



EVALUATION

The Rockefeller Foundation Initiative Promoting Equitable and Sustainable Transportation State Component

April 2012





Rockefeller Foundation

Innovation for the Next 100 Years

The Rockefeller Foundation's Sustainable and Equitable Transportation Initiative operates at both the federal and state levels. The state and federal levels were designed to be mutually reinforcing from a strategy perspective, but were implemented separately using different approaches and timelines. A Foundation-commissioned independent evaluation of both levels, undertaken from September 2011 through April 2012, was sequenced so that it first focused on the federal component and then examined the state component in light of findings from the federal component. This report presents the findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the State level component of the Initiative. A separate report focuses on the evaluation findings of the Federal level component. Read together, these two reports provide a comprehensive view of the evaluation of the overall Initiative.





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Innovation for the Next 100 Years

About TCC Group

TCC Group is passionate about helping the social sector achieve greater impact. Since 1980, the firm has provided strategy, evaluation, grants management, and capacity-building services to foundations, nonprofits, corporate community involvement programs, and government agencies. From offices in New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, the firm works with diverse clients – from large funders and international organizations to local, grassroots nonprofits. Measurement for learning defines TCC Group's philosophy and approach to evaluation. TCC believes that evaluation is a powerful tool to monitor progress and measure outcomes for the purpose of increasing knowledge, improving programs, informing decision making, and determining strategic direction.

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The Rockefeller Foundation fosters innovative solutions to many of the world's most pressing challenges by supporting work that strengthens resilience to acute crises and chronic stresses and promoting growth with equity so poor or vulnerable populations have more access to opportunities that improve their lives. Committed to supporting learning, accountability and performance improvements, the Evaluation Office of the Rockefeller Foundation works with staff, grantees and partners to strengthen evaluation practice and to support innovative approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning.

THE
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EVALUATION OFFICE



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Acronyms

BRT	Bus rapid transit
CEO	Chief executive officer (used interchangeably with Director)
DOT	Department of Transportation
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NGA	National Governors Association*
RF	Rockefeller Foundation
SB375	California Senate Bill 375 (2009)
SSTI	Smart State Transportation Initiative*
TA	Technical Assistance
TRA	Rockefeller Transportation Initiative

*Rockefeller grantees

Introduction

This report presents the findings of an evaluation commissioned by the Evaluation Office of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation Initiative on Equitable and Sustainable Transportation (TRA). The evaluation, conducted by TCC Group from October 2011 to April 2012, focused principally on efforts to build state capacity and attain state and regional policy changes. An evaluation of Foundation efforts focused on federal transportation reform was completed in early 2012. This report touches on the relationship between some of the state strategy work and its relationship to federal reform.

The transportation initiative team articulated four key evaluation questions:

- What is working in the state strategy?
- What are promising practices that have evolved from the state grants?
- What should next steps be for the state evaluation?
- What has been missed by our grantmaking strategy?

Developing an overarching state reform strategy presented the initiative with a number of challenges that differed from federal reform. Individual states differ greatly from each other in terms of needs, political climate, urban-rural balance, tensions between local and statewide decision-making, in-state organizational capacity and legislative support, and state Department of Transportation (DOT) capacity and support for reform. The Foundation initially examined states' capacities to implement transportation reform (assuming at the time that a reform bill was pending). It was found that there was not only little capacity at the state level, but that there was not a strong network of reform-minded technical assistance providers that could be tapped to build state capacity.¹ Next, the Foundation examined the existing advocacy groups operating in state, regional and local environments. Initial funding to bring these groups together did not lead to an indication that these groups could be leveraged to advance the states.

After these explorations, the Transportation Initiative was clear that an overarching 50-state strategy was unlikely to emerge but that a number of strategies would be employed to further state capacity and advance a broad range of reforms. Distinct from the federal aspect of TRA, the state level certainly hoped it would catalyze some reform, but even more, it sought to prepare the states for what was expected to be federal mandates emerging out of the reauthorization bill.

Overall, the Foundation funded 42 state grants and 4 state/federal grants which the Transportation Initiative staff clustered in the following overarching categories.

- **INTERNAL REFORMERS.** The Foundation invested heavily in organizations focused on internal reform, with varied targets including State DOT CEOs, governors, city transportation officials and legislators.
- **INNOVATIVE POLICY.** The Foundation identified specific opportunities to advance reform and innovations in areas that might have a good likelihood of success.

¹ The finding specifically found a lack of independent reform capacity – that capacity that might be distinct from the existing transportation power structure.

- **MISCELLANEOUS.** The Foundation invested in a host of opportunities largely related to building the advocacy capacity of state/region-focused organizations working on transportation reform, or expanding support for key reform concepts, such as bus rapid transit (BRT).

The State Component evaluation was designed as a formative evaluation, allowing for an analysis of strategy and any outcome data available. As such, the evaluation represents a point in time and is meant to inform future decision-making rather than draw conclusive findings. The evaluation followed a detailed evaluation plan that included collection and analysis from several data sources. This plan was followed, including data collection and analysis from a variety of sources in a mixed-methods evaluation. A summary of data collection can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1: **Summary of data collection**

EVALUATION TOOL	DATA COLLECTION
Grantee survey	22 respondents
Grant analysis/coding	46 grants
Interviews	18 (not including SSTI)
Grantees	15
Other funders	2
Outside observers	1
SSTI Interviews	14
Discussion with Transportation Initiative staff	3 participants

Key findings

The goal of the State Component was to improve the capacity of states to implement any federal reforms coming from the next federal reauthorization, with additional emphasis on supporting innovative reform at the state level. This formative evaluation explored the extent to which there were overarching outcomes shared across the portfolio, characteristics critical to grantee outcome attainment, and analysis successes and challenges experienced by grantees.

1. Portfolio analysis and articulation of theories of change

All grants were analyzed to list out strategies and intended outcomes. Individual logic model strands were developed for each grant, and strategies and intended outcomes were aggregated to increase understanding of how the portfolio as a whole seeks to achieve impact. The pockets of change that have emerged seem promising, particularly those that worked directly on embedding change.

A logic chain was developed for each of these types of outcomes, depicting how aggregated strategies led to indented outcomes for grantees. Five streams of activities were identified through the review:

- building external capacity
- setting effective and efficient policy advocacy campaigns
- framing the smart transportation message
- investing in network-building
- identifying other shared outcomes.

It is clear that despite the lack of an overarching strategy for the state grantee portfolio, grantees shared outcome aspirations and also appeared to be exploring similar pathways to outcome attainment.

2. Comparing high performing grantees to low performers

In order to help Rockefeller predict successful grants better in the future, TCC examined characteristics of grantee performance – ranging from high performing grantees to low performers. Both organizational and environmental factors appeared to contribute strongly to grantee success, with the clearest distinction being organizational capacity. The chart below depicts the organizational and environmental factors that were crucial for success and shows that grantees with less capacity were much less likely to be able to implement their projects quickly, a huge problem in an environment fraught with urgency.

TABLE 2: **Capacities of successful grants**

WHAT CAPACITIES DO SUCCESSFUL GRANTEES SHARE?				
Ability to lead	Ability to adapt to changing environments	Ability to manage	Ability to further their work	Environmental factors
Leadership/ program staff sustainability	Use of effective decision-making tools	Program staffing	Fundraising skills	Relative stability in target audience
Staff Reputation	Environmental learning	Problem solving	Marketing skills	Clear value-added end goal (beyond study)
			Outreach skills	Existing advocacy infrastructure Research base to support argument, especially when highlighting non-environmental arguments (e.g. public health, cost savings, economic development)

3. Successes and challenges

TCC examined grantees across the following categories: internal reformers, innovative policy, broad reform, topic advocacy and regional advocacy. Each type of grant presents a set of unique opportunities and challenges.

