




**EVALUATION**  
ROUNDTABLE



# **Navigating Accountability for Systemic Impact**

**October 14 - 16, 2025**

CENTER FOR  
**EVALUATION**  
INNOVATION

Convening Hosted by the  
Center for Evaluation  
Innovation



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# Agenda

## Navigating Accountability for Systemic Impact in Philanthropy

October 14-16, 2025

Facilitated by the Center for Evaluation Innovation  
Hosted by the Ford Foundation

### Convening Framing Questions

- What will it take for philanthropy to evaluate, measure, report on, and learn about systemic impact in ways that reflect the realities of complex systems change—diverse contexts, incremental progress, and long time horizons—while still offering meaningful insight and guidance?
- How can those approaches also hold foundations accountable for how their resources, decisions, and efforts influence systems and contribute to or unintentionally work against social and environmental betterment?

### Required Pre-Reading

- Framing Paper. *Accountability for Systemic Impact: Rethinking How Foundations Learn & Add Value* by Dr. Albertina Lopez, Dr. Hanh Cao Yu, Mariah Brothe Gantz, and Kayla Christopherson, Center for Evaluation Innovation
- Teaching Case. *Learning-Oriented Accountability: How the Ford Foundation Navigates Impact & Social Justice* by Gitta Zomorodi

**The Evaluation Roundtable convening isn't a conference.** Instead, attendees work together to address real-life situations faced in their work through practice-based, peer-to-peer learning. A successful convening requires that everyone has closely read the teaching case in advance and is fully present and engaged in the event. Please come ready to dig in with your colleagues in a spirit of curiosity and candor.

# Tuesday, October 14

## The Sector: Mental Models & Practice

We will begin by exploring how philanthropy has historically approached impact and how evaluation and measurement practices have stemmed from a programmatic mental model. How have these assumptions shaped today's strategy, learning, and evaluation practices? What challenges do foundations face when applying them in the context of complex systems change? This grounding will set the stage for identifying the gaps between current practices and the demands of accountability for systemic impact.

**12:00 - 1:00pm Registration & Lunch**

**1:00 - 1:15pm Welcome**

Dr. Hanh Cao Yu, Center for Evaluation Innovation & Bess Rothenberg, Deputy Vice President, Strategy & Impact, Ford Foundation

**1:15 - 1:45pm Introduction to the Theme: Accountability for Systemic Impact**

Dr. Albertina Lopez & Hanh Cao Yu

**1:45 - 2:30pm Roots of Accountability for Systemic Impact**

Hanh Cao Yu & Mariah Brothe Gantz

Through an exploration of the philanthropic sector and evaluation field's understanding of and approaches to impact, we will trace how programmatic mental models have shaped strategy, learning, and evaluation, and critically reflect on the assumptions these models continue to carry into today's work on complex systems change.

# Tuesday, October 14 (continued)

**2:30 - 2:45pm Break**

**2:45 - 4:00pm Challenges & Tensions in Navigating Systemic Impact**

Albertina Lopez & Kayla Christopherson

Drawing on our benchmarking research, we will examine the challenges and tensions foundations face when applying a programmatic mental model and its practices to complex systems change, and reflect on how these dynamics shape learning and accountability.

**4:00 - 4:30pm Closing the Day & Preparation for Tomorrow**

**4:30 - 6:00pm Free Time**

**6:00 - 9:00pm Group Dinner at Sinigual**

640 3rd Ave  
Manhattan, NY 10017



## Wednesday, October 15

# The Organization: Practices, Relationships, & Tensions

Through a teaching case about the Ford Foundation, we will examine how one foundation has grappled with the questions of systemic impact and accountability through learning. In addition to a collective analysis of the case, participants will reflect on how it connects to their own organizational experiences and contexts: How have accountability and power dynamics shaped their work? What tensions do foundations encounter when navigating the realities of systems change at the organizational level?

**Lead facilitators:** Hanh Cao Yu & Albertina Lopez

**8:00 - 9:00am Registration, Breakfast, Connecting**

**9:00 - 9:15am Welcome & Reflections from Day 1**

### Teaching Case Opener

Rules of engagement for teaching case discussion

**9:15 - 10:30am Ford Teaching Case: Part 1 on Strategy**

Case teaching, small group discussion, and large group sense-making

**10:30 - 10:45am Break**

**10:45am - 12:15pm Ford Teaching Case: Part 2 on Evaluation**

Case teaching, small group discussion, and large group sense-making

**12:15 - 1:15 pm Lunch**

# Wednesday, October 15 (continued)

**1:15 - 2:45pm Ford Teaching Case: Part 3 on the Enactment of Accountability**

Case teaching, small group discussion, and large group sense-making

**2:45 - 3:00pm Break**

**3:00 - 4:30pm Panel: Reactions to the Case with the Ford Foundation & Dala Institute**

Q&A and reflections from primary teaching case characters

**Ford Foundation:** Martín Abregu, Tony Bebbington, Subarna Mathes, and Bess Rothenberg  
**Dala Institute:** Rodd Myers and Cininta Perwiti

**4:30 - 4:45pm Closing the Day & Preparation for Tomorrow**

**4:45 - 5:00pm Free Time**

**5:00 - 6:00pm Cocktail Reception**

Located in the Garden Atrium at the Ford Foundation

# Thursday, October 16

## The Future: Possibilities for the Sector & Your Work

Building on the sector's history (Day 1) and organizational practice (Day 2), we will turn toward the future. Together, we will ask: What will it take for philanthropy to evaluate and learn about systemic impact in ways that are meaningful, responsible, and responsive to complexity? What shifts in mental models, relationships, and practices may be required—and what might foundations need to let go of or try differently? How can collective action across the sector advance more meaningful accountability for systemic impact?

**8:00 - 9:00am Registration, Breakfast, Connecting**

**9:00 - 9:15am Grounding & Reflections on Days 1 & 2**

**9:15 - 10:15am Exploring Future Directions for Evaluating Systemic Impact**

Remarks and Discussion with Jewlya Lynn,  
PolicySolve

In this session, Jewlya Lynn will share provocative observations about philanthropic habits and offer concrete examples that illustrate how the field is grappling with systemic impact. She will also reflect on emerging trends in causal analysis, trust-based philanthropy, and related practices that push our thinking forward.

**10:15 - 10:30am Break**

# Thursday, October 16 (continued)

**10:30 - 11:45am Future of the Sector: Propositions for Practice**

What might philanthropy consider to move beyond programmatic approaches to accountability practices that better reflect the realities of complex systems change? Participants will engage in a set of propositions as provocations to test, refine, and reimagine them, in order to surface possibilities for strengthening accountability for systemic impact across the philanthropic sector.

**11:45am - 12:00pm Closing**

**12:00 - 1:00pm Lunch**

Takeaway options available



# Thank you.

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