

Cathy Mann: Welcome to. It doesn't hurt to Ask! The podcast where we talk about fundraising this season. We'll be talking to shift disturbers and philanthropy people who are shaking up traditional philanthropy practices. On today's episode, we're talking with Alyssa Beckett from Tides Canada. Alyssa is a fundraiser, a teacher and an entrepreneur, and she cares passionately about social change philanthropy.

Cathy Mann: Alyssa, thanks so much for joining us on, It Doesn't Hurt to Ask podcast.

Alyssa Beckett: My pleasure.

Cathy Mann: So this season we're talking about shift Stover's and when we were thinking about who to invite to speak, yours is one of the first names that came to mind because you have such an interesting experience in doing things really differently in our sector.

Alyssa Beckett: Well thanks. That's pretty fun to hear.

Cathy Mann: That could be taken as a backhanded compliment, but it's intended fully as a compliment. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about Flip Give.

Alyssa Beckett: Okay, so Flip Give. That's a, the business that I started with a couple of my classmates in my MBA program and that was,

Cathy Mann: And so they were, they were not nonprofit.

Alyssa Beckett: No, they weren't. They would definitely weren't. There was a a head hunter and a technology guy, so salesman maybe. Uh, they picked me I guess because I actually work in the nonprofit sector and that's the one they wanted to tap into. But we had the idea that there was technology that wasn't being used in the web world that could be better deployed to raise money for charities. Part of that was the motivation behind how do you get people to do things and charity seem like a good idea after a few sort of tricky iterations at the beginning we came up with the idea of FlipGive, which is the actual brand name. It basically replaces chocolate bar sales right. That our door to door with an online version. And so the company is considered a marketing technology and fundraising engine designed to help the sort of mom and pops who are trying to figure out how to get enough money to send their kids to uh, you know, summer camps or their hockey team, travel team, et cetera.

Cathy Mann: Yep. You were the, am I correct in saying the first Canadian B Corp?

Alyssa Beckett: I believe so, yeah.

Cathy Mann: And so explain that to us.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah, for sure. It would. So benefit corps or B Corp for those who don't know is basically a look at companies that are working in that social enterprise space and evaluating them based on their governance, their environmental and their social impact. And so you had certain points system to get it. And so one of the things, just to use an example is you would get in the States, uh, bonus points if you had more than six weeks of mat leave. Obviously that didn't translate well to Canada.

Cathy Mann: Oh boy. No. Okay. All right.

Alyssa Beckett: So we, uh, and we worked with them and MARS to Canadianize the qualification. So then, then, uh, along the, the way we became the first B Corp in Canada.

Cathy Mann: And did that mean anything to people?

Alyssa Beckett: Well, I mean, I guess part of it was an education of what B Corps are, but now that Patagonia and other big companies are part of it, it's a pretty important stamp of honor I guess, uh, in the social enterprise space. You know, we started in 2008, so 2010. So know some time ago.

Cathy Mann: Right. So you get to walk by Patagonia now and say, I started this for you, Patagonia.

Alyssa Beckett: Thank you. Patagonia,

Cathy Mann: Patagonia. You can thank me. That's right.

Alyssa Beckett: So you, you moved out from flip give to yet another really innovative thing in our sector, which is Tides Canada. So tell us, tell us what your title is. I know you've had a few titles since you've been there. I'm the Vice President of Development and Strategic Initiatives, which means that I'm in charge of, usually I describe it as I'm in charge of everything except for IT, HR and Finance. So yeah, people in operations.

Cathy Mann: So I love Tides Canada. I have worked with clients that are projects of Tides Canada, but not everybody understands or knows what Tides is or maybe haven't heard of it. So tell us, tell us all about it.

Alyssa Beckett: So a little bit of the joke I often make on the way in is the Tides. Canada is your least well known, \$30 million charity in Canada.

Cathy Mann: Nice. It's a good tagline, actually.

Alyssa Beckett: Not Bad. It doesn't really tell you what we do, but it's, but it gives you a sense of who we are. And actually it's a brand that is a bit of a brand behind the brands and that's sort of part of the DNA of the organization. But Tides Canada is a

environmental and social justice charity that seeks uncommon solutions for the common good. So we look at basically how to work with a broad slate of people across Canada to help them get from their philanthropic or their community vision to impact on the ground.

