RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Program Officers, Grantees,
and the Keys to Success

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY
The mission of the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) is to provide data and create insight so philanthropic funders can better define, assess, and improve their effectiveness—and, as a result, their intended impact.

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FUNDER–GRANTEE RELATIONSHIPS AND **WHY THEY MATTER**

The funder–grantee relationship is both notoriously fraught and widely seen as crucial.

It is crucial because funders and grantees must work together to achieve shared goals. As David and Lucile Packard Foundation President and CEO Carol Larson explains, her foundation seeks "effective relationships with our grantees" because "our grantees are the experts promoting change across our areas of longstanding commitment and passion."[1] Wilburforce Foundation Executive Director Paul Beaudet puts it even more starkly. "Wilburforce can only succeed if our grantees succeed," he argues, making it crucial to "focus on strengthening relationships and building capacity to empower grantees to achieve the outcomes that ultimately contribute to our shared goals."[2]

Yet, even as they are recognized as vital, funder–grantee relationships are fraught because of a range of dynamics, including the inevitable power imbalance between those who have resources and those who need them. The widely read nonprofit blogger Vu Le laments "a pervasive lack of... trust between funders and nonprofits" that is "affecting all of us and our abilities to survive and do our work."[3]

It isn't just nonprofits that pay the price for relationships that aren't as strong as they could be. Many foundation CEOs see listening to and learning from those they seek to help as holding a lot of promise for increasing foundation impact, as we documented in a 2016 report on the future of foundation philanthropy.[4] As Lori Bartczak of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations puts it, "Despite grantmakers' best intentions to engage grantees in their work and build

strong relationships, many don't feel they're including their grantees in the best way."[5]

Part of the reason may be that relationships are often seen as "soft" and not prioritized sufficiently, according to John Esterle and his colleagues at the Whitman Institute.[6] "Relationships—and the processes involved in building them—too often recede into the background," they argue.[7] "In the drive toward measurement and metrics, talking about relationship building as a measure of impact may seem suspect, so it's safer not to go there."[8] Esterle and his colleagues suggest that's a mistake.

We agree, and for the past 15 years, CEP has sought to help funders measure the strength of their relationships with grantees through our Grantee Perception Report® (GPR) process, which surveys grantees about their views of their foundation funders. (For more information about the GPR, see Methodology.) Hundreds of foundations have used the GPR, many of them multiple times, and their participation has allowed us to develop a rich comparative dataset we can analyze for its broad implications. This report seeks to explain what we now know about funder–grantee relationships and what it takes for funders—and program officers—to excel in forming and maintaining strong ones.

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1   Carol Larson, "2016 Grantee Perception Report Results" (The David & Lucile Packard Foundation, December 6, 2016), https://www.packard.org/2016/12/2016-grantee-perception-report-results.

2   Paul Beaudet, "Putting Grantees in the Center of Your Map" (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, January 24, 2012), http://cep.org/putting-grantees-in-the-center-of-your-map. Beaudet is a member of CEP's board of directors.

3   Vu Le, "Trust-Based Grantmaking: What It Is, and Why It's Critical to Our Sector" *Nonprofit AF*, October 24, 2016, http://nonprofitaf.com/2016/10/trust-based-grantmaking-what-it-is-and-why-its-critical-to-our-sector.

4   Ellie Buteau, Naomi Orensten, and Charis Loh, "The Future of Foundation Philanthropy: The CEO Perspective" (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, 2016), http://research.cep.org/the-future-of-foundation-philanthropy.

5   Lori Bartczak, "Grantee Inclusion: What's It All About?" *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, July 26, 2016, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/grantee_inclusion_whats_it_all_about.

6   John Esterle, Malka Kopell, and Palma Strand, "From The Kids' Table to The Adults' Table: Taking Relationships Seriously in a World of Networks" (The Whitman Institute, July 2013), 2, http://thewhitmaninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/FromTheKidsTabletoAdultsTable.pdf.

7   Ibid.

8   Ibid., 3.

DEFINITION OF
FUNDER–GRANTEE RELATIONSHIPS

Based on our analyses of tens of thousands of grantees' views of their experiences working with hundreds of foundations, CEP has developed a definition of funder–grantee relationships encompassing grantees' ratings of three dimensions of interactions and two aspects of communications.[9] (See Figure 1.)

Figure One
WHAT IS A FUNDER-GRANTEE RELATIONSHIP?

COMPONENTS OF RELATIONSHIPS

INTERACTIONS

- **Fairness** of treatment by foundation

- **Comfort approaching** foundation if a problem arises

- **Responsiveness** of foundation staff

COMMUNICATIONS

- **Clarity of communication** of foundation's goals and strategy

- **Consistency of information** provided by different communications

9   Ellie Buteau, Phil Buchanan, and Timothy Chu, "Working With Grantees: The Keys to Success and Five Program Officers Who Exemplify Them" (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, May 2010).

KEYS TO FORMING A STRONG FUNDER–GRANTEE RELATIONSHIP

Data-based research on what it takes to form a relationship that grantees see as strong is scarce, and CEP has sought to address that gap. In 2010, we published "Working with Grantees: The Keys to Success and Five Program Officers Who Exemplify Them," based on analysis of data from almost 30,000 grantees of 175 foundations to determine what best predicts a strong funder–grantee relationship.

