated this assessment, it was a collaborative effort with the greater RBF. Through individual and group discussions about the project, the Fund’s program staff were instrumental both in determining the specific meeting outcomes used in the assessment and in evaluating the conference data for their program-funded meetings. With their input, the following five outcomes were chosen to be evaluated for the study:

1. Conferences launched new initiatives or the development of new fields.
2. Conferences caused a new organization to be formed.
3. Conferences contributed new ideas to public policy debates.
4. Conferences responsible for establishing key relationships and networks.

Conferences by Program Area
1994–2012



A total of 297 conferences were convened or sponsored by the Fund’s program staff from 1994 to 2012.

² The total number of conferences held in that timeframe is too large for the limited staff resources available to evaluate them all; it would be difficult, if not impossible, to track down and contact the 600–700 non-RBF staff sponsors/organizers who convened meetings, dating as far back as 20 years.

5. Other takeaways (e.g., institutional change).

An important sixth outcome emerged from the study that we did not anticipate:

6. Conferences responsible for generating significant documents such as proclamations, resolutions, essays, publications, and the like.

Program staff were given the charge of providing feedback only on those meetings that produced a definable outcome. In those instances when there were multiple outcomes, staff were asked to classify each as either the primary or secondary outcome. It was often difficult to discern between these two rankings in evaluating the data.

Outcome data was also sourced from post-conference write-ups, which are provided by conference organizers after every convening.

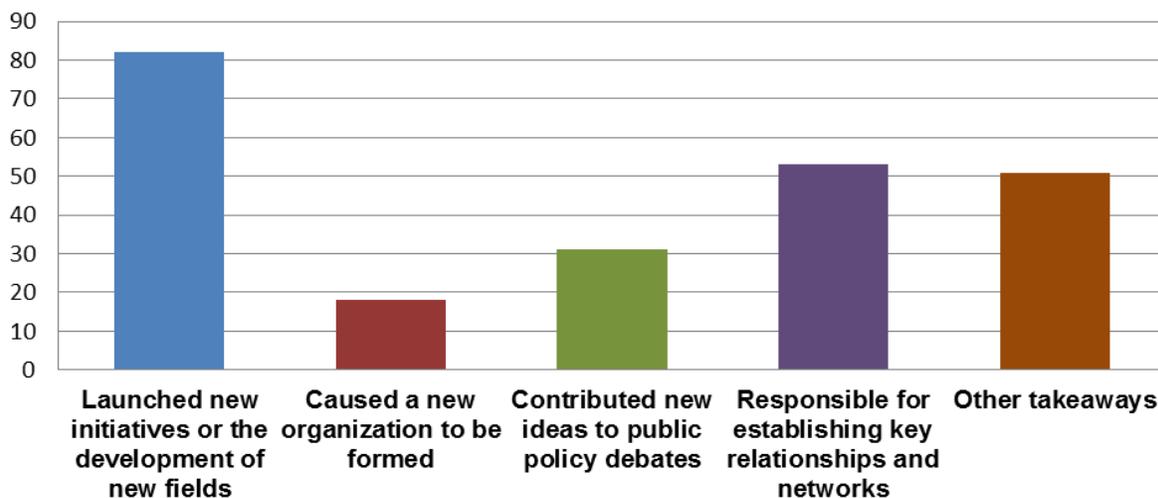
Findings

Of 297 conferences analyzed, 79 percent or 235 meetings had known primary outcomes, and of these meetings, 155 had a secondary known outcome as well. Some conferences produced multiple impact outcomes.

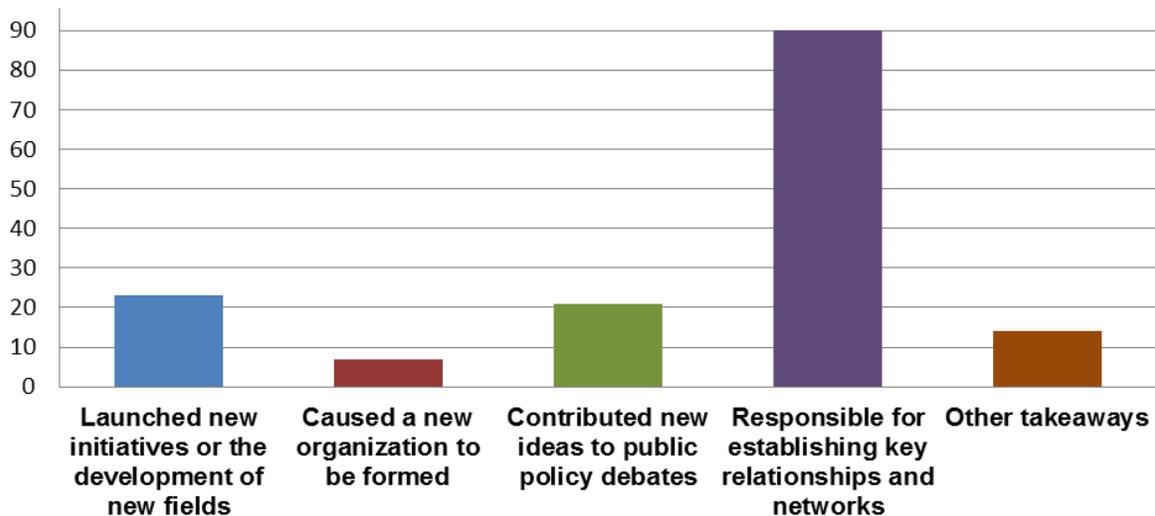
This review includes preliminary data from meetings that occurred within the past three years, but staff acknowledge that as in grantmaking, we know it takes time for true outcomes and impact to emerge. At this point in our analysis, 21 percent of the meetings in the study did not have a known outcome.