Cathy Mann: And so that still doesn't tell me exactly what do you, what you do. But if I may, so one of my clients is a project of yours, East Scarborough Storefront. They operate with Tides, charitable registration number because in effect they are part of Tides. So you have a whole bunch of projects that are operating under under the umbrella of Tides Canada.

Alyssa Beckett: That's great. That's one of the things, one of the things we do use and that actually illustrates an important point, which is that usually when we're talking to people, we talk based on their entry point into Tides Canada. And so projects are one of the entry points. So we have about 60 of those types of projects, uh, across the country. And what we do is, again, that's primarily based on change makers. So people who are trying to create some sort of social good or environmental good in Canada and they have a barrier to getting there. And typically in the charitable sector, one of the barriers is that they don't have charitable status. And so, uh, these projects start and a variety of different ways. Sometimes community groups start them. Sometimes a funder might have an idea and sometimes we start them internally, but they all basically have the same issues that they need to get money in the door. And then they need some assistance to operate a charity and then they need to create impact in the field. So Tides Canada provides a whole bunch of what is sometimes in the sector known as backbone supports. And so we provide governance and strategic oversight. We also provide, uh, a bunch of the operational pieces. So we do HR, we do payroll, we do insurance, we do bookkeeping, we do financial statements and all those sort of things. And they all roll up within Tides Canada and they're part of Tides Canada.

Cathy Mann: Okay. So that's one thing that Tides does. That's one thing that we do.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah. We also operate donor advise funds in a similar to a community foundation. Like unlike the Toronto or the Vancouver Foundation, we're not geographically based. We're based instead on, uh, the issue area. So this typically we attract people who are interested in environmental or social justice issues. And those are the types of people that we work with. Okay. Layered on to that as sort of number three, which is we do, um, philanthropic services or client services, and that's basically where we're working with Canadian and sometimes international donors to help them, again, realize whatever their philanthropic vision is.

Cathy Mann: Okay. All right. So I wouldn't have been able to give you the number three.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah. Well, and so when we do that often with, we will do all sorts of things. Sometimes we'll do like landscape research. So, um, we've had clients that have been interested in running say a contest in Canada, but are international

corporate players and they needed to understand the Canadian landscape. We do research. We've got individual philanthropists where we work on them. They've got some ideas of what they want to do on an interest area, say, but they don't know how to execute the strategy or they're not sure which part of it is the most important thing to work on at this given time. So we'll help them develop a philanthropic strategy. Uh, and then we also sometimes will just simply do what we call docket management, when, which is basically donors want to give to a variety of things, but they don't want to worry about how do I get my grant report back? Or how do I share this with my kids? Which is often a thing with intergenerational wealth.

Cathy Mann: I mean, the title of the season is called shift disturbers. So why is Tides a shift disturbing presence in our sector?

Alyssa Beckett: Well, I, I mean, I guess again, it's, there's so many pieces of that puzzle that are important, but I mean

Cathy Mann: Let's just about the platform. So Tides as a platform that houses all of these different projects that are either environmental or social justice. Uh, just in case, uh, people don't know this, uh, use the term shared platform that really is just the umbrella under which all your projects live, right?

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah, that's right.

Cathy Mann: We talk about platforms a lot these days, but I think you guys were one of the first to really make it work.

Alyssa Beckett: So we're the only one like this operating at scale in Canada and we're providing an easier entry point for really important social justice and environmental ideas to flourish. So sometimes you can think about it like an incubator or an accelerator, but it's, it's how in a timely fashion in the, the world that we're operating in the charitable structures, can you get from an idea to pilot something without expanding a huge amount of dollars or having to invest a lot in, in trying to understand how the charitable sector operates and get to activity more quickly.

Cathy Mann: Right.

Alyssa Beckett: So I think that's like the one of the key things. Yeah. But, but the other one I think, and, and East Scarborough Storefront is a great example of this one is that, and we talk about this internally a lot when we're talking about what our role is in our mantra here is we'll let change makers make change. So we're removing the burden of, uh, all of the pieces of operation that typically the leader, the really passionate and excited leader of a social change movement wants to spend their time doing. Instead, we're allowing them to do that rather than having them then their time on things that aren't advancing their mission.