TABLE 3: **Opportunities and challenges by funding category**

CATEGORY	OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
Internal reformers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to capacitate those with the ability to enact change Ability to establish best practices/opportunities for replication Peer support/exchange Ability to partner with other statewide efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credibility/buy-in with targets Establishing the value added for targets Sustainability/exit strategy Projects may stall without \$ tied to helping targets implement reforms/projects
Innovative policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing networks/coalitions working on the issues Momentum Ability to garner public support Ability to mobilize other funders Ability to demonstrate successful innovations to other states/regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue/organizational history can be a barrier
Broad reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to tap into promising projects of different scope/scale Geographic diversity – can support small projects/reforms in states that normally would not be receptive Ability to experiment Strong replication potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to chase easy wins – go after low-hanging fruit Less of an overarching message due to less focus Less potential for a cohort when those engaged have less in common
Topic advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to make a lot of progress on specific issue areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential lack of tie-in to broader reform debate
Regional advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowing for more collaboration between different states, DOTs, advocacy groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State governmental barriers may block progress Susceptible to multiple governmental stakeholder changes

4. Sustainability

Grant documents clearly described hopes for ongoing sustainability of the Foundation-funded projects, but there was not an overarching pathway to sustainability uniting the grants. As Rockefeller Foundation is one of the (if not the only) primary investors in the space and for these programs, the impending absence of Foundation funds is likely to have a large negative effect on sustainability. This is already evidenced in some of the programs that the Foundation chose not to reinvest in, which have since been discontinued.

There are a few pockets where sustainability seems likely, at least in the short term. These stem from Foundation efforts to increase local networks (including funding networks) and to build up the credibility of specific institutions. Several reforms seem to have been embedded in institutional structures (e.g. state DOTs), though it is too early to know how deep they go and if they have staying power. These collective efforts are leading to more perceived capacity in the transportation space, as compared with when the Foundation entered, which may take on a self-generative life. Ultimately, however, as with transportation reform efforts, there are few apparent viable funding mechanisms to sustain much of the work.

Analysis and select recommendations

It is TCC's assessment that despite an overly broad strategy, the Foundation was thoughtful and reflective regarding its state funding. The grants reflected an attempt to pursue multiple avenues of change, with the notion that there was an abundance of opportunity and need, and that transportation reform is complex, necessitating change at multiple levels. Several of the grants did not fare well, frequently due to issues of extant capacity, or lack thereof. In this regard, the Foundation appears to have operated out of a sense of urgency for reform but without the patience merited by its own understanding of lack of capacity in the field or the focus to concertedly develop that capacity.

Interviewees were asked to provide recommendations regarding innovative smart growth reform efforts and areas where the Foundation might increase its investments or fund additional activities. The evaluation team grouped responses (shown in Table 2).

TABLE 4: **Interviewee recommendations for projects**

Incubate innovative funding for transportation	Invest in SB375-type legislation
Identify sample projects for transferability	Invest in buy-in from local officials
Facilitate interaction across government departments	Better coordinate statewide activities
Build grassroots support	Make a "big bet" in one state
Improve regional projections	Develop communications for transportation reform advocates
Leverage existing demonstration projects	Support use of technology
Develop pipeline of projects	Scan for potential opportunities to invest in rural areas
Engage public health	Invest more heavily in local projects

Based on our analysis and in addition to interviewee-generated ideas, TCC presents the following recommendations to the Rockefeller Foundation.

1. ***The overall rationale for funding state/regional/local work remains compelling.***
Reform at this level continues to show promise for strong social, environmental, financial and health impacts, all areas of interest for the Foundation. The state portfolio appears to have a closer alignment with Foundation goals due to greater emphasis on climate change and equity in some of the state grants. Further, while changes emerging at the state and local levels are more limited than federal reform would be, they are having an immediate impact on the way transportation policy is conceived and implemented.

2. *The Initiative had too high expectations for what this portfolio of grantees could accomplish and should take a longer term view.*

Given the Foundation classification of high, medium and low performing grantees, it appears that some of the lower performing grantees lacked capacity to undertake the work, needing either more time or more stability to implement their grants fully. A better assessment of capacity or a greater level of support in implementation may have helped these grants achieve greater success. Further, given the Foundation's own understanding of the limited capacity that existed in the field, it is not surprising that many efforts have generated modest returns to date.

3. *Consider selecting one or two levers of change and work those in multiple states.*

Working through multiple levers of change has not proven more effective. Building up infrastructure in one or two common areas (e.g. governors, legislatures, DOT, local planning, MPO) across multiple states rather than broad capacity development may lead to more sustainable results. Many state policymakers expressed the notion that success breeds copycats, indicating that generating pockets of success within one or two areas in a state may be enough to generate a snowball effect. Based on our analysis of the data, continuing work with DOTs seems to be the most promising, as it has the greatest recognized extant group of staff with expertise, and work with governors seems the most difficult.

4. *Focus on readying projects for transferability.*

Whether drawing from existing Foundation projects or scanning for additional projects, the Foundation should focus on creating a cadre of projects that could be showcased as viably successful in three to four thematic areas.

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The transportation team articulated four key evaluation questions.

- What is working in the state strategy?
- What are promising practices that have evolved from the state grants?
- What should next steps be for the state evaluation?
- What has been missed by our grantmaking strategy?

Description of the state strategy

In 2008, the Rockefeller Foundation Board of Trustees approved \$29 million in support of a Transportation Initiative, focused on informing federal policy. This responded to an immediate perceived need – the pending US Surface Transportation reauthorization – with the idea that broader grantmaking toward state capacity and policy would follow. With the principal objective of expanding more fully to the state level, in 2010 the Board approved an additional funding strategy, bringing the total TRA allocation \$66 million.

Developing an overarching state reform strategy presented a number of challenges compared to federal reform. States differ from each other greatly in terms of needs, political climate, urban-rural balance, tensions between local and statewide decision-making, in-state organizational capacity, legislative support, and state Department of Transportation (DOT) capacity and support for reform. The Foundation initially examined the capacity for states to implement transportation reform (assuming at the time that a reform bill was pending). It was found that there was not only little capacity at the state level, but that there was not a strong network of reform-minded technical



assistance providers that could be tapped to build state capacity.² Next, the Foundation examined the existing advocacy groups operating in the state, regional and local environments. Initial funding to bring these groups together did not lead to an indication that these groups could be leveraged to advance the states.

After these explorations, the Transportation Initiative was clear that an overarching 50-state strategy was unlikely to emerge and that a number of strategies would be employed to further state capacity and advance a broad range of reforms. Distinct from the federal aspect of TRA, the state level certainly hoped it would catalyze some reform, but sought more to prepare the states for what was expected to be federal mandates emerging out of the reauthorization bill.

Overall, the Foundation funded 42 state grants and 4 state/federal grants. Of these grants, Transportation Initiative staff offered the following overarching categories to cluster grantmaking.

- **INTERNAL REFORMERS.** The Foundation invested heavily in organizations focused on internal reform, with varied targets including state DOT CEOs, governors, city transportation officials and legislators. The goal of this aspect of the strategy was to generate a reform culture within government by exposing officials to new ideas, facilitating interaction with reform-minded peers, and providing technical assistance to begin implementing and testing reforms.
- **INNOVATIVE POLICY.** The Foundation identified specific opportunities to advance reform and innovations in areas with a good likelihood of success. These grants included funding around California's SB375 (implementation of a bill on greenhouse gas emissions), congestion pricing in New York City, and a Metro Atlanta region referendum on transportation funding. The goal of this aspect of the strategy was to raise the visibility and explore viability of innovative policies that already had some level of support.
- **MISCELLANEOUS.** The Foundation invested in a host of opportunities largely related to building the advocacy capacity of state- and region-focused organizations working on transportation reform, or expanding support for key reform concepts, such as bus rapid transit (BRT). The goals of these relatively modest grants vary, but hinge on emerging opportunities, building allies or some other type of benefit beyond a more tangential likely impact on reform.

² The finding specifically found there to be a lack of independent reform capacity – that capacity that might be distinct from the existing transportation power structure.