The data provided over 390 outcomes spread across the five chosen categories. Only a few examples could be included and appear as described by the program staff and/or organizers. The complete analysis for each program is available by request in an excel worksheet.

Pocantico Conference Primary Outcomes
1994–2012



Pocantico Conference Secondary Outcomes 1994–2012



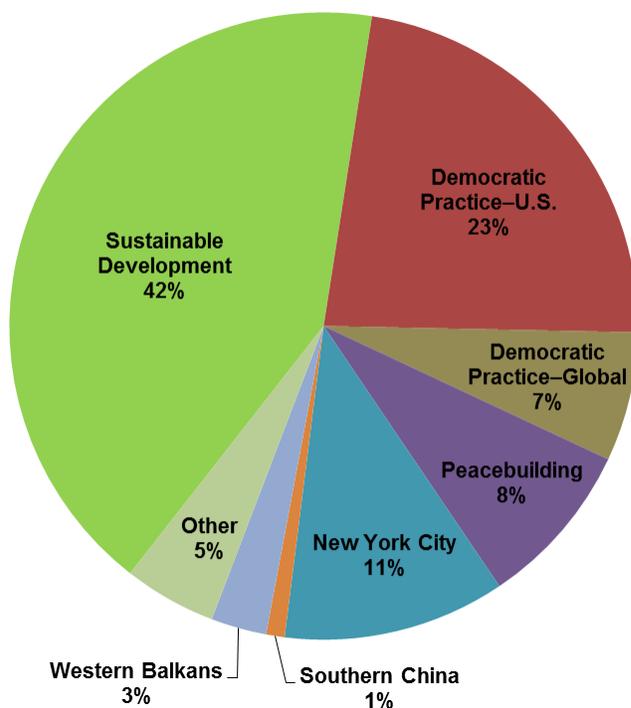
Conferences that Launched New Initiatives or the Development of New Fields

The data tells us that Pocantico conferences are responsible for bringing together people with diverse perspectives to share their ideas and lay the groundwork for launching new initiatives or

creating new fields of work to solve complex problems. Thirty-five percent across all programs had this as either a primary or secondary outcome, and it was the primary outcome for 28 percent of the conferences. Most notably, the Sustainable Development program had the highest percentage of conferences in this category, with half of its meetings having this as a primary outcome. This is not surprising considering the rapid growth in the climate change/global warming movement over the past 20 years.

Conferences that Led to New Initiatives or Fields

1994–2012



Since initiatives and ideas can take several years to germinate, we expect that the number of conferences having outcomes in this category will likely grow in time.

What follows is a sampling of some of the initiatives that were launched at Pocantico:

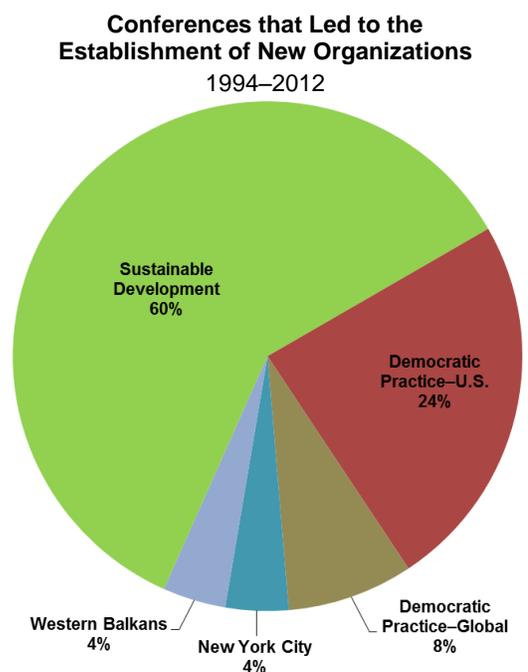
- The Pocantico Roundtable for Consensus on Brownfields, organized by NYC Partnership, marked the beginning of the RBF's 14-year strategy around brownfields grantmaking [1998].
- Grassroots Action in a Global World, a transatlantic seminar that brought together environmental leaders from the United States and Central and Eastern Europe, led to the establishment of a civic engagement process in Central and Eastern Europe [2000].
- The Convening of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a cooperative effort of nine Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states with the charge of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, led to creation of an RGGI secretariat [2005].
- Search for Common Ground launched the U.S.-Muslim Engagement Initiative, a critical and timely initiative to help inform U.S. policy toward predominately Muslim countries and increase U.S. understanding of Islam and Muslims [2007].
- The Partnership for Public Service's Presidential Management and Transition conference led to lasting changes in the way the federal government plans for and facilitates presidential transitions [2008].
- Models of Excellence in Family Philanthropy: A U.S.-China Exchange helped the development of family philanthropy as a relatively new field in China [2011].

