

# Foundations

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Foundations are often started with the motive of empowering the population. Foundations aim to “ give wings to people who want to fly”.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is one of such organizations. Given that it draws its funding from the richest men in the world, it is not surprising that it is the largest private philanthropic organization in the world. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation focuses on improving the global levels of healthcare, and enhance the educational and IT standards both around the world and in the United States. This foundation, whose trustees are Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffet, had an endowment of over thirty six billion US dollars as at the end of the year 2012. This makes it, by far, the largest philanthropic organization in the world.

This article deals with its mode of operation and projects that it funds, giving examples where relevant. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has sorted its work into three categories, which are: the Global Development Program, The Global Health Program and The United States Program (Beckett, 2010). The Global Development Program seeks to empower the world’s poorest people lift themselves out of poverty and set up decent livelihoods; the Global Health Program aims to support scientific and technological innovations that help to improve healthcare in developing countries, and, therefore, save lives. The United States Program aims to enable citizens and residents of the United States gain access to high school and post high school education; expand the reach of IT in the United States; and enable US residents acquire stable housing. The screening process for potential projects is thorough, and the Foundation prioritizes on the people who need

aid most urgently. All these measures are incorporated to ensure that funding is provided for people who are in most need of it.

The foundation was initiated in 1994 as the William H. Gates Foundation. It was christened anew in the year 1999 to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In 2008, Bill Gates relinquished his position as the Chief Executive of Microsoft and took up a full time commitment to this organization. Its trustees are Bill and Melinda Gates.

In 2006, the foundation welcomed on board another trustee, Warren Buffet (McNeil Jr. & Lyman, 2006). The Foundation draws its funding from the proceeds of Bill Gates' successful business venture as establisher and CEO of Microsoft Inc., which made him the richest man in the world for scores of years. Bill Gates has channeled most of his personal wealth into the analyzed institution.

In 2006, it received a rare boon from the then world's richest man, Warren Buffet, when he pledged to channel most of his vast fortune to the foundation. He pledged around \$31 billion at the time, but this amount has grown since then (McNeil Jr. & Lyman, 2006). The foundation's headquarters is based in Seattle, in a building that is, by all means, humble considering the fortune it controls. It has around 850 members of staff, and it operates in a quiet way (Beckett, 2010).

The organization has adopted a strategy that allows it to channel its money and energy into the most worthy projects. For purposes of description, the foundation dishes out its grants in a cyclic four-stage process. ("How we make grants," n. d.). The first step is to develop the strategy, the second – is <https://assignbuster.com/foundations/>

to give the grant, the third is to measure progress and the last is to adjust the strategy where necessary.

The first step, which involves developing a strategy, has three stages. The first is to identify significant problems that have received far too little attention for their magnitude. This is called scoping. Bill and Melinda have stated categorically in the organization's website that they only get involved when they can make a unique contribution. Next, they choose from a number of strategies the one that will guarantee viability, minimal risks and sustainability. Finally, the third stage of this involves developing a plan for executing the strategy.

Once the first step has been successfully passed, the foundation then offers a three to five year grant. The grant is not infrequently offered through an intermediary partner. This allows developing the skills of the members of the intermediary organization, which is specialized in the grantee projects. The foundation then proceeds to measure the grantee projects' progress and, possibly, adjust the strategy of operation to improve and refine the one has been put in place to achieve the desired results. The foundation funds projects have centered on the improvement of healthcare in developing countries, the expansion of the quality and reach of education in the United States and the world at large, and the improvement of IT systems in the US and, by extension, the rest of the world.

The work funded by the organization ranges from offering vaccines for preventing and reducing childhood disease and mortality, to avant-garde research that helps boost crop yields or prevent disease. It also aggressively

funds research on HIV/AIDS. The organization holds the belief that vaccines are the most inexpensive public health measure. To demonstrate this, it granted close to \$750 million to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI Alliance) in the year 2005. Other beneficiaries of grants from the foundation include The Children's Vaccine Program, the Pro Mujer project, a microfinance project in Latin America, and The Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa.

There are a number of projects that this supported by an endowment institution does not fund. First, the foundation only grants funds to organizations that are exempt from tax. The organization does not also furnish money for political campaigns, construction campaigns, health projects in developed countries, projects run by individuals and projects that serve an exclusively religious purpose. Indeed, Bill and Melinda Gates have undertaken to explore philanthropy in a way previously unexplored. This all-out gesture of charity is not only commendable, but also amazing.

This foundation will go down the annals of world history as one of the most awe-inspiring manifestations of charity people could ever display.