Over time, we have honed the survey instrument used to collect information about grantees' experiences working with foundations, and we are now in the position to update this analysis. In 2016 and 2017, we used our improved survey instrument to collect new data from almost 20,000 grantees of 86 foundations. Through analysis of this data, we can now explain even more thoroughly what it takes to form these relationships.[10]

The first insight is that **program officers hold the keys**. On many answers to questions in our grantee survey, variation in results is explained more by which program officer was a grantee's primary contact than by which foundation was the funder.

We also see that program officers who want to form strong relationships with grantees should focus on **developing their understanding of grantee organizations and the context in which they work**, and **being transparent** with grantees. (See Figure 2.) From the grantee perspective, these are the two most powerful elements that contribute to a strong funder–grantee relationship.

Less powerful, but still important to forming strong funder–grantee relationships, are the experiences grantees have during the selection process and how open they find funders to be to their ideas about the foundation's strategy. Program officers play an important role in enhancing the **helpfulness of the selection process** for the grantees with

10 In 2010, our regression model was able to predict 51 percent of the variation in grantees' ratings of the strength of their relationships with foundations. (See the Center for Effective Philanthropy, "Working with Grantees: The Keys to Success and Five Program Officers Who Exemplify Them," May 2010.) Now, in 2017, we are able to explain 63 percent of the variation in the grantees' ratings of the strength of those relationships.

PREDICTORS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Understanding of grantee organizations and the context in which they work

Transparency from foundation

Helpfulness of selection process

Openness to ideas about strategy

Mitigation of **pressure** to modify priorities
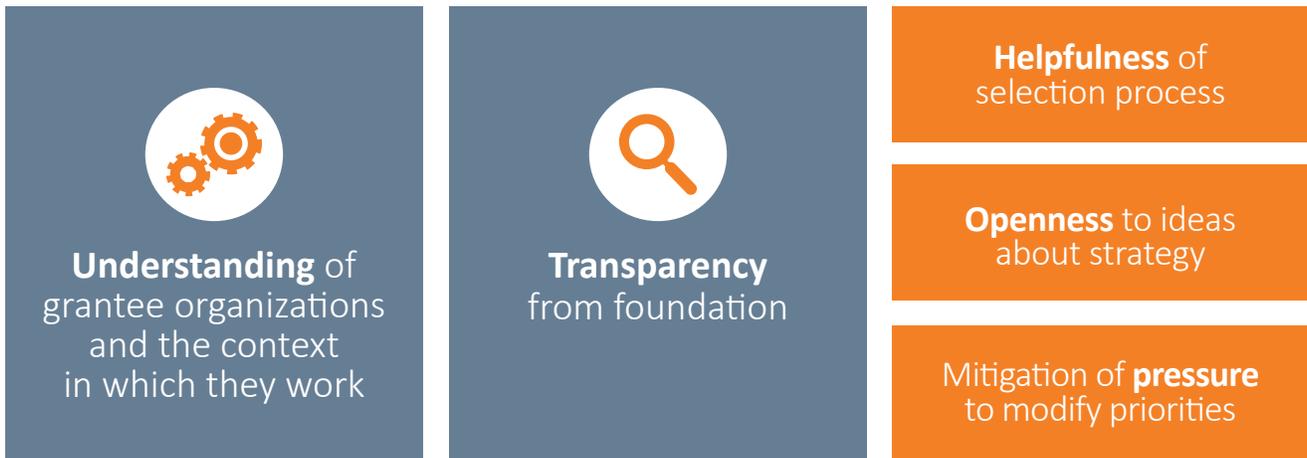
which they work, cultivating a greater degree of **openness** to ideas from grantees about strategy, and mitigating the **pressure** grantees feel to modify their funding proposal to receive funding.

Using our data from our surveys of grantees, we identified the program officers associated with the highest ratings on the elements we identified as key to forming strong funder–grantee relationships. Over the past year, we conducted interviews with 11 of these program officers to better understand how they view their role, how they spend their time, and what they think it takes to be a good program officer. Quotes and stories from these program officers are woven throughout this report.

What We Mean By "HIGHLY RATED PROGRAM OFFICERS"

The GPR survey instrument asks grantees about their experience with a particular foundation on a range of dimensions. Many foundations that commission a GPR ask us to provide an opportunity for grantees to identify their primary contact at the foundation. This allows CEP to segment results according to which program officer was named as a grantee's primary contact. Based on this analysis, CEP reached out to 11 of the program officers whose grantees provided some of the highest ratings on a number of questions, including those related to relationships. Throughout this report, we refer to those program officers as "highly rated program officers." For more information, see Methodology.

HIGHLY RATED PROGRAM OFFICERS

JAMIE ALLISON

Position:
Vice President, Grants

Tenure at Foundation:
12 years

Number of Active Grants:
25

S.H. **COWELL** FOUNDATION

Foundation Assets:
$132 million

Foundation Headquarters:
San Francisco, Calif.

JACKIE HAUSMAN

Position:
Program Officer, Health

Tenure at Foundation:
3.5 years

Number of Active Grants:
37

Kenneth Rainin FOUNDATION

Foundation Assets:
$356 million

Foundation Headquarters:
Oakland, Calif.

IRFAN HASAN

Position:
Program Director, Healthy Lives

Tenure at Foundation:
**17.5 years
(1.5 years in current role)**

Number of Active Grants:
50

THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST NYCT

Foundation Assets:
$2.7 billion

Foundation Headquarters:
New York, N.Y.

SARAH LOVAN

Position:
Program Officer, Arts

Tenure at Foundation:
**12 years
(5 years in current role)**

Number of Active Grants:
79

THE McKNIGHT FOUNDATION

Foundation Assets:
$2.2 billion

Foundation Headquarters:
Minneapolis, Minn.