Not every initiative launched at Pocantico lasts indefinitely. 1Sky, a major climate campaign that was launched at Pocantico, reorganized and recently merged with 350.org as the result of conversations that took place at Pocantico; and the U.S. in the World initiative, which was launched at Pocantico and became a centerpiece of the RBF's Peace and Security program, has "closed its doors," but the documents it produced can still be found on the web. Both of these had important successes when they were active.

Although this category ranks the highest for primary outcomes, statistics suggest that the new initiatives launched at Pocantico also contribute to new networks being created and new relationships being established.

Conferences that Led to the Establishment of New Organizations

Pocantico conferences have provided the impetus and basis for new organizations and coalitions related to the Fund's work to be created in almost every program area. Whereas some of these were actually established during a Pocantico meeting, in other instances, the meeting led to the future creation of an organization. This outcome category ranked lowest, at eight percent overall; however, the significance of the 25 known new organizations that were the result of Pocantico conferences is noteworthy.



Some examples of the new organizations or coalitions that were created as the result of Pocantico conferences include:

- The first meeting on creating a tar sands campaign that brought together biodiversity and climate change advocates to create a joint strategy; also a first attempt to link Canadian and U.S. advocates on these issues [2002].
- The Media Consortium, now a flourishing organization that fosters collaboration among its members and undertakes special projects [2005].
- The Investigative News Network (INN), which now has over 60 members and is a strong force in strengthening nonprofit investigative journalism [2009].
- The FACT Coalition, a diverse network of U.S.-based NGOs working for transparent, accountable, and fair international tax systems [2011].
- The creation of PACENow, a local government/community initiative that creates permanent private sector jobs, strengthening our national and local economies [2012].

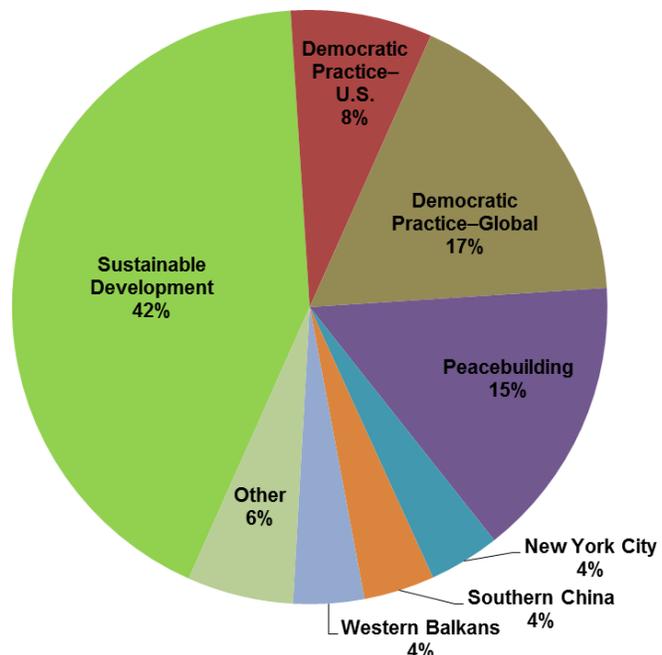
“With key partner organizations, Tax Justice Network-USA launched the Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency (FACT) Campaign and Coalition in April of 2011. Over the past two years, we have seen major progress in exposing individuals and corporations that use offshore tax havens to avoid paying taxes... Developments on the global scale, from the G8 to the OECD, have raised the issue amongst the developed and developing countries and increased calls for international cooperation on taxes and transparency. We hope to be a resource to those who want to learn more and join our fight.”

—Tax Justice Network's website

Conferences that Contributed New Ideas to Public Policy Debates

Conversations among conferees at Pocantico often result in the development and contribution of new ideas to public policy debates on a wide range of topics. This was the primary outcome for 10 percent of the conferences evaluated; however, when secondary outcomes are added, the number rises to 18 percent overall. Once again, the Sustainable Development program—with its continued advocacy work on climate—convened the most number of meetings having this outcome, followed by the Democratic Practice’s Global Governance portfolio, with its work on equity in climate policies and steady state economics. The only portfolio that did not produce an outcome in this category was Philanthropic Stewardship.