Cathy Mann: Yeah, I love that about it. You know, running a charity is a lot of work. All of those things you talked about HR, payroll, insurance, governance takes up a lot of time. And the fact that you guys are offering a big chunk of that support, just as you said, let's change makers, change, make change, make, make change. So like what are your thoughts about this? Why, why aren't there more Tides out there in our sector?

Alyssa Beckett: Well, we do operate in a complex governance and oversight regulatory environment and I think it's not easy. Uh, and you know, we've been working at this for now something around 12 years now and in many ways stumbled along in the early days and have started. And I would just say started to master it now. And it's a continuous improvement kind of beast. And so I, I mean, I think that's the most important reason why that people aren't doing it. Um, I think we'll see more of it in the future though. I think this Tides won't be the only one.

Cathy Mann: And sorry, they're not doing it because it's so complex.

Alyssa Beckett: I think it's complex and there isn't clear guidance on exactly how to operate this type of structure.

Cathy Mann: I can think of a time where East Scarborough Storefront applied for money couldn't get it because the grant giver said, no, we've already given money to that charitable registration number. So there must be a fair amount of education that needs to, to happen just but just out of curiosity, do you, do you do education with the, with grant givers or with donors or is that sort of the projects that need to do that from the ground up?

Alyssa Beckett: So yeah, that does happen on occasion and we've, we see that as really part of our responsibility because we're groundbreaking the charitable whole platform structure in Canada. So our objective is to have all the projects be successful, so successful in fundraising. So it, it, it behooves us to really strengthen the knowledge of what a shared platform is and why it's good for the sector with the grant givers, you know, and the staff changes. Guess what? Um, so sometimes we have to do it again and again and again, but we're pretty, we're pretty good at it. And as soon as we hear that it's happened or we that there is a question about this, we do our best to sort of take it up the chain at the grant givers organization and then sit down and try to have those conversations. Sometimes we've heard grant givers say that they, oh well we don't want to give in that scenario and we're saying, but why it's counter to what you're trying to do if you're trying to create impact, why would you want a duplication of administrative costs when this is a thing that's designed to reduce the costs? And then usually, you know, we can get through a on that basis, but sometimes there's like literally internal systems that allow for one number and they, and it gets flagged somehow.

Cathy Mann: So you've been involved in a number of really innovative things. You were part of Canada's first B Corp, you're now part of Tides, which is in my estimation, a really innovative way to help support social change. And since I'm all about

social change philanthropy, I love Tides. What do you see down the road? I mean you're probably one of the people I know who's been involved in a bunch of innovation in a way that nobody else has. What do you see? What does that big brain of yours see down the road?

Alyssa Beckett: What do I see down the road? So that's a great question. I mean I think for from the shared platform perspective, I expect this to be something that becomes more commonly used across the sector. I know there are folks like at the Ontario nonprofit network that are already trying to work with, in particular the Ontario government, but more broadly the sector to really get this idea of shared platforms out there and educate people on what they are so that we don't have these challenges with funders. But also I think we're, we've also heard that there's percolating up in the arts sector, real desire for arts organizations to both fund collaboratively work together and then have many of those arts organizations housed under one roof. So I think there, there is a real interest on both sides, the funder side and the grantee side to have an opportunity to work together and the shared platform model is part of that in other things, all things other, I mean I think that this, it's a good thread here to talk about the idea of collaboration in the sector. So we actually run these other things. I don't know if this is number four or whatever and the list of things Tides Canada does, but we love to innovate and test different models of philanthropy. And one of them is a funder collaborative model. And so funder collaborative sounds very like everyone says these words and jargon sector speak, but in a, in our world there's a bit of a continuum of them. But if I gave you a description of one, you'd get the idea. So a, in northern Manitoba we have a northern Manitoba food culture and community collaborative and it's a collaborative that brings together a group of funders and asks them to kind of park their typical funder things at the door. So we say you're not going to make decisions about where the, who the grantees are and exactly what happens with money. Instead you're going to pool your money with others like you who are interested in putting more money into this issue. So of course it's bounded by the food culture community and the specific geography. But other than that, the decision making is not happening with the funders. And part of what the funders are trying to do is to reach in and work effectively with indigenous communities. And so they've, given the power of that decision making authority over to an advisory group made up entirely of the indigenous community members and said, how much decision making authority you do you want to have and how do you think the decision should be made and how should this thing be structured?