ELIZABETH LOVE

Position:
Senior Program Officer

Tenure at Foundation:
8 years

Number of Active Grants:
95

HOUSTON ENDOWMENT

Foundation Assets:
$1.69 billion

Foundation Headquarters:
Houston, Tex.

STACY PARKER-FISHER

Position:
Director, Learning Differences

Tenure at Foundation:
8.5 years

Number of Active Grants:
22

Location:
Chapel Hill, N.C.

OAK FOUNDATION

Foundation Assets:
N/A

Foundation Headquarters:
Geneva, Switzerland

EMIKO ONO

Position:
Program Officer, Performing Arts

Tenure at Foundation:
6 years

Number of Active Grants:
94

WILLIAM + FLORA Hewlett Foundation

Foundation Assets:
$9 billion

Foundation Headquarters:
Menlo Park, Calif.

NICK RANDELL

Position:
Program Officer

Tenure at Foundation:
8 years

Number of Active Grants:
30

The Peter and Elizabeth C. TOWER Foundation

Foundation Assets:
$154 million

Foundation Headquarters:
Getzville, N.Y.

TERESA RIVERO

Position:
Senior Program Officer, Education

Tenure at Foundation:
11.5 years

Number of Active Grants:
30

Location:
Atlanta, Ga.

BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation

Foundation Assets:
$44.3 billion

Foundation Headquarters:
Seattle, Wash.

CAROLINE ALTMAN SMITH

Position:
Deputy Director, Education

Tenure at Foundation:
9.5 years

Number of Active Grants:
65

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

Foundation Assets:
$3.6 billion

Foundation Headquarters:
Troy, Mich.

GRACIELA SELAIMEN

Position:
Program Officer, Brazil Office

Tenure at Foundation:
3.5 years

Number of Active Grants:
37

Location:
Rio de Janeiro

FORD FOUNDATION

Foundation Assets:
$12.4 billion

Foundation Headquarters:
New York, N.Y.

FINDINGS

FINDING ONE

Program officers play an important role in shaping the funder–grantee relationship.

FINDING TWO

The most powerful ways for program officers to strengthen relationships are to develop an understanding of grantee organizations and the context in which they work and to be transparent.

FINDING THREE

Program officers can also strengthen funder–grantee relationships by ensuring that selection processes are helpful and being open to grantees' ideas about foundations' strategies.

FINDING ONE

Program officers play an important role in shaping the funder–grantee relationship.

While a grantee may interact with different staff members at a foundation during the course of a grant, the program officer to whom a grantee is assigned plays a crucial role in a grantee's experience.[11] As Joel Orosz, author and distinguished professor emeritus at Grand Valley State University, notes,

> *"The quality of any foundation's work, and the amount of positive change that it can affect in the world, is directly dependent on the capabilities of its employees. And of all these employees, no position matters more than that of the program officer…. Program officers are truly at the vital center of the entire enterprise."*[12]

It comes down to the "luck of the draw," as we put it in the title of a 2007 *Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR)* article.[13] At that time, our analysis showed that in many key areas—such as a grantee's comfort approaching a foundation if a problem arises and the responsiveness of foundation staff—individual program officers often play a larger role in grantees' experiences than do the foundations for which they work. That remains the case in our more recent analysis.

We see instances of wide variation in grantees' experiences within the same foundation. Our analysis suggests that some of this variation is explained by differences in program officer approach. At some foundations, grantees working with one program officer will rate their experience at the high end of our comparative data, while grantees working with another program officer will rate the foundation at the absolute bottom. Frequently, this comes as news to foundation leaders.

"The foundation's staff strive to understand the work of the organization and care not just about the success of the program, but the process and operations of the organization," says one grantee when asked to give feedback via CEP's GPR about the foundation from which they received a grant. "Staff create a culture of trust and understanding through a solutions-driven approach, rather than one that creates fear in sharing the challenges that are faced in meeting deliverables." Yet, a grantee of another program officer at that same foundation implores the foundation to, "Please listen a bit more to us as people living in and serving the region. We know the region and its needs and requirements. We have the right ideas and team

11 Kevin Bolduc, Phil Buchanan, and Ellie Buteau, "Luck of the Draw," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Spring 2007, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/luck_of_the_draw.
12 Joel J. Orosz, *The Insider's Guide to Grantmaking* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 38–39. Joel Orosz holds the title of distinguished professor of philanthropic studies emeritus at Johnson Center for Philanthropy.
13 Bolduc, Buchanan, and Buteau, "Luck of the Draw."

to assist the community, but we need the foundation's support."

When we replicated and updated our analysis with a more robust dataset, we were able to assess the importance of the program officer on even more dimensions of grantees' experiences than when we first undertook this analysis almost a decade ago. Table 1 includes a number of elements of grantees' experiences with foundations that program officers shape: These are areas in which program officers either shape the experience of grantees more than the foundation does or where the weight is equal.[14]

TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CEP: What have you learned during your time as a program officer that has changed the way that you think about forming and maintaining relationships with your grantees?

"I think that trust and mutual accountability are key to a successful relationship and the foundation's overall grantmaking success. I think the more I know about a grantee organization, the better program officer I can be. And then, ultimately, the better results the organization can have because it doesn't have to posture. It doesn't have to pretend that something is going well when it's not, and we can really strategize about how to make things better. And I think there's a certain amount of vulnerability on both sides of that honesty. I'm asking a grantee to tell me a little bit about what's not going well, but I also have to be vulnerable in that relationship and talk to grantees about how I will handle such news internally, and I have to be able to ask them for help when I need it, such as with my writeups. To say, 'OK. This is what I said about you. Is this okay? Is this right? Is this accurate?' And so, I think that really trying to partner with a grantee requires vulnerability on both sides of the relationship in order to build trust."

