

The Chronicle of Philanthropy
February 7, 2010

“Administrative-Support Program Honored”

By Eugene McCormack

The award: The Council on Foundation’s Critical Impact Award, which honors effective grant making that can serve as a national model.

The winner: The Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation, in Grinnell, Iowa, received the award for its Community Support Services program, which provides nonprofit organizations with administrative support and expertise from the foundation’s employees. The support, which includes such things as Web-site maintenance, marketing, and accounting, allows organizations to concentrate on what they do best, says Julie Gosselink, president and chief executive of the foundation. “The ultimate goal,” she says, “is to free up everyone else’s time so they can focus on their missions and fund raising.” She says that the collaborative program, which has provided an estimated \$660,000 worth of services since it began in 2006, has helped push forward several projects that were being held back only because they lacked “back office” support.

Why it won: Linetta Gilbert, a senior program officer at the Ford Foundation who was chair of the committee that administered the award, says it was the first time anyone on the committee had seen a family foundation looking at how it could improve the delivery of services. She says that especially during the economic downturn, families need to be served efficiently, “and we all felt this was an appropriate and impactful way to invest money.”