Cathy Mann: Wow.

Alyssa Beckett: And super important to this entire model is that it's designed on collaborative decision making, which is quite interesting and also reciprocal learning. So they're both supposed to be learning from one another.

Cathy Mann: If you could see my face, my eyes have widened reciprocal learning with funders. Wow.

Alyssa Beckett: And so they do a learning trip each year and then they also share a booklet of the community stories. And that's designed again to teach. And it's really about definitely about doing things that are supporting this food and culture and community work in remote northern Manitoba Communities. But it's as much about funders understanding, uh, reconciliation and the indigenous ways of being and doing and saying actually our colonial western ways of forcing grant reporting and grant applications is just that Western colonial style of working. Not that, you know, anyone's forcing anyone to abandon anything but at least understanding and taking a step towards understanding that oral traditions and other ways of doing things are equally important and effective at creating change, especially when you're talking about working in indigenous communities. So this idea of taking a step away from the traditional ways that we've learned about how philanthropy works and thinking about new ways that it could happen are really interesting.

Cathy Mann: This is so cool. I mean we often, we, and I say that in air quotes, I suppose often think about philanthropy in a very Judeo Christian kind of way. You and I are both members of the Association of fundraising professionals and that whole world that we exist in really for the most part thinks about philanthropy, Judeo Christian traditions. Completely. Yeah. So that funder collaborative, is that what you called? It is so cool. Has it been going on long enough for you to see any results from it yet or is it early days?

Alyssa Beckett: No, it's six years in this particular one. But we've modeled others, uh, after it recognizing that there are geographic and personality differences. Uh, but we've brought new funders in along the way and had very interesting conversations about what it means to be part a collaborative. And we've extended some of the learnings out. And so sometimes our, our program lead on that will go and speak at one of the funders meetings and share this unique way of giving. Uh, we've also seen funders committing to 10 years of funding, which is unheard of in our sector because they believe so strongly in the model and the impacts on the ground that are based on this grassroots driven changemaking that is durable because it's created by communities for communities. East Scarborough Storefront is just like an amazing example of that. But where the durability of the programming is because it's not top down, it's because it's bottom up.

Cathy Mann: Right. So I'm, I'm really fascinated. I hadn't heard about that funder collaborative before. So that begs the question. Do you have any other secrets up your sleeve that I've maybe never heard about around collaboration?

Alyssa Beckett: Well, I love collaboration. I guess there's lots of different ways to talk about, about, the one that I think has been pretty exciting to me over the last couple of years is we had a funder and I mentioned we do the strategic philanthropy work with some funders. And so one of these funders approached us and said that they were interested in, in looking at toxics. And of course there's lots of toxics work going on across really great stuff.

Cathy Mann: Toxics, meaning...

Alyssa Beckett: Toxic chemicals in your policy and framework things. So you know, the things that took BPA out of baby bottles.

Cathy Mann: Gotcha.

Alyssa Beckett: What else? Right. Maybe toxins in our regulatory and everyday use makeups and cookware and whatnot. So she said she was interested in reducing the, that the toxins in the Canadian everyday life and what were some important things to do? Very underfunded as well. Um, and so we said actually Tides Canada doesn't have somebody working on that this very moment. But that doesn't matter because our model is not really about that. It's about helping people get from A to B. So we said, let's help you. So we did a bit of research and found out that indeed there was some great toxics work going on, but in a number of organizations across the country, but also that there was a unique moment in time with some, a couple of key pieces of legislature being reviewed. But what that required was us bringing together, and I guess we had a bit of a carrot because we had some funding, but bringing together a bunch of groups doing this important work on, on the toxics and toxins to say maybe you'd like to work more collaboratively together and come up with a strategy where you're each working on the piece that your most effective at, but you're working together and anyone who works in our sector would know that we're not as good as we could be at actually working together with others in particular are quote competitors. Yeah. And this was a situation where we were able to bring quite a lot of funding and attract some additional matching funding to it while having a group that doesn't typically work together, work together, Tides Canada would call it's strange bedfellows years ago, brought some strange bedfellows together. Uh, and I think it's really produced some interesting work and how nice people are not duplicating efforts.

