Teaching Employees to be Grantmakers:
A Case Study in Corporate Citizenship

One important way we strive to put our employees at the heart of our philanthropy is through The Blackbaud Fund. Established in the mid-1990s by company founder Tony Bakker and administered by the Coastal Community Foundation (CCF), the fund provides grants for the education of minority and disadvantaged youth in the tri-county region surrounding Blackbaud’s corporate headquarters.

The fund has made grants totaling more than $330,000 since 1997
About 50 nonprofit organizations have received grants
Beginning with the 2012 funding cycle, nonprofits can request up to $10,000 annually

Each year, CCF staff and Blackbaud’s corporate citizenship team work side by side teaching an employee committee how to review grant applications and make what are often difficult funding decisions. Service on the committee is considered an honor and a firsthand way to better understand the organizations Blackbaud works with every day. Although many hours are invested in reading applications and meeting with the team, the most critical part of the process is the site visits where employees meet in person with the leaders of nonprofits that are requesting grants. It is through these visits that the work of the organizations truly comes to life.

Following the site visits, the committee convenes to share what its learned and talk through how initial opinions of a grant might have changed – and why. These conversations are passionate, thoughtful and sometimes challenging, as the group ultimately seeks to determine who will receive funding and at what level. In the end, both the nonprofits selected for grants and the members of the committee are rewarded. In the case of our employees, that reward is increased knowledge of the sector we seek to help through our professional efforts.

In addition to those serving on the committee, employees across the company are welcome to support the fund through payroll deduction. The company makes a monthly corporate donation, as well, growing the fund for the long-term benefit of the community.

“The Blackbaud Fund is serious about investing in Charleston nonprofits that truly make a difference in the lives of others. WINGS has been fortunate enough to have benefited from their smart decisions last year — and we’re thrilled they can help us help our kids to soar! It feels really good to meet the Blackbaud Fund’s standards”

— Liz Mester,
Director of Development,
WINGS for Kids.