Conferences that Led to New Ideas for Public Policy
1994–2012



Highlights in this category from across the programs include the following:

- Carbon Sequestration (“Sinks”) Meeting brought together forest conservation and climate change advocates to rationalize competing views on “sinks” and offsets [1999].
- A meeting on issues and opportunities facing manufacturing districts and mixed-use communities in New York City brought to light the role of green manufacturing [2001].
- Accelerating State Action on Global Warming, convened by RBF, assembled senior officials from a dozen states in an effort to strengthen climate planning nationally [2006 and 2008].
- A meeting sponsored by the Democratic Practice–U.S. program and convened by the League of Women Voters helped to focus the democracy reform community on the issues around redistricting [2009].
- Alternative Energy Policy and Funding Scenarios for the World Bank Group, convened by Bank Information Center (BIC), allowed a broad group of NGOs and thinkers to articulate a “shadow energy policy” for the World Bank, a useful tool for aligning World Bank rhetoric with operations [2010].
- The Forum on the Development of Philanthropy in the Western Balkans created a legal framework for philanthropy development in the region [2011].
- Action Aid convened a meeting that brought together leaders of diverse organizations and interests to develop a shared holistic analysis of links between agriculture, climate, and energy policy; nurture new strategic constituency partners to engage in advocacy on a bold agenda to tackle the key policy drivers of food price volatility; and identify a few key political opportunities for joint action in 2012–2013 [2012].

It should be noted that some public policy debates—such as Universal Access to Early Childhood Education—were the topic of several Pocantico conferences in the early 2000s, when Education was a grantmaking program of the Fund; these discussions are still very much alive today.

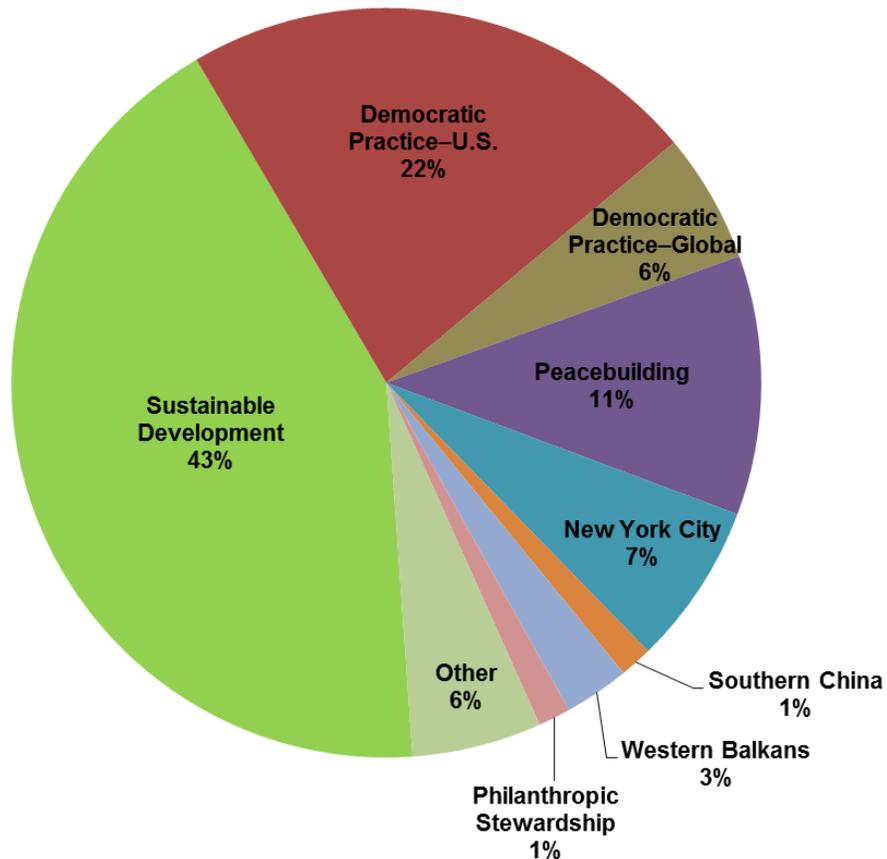
Conferences Responsible for Establishing Key Relationships and Networks

The 50 to 70 conferences convened at Pocantico each year bring together an average of 1,500 people annually. The study revealed that one of the most significant advantages of Pocantico conferences is that time spent engaged in conversations with other attendees during meeting sessions, in informal conversations after dinner in the Hayloft, or while strolling the grounds, provides a valuable opportunity for participants to expand their professional and personal networks and to establish key relationships with other participants or other organizations. These networking opportunities will be enhanced when future gifts of property are transferred to the National Trust by David Rockefeller and more places for people to engage become available.

Connections and new networks that are established at Pocantico often reveal opportunities for collaborative work on new topics of interest. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see participants reappear at meetings convened by other groups as a result of the connections made at a prior Pocantico meeting.