Evaluation purpose and audience

The State Component evaluation was designed as a formative evaluation, allowing for an analysis of strategy and any outcome data available. As such, the evaluation represents a point in time and is meant to inform future decision-making rather than draw conclusive findings.

The evaluation is primarily designed to serve internal Rockefeller Foundation information needs. As such, the primary audience for the evaluation includes the Foundation Executive Team, the Transportation Initiative Team and the Foundation's Board of Trustees. To some extent, it is anticipated that the evaluation will also inform grantees funded under the Initiative. Primary audiences are expected to act on the results and recommendations of the monitoring and evaluation to make improvements in the implementation of the Transportation Initiative and the strategy of the Foundation.



Andrew Bossi

Methodology

The evaluation followed a detailed evaluation plan (see Annex E), that included collection and analysis from several data sources. This plan was followed, including data collection and analysis from a variety of sources in a mixed-methods evaluation. Below is a brief description of the implemented methodology.

Data collection methodologies

TCC used the following mixed methods to conduct this evaluation.

- **DESK REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS.** TCC reviewed a wide range of Initiative documents, including internal memos and strategy documents, grant proposals and agreements from the 46 state and state/federal grants, and available grantee reports. A detailed grant coding and analysis was done of all grants made to date as part of the Federal evaluation. TCC also facilitated a discussion with Transportation Initiative staff to improve its understanding the history of the state component. A list of reviewed grants is included in Annex F.
- **INTERVIEWS OF A DIVERSE GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS.** In total, TCC conducted 18 telephone interviews with high, medium and low-performing grantees (as reported by Transportation Initiative staff) and funding partners. A list of interviewees is included in Annex B.
- **SURVEY OF GRANTEES.** With the Federal evaluation, TCC administered a survey to all grantees (N=125). For this evaluation, TCC separated the responses of those who indicated that they engaged in state policy advocacy. Survey sections included perceptions of change in the policy, sector capacity, sustainability and Rockefeller Foundation effectiveness. The survey with embedded results is included in Annex A.

A summary of data collection can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 5: **Summary of data collection**

EVALUATION TOOL	DATA COLLECTION
Grantee survey	22 respondents
Grant analysis/coding:	46 grants
Interviews:	18 (not including SSTI)
Grantees	15
Other funders	2
Outside observers	1
SSTI Interviews	14
Discussion with Transportation Initiative Team	3 participants

It should be noted that TCC conducted a deeper inquiry into a key initiative within the state strategy, the Smart State Transportation Initiative (SSTI). TCC conducted additional interviews for the SSTI evaluation, submitted to the Foundation in April 2012. A portion of these interviews informed the overall state level analysis.

Data analysis

Given the diverse type of grants, grant objectives and data used in the evaluation, the evaluators conducted varying types of analysis.

- Survey data was cleaned and analyzed using SPSS statistical package.
- Qualitative data was thematically coded against the key evaluation questions, then analysis done on relevant grouped data points. Further analysis was done in some cases to link interview data directly to grant reporting data as a method of cross-validating.
- Reports and grant agreements for all state grants were analyzed according to a shared rubric (Annex C). Each grant was analyzed to develop a logic model of change, and thematic analysis was done across the logic models to identify common trends in strategies and outcomes.
- Comparative thematic analysis was done between Foundation-identified high and low performing grants in order to identify trends that may contribute to achieving the Foundation's intended goals.
- Descriptive grouping of qualitative responses was done to generate areas of potential further investment. These groupings were then analyzed for relevance and reasonableness.

Findings

Through the diverse data collection described above, the evaluation identified a number of findings related to the Transportation Initiative. The findings pertain to evaluation questions identified in the evaluation workplan (see Annex E). As described in the workplan, the goal was less about affixing success or failure to the state portfolio of grants or individual grantees and more about uncovering aspects of what might lead to success or failure. Findings are presented in four sections.

- A. Portfolio analysis and articulation of theories of change
- B. Comparing high performing grantees to low performers
- C. Successes and challenges
- D. Sustainability

SECTION A on portfolio analysis and theories of change takes a broad look at the portfolio and the way it was constructed. A five-part framework was developed that teases out implicit and explicit theories of change associated with individual grants and groupings of grants. While the Foundation has a post-hoc articulation of groups of grants, this section is intended to provide additional insight to the Foundation as to how it might conceive of the portfolio and think about remaining investments.

SECTION B compares grants that were considered to be high, medium and low performing, as identified by TRA staff. The purpose of this comparison was to identify grantee characteristics that were likely to aid or impede implementation in order to provide further insight to the Foundation for the remainder of the initiative.

SECTION C continues the analysis pertaining to effective grant typologies and provides findings and analysis related to opportunities and challenges pertaining to the different funding approaches. The purpose of this analysis is to aid Foundation staff in making future cost/benefit calculations for the remainder of the Initiative. This section cues up an analysis of recommendations and potential opportunities stemming from the evaluation, which is presented in the report's final analysis and recommendations section.

SECTION D is a brief analysis of sustainability related to grantmaking.

Each of these sections is addressed in detail below.

Portfolio analysis and articulation of theories of change

There was not one overarching strategy to frame the state grantee portfolio. Instead, the Transportation Initiative utilized multiple strategies to move state policy and build capacity at the state level. Transportation Initiative staff members identified three overarching clusters of grantmaking in their state strategy: internal reform, innovative policy and miscellaneous.

During initial search efforts, the Foundation found little existing capacity at the state and local levels. With the Initiative's primary goal focused on the immediacy of federal reform, the lack of existing capacity posed a challenge for investing as deliberately as the TRA team would have liked. The team strategically chose to delay a robust state strategy, though some initial grants that were made were anticipated to provide some state/local pressure up to the federal debate. While the delay in broader grantmaking at the state level was questioned in reference to the federal strategy,³ the evaluation considered the state strategy in its own right – as a mechanism for preparing for federal change and continuing local reform structures and idea development.

As with the federal strategy, the state-level strategy did not pursue a specific reform agenda. A narrow review of the portfolio shows an attempt to try a variety of strategies to penetrate reform at the state/local level – engage governors, engage legislators, engage state departments of transportation, pursue pilot projects, engage local policymakers, etc. The range of issues is reflected in state-level grantees assessment about the transportation field's effectiveness in reaching concrete goals – 30 percent of respondents indicated medium or large improvement, ranking in the bottom half of changes explored in the survey.

A broader analysis of the portfolio reveals an attempt to seed change at multiple levels, with varying degrees of initial uptake. While it is clear that there were distinct strategy clusters, the Foundation desired to explore whether there were also outcome clusters. Lists of strategies, short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes were developed after reviewing Foundation grantee data. Grantee applications and reports were analyzed to identify whether each grant engaged in each strategy or anticipated each outcome. For each grantee, a logic chain was developed to articulate the individual theories of change embedded in each grant. This analysis is found in its entirety in Annex C.

Once the individual logic models were developed, the strategies, short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes were aggregated to identify the most common pathways. Figure 1 depicts the final tally of aggregated grants across these strategies and outcomes. Strategies and outcomes intended by over 50 percent of existing grants are in blue text; strategies and outcomes intended by 20-49 percent of grantees are in red text; and those intended by less than 20 percent of grantees are in black.

