

**F. M. KIRBY FOUNDATION, INC.**  
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April 19, 2024

**TO:** Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Justin Kiczek  
**SUBJECT:** Report of the President

I dreaded group projects when I was a student. With a ragtag group of peers, you had to go through what felt like the soul-crushing work of coming up with a common approach or topic, delegating work, and trying to find a part for everyone to play. There was inevitably the one person in the group who pulled no weight, and, on the other hand, there was usually the high achiever who might try to take all of the credit.

No matter the project, it always seemed like it would be easier if I could just tackle it on my own, rather than go through the messy work of achieving something with other students. In many ways, with its testing and grading system, school has always rewarded individual – not group – achievement, so trying to suddenly shift gears and accomplish something with others felt counterintuitive.

But once you enter the “real world,” you realize that those same skills of building consensus, working with others, and delegating roles are what make well-developed workplaces thrive. There are, of course, many careers where individuals achieve greatness on their own, but the vast majority of human achievements happen because of teamwork – in other words, group projects. I guess, as usual, our teachers were on to something.

The F. M. Kirby Foundation has always been animated by a strong team culture, but since our December 2023 Board meeting, collaboration has felt more prominent – and necessary – than ever. It was a mighty team effort that launched our new grant portal in February of this year, with Wanda leading the design, the program team helping to craft the questions, and Gina shaping the communications with our grantees. Similarly, the 2023 Annual Grant Book, which you received a few weeks ago, also required “all hands on deck,” and we believe that the report has been enhanced by the robust participation of all team members.

Collaboration was also the key word for our March 2024 convening, entitled “Common Ground, Common Goals.” An illustration of partnership itself, this event for Morris County non-profits was born out of a close working relationship with the Mimi Washington Starrett Foundation, with whom we co-hosted the event. Designed to share best practices in partnerships between non-profits, the convening not only helped our grantees re-connect with one another, but it also spurred several new partnerships among grantees who may have otherwise not seen a connection.

Relatedly, we have partnered with the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship for two important projects: the F. M. Kirby Impact Prize, now in its fourth year of operation, and the recently announced “Innovating to Scale” webinar series. For our grantees, this learning opportunity will set the stage for our upcoming “Engine 2” grant initiative, but, as an added bonus, the webinar is open to any impact organization across the globe, which allows the F. M. Kirby Foundation and CASE to extend our collective impact well beyond the regions which we cherish.

In both of these recent collaborations, partnership has amplified our ability to do more. With a small staff and a large pool of grantees, our capacity to serve our grantees “beyond the check” has its limits, but when we partner with the Foundation’s friends, so much more can be accomplished.

Finally, it must be noted how much the enclosed mailing and the assorted preparations for the April 26<sup>th</sup> Board meeting are themselves the products of collaboration. In the attached packet, you will see newly designed reports from GivingData, thoughtful evaluation forms from our program team, investment reports from our Director of Finance and investment committee, and much more.

For all of these reasons, we are looking forward to gathering with you on April 26, 2024 at Sarah P. Duke Gardens. As Laura made you aware, we will begin the day at 11:30 a.m. with a tour of the Gardens. Upon our return to the Doris Duke Center and Kirby-Horton Hall, we will enjoy lunch and hear from Mr. William LeFevre, Executive Director of the Gardens. After a short break, we will begin with the annual meeting of the Board of Members, and Laura will invite Directors, guests, and staff to listen to the annual report of the Chair. From there, we will go into our Directors meeting. Please note the detailed agenda enclosed herewith. In the President’s Report section of the meeting, the team hopes to take you through the “life cycle of a grant,” in order to help you better understand how, with new technology and new team members, we are working together as a unit.

In anticipation of our meeting, we present to you in this mailing 61 grants in amounts of \$75,000 or under for your concurrence (for a total of \$2,072,000). We are happy to highlight here two new management-approved grantees:

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** This \$50,000 grant was directed towards marketing and advocacy efforts for the nationwide 988 hotline. As you may recall, this was a grant recommended by our subcommittee studying mental health (Leigh, Wilson, JoAnn, Liz, and myself). The 988 Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our support for 988 through NAMI will help increase public awareness of the lifeline while also advocating for further improvements to the infrastructure.
- **New Jersey League of Conservation Voters Education Fund:** This \$15,000 grant supports the Flood Defense New Jersey coalition. The coalition advocates for the adoption by municipalities of “stormwater utility,” which sets up revenue sources for stormwater management while creating incentives for businesses and developers to reduce impervious surfaces. The League has come highly recommended to us by many of our Environment grantees.

Our Cumulative List of Referrals to the Board totals 32 grants, for a recommended cumulative amount of \$8,439,000. Again, the period of December to April has represented our busiest grantmaking season. I hope, when reading through these evaluations, you can see how much care and thoughtfulness have gone into our stewardship of the Foundation’s investments.

On that note, we look forward to sharing more with you about the Foundation’s investments in both the Chair’s annual report as well as the Investment Committee’s report. We are proud to also seek your acceptance of another “clean” audit, which was uploaded to the Board portal along with our other Board meeting materials. Helen and the Audit Committee will review the audit at the meeting. We appreciate the assistance of the Audit and Compliance Committee in navigating the process.

To conclude, as grantmakers, we cannot encourage and celebrate partnership and collaboration among our grantees if we are not doing it ourselves. That hard, messy work of achieving something with others allows all of us, as a Foundation, to come closer to our mission of fostering self-reliance and creating

strong, healthy communities. This notion extends, of course, to the partnership between the staff and Directors and guests. Your in-depth knowledge of the communities the Foundation serves, your thoughtful endorsements of grants, your presence at site visits, and your philanthropic experience and wisdom are all essential for the success of the Foundation's grantmaking. Please know how much we enjoy this "group project," if you will, of working with you to steward F. M. Kirby's gift and to ensure its lasting impact in the Foundation's communities.