It is not surprising that of the five categories we examined, this outcome ranked highest overall, with 48 percent of all of the conferences evaluated having this either as a primary or secondary outcome. We know firsthand from the Fund’s program staff how important these new networks and relationships are in advancing their programmatic work.

Conferences that Led to the Establishment of New Networks
1994–2012



Nearly half of the meetings in the study generated new networks or key relationships. The small sampling below illustrates the wide range of relationships and networks that have resulted from Pocantico conferences:

- A meeting on financing the sale of household solar systems in impoverished rural areas, which brought together representatives from the science, business, and NGO communities, generated many new partnerships and collaborative activities designed to help jumpstart the development of new market mechanisms to finance and deliver household solar systems on a mass scale [1995].
- The Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP) convening established an ongoing support network for young people of color in the foundation world [2004 and 2008].

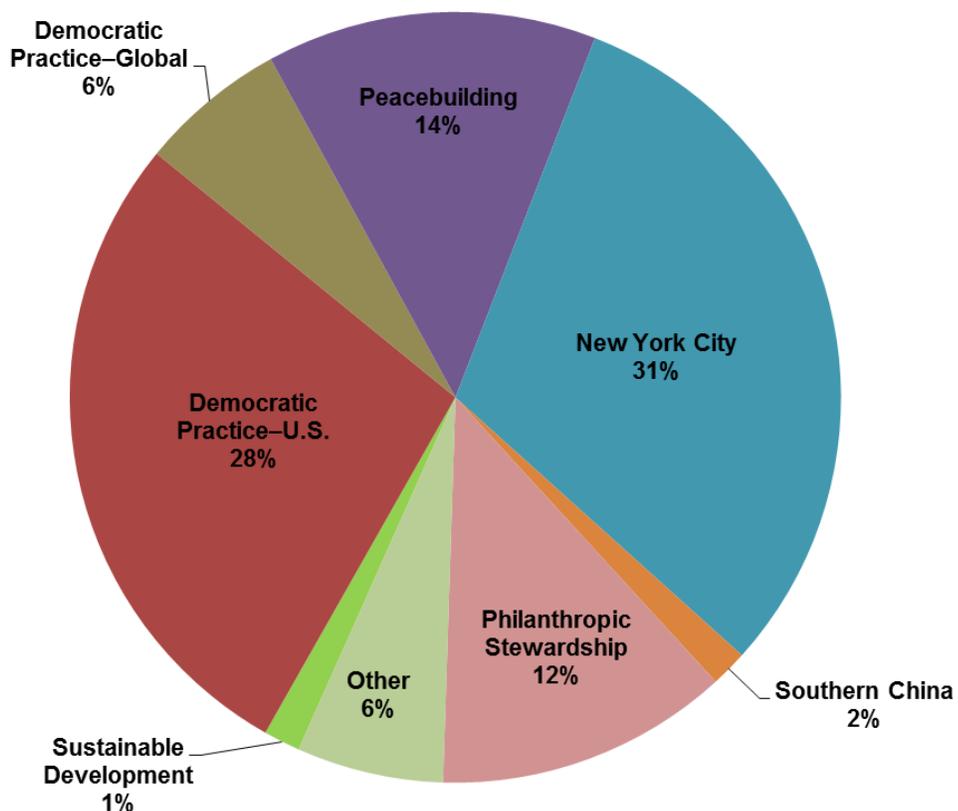
- Held shortly after the Citizens United decision by the Supreme Court, a conference called New Thinking About Campaign Finance Reform brought together advocates, funders, and academics to share reactions and ideas about campaign finance reform. Many new relationships were established (many advocates and academics, for example, had not met leaders in the other camp before). Under the pressure of Citizens United, this conference helped to coalesce the field [2010].
- Shortly after a meeting was convened by the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy and the American University in Cairo to discuss global philanthropy from the perspective of Muslim-majority societies, a smaller group from that conference met again and agreed to establish the Muslim Philanthropy Network as an interface between academics and researchers on the one hand, and policymakers, philanthropists, and nonprofit leaders on the other. Shortly thereafter, the Network expanded to over 60 members and continues to grow [2010].
- Searching for Real Green Economies: A Dialogue brought together, for the first time, leaders from indigenous communities and organizations with thought leaders on the “new economics” that a stable and just planet requires [2012].

Other Takeaways (e.g., Institutional Change)

Of the 297 conferences that were evaluated, 17 percent had known outcomes that did not fall within the four specific outcome categories. The New York City program had the highest number of meetings in this category, with 31 percent, and most of these were Culpeper Institutional Leadership conferences or other strategic planning meetings for New York City Arts and Culture grantee organizations.