³ See related evaluation report: Rockefeller Foundation Initiative: Promoting Equitable and Sustainable Transportation – Federal Component

FIGURE 1: **Aggregated state portfolio**

STRATEGIES	SHORT TERM OUTCOMES	LONG TERM OUTCOMES
Research & create resources (63%) <i>Capacity building of other organizations (15%)</i> Networking, collaboration, convening (65%) Specific smart transit advocacy project support (57%) <i>Interact with policymakers (13%)</i> <i>Invest in media hits (11%)</i> <i>Use technology to spread message (7%)</i> <i>Invest in internal organizational capacity (35%)</i> <i>Invest in internal communications capacity (28%)</i>	Message better framed (24%) Increased organizational capacity (33%) Increased intra-advocate collaboration (52%) Increased capacity of other advocates (41%) <i>Developed cache of knowledge (17%)</i> <i>High quality/improved advocacy (17%)</i> Message reaches policymakers &/or general public (35%) <i>Increased engagement of private sector (7%)</i> <i>Increased capacity of states (15%)</i> <i>Increased support/engagement of general public (15%)</i> <i>Increased knowledge of transit issues among general public (11%)</i> <i>Increased capacity of states (2%)</i> Enhanced network (30%) Increased communications capacity (20%) <i>Increased ability to influence policymakers (17%)</i> High quality/innovative policies prescriptions made (37%) <i>Increased conversation about smart transit (7%)</i> Increased engagement/support of policymakers (41%) Influenced policy text (7%)	<i>Horizontal and/or vertical replication (11%)</i> Equitable (26%) Economically competitive (24%) More options (11%) Regional component (37%) Better policy enacted (39%) Implementation of high quality transit (26%) <i>Advocates' long term capacity strengthened (4%)</i> <i>Structural changes in government (2%)</i> <i>Increased referenda for positive changes (2%)</i> Raising transit revenue (20%) Mobility of policymakers (2%) <i>Destructive bills blocked (9%)</i> <i>Sustained capacity of governments (2%)</i> Transportation implementation is sustainable (33%) Reduced greenhouse gas emission (20%) <i>American culture/paradigm shift (4%)</i>

Overall, the portfolio is far too broad to see deep levels of change. However, the pockets of change that have emerged seem promising, particularly those that worked directly on embedding change.

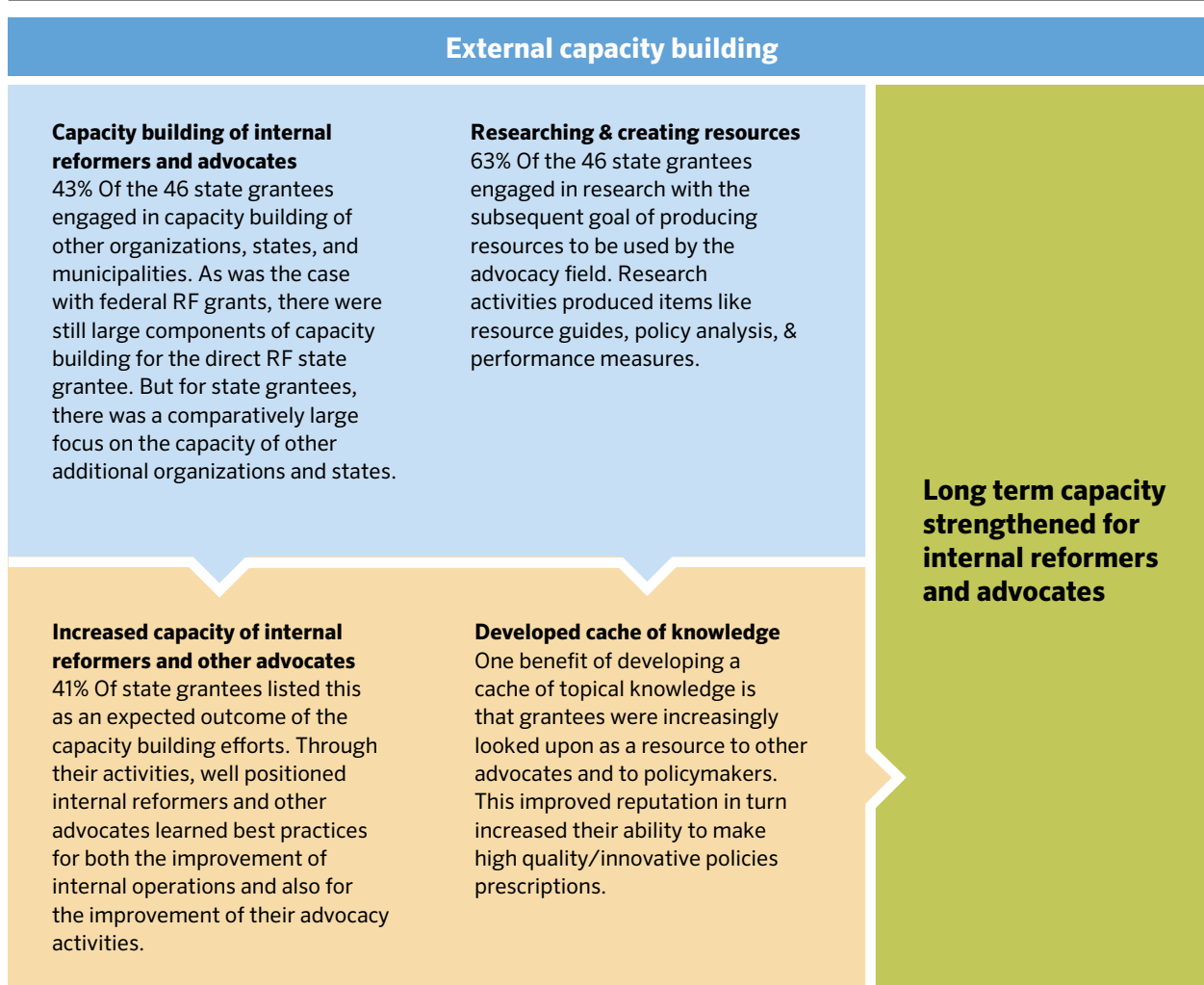
A logic chain was developed for each of these types of outcomes, depicting how aggregated strategies led to indented outcomes for grantees. Below is a look at five streams of activities identified through the review:

1. External capacity building
2. Effective and efficient policy advocacy campaigns
3. Framing the smart transportation message
4. Investing in network-building
5. Other shared outcomes

1. External capacity building

Many grantees were involved in work to build the capacity of others, typically either internal reformers (e.g. reform-minded state DOTs, city transit officials) or advocacy groups. Grantees engaged in this kind of work also utilized research and resources to supplement their capacity building, either through commissioning/conducting their own research, compiling existing research or drawing from new products put into the field by other Foundation grantees. These activities were intended to lead to gains in capacity and knowledge among capacity-building targets and, in turn, were intended to lead to long term capacity gains. This pathway is depicted below in Figure 2.