JAMIE ALLISON
Vice President, Grants

S.H. COWELL FOUNDATION

Table One

ASPECTS OF THE GRANTEE EXPERIENCE WHERE PROGRAM OFFICERS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE

Aspects More Strongly Shaped by the Program Officer than the Foundation
Overall funder–grantee relationship
Helpfulness of the selection process
Helpfulness of the reporting/evaluation process
Helpfulness of foundation in assessing progress toward grantee goals
Helpfulness of foundation in addressing grantees' challenges
Overall transparency
Total time grantees spend on foundations' processes

Aspects Shaped Equally by the Program Officer and the Foundation
Understanding of the social, cultural, or socioeconomic factors that affect grantees' work
Understanding of grantees' goals and strategies
Understanding of grantees' fields
Impact on grantees' fields
Impact on grantees' organizations
Level of pressure to modify grantees' priorities
Awareness of the challenges grantees face

14 Three aspects of the grantee experience that we could not test, due to the fact that they were added to the GPR too recently for enough data to have been collected to run a robust HLM analysis, are foundations' understanding of the needs of grantee organizations' intended beneficiaries, the extent to which foundations incorporate an understanding of beneficiary needs into their funding priorities, and foundations' openness to grantees' ideas about their strategy. However, our analyses indicate that these aspects are highly correlated to other aspects of foundations' understanding in this table.

Foundations, as Organizations, Also Shape Relationships

While there are many elements of a grantee's experience with a funder that are shaped more strongly by who their program officer is, some elements are more strongly determined by differences in the way foundations operate (see Table 2). For example, the provision of general operating support and nonmonetary assistance tends to be more a function of practices at a foundation than of the program officer with whom a grantee works.

Table Two

ASPECTS OF THE GRANTEE EXPERIENCE SHAPED MORE BY THE FOUNDATION THAN BY THE PROGRAM OFFICER

Proportion of grantees receiving nonmonetary support from the foundation
Type of nonmonetary support provided by the foundation
Proportion of grantees receiving general operating support from the foundation
Impact of funding on ability to continue work funded

CEP: How has the foundation supported you in building the relationships you have?

"Each program officer at the New York Community Trust has specific grant responsibilities. But, because the Trust funds almost every single area that one could think of—education, health, human services, environment, technical assistance—we're able to take a balanced, global approach and match it to specific sector-related challenges. This helps because most issues we fund don't fit in a silo. The fact that I can draw on my colleagues with expertise in other areas to think through an issue is helpful, and I think grantees appreciate knowing that when I look at something, I am looking at it from all angles.

The Trust gives me a fair amount of autonomy to figure out what needs to be done. As a program staff member I must operate within board-approved grantmaking guidelines—and because the Trust is a community foundation, we have funds with particular purposes to which we must adhere—but within such parameters I have significant latitude to determine how best to address a particular issue. Program staff at the Trust are tasked with that responsibility and, I believe, respected in their field for their opinions on how to move an issue forward or address a challenge."

IRFAN HASAN
Program Director of Healthy Lives

THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY TRUST

Our analysis suggests that program officers are crucial. The job they do is affected by their own characteristics and efforts, of course, but it's more complicated than that. Foundation boards and leaders can set program officers up for success—or failure—by affecting the conditions in which they work. Recent research we published on program officers' roles and responsibilities—based on a survey of 150 program officers—indicates that program officers don't always feel supported in prioritizing relationships. More than half of program officers surveyed told us they believe that spending time developing and maintaining relationships with grantees should be one of the job responsibilities taking up the greatest amount of their time, yet that is only the case for 36 percent of program officers surveyed.[15] Our research suggests that program officers see relationships with grantees as key and want to be doing more.[16]

15 Ellie Buteau et al., "Benchmarking Program Officer Roles and Responsibilities" (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, June 20, 2017), http://research.cep.org/benchmarking-program-officer-roles-and-responsibilities.

16 Ibid.

> Foundation boards and leaders can set program officers up for success—or failure—by affecting the conditions in which they work.

FINDING TWO

The most powerful ways for program officers to strengthen relationships are to develop an understanding of grantee organizations and the context in which they work and to be transparent.

1. UNDERSTANDING

Understanding is crucial to forming a strong funder–grantee relationship. As one grantee says, "Good relationships of any kind are rooted in mutual understanding—but this is not always acknowledged in foundation–grantee relationships."

The issues nonprofits work on are complex, and their organizations are often strapped for resources. The context in which they work is also complicated, with systemic issues often at the root of the environmental and social problems that they work to address. Program officers, therefore, must have an understanding of many different aspects of the grantee organizations with which they work, and the context in which those organizations operate, to form strong relationships with grantees.

When they do, grantees know it. As one grantee notes, "The foundation uses its resources in ways that truly support our growth. This is an integral reason it is such a valued partner. They take the time to understand our goals and aspirations and the environment in which we operate." Another says, "I most appreciate that the foundation staff understand the needs in my community. When you discuss barriers and challenges, they understand what you're talking about. The staff understands the culture of each of the various communities in the state and region."