Conferences that Led to Other Outcomes

1994–2012



The definable outcomes that most often appeared in the “other takeaway” category include:

- Institutional change
- Institutional development
- Development of a strategic plan
- Strengthened board commitment

Conferences responsible for generating significant documents

The study revealed that numerous documents, publications, essays, declarations, statements, and proclamations were produced and widely disseminated as the result of Pocantico meetings. In addition, resolutions, action plans, roadmaps, and proposals were also created during Pocantico meetings. Although these items were frequently acknowledged in the staff comments and organizer write-ups, this was not an outcome category staff evaluated and, as a result, in most cases, these documents were not ranked as primary or secondary outcomes. We do not know how many of these items have been produced; however, we understand that some were of great significance and were presented at the White House and to the U.N. General Assembly. Below are some examples:

- Six *Pocantico Papers* were published as the result of RBF-sponsored meetings at Pocantico between 1995 and 2002 and can be found on the [Fund's website](#). These were discontinued because of the expense involved.
- A book by Robert Putnam on economic inequality (now in progress) was inspired, in part, by a Pocantico conference on the subject.
- The United Nations Intellectual History Project book, *Ahead of the Curve*, took its present form at Pocantico.
- A series of conversations that were convened at Pocantico by the Yale U.N. History Project contributed to *The Organization and Publication of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Papers*, Lynn Rienner Publishers.
- A significant outcome of the Developing a Strategy for Kosovo's First 120 Days was the Pocantico Declaration, in which the five members of the Unity Team of Kosovar leaders pledged to collaborate on such critical issues as reconciliation among Kosovo's ethnic communities and new, peaceful relations with its neighbors, including Serbia.
- A Statement of Essential Principles in Redistricting was released by League of Women Voters as the result of a Pocantico meeting.
- A declaration was developed at a meeting convened by The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies that launched an effort to emphasize the role and importance of the nonprofit sector. It was issued publicly through a full-page ad in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, circulated to policymakers and the press, and posted on a number of websites. The declaration and its call for a renewed partnership has also been widely covered in the media including *The New York Times*, Huffington Post, and *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, and sessions focused on its Action Statement have been held with White House officials and others.³

³ See http://ccss.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/10/News-Release_LP-Forward_2.2009.pdf for more information regarding the declaration.

Trends, Styles of Convening

Analysis of the data collected also revealed certain trends and styles of convening that are prevalent at Pocantico conferences.

The Pocantico conference planning process starts with the submission of a completed conference application. This is standard procedure, even for meetings that RBF staff organize. An eligibility quiz eliminates potential meetings that do not fit within the Fund's guidelines for use of the conference center. Organizers are also asked how their organizations address diversity to strengthen their work. Once an application is received, it is first reviewed by Pocantico staff, who in turn recommend to the Fund's vice president for programs whether or not the meeting request should be approved and if funding should be provided by the RBF, if it was requested. If it is an external meeting and it relates to the Fund's program interests, the relevant RBF program director is asked for their feedback on the proposed request. Turn-around time is generally one to two weeks.

The Pocantico Center continually draws repeat users. Of the 1,015 meetings hosted between 1994 and 2012, 38 percent of these were convened by repeat users. This number does not include RBF board and staff meetings or U.N.-related meetings. There are groups that met several years ago at Pocantico, some for the first time, and continue to return today. For example, Public Works spun off from Dēmos in 2004 and convened at Pocantico first in 2005 and most recently in January 2014. The Cornell Global Leadership Institute convened a Pocantico retreat in 2008 to officially launch the Labor Leaders Climate Forum, a cross-programmatic initiative that has convened at Pocantico on several occasions since then. The Economic Benefits of Climate Action conference led to the creation of the Climate Prosperity Project, which has been a repeat convener at Pocantico since it was formed at this meeting in 2007. Although a significant number of Pocantico meetings are convened by repeat users, the subsequent meetings they bring are for different purposes, focus on different themes, and involve different players.

Pocantico is also a venue for organizational retreats. As the conference center generally does not host routine or annual meetings unless they are strategic in nature, these usually occur at a pivotal moment or critical juncture in an organization's history. Many strategic plans important to an organization's programmatic directions have been set forth at Pocantico, and the RBF, too, convenes its board and staff at Pocantico for this purpose. In addition, technical assistance (such as with board development and fundraising skills) through workshops arranged by conference organizers with professionals they invite to Pocantico is appreciated by RBF grantees.