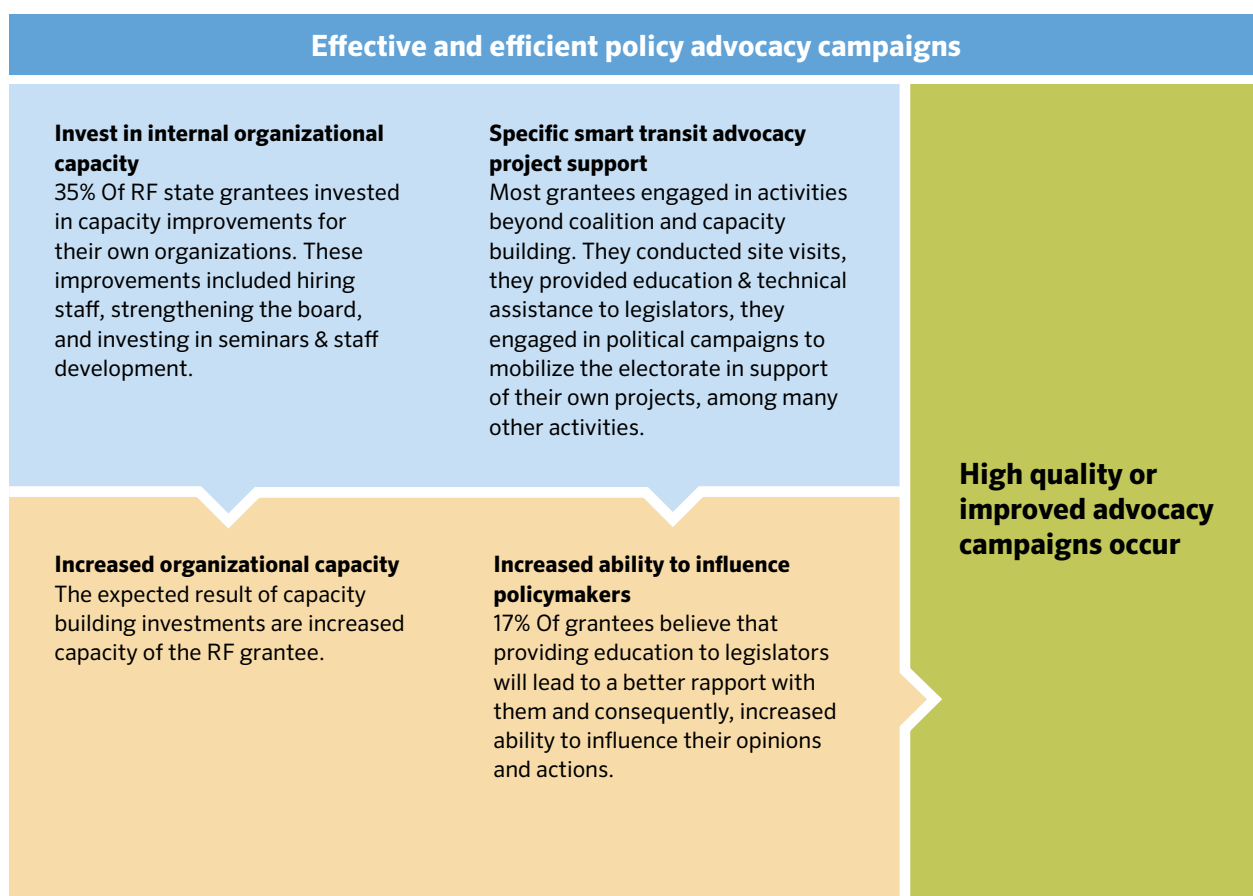
FIGURE 2: External capacity building pathways



2. Effective and efficient policy advocacy campaigns

The State strategy also consisted of a number of grants that funded advocacy campaigns and advocacy organizations. This funding often served to build internal capacity of advocacy organizations, including adding advocacy-focused or transportation-focused staff and to support campaign implementation. Investing in advocacy capacity and project implementation resulted in intended outcomes of increased organizational capacity to do advocacy and increased ability to influence policymakers, ultimately resulting in high quality advocacy campaigns. Figure 3 below depicts this pathway.

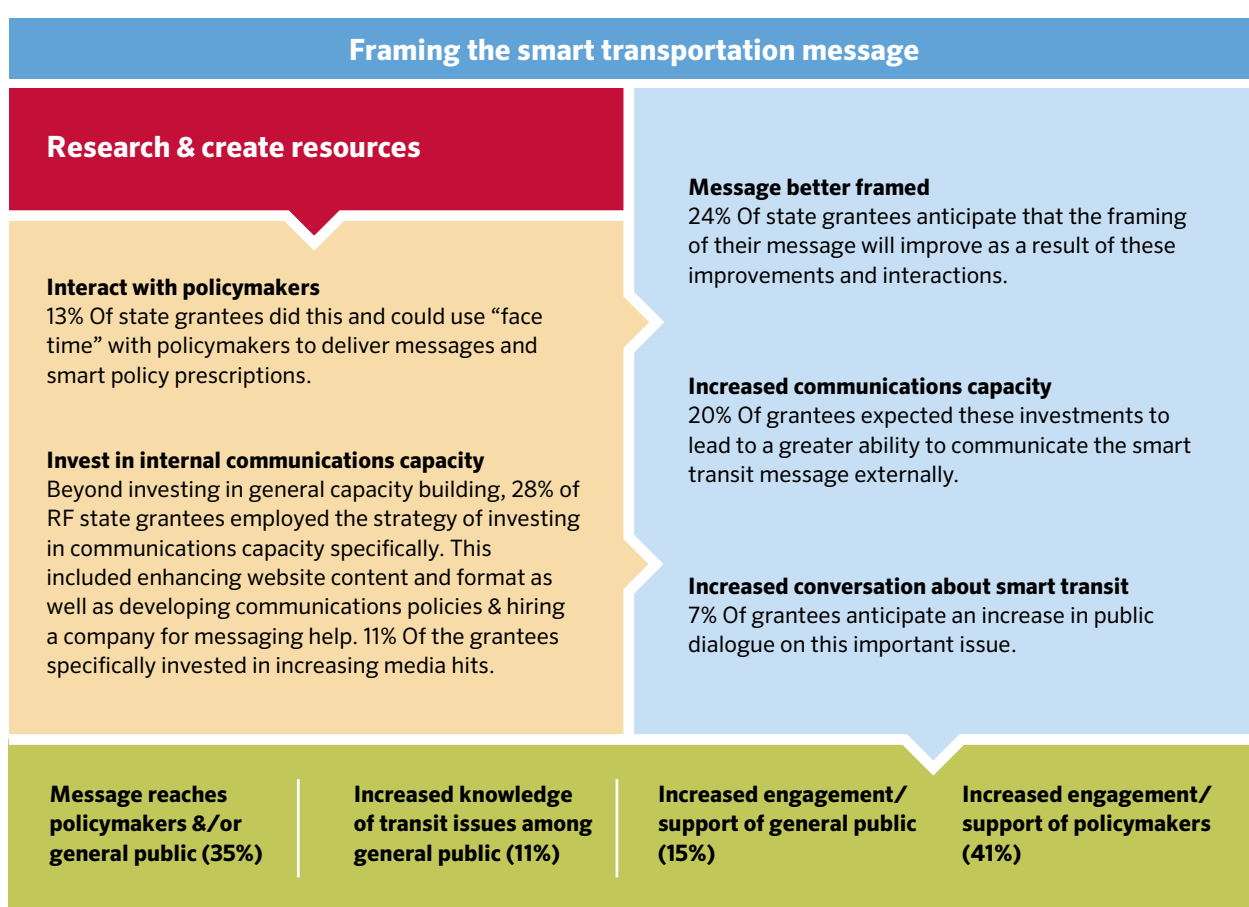
FIGURE 3: Policy advocacy campaigns pathways



3. Framing the smart transportation message

About one-quarter of grantees were engaged in message framing work. Efforts to frame the smart transportation message on the state/local/regional level were intended to garner support from the general public as well as policymakers and decision-makers. Grantees utilized research and resources, enhanced internal communications capacity, and interacted with policymakers to frame and deliver their messages, as depicted in Figure 4 below.

