

Applying the 4Cs creatively: everyone can be a changemaker



The 4Cs framework was developed by Wings and Dafne in 2016 to help support organisations plan, demonstrate and communicate added value, understand the difference they make, and to learn from and improve practice. The framework is built around four areas of philanthropy support organisation work - i.e. building Capacity, Capability, Connections and Credibility. Below, Carola Carazzone, Secretary General of Assifero in Italy and Vice-President of [Philea- Philanthropy Europe Association](#) describes how it has been used by the Italian Association of the Philanthropic Foundations as a strategic tool since 2017 and how it contributed to shifts in practice - initially in planning and then in evaluation.

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“We initially applied the framework step by step, focusing on just two areas - capability and connections. As we became comfortable with the approach and realised its potential to provide the basis for our strategic planning, we embraced the whole framework and applied it across our work. It had a profound impact on what Assifero did during the last 6 years. It contributed to improving our effectiveness and to multiplying our impact, by shifting not only our practice (WHAT we do), but also our approach, our mindset (HOW we do) in a number of ways:

- 1) A shift from ex-post reporting to ex-ante commitment - shifting from reporting projects/services to a pledge, an open, public commitment to a bold vision: from serving members as a traditional membership organization offering juridical and fiscal services to promoting an informed, connected, effective Italian philanthropic system for human and sustainable development with a direct connection to the 2030 Agenda. This comprehensive shift in terms of vision resulted beneficial and fruitful in building a mission related case in seeking additional resources and later on in expanding Assifero membership;
- 2) A shift from a vision of ‘support’ to a vision of ‘system change’, of building an ecosystem aiming at collective impact (not 1+1+1+1+ but much more than the sum of the individual parts). The metaphor that I love is the one of a [live mycorrhizal network](#), not only a neutral and cold infrastructure. One outcome of this mycorrhizal approach is that it is alive beyond Assifero itself and is active throughout the network as evidenced by, for example, the momentum around the development of the community foundation movement in Italy;
- 3) A shift from planning activities to rely on a strategic framework (not a linear plan, but a canvas) that is at the same time much bolder and much more flexible and this was very relevant when Covid 19 hit;

- 4) A shift from responding to needs of Assifero's members to being creative in an asset-based and multi-capital approach: untapping in-kind contributions, relational, social, intangible capital; disseminating activities across the country based on the lead of local members and engaging prospective members;
- 5) A shift from projects to processes: a clear call to investing in people, organizations and processes. The 4Cs gave us a clearer and bolder horizon of impact. In March 2018 we launched [a call to action to question the mainstream funding practice in our country](#) and beyond. In March 2020, during the initial peak of the pandemic, our second call to all Italian foundations was scaled at European level by Dafne and EFC (today merged into Philea) through [a pledge](#) for more flexible funding and adaptive reporting. It was signed by 186 organizations across the continent.

The 4Cs offered us a simple but comprehensive framework to which we were able to apply our own C - that of Creativity, in how we used it in Italy. It has been transformative for Assifero as a philanthropy support organisation. In 2021 we decided to use the 4Cs framework also as the tool for our first impact evaluation as an organization. It was a challenging and exciting process. The 4Cs continues to underpin our planning and provides the basis for on-going 'formative' evaluation of our work as a learning organization. Everyone can be a changemaker"

More information on the 4Cs framework can be found here
<https://wings.issuelab.org/resources/28297/28297.pdf>

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