When program officers don't possess much understanding of grantees' organizations or the context in which they work, grantees make comments like, "The foundation could be a better funder by engaging with organizations at a deeper level and by 'setting the table' to have honest conversations with grantees. It would be great if the foundation asked us, 'What are the major challenges you are wrestling with? How can we help you address your challenges?'" Grantees also recognize when their funder is not putting in the effort to build understanding, saying things like, "Sometimes the people that we serve know far more than those of us (myself included) with graduate degrees, late-model vehicles, and access to wine clubs. Being of and around wealth does not a deep-community-knowledge make. Humility yields many, many great things."

Our analysis captures several different types of understanding: of the goals and strategies of grantee organizations; of the challenges nonprofits face; of the communities and/or fields in which grantees work; of the social, cultural, and economic context in which grantees work; and of those whom grantees ultimately seek to help—the intended beneficiaries. (See Table 3). All of these types of understanding come together to form one of the keys to a strong relationship.

> "
>
> Sometimes the people that we serve know far more than those of us (myself included) with graduate degrees, late-model vehicles, and access to wine clubs. Being of and around wealth does not a deep-community-knowledge make. Humility yields many, many great things.
>
> *–Grantee*

Table Three

ASPECTS OF FOUNDATIONS' UNDERSTANDING OF GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THEY WORK

Aspects of Understanding
Foundations' understanding of grantee organizations' **strategy and goals**
Foundations' awareness of grantee **organizations' challenges**
Foundations' understanding of the **fields** in which grantees work
Foundations' understanding of grantees' **local communities**
Foundations' understanding of the **social, cultural, or socioeconomic factors** that affect grantees' work
Foundations' understanding of intended **beneficiaries' needs**
Extent to which foundations' **funding priorities** reflect a deep understanding of grantees' intended beneficiaries' needs

PRACTICES OF
HIGHLY RATED PROGRAM OFFICERS
FOUNDATION UNDERSTANDING

"I receive the grantees I work with. It's subtle, you know? It's part of my own way of behaving with grantees, of demonstrating interest. And it's not only about grantees, it's about anyone. If you want to engage with people, have good communications, and really understand, then you have to listen and not judge as much as you can. It's not easy to do that, but try not to be judgmental, and really put yourself in other people's shoes. This is something that I try to do.

It's not easy to come to the Ford Foundation office in a very nice building, meeting with someone who makes decisions about the money that you depend on to pay your team for the next two years. So I try to be very simple, also, in the way that I talk and the way that I behave. It took me a while, working as a grantmaker, to allow myself to show vulnerability. At first, I was kind of scared, thinking that I had to show that I knew more than the grantee. But it was not true—and I realized I wouldn't do really good work if I wasn't genuine. So, I take the risk of being the real me. I show real interest because I am a curious person, and I'm aware I always have something to learn in a conversation. I like to know about people's experiences and visions. I think this leads to relevant conversations that open the way to really good work, collaborative work built upon trust."

GRACIELA SELAIMEN
Program Officer,
Brazil Office

FORDFOUNDATION

"I listen a lot. I believe most people who go into the nonprofit sector, particularly in the health and behavioral health areas [do so] because they have passion about an issue. Every chance I can get to hear from those people is a chance at bettering my understanding of important issues. So, a good conversation is a conversation where I say very little and I hear from them, so they can better inform my work."

IRFAN HASAN
Program Director
of Healthy Lives

THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY TRUST NYCT

"We try to listen closely to our grantees and other colleagues in the field. For us, the "beneficiaries" are researchers and people living with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). We spend a lot of time visiting grantees, learning about their work and the scientific challenges they face, as well as what the key questions in the field are at this time. We also sometimes meet with patients/families, to understand the impact that some of the research is having on their or their children's lives (e.g., diet/nutrition research). We also talk to colleagues working at other foundations that support research on IBD to learn about their strategic priorities and what they understand about the state of research in this area. We network with people in industry and biotech and seek ways to support innovative and collaborative projects with industry, biotech, and academia. We participate in a membership organization of biomedical funders, called the Health Research Alliance, where we often discuss ways funders can accelerate research to improve treatment for various diseases, share best and promising practices, and get inspired to try new approaches to impact the state of research in this area. We attend conferences on this topic as well (e.g., Partnering for Cures)."

JACKIE HAUSMAN
Program Officer, Health

Kenneth Rainin
FOUNDATION

"With new partners, I don't assume I know the organization's priorities and strategies. In my conversations, I spend more time at first understanding what an organization's mission means in actual work. Then I put our strategy in that context. That's really what it's about, doing the work to understand folks—understand how they're getting things done and what our intersection can be."

TERESA RIVERO
Senior Program Officer of Education

BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation

"I went on a trip with First People's Fund to a couple of reservations and had the honor of learning more deeply about native culture and the context of grantmaking in cultures that aren't my own. I also learned about the ways I (I identify as a white woman) would go into a situation and how I need to alter the way I work or hold a conversation in order to respect someone else's culture when I approach, or am approached by, communities in regards to funding. I also went through a process with Alexs Pate—he's an amazing person, educator, and writer. He wrote *Amistad*. He did a process with a group of us called *Innocent Giving*. It's based on something he's done in classrooms with teachers and students, and he's created a curriculum for philanthropy. And that has really been instrumental in my understanding of how I can do better in this work—just by understanding how I may be perceived or how I perceive or how I show up when I walk into a room. I'm representing a large foundation. I appreciate learning from others about how to be more authentic and realizing where grantees are when you are having a conversation with them and being respectful of that power dynamic."

SARAH LOVAN
Program Officer, Arts

THE McKNIGHT FOUNDATION

"There is an expectation at Hewlett that you spend time with grantees and in the field more generally. We are provided the time we need to understand and support the organizations with which we work and also have money in the budget to attend conferences. The structure of the job is set up so that we can build relationships and maintain those relationships."