FIGURE 4: **Messaging pathways**

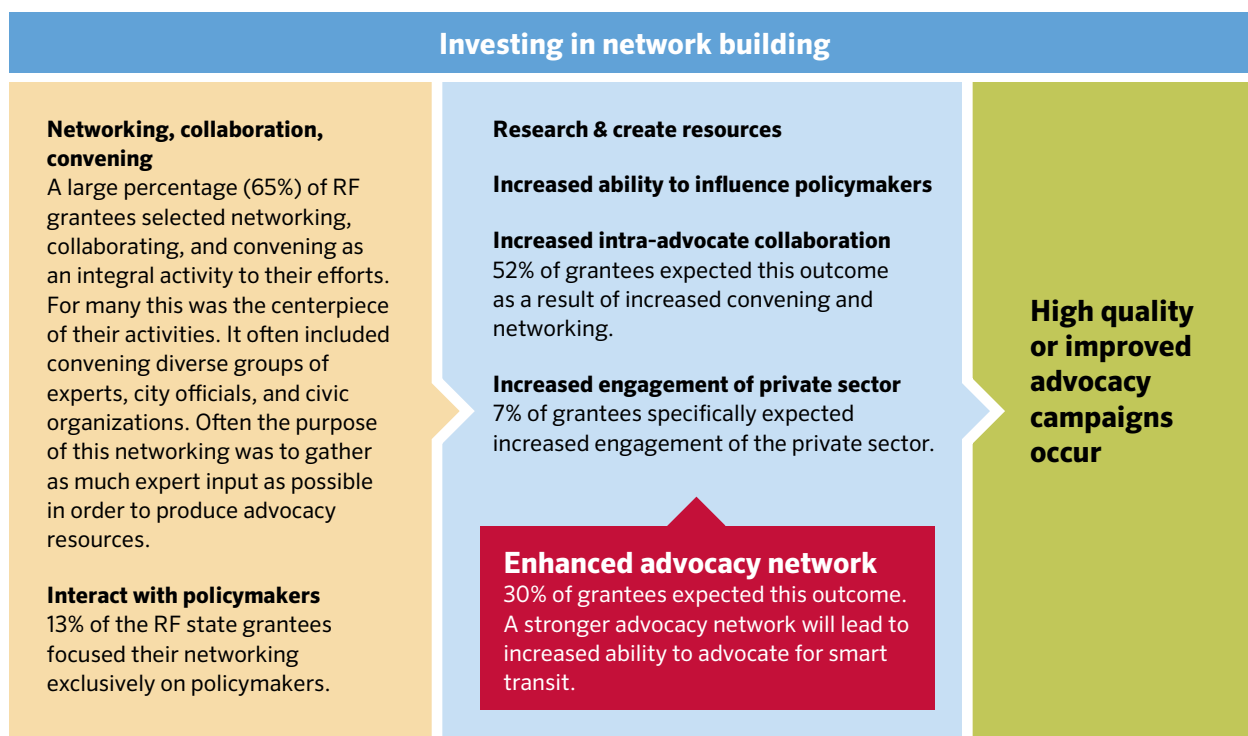


Simultaneous investments in research and communications capacity show a pathway for success in reframing the smart transportation, allowing for increased dialogue and knowledge about smart transportation. While many grantees were not specifically focused on engagement of the general public, many expected increased knowledge and engagement of the general public as an outcome from their general advocacy work.

4. Investing in network building

While the Foundation did not explicitly fund an overall state strategy coalition/ network, grantees engaged in a good deal of formal and informal network building. Furthermore, the Foundation provided opportunities for grantees to engage with each other and leverage resources. Network building allowed for increased capacity, increased ability to collaborate and increased engagement. Figure 5 depicts the causal chain showing how network building can ultimately lead to high quality advocacy implementation.

FIGURE 5: **Network-building pathways**



5. Other shared outcomes

Foundation grantees described other shared intended outcomes in their work. Although these outcomes did not fit into any of the graphics above, they warrant further examination, especially as they were more apparent among state grantees as compared with federal grantees.

- **INTENDED REPLICABILITY.** State grants frequently had an emphasis on the potential for replicability to other states, or to serve as models for potential federal reforms. This was true among grants aimed at providing technical assistance to internal reforms, those that had an emphasis on best practices and innovation, as well as among demonstration-type grants. Many of these efforts are just now arriving at a place where replicability is feasible.
- **BLOCKING DESTRUCTIVE POLICY.** Grantees not only intended to push forward smart transportation policy, but also focused on blocking destructive policy. For example, in several cases, these activities were focused on preventing sprawl-inducing road projects. This also included activities related to encouraging states not to return federal transportation funds.
- **REFERENDA.** Not surprisingly, many state grants utilized referenda as a way to advance reform. Referenda represent a unique opportunity to advance reform goals in a climate where legislators are unwilling to allocate funding. Raising

transit revenue through the use of taxes and fees was a key goal of referenda campaigns. However, this is especially difficult due to the current anti-tax climate in many states.

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF HIGH QUALITY TRANSIT.** State grantees were more focused on policy implementation than policy adoption. Some grants emphasized teaching state leaders to set up well designed and sustainable transit systems.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES.** As quite a few grantees came from the environmental advocacy realm, many grants set environment-related intended outcomes, mainly related to reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

It is clear that despite the lack of an overarching strategy for the state grantee portfolio, not only were there shared outcome aspirations among grantees, grantees appeared to be exploring some similar and complementary pathways to outcome attainment.

Comparison of high performing grantees to low performers

In order to help the Foundation better predict successful grants in the future, TCC examined characteristics of grantee performance – ranging from high performing grantees to low performers. Foundation staff identified a set of high-performing, medium performing and low performing grants. Interviewees were also asked to identify characteristics of either a grantee or an initiative that would be likely to succeed. It is clear that both organizational and environmental factors contributed to differences in success among the state grantees. The following table presents an analysis of shared organizational characteristics of successful grantees, as described by grantees themselves, and as summarized by analysis of interviews with grantees that the Foundation rates as high performing

TABLE 6: **Capacities related to successful grants**

WHAT CAPACITIES DO SUCCESSFUL GRANTEES SHARE?				
Ability to lead	Ability to adapt to changing environments	Ability to manage	Ability to further their work	Environmental factors
Leadership/ program staff sustainability	Use of effective decision-making tools	Program staffing	Fundraising skills	Relative stability in target audience
Staff Reputation	Environmental learning	Problem solving	Marketing skills	Clear value-added end goal (beyond study)
			Outreach skills	Existing advocacy infrastructure
				Research base to support argument, especially when highlighting non-environmental arguments (e.g. public health, cost savings, economic development)

Of these factors, grantee capacity to deliver on the specific work prior to the grant, both specific to smart transportation and the audience they are trying to reach, was important. As the Foundation had previously identified the lack of existing capacity, it is not surprising that the development of many of the grants moved more slowly than the Foundation had originally intended. Future investment will likely benefit from the initial trial-and-error experienced in some of the early grants in that their institutional capacity and increased credibility has grown.

Along with capacity, high staff turnover can also be a predictor of less successful grants. Grants that had a lot of turnover in staff (especially multiple handoffs) suffered in their ability to attain intended outcomes. While it is nearly impossible for a funder to predict grantee staff turnover, interviewees posited that a strong board or executive could potentially serve as a source of continuity, especially with an executive transition. This is more applicable to smaller organizations with greater board oversight.

Successful grantees reported extensive ability to adapt to changing environments. This included success in message reframing (e.g. reframing SB375 implementation from an environmental issue to a public health issue), use of decision-making tools to inform strategy (e.g. research, polling), and successes in bringing on new partnerships and credible spokespeople. They also benefited from existing credibility and relationships, allowing them to advance agendas in an environment where trust already had been established. Some of the less successful grantees evidenced less ability to be nimble and reframe their programs when something was not working.

Grantees that focused on building capacity within infrastructure groups had varying levels of success. Engagement of targets (e.g. legislators, governors, transportation officials) appears to be the biggest driver of success in these types of initiatives. Grantees that were able to build and sustain engagement and interest (e.g. SSTI and Institute for Sustainable Communities) were much more successful than grantees that had difficulty finding interested targets to engage (e.g. Smart Growth Leadership Institute and National Governors Association for Best Practices). In order to engage targets, a few important factors emerged.

- **EXISTING CREDIBILITY OF STAFF.** Various constituent groups were reluctant to work with unknown quantities. Having staff with national credibility on board was important. Further, having actually implemented some types of change was critical to staff credibility.
- **OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE WITH PEERS.** Learning from peers and engaging target audiences with their peers appeared to generate increased interest, as compared to focusing more narrowly on one's own local state/locality.
- **ABILITY TO REACH AN INTERESTED CHAMPION.** Beyond just selling a program, the successful programs appeared able to meet interested parties where they were, and to frame the project in a way that it built upon the interests of the individual. More abstract targeting (e.g. political transitions, strategic geography) had more difficult gaining traction.

Successes and challenges

While Rockefeller Foundation staff shared preliminary thoughts regarding which grants were successful, TCC offers additional reflections on the successes and challenges of the state portfolio.