Cathy Mann: Yeah. We see this notion of collective impact that is about bringing groups together to work on a common problem. So do you see other manifestations of that kind of collaboration going on?

Alyssa Beckett: I think that there is a whole lot of space out there for what people would call collaborative fundraising. And so this I think of as groups that are solving different pieces of a puzzle coming together and presenting a more unified solution. Not trying to extend beyond themselves, but staying true to the core of what who they are, but then filling in the missing pieces with others and presenting that to the major donors, the governments and foundations in particular who are interested in making broader systems change but are forced to piece it together themselves, otherwise.

Cathy Mann: Based on your experience, do you have any thoughts about what are the things to do to help those collaborations succeed? Or conversely, any ideas or thoughts about things that maybe you shouldn't do when you're trying to encourage collaboration?

Alyssa Beckett: Well, I mean I think, what did I say first? Check your ego at the door, right? Collaborations are not about credit taking and not about being first in the door or those sorts of things. I mean you really have to do that. You also have to trust because you know, you're coming into a room where you're going to share a funder or you're going to share a relationship and you have to have trust that the partners in the room are going to respect the boundaries of that relationship. Most of us are have more fear than we have trust. And I think in order to really effectively collaborate, you have to have trust. I'd also say that some ground rules are important. So you know, if you're coming into a collective fundraising situation, you might want to think about what are the incentives that I have, what are the incentives that my partner has and what are some ground rules we need to, to make? I've contemplated the idea of setting up a partnership where maybe we agree on the way in the door that, you know, if this comes out of it, we'll take that. If that comes out of it, you take that so that we're clear on what the expectations of each partner are. Um, those are some of the things. I'm sure there's many others.

Cathy Mann: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, this is cool because I do think that rethinking and reimagining how we work together is going to be a big part of the sector's future.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. In fact, we haven't had a major Uber type disruption to our sector yet. It's coming. I don't know if it's going to be technology. I expect some of it will be, but there's something that we can't quite foresee yet that's coming. One thing I think that can really play into that space is, you mentioned the Judeo Christian idea of big charity philanthropy. You know, if you point to the UK, there's some disillusionment from those, I kind of want to call it big box charity, um, with, with the counterpoints being really grassroots nonprofit not playing in the conventional tax receivable charitable space. So black lives matters and others, these ones that are really capturing the hearts of people. And then on the other hand, there's the business side of it where there's this crossover where you've got a social enterprise. So if we can't do it through philanthropy, surely, well, the corporate mindset or, or the corporate motivation will, will win the day. Right? We'll, we'll just build really great empowered employment opportunities through Ben and Jerry's and we'll be done. Right? Yeah. And most of us who work in the, the world of complex social change know that it's not so simple as that one or the other of those things will be the silver bullet. But how do you live in the world of the traditional charitable sector that's doing such great work and not become passe and uninteresting with these exciting things around the fringes?

Cathy Mann: Yeah, and I mean you talked about technology and we know that crowdfunding and that kind of online giving and the direct connection to the beneficiary is really exciting to donors. Whether there's a tax receipt involved or not. Um, I think that's going to be a play a huge role.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah. If I think about the people that were doing the, the philanthropic strategy work for, they are deeply interested in a way that I hadn't seen before earlier in

my career in being connected to the work. That doesn't mean they want to go into the field and poke around. It means that they want to really be assured that there's a direct connection between what they're doing and what actually happens on the ground. So there's an impact measurement component of that. There's a, a sense of direct connection between the donor and the actual work. Technology can facilitate some of that. So, you know, monthly giving for a long time, we've always connected, like if you give \$10 a month, this will buy five bandaids, three light casts and two tetanus shots. And people love that. But what about that at, at a million or \$10 million? What does that mean? Yep, sure you can have your name on the wing of a hospital, but what are you really doing? And I think donors want to know that. And I think that's what's so appealing about, um, the black lives matters type movements, is that there's a real gritty grassroots connection that you can see action. And I think that it, the challenge to our sectors to make it real no matter what type of organization you work for.