EMIKO ONO
Program Officer of Performing Arts

WILLIAM + FLORA
Hewlett Foundation

2. TRANSPARENCY

The other crucial aspect of building strong relationships between program officers and grantees is transparency. To nonprofit leaders, transparency is about clarity, openness, and honesty. Grantees value and appreciate this openness as a way of obtaining information they believe is important to their success.[17]

Grantees who find their funders to be transparent explain how that transparency helps them work with those funders, saying, "I appreciate the transparency and clarity of communication received from the foundation and its staff. It helps my staff and me use our time efficiently and effectively when preparing a grant proposal. Foundation staff are accessible and offer, when able to, good information and clear direction." Another grantee notes, "It is a pleasure to experience such an open and collaborative partnership. The processes are thorough and clearly designed to ensure accountability and transparency by all parties."

When grantees are not receiving information from their funder, they often wish they were. They say things like, "It would be nice to have more support from the foundation, including a more open conversation about how it can support our work, what the staff have learned in working with other grantees and projects in our geographic and service area, and what they are looking for from potential projects." Another grantee comments, "It would be helpful to understand the foundation's strategy and approach to the issues about which we apply for funding. The foundation can be intrusive in asking organizations to reveal

internal workings in order to receive funding, so it would be nice if the foundation itself would be as transparent as is demanded of the entities it funds."

Foundation CEOs also see transparency as important and largely define it in the same way as grantees, as we have documented in other research efforts.[18] The majority of foundation CEOs believe that being transparent about their programmatic goals, strategies, and experiences with what has and has not worked in their efforts could increase their foundation's effectiveness.[19] So the question is not one of intention, it's one of execution.

> "
>
> I appreciate the transparency and clarity of communication received from the foundation and its staff. It helps my staff and me use our time efficiently.
>
> –Grantee

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17 Andrea Brock, Ellie Buteau, Ph.D., and Ramya Gopal, "Foundation Transparency: What Nonprofits Want" (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, May 2013), http://research.cep.org/foundation-transparency-what-nonprofits-want.

18 Ellie Buteau et al., "Sharing What Matters: Foundation Transparency" (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, February 2016), http://research.effectivephilanthropy.org/sharing-what-matters-foundation-transparency.

19 Ibid.

TRANSPARENCY

"First, grantees have to become convinced that being transparent about a problem is not a conversation about their funding. The funding conversation certainly may occur at some point, but the foundation does not expect that every grant is going to proceed the way it was predicted at the onset. To be a true learning partner, we seek to build a level of trust and transparency.

The foundation supports program officers to take thoughtful, well-researched risks, and to know that some of those risks are going to play out in ways we never could have imagined—both positive and potentially negative ways. We share with grantees how our foundation expects there to be lessons learned and how it values continuously sharing these lessons across programs. We couldn't take a learning stance with our grantees if that position hadn't first been taken with us inside the foundation."

STACY PARKER-FISHER
Director,
Learning Differences

OAK FOUNDATION

"Getting the relationship off on the right foot is key. Making clear that the door is open from the beginning, and ensuring that both people have a set of articulated, shared expectations up front about how you're going to work together is really important."

CAROLINE ALTMAN SMITH
Deputy Director, Education
THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

"I think having reciprocal transparency and accountability is really important in building strong relationships with grantees. I simply cannot do my work without the grantees, so I try to make that as apparent through my actions as possible. For example, I tend to share my writeups with grantees. After I've written a draft of whatever's going to the board, I often share that with grantees and say, 'This is what I'm going to be saying about your organization and your work. I'd like your feedback—is this accurate? Are there things you would want my board to know about you that I haven't mentioned?'"

JAMIE ALLISON
Vice President, Grants

S.H. COWELL FOUNDATION

"We are fairly dramatically changing the way we make grants, and we're erring on the side of giving organizations too much information about it. We've started blogging about some changes that are coming. We're giving a high-level description of what we're going to be doing, saying there are more details to follow, before the grant guidelines come out. To further explain the changes, we put together a video series, posted on our website. In the videos, each program officer addresses a different issue related to the changes in what we hope is an open, conversational way. We're all sort of filling in different pieces of the puzzle. Next month, we're going to have workshops in our funding areas and in our geographic areas further explaining the changes."

NICK RANDELL
Program Officer

The Peter and Elizabeth C. **TOWER** Foundation

"I found over time that the more information and more clarity I provided about our process and about how we do our work, the better relationship we were able to build. The more open I was, the more open grantees would be."

ELIZABETH LOVE
Senior Program Officer

HOUSTON ENDOWMENT

" I think having strong relationships relies on building trust, transparency, and creating equal ground. I think that all three are hard when you have a relationship that starts with some funding mechanism. I'm the one who has to break down the barriers to make it equal and not hold the power, and I know it's unbalanced. I try to figure it out by being as transparent as I can. I think some of the challenges sometimes are due to internal systems, or the way foundations generally operate— how decisions are made impacts being transparent. But what I do is lay what I know on the table, in the most respectful way, in partnership, and always follow up on things I promise I'm going to do. So, when I know something that impacts grantees, I make sure that folks know what I know, when I know it, in the most respectful way possible."

TERESA RIVERO
Senior Program Officer
of Education

BILL&MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

FINDING THREE

Program officers can also strengthen funder–grantee relationships by ensuring that selection processes are helpful and being open to grantees' ideas about foundations' strategies.

1. SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process is, of course, a crucial time during which foundations and nonprofits learn about each other's goals, strategies, and operations. When grantees find the process helpful, they make comments like, "The foundation's processes, interactions, and communications were helpful and positioned us to be more successful. The foundation's partnership with us in the application process helped to clarify and prioritize the program's activities and values."

A helpful process can set the stage for a positive relationship characterized by productive, meaningful discussions—and mutual respect. In these instances, the selection process can enhance grantees' work. Yet, grantees can also experience a process that is disorganized and onerous. At these times, grantees can feel pressured by funders to change their processes in ways that they view as burdensome or unfair. As one grantee notes, "The

foundation continually changes its processes and goals and seeks to put pressure on organizations to meet the needs and wants of the foundation as opposed to the needs and wants of the community."

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> The foundation continually changes its processes and goals and seeks to put pressure on organizations to meet the needs and wants of the foundation as opposed to the needs and wants of the community.
>
> *–Grantee*

"We feel very strongly that organizations should not modify their priorities to align with ours. To mitigate this risk, we find that communicating with potential applicants at the "idea stage"—well before a proposal is crafted and submitted—is the best way to ensure that an organization doesn't alter its priorities. We do this in several ways. First, we ask that all potential grant seekers reach out and speak to a program officer before preparing an application. We appreciate the opportunity to learn the mission, goals, and strategies of potential applicants and to share what Houston Endowment is seeking to achieve. It's often during these conversations we have the opportunity to communicate the lack of fit and steer the grant seeker from completing a proposal and toward other resources or connections that may be helpful. Second, we welcome "preapplications," which is a short online form that allows grant seekers to share a little more about their work. We aim to review and respond within just a few weeks, providing guidance regarding whether an idea should move on to the next phase in the application process. Finally, for active grantees interested in renewal, we aim to stay in close touch throughout the grant cycle—this allows us to monitor the progress of the work, as well as communicate as soon as possible about any changes to foundation priorities that may impact the likelihood for renewal."

ELIZABETH LOVE
Senior Program Officer

HOUSTON
ENDOWMENT

"There is not really a space, in my mind, for a foundation to tell an organization what to do. It's not good grantmaking to be prescriptive in that way. I may have insights, experience, and thoughts that I can share with an organization, but to presume I know what is best for them to prioritize is not okay."

SARAH LOVAN
Program Officer, Arts

THE MᶜKNIGHT FOUNDATION

"One thing that we started doing is making calls with prospective grantees to clarify questions that we have about even their preliminary submissions. I think that they appreciate that we didn't just react to what we saw on paper—we gave them a chance to flesh out their proposal a little bit."

NICK RANDELL
Program Officer

The Peter and Elizabeth C. TOWER Foundation

"It's tricky because of the power dynamic, but I try to ask questions to make the process more of a conversation than a prescription. In the end, it is not only about the project—it is about strengthening the organization we are working with."

GRACIELA SELAIMEN
Program Officer,
Brazil Office

FORDFOUNDATION

2. OPENNESS

Some foundations are open to ideas from the grantees they work with about how to approach their work differently, while others are not. When a funder is open to grantees' ideas about strategy, such openness can contribute to building stronger relationships with grantees.

Grantees who find their funders to be open to ideas say things like, "I have found members of the foundation's staff to be very open to discussions about how, together, we can make a difference in our geographical area. They are willing to step outside of the box and try new ideas." Another grantee notes, "The staff are accessible and available for ongoing discussions and brainstorming about new ideas and ways of accomplishing programmatic goals."

However, many grantees do not experience this level of openness. When grantees perceive a funder is not open to ideas about strategy, they make comments like, "I think the foundation should take more time in designing its initiatives, involve a wider selection of individuals and organizations in the strategic design process, and generally 'listen' a bit more to the field before diving in."

> I think the foundation should take more time in designing its initiatives, involve a wider selection of individuals and organizations in the strategic design process, and generally 'listen' a bit more to the field before diving in.
>
> *–Grantee*

> I've also learned that I need, in this position, to understand race and culture in a deeper way. I need to not only read books, I need to have actual relationships with people that are not like me, who do not look like me, who do not practice the same things that I practice, and to not only seek out those relationships, but develop them.
>
> *–Sarah Lovan*

OPENNESS

"I have learned that most of us are trying to do something to make the place that we live better. I try to always go in with an open mind and open heart. And listen. I think about where people are and what they're trying to accomplish, and just really honor them and their efforts. Honestly, that's what I've learned.

I've also learned that I need, in this position, to understand race and culture in a deeper way. I need to not only read books, I need to have actual relationships with people that are not like me, who do not look like me, who do not practice the same things that I practice, and to not only seek out those relationships, but develop them. That sort of work is imperative to the foundation continuing its connections in an authentic way and doing good grant making—great grant making, actually. Strong grantmaking is when you listen and act with the knowledge and sharing of the people you are trying to connect to."

SARAH LOVAN
Program Officer, Arts

THE McKNIGHT FOUNDATION

"As we've considered major shifts in strategy, we've proactively sought input from grantees. For example, as we revised our approach to environmental grantmaking, we engaged a consultant to conduct structured, confidential interviews with a number of grantees. We were interested in learning their thoughts about the impact of our past grantmaking, about emerging issues in the field, and about how they felt Houston Endowment could best invest its resources in the coming years. We found this feedback to be quite valuable and particularly influential in our decisions to sunset certain initiatives, double-down on others, and prioritize building capacity where it was lacking."