1. *Leveraging funds to lead to improved sustainability.*

One of the main success stories in the group of grantees funded to work on SB375 implementation is its potential for ongoing sustainability. The Foundation's leadership ensured that California funders are now well engaged in transportation reform, finding arguments to draw in health and social justice funders. California funders have demonstrated increased coordination in their grantmaking, allowing for greater effectiveness and less overlap. The funder coordination appears to have good sustainability, with funders agreeing that they will need to continue to fund SB375 implementation, even if the Foundation pulls out or reduces support and will continue to support the capacity built through the Foundation's funding. This is also a helpful model to explore moving forward, as it makes the Foundation's exist strategy less fraught because of the commitment of statewide funders.

2. *Having a tight focus.*

Infrastructure capacity-building initiatives that have cast a wide net both in terms of topic and audience seem to have struggled more than more focused capacity-building initiatives.

3. *Existing capacity is key.*

Grants that had strong capacity to do the work at initiation were much more likely to have quicker outcome attainment. Grants supporting internal reformers were much more successful when there was already a strong trusting relationship with the reformer group. Organizations trying to build credibility with these groups needed much more lag time to build momentum (e.g. NGA not receiving a large number of feasible applications from states). For state/regional work, grantees with existing advocacy networks, funder relationships and policymaker relationships were better positioned to move quickly. Many of the grants with less demonstrated success could have benefited from more start-up time to establish a strong baseline of capacity.

4. *Patience is important.*

Building on the previous finding regarding capacity, it is clear that the Foundation expectations for some of the grants may have been higher than to be expected given the demonstrated capacity of these organizations. It is acknowledged that federal reform can move slowly, but it is important to acknowledge this on the state and local level as well. States have varying capacity to implement reform and respond to external pressure, and there does not seem to have been as much patience for the pace of state progress.

TCC attempted to examine Foundation allocations by categorizing grants into the three buckets the Foundation had suggested: internal reformers, innovative policy and miscellaneous. As the miscellaneous bucket was quite large, we have further split it into three additional categories: broad reform (no specific state/regional target,

broad agenda), topic advocacy (no specific state/regional target, specific topics such as freight), and regional advocacy (targeting specific states/regions with broad reforms). Dollar allocations for each grouping are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 7: **Grant allocations by type**

CATEGORY	TOTAL ALLOCATION	# OF GRANTS IDENTIFIED BY RF AS HIGH PERFORMERS	# OF GRANTS IDENTIFIED BY RF AS MEDIUM/LOW PERFORMERS
Internal reformers	\$3,240,000	1	4
Innovative policy	\$3,440,000	4	1
Broad reform ⁴	\$12,482,500	3	1
Topic advocacy	\$780,000	1	0
Regional advocacy	\$2,587,000	0	2

Analyzing each of the categories for potential opportunities and challenges resulted in potentially useful findings related to each category. The internal reform and innovative policy categories appeared to have the greatest success overall, though the internal reform category also experienced some of the most difficult challenges. A deeper list of challenges and opportunities related to each grouping can be found in Table 4.

TABLE 8: **Opportunities and challenges by funding category**

CATEGORY	OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
Internal reformers	Ability to capacitate those with the ability to enact change Ability to establish best practices/opportunities for replication Peer support/exchange Ability to partner with other statewide efforts	Credibility/buy in with targets Establishing the value add for targets Sustainability/exit strategy Projects may stall without \$ tied to helping targets implement reforms/projects
Innovative policy	Existing networks/coalitions working on the issues Momentum Ability to garner public support Ability to mobilize other funders Ability to demonstrate successful innovations to other states/regions	Issue/organizational history can be a barrier
Broad reform	Ability to tap into promising projects of different scope/scale Geographic diversity – can support small projects/reforms in states that normally wouldn't be receptive Ability to experiment Strong replication potential	Potential to chase easy wins/go after low-hanging fruit Less focus means less of an overarching message Less potential for a cohort when there is less in common among those engaged
Topic advocacy	Ability to make a lot of progress on specific issue areas	Potential lack of tie in to broader reform debate
Regional advocacy	Allowing for more collaboration between different states, DOTs, advocacy groups	State governmental barriers may block progress Susceptible to multiple governmental stakeholder changes

⁴ This category is much larger due to the \$10 million investment in a broad reform grant to Brookings.

Sustainability

Assessing the sustainability of the state grants is fairly difficult. The breadth of the portfolio means that sustainability must primarily be examined through the lens of individual grants. Because many of the grants are still being implemented, it is frequently hard to know the full extent to which outcomes will be realized, much less sustained. Further, even where grants evidenced concrete outcomes, the evaluation was unable to probe at a deep enough level to know whether changes would be sustainable through outside forces such as governance transitions or continued economic pressures.

While grant documents clearly describe hopes for the ongoing sustainability of their Foundation-funded projects, there was not an overarching pathway to sustainability uniting the grants. As the Foundation is one of the (if not the only) primary investors in the space and for these programs, the impending absence of Foundation funds is likely to have a large negative effect on sustainability. This is already evidenced, as some of the programs that the Foundation chose not to reinvest in have since been discontinued.

There are a few pockets where sustainability seems likely, at least in the short term. These stem from Foundation efforts to increase local networks (including funding networks) and to build the credibility of specific institutions. Several reforms seem to have been embedded in institutional structures (e.g. state DOTs), though it is too early to know how deep they go and if they have staying power. These collective efforts are leading to more perceived capacity in the transportation space compared with when the Foundation entered, which may take on a self-generative life. Ultimately, however, as with transportation reform efforts, there are few apparent viable funding mechanisms to sustain much of the work.

Analysis, opportunities and recommendations

It is TCC's assessment that despite an overly broad strategy, the Rockefeller Foundation was thoughtful and reflective regarding its state funding. The grants reflect an attempt to pursue multiple avenues of change, with the notion that there was an abundance of opportunity and need, and that transportation reform is complex, necessitating change at multiple levels. Several of the grants did not fare well, frequently due to issues of extant capacity (or lack thereof). In this regard, the Foundation appears to have operated out of a sense of urgency for reform but without the patience merited by its own understanding of lack of capacity in the field or the focus to concertedly develop that capacity.

The Foundation's broad approach was an appropriate strategy, given the acknowledged need to build capacity. The evaluation revealed little that the Foundation could have strategically invested in that it had not, with two exceptions. First, it appears that the Foundation could have placed a more concerted focus on financing mechanisms and revenue generation. Addressing the issue of financing is a critical consideration for states, just as it was a large impediment for federal reform. While the states seem more willing to explore a diverse array of funding mechanisms, they are looking for good models and ideas that are feasible and generate revenue at a meaningful scale. Second, the Foundation could likely have done more to highlight existing pockets of reform, providing policymakers and advocates concrete examples of what successful reform might look like and demonstrating its viability under a number of political, geographic and population density settings.

Based on the above and some specific data collection, we present the following sets of recommendations. The first are derived from interviewees and the second are from TCC's perspective.

Ideas from the field

Interviewees were asked to provide recommendations regarding innovative smart growth reform efforts and areas where Rockefeller might increase its investments or fund additional activities. The evaluation team grouped responses and presents them in Table 5, along with its assessment of the value of the recommendation in line with other findings from the evaluation.