Cathy Mann: And the other thing that occurs to me is you talked about earlier in the collaborations around having to have trust and overcoming your fear. I think fear will rise up and a lot of charities when they think about donor as the actor, I see a lot of charities who are concerned that donors are going to try to have, uh, an inordinate amount of control over programming.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah, I mean, so it's not surprising that we're going to have see fear bubble up in general. I think that that change is difficult and I've seen change. I mean, my experience at the beginning of our, our Flip Give days showed that the charities are very fearful. Even with modest change, like testing, things can often even be fearful. And we actually even live in a world where testing is part of the norm, but yet it's still something we fear. So when you think about, um, that type of change, it's really challenging. Sometimes I think about Tides Canada, given that we have so many weird little touchpoints and not in this very centralized model of change, it's really durable community led type change that we have this sort of, I use the analogy of, of our projects and our grantees as being dancers on a dance floor and sometimes they dance with each other and they learn things about each other and sometimes then they switched partners and they dance with someone else. They don't really have the ability to dance with everybody. And so I sometimes think, oh, maybe that's a role that we should play.

Cathy Mann: Interesting.

Alyssa Beckett: Then I think about our staff and I say, well sometimes we're down on the dance floor too, but sometimes we have this really special place where we get to be up in the balcony and look down and see all the stuff that's going on out there and say, hey, there's some really cool things. And I think that that role in, uh, an organization like ours is kind of interesting and unique when you think about the donor as the actor because the donor can be interested in, they've, they've talked to one very charismatic dancer and they are really excited about them and they really want to pour all their money into them. But we say, actually that

dancer, so charismatic is often, you know, there's lots of people attracted to this one,

Cathy Mann: There's choreographer behind that too.

Alyssa Beckett: So great. But others could learn from that. Maybe instead of pouring all your money there, you know, we could influence you to put some of your money into sharing the magic of the dancer and the choreographer to use the rest of the analogy. And then we say, well, you know, and there's some really wall flowery people over here that could really use some help to get on the dance floor. It's not that the charitable sector or, or charities, even in the big box sense don't have influence and don't have really good strategic sense of where money should go and that they can't or shouldn't influence the donor's behavior. But it's incumbent upon the charity to change the way they're doing it. It's not about creating a box at the top and saying either you fit or you don't. It's about saying, hey, let's work together to figure out how we meet everyone's needs, both the donors and the dancers.

Cathy Mann: But I do think you've raised a really interesting point and that is having somebody who has a perspective from the balcony because charities, as much as they may be connected and are able to dance with other partners, are still seeing things from the dance for perspective. And to have somebody who can see, having somebody who has that perspective and who can identify that there's the charismatic dancer who can dance around like nobody's business. But there's the wallflower over there, as you said, is such an important role. And I think that, you know, we have up until now been in an era where in the world of collective impact, we talk about this notion of charities are operating in isolation, so isolated impact. And I think we are entering an era of collaboration and collaboration doesn't happen on its own. It needs to be nurtured and supported and places like Tides have an important role to be playing that nurturing role, but also having the bigger picture so you can see things going on that the dancers may not see on the dance floor.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah, I think that's a great way of thinking about that. And I think we've been thinking pretty hard over the last little while about what exactly that role is. So out of the gates he said it was hard to describe what Tides Canada does and we've described ourselves as a brand behind the brand with East Scarborough Storefront as an example, being the brand in front. So what does that mean? There is a specific role for an organization like ours and it's actually not advancing community work in East Scarborough. It's actually about saying there are models of doing things that are different and interesting and effective that should be highlighted and given voice to. And I think we have a unique position to play in doing that kind of work. Interestingly, I think it's also driven by funders sometimes. So we have a, we just had a recent situation where a group of funders who are funding a more traditional style of program thought that it would be useful for them to come together to, to understand the broader impact of the whole program so that they could see where they fit into it. So for example, this program touched on some language and separately some culture

and separately some conservation work. And so a conservation fund or was funding the conservation piece and we were playing our role in the balcony, sort of directing the players and helping to say that, you know, well your interest matched this piece of the puzzle. And so, but then one of the funders said, well actually I'm kind of interested in the whole puzzle. Like why did you guys think that the puzzle was important? Even though I'm not going to give to these other bits of the puzzle, I'm only going to give, I'm a conservation fund or I'm only going to give to that piece of it. Why did you guys put the puzzle together this way? And they asked us to bring together the rest of the funders and tell everybody how they fit together.