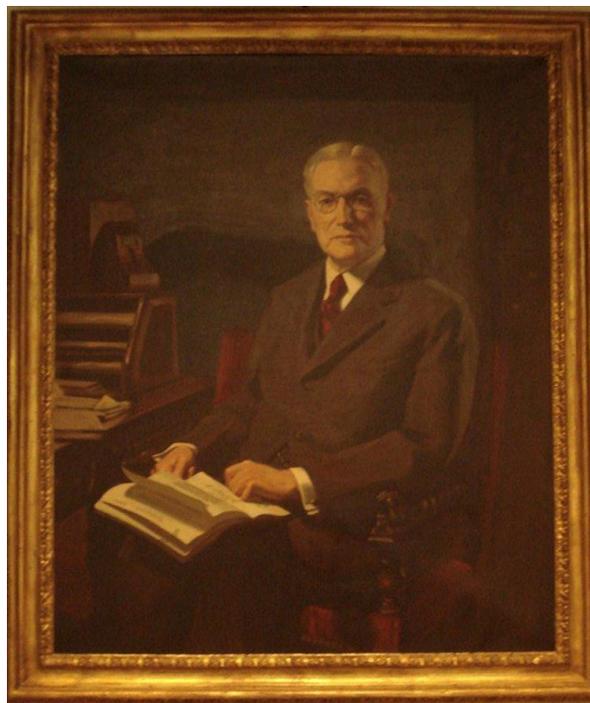
RBF trustees occasionally convene and sponsor conferences at Pocantico on topics in which they are involved in that relate to the Fund's overarching program interests. Often these meetings result in the production of significant documents as well. For example: 1) a series of conversations convened by the Earth Charter drafting committee at Pocantico between 1997 and 2000 were instrumental in shaping the final version of the Earth Charter—a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful world; 2) Global Development and Environment's (GDAE) first edition of *Macroeconomics in Context* was published in 2006 as a result of a Pocantico conference; and 3) convenings of the Sargasso Sea Alliance have enabled participants to discuss and review the draft text of the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea suggesting improvements and flagging potential political issues to be resolved in advance of an intergovernmental signing ceremony planned for March 2014.

Foundations and other nonprofit organizations also come together at Pocantico to collaborate on a wide range of issues. These include Carnegie, Pew, Rockefeller, and Winrock International, to name a few. On occasion foundation leaders convene at Pocantico such as the Foundation Executives Group and, most recently, The Hague Club.

A range of programs within the United Nations have convened a variety of meetings over the years at Pocantico. It is of no coincidence that the portrait in the conference center loggia is that of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., signing the gift for the land for the site of the United Nations. Pocantico's proximity to Manhattan—falling within the 25-mile radius set by the U.N. for business to be conducted outside of its physical plant—combined with on-site security, the overall ambiance, and the ability to have exclusive use of the facilities, makes Pocantico an ideal venue for high-level and other off-the-record conversations. Since 1994, Pocantico has hosted meetings for three secretary generals and several U.N. Security Council (UNSC) retreats.

Pocantico provides a “safe haven” for off-the-record conversations, Track II dialogues, and the like. For example, during the U.S.-China Track II Climate Dialogue, Chinese delegates learned about the challenges the United States has in cutting carbon emissions and about U.S. policy decisions on climate⁴. In 2004, Montenegrin leaders, including Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, convened at The Pocantico Center to have an off-the-record discussion with experts from the United States, other countries, and international agencies about transforming the concept of national sustainable development into an operational strategy. As a result of this meeting, the government of Montenegro started the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and adopted the idea of including civil society in the planning and implementation of this effort to become an “ecological state.”

In April 2007, Pocantico hosted a meeting entitled Developing a Strategy for Kosovo's First 120 Days, which was designed to provide senior Kosovar political and civil society leaders with an opportunity to jointly consider the significant challenges they would face in building an independent and democratic nation as envisioned in the Ahtisaari Plan presented to the UNSC in March 2007. The ability to convene high-level meetings such as this one at Pocantico has enabled other notable figures such as the late Vaclav Havel, former president Jimmy Carter, Henry Kissinger, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, to participate in these types of gatherings.



John D. Rockefeller, Jr., holds the correspondence relating to the gift for the land for the site of the United Nations. Painting by Fred W. Wright after the original by Frank O. Salisbury.

⁴ Some references to specific conferences in this section may need to be removed for public circulation in light of the sensitive nature of this type of conference.

Over the last few years, Pocantico has hosted convenings on developing philanthropy in two of the Fund's pivotal places, Southern China and the Western Balkans, by offering the RBF and Rockefeller family as models. Use of The Pocantico Center for this purpose is a trend staff hope will continue to grow.

Recently, the economy has affected Pocantico conferences and the nonprofit sector as a whole. With budget cuts occurring across the sector, it is not surprising that fewer people are attending conferences. This is due to a combination of factors including: 1) travel is more expensive while travel budgets have been cut; 2) air travel now requires significantly more time to get to and from a destination; and 3) many potential participants have taken on more job responsibilities due to staff reductions within their organizations, and they do not have as much time be away from their offices.

Weather has also presented its challenges, and the increase of episodic storms over the past several years has impacted the conference program. In addition to the physical toll these storms have had on The Pocantico Center, which occasionally necessitated closing down due to loss of power or inaccessibility due to blocked roadways, the effects of some of these storms have prevented participants from traveling to Pocantico to attend meetings. Last year after Hurricane Sandy, four meetings were canceled.

Fortunately, technology, such as video-conferencing and Skype, has made it possible for those who are not able to attend in person to participate in meeting sessions.