TABLE 9: Interviewees' recommendations and TCC Group's assessment

RECOMMENDATION		DESCRIPTION	TCC ASSESSMENT
A.	Incubate innovative funding for transportation	Identify potential viable revenue streams for transportation distinct from the gas tax.	Anything the Foundation can do to further this issue is likely to be leveraged. However, there is a danger, in that financing options may not be tied to the level of philosophical and planning reform necessary to truly bring about reform. Care is needed to ensure that innovative financing isn't a solution in and of itself.
B.	Identify sample projects for transferability	Grantees indicated a first-mover reluctance on the part of states. Provide a national perspective/database of innovative projects that could be seen through a viable state lens.	Such a cataloguing of projects is likely to have a big effect on exposing a wider range of individuals to viable reform ideas. Further, it would provide advocates something to draw from in their local work. This seems highly viable.
C.	Facilitate interaction across government departments	The "siloing" of transportation is perceived to be problematic, given that multiple governmental departments have a stake and play a role in aspects of transportation policy. Facilitating interaction across departments would help break down those silos.	In theory, this is clearly meaningful and existing attempts to provide demonstration initiatives may prove useful. However, the scope and nature of the siloing issue are likely too broad and entrenched for the Foundation to have much influence, even in terms of adding additional demo projects.
D.	Build grassroots support	Encourage a more reform oriented grassroots because transportation is slow to reform and innovate.	It is not entirely clear where such grassroots would emerge, and a broad-based strategy is likely to be too diffuse to be meaningful in most states. However, bringing new groups to the transportation table (e.g. through an equity lens or economic lens) has the potential to be sustainable in the long-term.
E.	Improve regional projections	A couple of interviewees pointed to the poor projections of many DOTs, and one interviewee referred to the tri-state work as a model for "removing smoke and mirrors."	This might be a parallel to the revenue stream approach. However, in general, it does not have the type of direct tie to reform that the Foundation may be looking for.
F.	Leverage existing demonstration projects	Several Foundation-supported projects are just coming to full fruition and there is an opportunity to test the transferability model.	This is a logical extension of the existing approach – build on where there are signs of success. Interestingly, the recommendation was to pursue this approach as the primary lens, rather than investing in new states/demo projects, though recognize that these might be a way to open the door toward another project that a new state might now be interested in doing.
G.	Develop a pipeline of projects	Given transportation projects generally take a long time to come to fruition, beginning to develop a pipeline of projects at the local level that are there to force attention would increase number of smart growth projects that get in the funding line.	Too ambitious and amorphous for the Foundation, but a cataloguing of projects might serve as a first step for this.
H.	Engage public health sector	Bring public health stakeholders more actively to the table – both for advocacy and for research – to make the case.	In theory, making linkages across multiple groups is worthwhile. However, in the absence of a specific campaign, it is unlikely that transportation policy and planning would consistently sit on public health's policy agenda.

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION	TCC ASSESSMENT
I. Invest in SB375-type legislation	Leverage existing reforms in order to embed them more deeply. This provides for great implementation opportunities and provides a time-bound framework. A regional funders network is likely to be important in such efforts.	In order for the Foundation to capitalize on this recommendation, such opportunities would already need to exist, and they may be limited. However, this may provide an innovative opportunity for the Foundation to test the possibility of leveraging existing pieces of legislation that are tangentially related to transportation through the executive process.
J. Invest in buy-in from local officials	Ensure local/metropolitan support to advance local reforms and incubate promising practices.	Despite its potential breadth, this recommendation seems reasonable in terms of continuing to present examples of innovative policies in a way that facilitates potential transference.
K. Improve coordination of statewide activities	While the Foundation has made some efforts to improve coordination of its statewide work (e.g. connecting SSTI to NGA), some grantees felt that this could be improved. Some questioned whether there should be multiple capacity-building activities occurring simultaneously in states. Along these lines, grantees also recommended greater monitoring on the part of the Foundation to help facilitate such coordination and also recommended that the Foundation facilitate bringing in other non-grantee stakeholders.	Informing grantees how they fit into a broader portfolio and continuing to strategically facilitate relationships is something the Foundation should continue to do. The notion of bringing in other non-grantee stakeholders seems beyond what the Foundation should do in the remainder of the Initiative.
L. Make a “big bet” in one state	Look to bring about significant policy change in a single state, similar to the national campaign efforts	There is not likely enough time for the Foundation to engage in this strategy. Further, it may be hard to prioritize a single state that might have catalytic potential.
M. Develop communications for transportation reform advocates	Transportation messaging remains a challenge and there is reported need for additional research to bring together transportation and other areas, such as economics.	RF has already invested in some polling and communications work. It is unclear the extent to which additional message testing would be valuable.
N. Increase utilization of technology	Several interviewees felt that transportation was underutilizing technology – from social media and online revenue streams to biotechnology-enhanced asphalt and route modeling.	This could fall under the broader category of highlighting some existing innovations. While it would be innovative, it is not clear if there is enough time for the Foundation to develop a good strategy around this.
O. Scan for potential opportunities to invest in rural areas	One interviewee felt there was promise with rural and exurban areas and that the Foundation may wish to conduct a scan to identify any potential.	A high premium might be placed on rural examples in order to facilitate change at both the federal and state levels as such examples will likely be important in legislative activity.
P. Invest more heavily in local projects	Innovation and ambition are more readily apparent in local municipalities. Land use was identified as one of the most important and potentially viable issue areas that could be focused on.	The potential for tangible change is greater at this level, though it is not clear that the smaller scale meets Foundation objectives.

TCC Group recommendations

Based on our analysis and in addition to our commentary on interviewee-generated ideas, TCC presents the following recommendations to Rockefeller Foundation:

1. *The overall rationale for funding state/regional/local work remains compelling.*

Reform at this level continues to show promise for strong social, environmental, financial and health impacts, all areas of interest for the Foundation. In fact, the state portfolio appears to have a closer alignment with Foundation goals due to greater emphasis on climate change and equity in some of the state grants. Further, while more limited than federal reform would be, changes emerging at the state and local level are having an immediate impact on the way transportation policy is conceived and implemented.

2. *The Initiative expectations were too high for what this portfolio of grantees could accomplish and should take a longer-term view.*

Given the Foundation classification of high/medium/low performing grantees, it appears that some of the lower performing grantees lacked capacity to undertake the work, needing either more time or stability to implement their grants fully. A better assessment of capacity or a greater level of support in implementation may have helped these grants achieve greater success. Further, given the Foundation's own understanding of the limited capacity that existed in the field, it is not surprising that many efforts have generated modest returns to date.

3. *Work to facilitate more state-local relationships.*

It appears that local projects were largely left out of the mix with a few exceptions (e.g. MoveNY, National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)). While the funded local work was not highly successful, it appears that the Foundation could gain some traction in specific localities, especially in strengthening the DOT/local relationship. Ways that RF might do this include raising up existing local projects that have either been successful or are pipeline ready and directly facilitating more state-local connections.

4. *Rockefeller Foundation has been helpful in bringing select grantees together and making connections, but could engage in some strategic convenings.*

State grantees were more unaware of the larger Transportation Initiative and were not always aware of who else was engaged in Foundation-funded state level work. There could be some good opportunities to bring grantees together to identify shared leverage points or lessons learned to date.

5. *Funder coordination is a promising exit strategy, though may be elusive.*

The work done engaging California funders has been a good exit model for the Foundation. Funders in CA are anticipating an eventual Foundation funding reduction, and are prepared to step up. This group of funders is better positioned for impact due to greater funder coordination, so the Foundation exit may be less painful due to their work. Furthermore, it has allowed for a more diverse framing of the importance of reform, bringing funders interested in health and social

justice into the transportation reform funding realm. The Foundation's leadership in getting funders engaged in this work was viewed as instrumental. We acknowledge the difficulty of facilitating such funding coordination and any such effort is likely to benefit from similarly organizing around concrete policies or projects.

6. *Consider selecting one or two levers of change and work those in multiple states.*

Working through multiple levers of change has not proven to be more effective to date. Building up infrastructure in one or two common areas (e.g., governors, legislatures, DOT, local planning, MPO, etc.) across multiple states rather than broad capacity development may lead to more sustainable results. The notion that success breeds copy-cats was referenced by multiple state policy-makers and generating pockets of success within one or two areas in a state may be enough to generate a snowball effect. Based on our analysis of the data, continuing work with DOTs seems to be the most promising (as it has the greatest recognized extant group of staff with expertise) while governors seem the most difficult.

7. *Focus on readying projects for transferability.*

Whether drawing from existing Foundation projects and/or scanning for additional projects, the Foundation should focus on creating a cadre of projects that could be showcased as viably successful in three to four thematic areas.