Cathy Mann: Oh, interesting.

Alyssa Beckett: And so I think that's yet to be seen. We haven't done it yet, but I thought that was a tremendously interesting thing. And of course we sat back with a little bit of fear like what is this going to mean? We're sort of opening the Kimono and what will, um, but now I think, you know, more and more I think that this kind of interaction is beneficial for the sector and it should more of that should happen.

Cathy Mann: That is so cool. So we, we think that collaboration is important. If that's the case, I mean, I suppose at some point we need to test that, but let's assume that we're, our intuition is right. If collaboration is important, what do donors need to know and do to allow that to happen?

Alyssa Beckett: So I think that's a really good question. I mean, I think that these donors were pretty sophisticated and asked this question about the broader puzzle. And I think that's pretty cool because you can be quite easily responsive that I also know of a story from some time ago where a donor, very important local donor caught wind of a lot of duplication going on and use the stick approach, you know, Sorta said either you guys work together, forgot about getting my important dollars. Hmm. That's something I think is possible, but I, it's not like one that I'd be like, yes. Touting as the solution. The most important thing I think is that the value of gathering people to collectively create solutions rather than everybody learning through experiential learning or duplicating efforts. And the things that happen when you don't work together is, is the fact that that actually costs a little bit of money and having people gather in person to work through things is a good and important and efficient use of money. Which in some funders minds may sound like administration or, uh, you know, not direct programmatic support. But in fact that work can be worth 10 times the amount that they spend on doing that collaborative effort in what actually transpires in the field.

Cathy Mann: Yeah. So it's interesting because what, what you're talking about I think is that, um, where I hope that we get to a point where donors begin to see the value of investing in process and not just in programs. And too often our philanthropic paradigm has been invest in programs and I will make an intervention and I want to know what the outcome is going to be. So very programmatic and in

fact all this work that you're talking about, this world of collaboration requires process. And I suppose I'm really hopeful that donors, that the kind of donors you're working with begin to see the, the value. I mean clearly they already are seeing the value of that, I'd say. Yeah. But it requires a different language from us. Right? So in terms of the kinds of things we were talking about, what do the donors need to do? But I think we also need to be responsive to the change that's happening and responsive to the kinds of investments that that donors want to be making and work with them. So it's like any relationship, right? It's not just about one or the other, it's going on a journey together and figuring it out. And I think we haven't created a really strong paradigm that allows our sector players and our donors too to go on that journey.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I think that that concept of like the trust and fear relationship comes really into play there. But I, but I have hardly seen situations where collaboration led to losers. I don't think there are any, not that I've seen anyway. Yeah, I mean it nothing but good things come of it. You know? So why are we fearful as maybe a question we should be asking ourselves.

Cathy Mann: I think we should just end the podcast on that provocative or at least thoughtful note. Alyssa, thank you so much for being part of It Doesn't Hurt to Ask podcast. This has been a really interesting conversation. Gone in directions I didn't expect it to. And I really appreciate you coming and spending the time with us.

Alyssa Beckett: Yeah, it was great fun. Thanks for having me.

Cathy Mann: As someone who spent so many years working in social change philanthropy, this conversation was really engaging for me. Community led change dancers on a dance floor, collaboration. Wallflowers. What a wide ranging conversation we had. If you like what you heard and want to hear others talk shifts going over too. itdoesnthurttoaskpodcast.com. Subscribe on iTunes or stitcher. As podcast was produced by Poodle Party productions. Good girl Brandy and Cathy Mann associates and the ever patient podcast producer Anne Lemesurier. The music you heard was Dog Days by Isaac Joel.

Speaker 3: And remember in fundraising as in life, it doesn't hurt to ask.