CONFERENCE PROFILE

APRIL 2007: DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR KOSOVO'S FIRST 120 DAYS



The Fund has played a critical role in efforts to reach a final settlement for Kosovo. It supported the negotiation process to find a peaceful solution to this paramount problem and supported civil society and media in order to prepare the way for a peaceful response to the final settlement. In April 2007, the Fund hosted a dialogue at Pocantico with Kosovar leadership and representatives of ethnic groups and civil society leaders, together with European and U.S. leadership, among whom were the former U.S. President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, U.S. Special Envoy for Kosovo Frank Wisner, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Special Political Affairs Rosemary Di Carlo.

The conference ended with a Pocantico Declaration in which all the parties committed themselves to a peaceful transition from U.N. protectorate to statehood. It highlighted the need for special attention to and protection of ethnic groups, in line with the comprehensive Ahtisaari plan.

Challenges

Despite all its assets, the conference center does have its challenges. With limited access on the estate, participants are restricted as to where they can walk and what they can do on the property. Joggers are directed to the trails outside the gates, while space for exercise equipment is confined to a stairwell. In addition, meals, meetings, and lodging for a majority of the participants all occur in one building. As such, it is possible for a conferee to attend a multiday meeting and never leave the building. This is expected to change when the Playhouse is transferred to the National Trust and becomes available for RBF's use. Having access to the Playhouse and other properties, such as the guest houses, will have an enormous impact on The Pocantico Center programs, including public programs, residencies, and the like. Perhaps the largest impact will be on the conference program, which will be enhanced in several ways: 1) it will create additional settings for conference meals, and walks between facilities will provide opportunities for participants to engage with one another outside of the meeting room; 2) it will increase the capacity of available meeting spaces; and 3) it will provide a space for work-out equipment, an amenity currently lacking and often requested by participants. All of these refinements will add tremendous value to the overall experience of attending a Pocantico conference.

Next Steps

Going forward, staff will continue track the outcomes of Pocantico conferences by updating the data already collected. In order to take the study to the next level, staff hope to supplement the data that has been provided with input from conference organizers and conferees who have attended meetings. Thought is already being given to what questions we might want to consider asking; for example, "How has an organization changed as a result of a Pocantico conference?" This is very much a work in progress.

In the future, staff are planning to conduct a similar Pocantico public program initiative assessment to evaluate the outcomes and impact of the Pocantico public programs, such as the Pocantico Arts Collaborative, which includes artist residencies and performances. Other public offerings, such as forums, symposiums, and lectures, will also be included, and will involve collecting feedback from the audiences and the community.

Conclusion

The power of place is a constant at Pocantico. Conferences are contributing to the Fund's impact on the social and environmental issues that are central to the RBF's philanthropic programs and grantmaking activities. As Betsy Campbell, vice president for programs, recently stated when describing the Fund's programmatic work, "Pocantico conferences contribute to meaningful progress in the world." This is supported by the data used in this study, which revealed that nearly 80 percent of the meetings evaluated had at least one outcome, as well as the hundreds of post-conference

"...it is clear that the following were all key to meeting's success: a setting where participants did not feel the pull of real world distractions; beautiful grounds that allowed participants to stretch their legs with their minds; a great informal space in the Hayloft conducive to group sharing and bonding; and a Pocantico staff who demonstrated professionalism, flexibility, hospitality, and remarkable attention to detail."

—*Thomas H. Sander, Harvard Kennedy School, The Saguaro Seminar*

write-ups submitted by conference organizers and the constant stream of thank you letters that we receive.

Conferees often comment that Pocantico is a magical place! It is a place where people with diverse perspectives and backgrounds, some with different agendas, come together to solve complex problems. Although they might not reach consensus, they leave having gained an understanding and mutual respect for those whose viewpoints might differ from their own. It is a place where new connections and relationships previously not thought possible are established. The conference center has seen representatives from the Global North and South, Palestinians and Israelis, Kosovars and Serbs, etc., gathered around the same table engaged in friendly dialogue.

The Pocantico Center has developed a brand of its own. Increasingly, more people from across the country and around the globe vie for an opportunity to attend or convene a meeting at Pocantico. A common misconception is that Pocantico is upstate; however, in reality, it is easily accessible from one of the world's most vibrant cities. It has established a reputation for being a premier venue that is conducive to critical thinking that advances social change and contributes to a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. Conference organizers and attendees value the opportunity to have exclusive use of the conference center, one of the many reasons it has become widely recognized as a safe place for off-the-record conversations. Its size and intimate setting, in comparison to other conference facilities, make it ideal for roundtable face-to-face conversations. As a secured property, The Pocantico Center is a favorable venue for hosting high-level participants, including presidents and other government officials.

The conference assessment project confirms that Pocantico conferences fulfill the mission of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and that the funding provided for conferences is an effective investment, enabling Fund staff to provide the convening, thought leadership, and network building that characterize the Fund's engaged grantmaking approach. This assessment also highlights that more research and analysis is needed to discern the relationship between the conference program outcomes, RBF grantmaking activities, grantees, and conference organizers, and longer-term program impact across the variety of fields in which we work.