ELIZABETH LOVE
Senior Program Officer

HOUSTON
ENDOWMENT

"We have consortiums. Every two or three years we have a gathering of all of our grantees. This is a time when grantees can take space from their day to day and connect with one another to provide support, share learning, and make new connections. We have found the relationships formed at these meetings have been durable and critical to the ongoing success of the programs."

STACY PARKER-FISHER
Director,
Learning Differences

OAK FOUNDATION

"The program's strategy undergoes a significant evaluation and is refreshed approximately every eight years. During this process, many grantees are solicited for their input. Also, every four years, the strategy undergoes a less intensive assessment and is often tweaked as a result of that review. Key grantees are elicited for input during this assessment period as well."

EMIKO ONO
Program Officer of
Performing Arts

WILLIAM + FLORA
Hewlett Foundation

"We can't be afraid to ask, what can we be doing better? So, we are open and accessible to how we can better support grantees' work."

JACKIE HAUSMAN
Program Officer, Health

Kenneth
Rainin
FOUNDATION

CONCLUSION

Foundation leaders and program officers alike recognize the importance of having strong relationships with grantees in order to achieve their goals.

Relationships are formed between people, of course, and when it comes to laying the groundwork for developing strong relationships between foundations and grantees, program officers are fundamental players. Program officers are grantees' main point of contact with a foundation, so much of grantees' experiences with a foundation rely on their interactions and communications with those program officers.

Recognizing the importance of relationships, and who is in the position to build them, is the first step. The second step is to really understand the grantee perspective.

"When it comes to the relationships we seek to build and maintain with individuals and institutions, understanding what they truly need should be our first priority," notes Ford Foundation President Darren Walker. "Ultimately, realizing our potential as foundations isn't only about serving our own missions; it's about engaging honestly and authentically with organizations we believe in and working to serve theirs."[20]

Our analysis of the perspectives of thousands of nonprofit grantees reveals that the most powerful steps a program officer can take to strengthen relationships with grantees are to focus on **understanding grantee organizations and the context in which they work** and **being transparent** with grantees. This is where foundation staff and leadership should concentrate their efforts.

Other factors that contribute to a funder–grantee relationship are how **helpful** grantees find a funder's selection process, how **open** they experience a funder as being to new ideas about strategy, and how much **pressure** they feel to modify their funding proposal to receive funding.

The program officers we profile in this report are among the best we have seen, in the eyes of their grantees, among a set of more than 500 for which we have data. There is no formula, of course—no one prescribed way that highly rated program officers approach their work. Instead, each of the highly rated program officers with whom we spoke

seem to have figured out for themselves what works best in the context of the culture of their foundation and their own personalities and experiences.

One quality that these program officers do seem to share, however, is a respect for grantees and the knowledge and experiences that grantees bring to the table. As Caroline Altman Smith of the Kresge Foundation notes, "It's important to be respectful, and keep the focus of the work on the grantees and the people they serve. It's not about us. We're there to help enable and steward resources so that the grantees can do their work."

While funder–grantee relationships are primarily shaped by program officers, program officers cannot do their jobs well without resources and support from their foundations. Program staff do not work in a vacuum—they work within an organizational culture and structure. So, there are implications in our analysis for foundation leadership, too, as they consider how they best set up program officers for success in the important work of strengthening relationships with the nonprofits on the front lines.

We hope this analysis of thousands of grantee views, as well as the wisdom of program officers who do this work well, can help guide foundations as they prioritize building strong relationships with their grantees.

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> It's important to be respectful, and keep the focus of the work on the grantees and the people they serve. It's not about us. We're there to help enable and steward resources so that the grantees can do their work.
>
> –*Caroline Altman Smith*

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20   Darren Walker, "Listening for Change," *The Center for Effective Philanthropy*, CEO Reflections on the Future of Philanthropy, December 2016, 16–19.

METHODOLOGY

Two sources of data were used for analyses in this research about funder–grantee relationships:

- Surveys of grantee organizations from CEP's Grantee Perception Report® (GPR).
- Interviews with foundation program officers.

All research and analyses were developed and executed by CEP staff. Information detailing the processes for collecting and analyzing the data associated with the two sources is below.

GPR DATA

Grantee data discussed in this report was gathered through surveys administered as part of CEP's GPR process.

This study used three subsets of the GPR:

- Quantitative GPR data collected in 2016 and 2017 was used for various quantitative analysis;
- Quantitative GPR data collected from 2005 to 2015 was used for hierarchical linear modeling analysis; and
- Qualitative GPR data collected from 2010 to 2017 was used for grantee quote collection.

Further information detailing the parameters of each of these three subsets of GPR data is below.

METHOD

Foundations commission GPRs to receive confidential feedback from their grantees on a range of issues, such as:

- Grantees' perceptions of the clarity and consistency of the foundation's communications;
- Grantees' perceptions of foundation staff's responsiveness;
- Grantees' comfort in approaching the foundation if a problem arises;
- Grantees' sense of how fairly they are treated by the foundation;
- Grantees' perceptions of the foundation's overall transparency; and
- Grantees' perceptions of the impact the foundation has on their organizations, the fields in which they work, and the communities in which they work.

The GPR survey consisted of about 50 items, many of which used seven-point Likert rating scales. All surveys were fielded online. Grantees were sent a brief e-mail that included a description of the GPR survey, a statement of confidentiality, and a link to their survey.

GPR QUANTITATIVE SAMPLE COLLECTED IN 2016 AND 2017

Between spring 2016 and summer 2017, 86 foundations commissioned a GPR and 25,906 of their grantees were invited to participate in the GPR survey. Of those surveyed, 17,248 grantees responded, resulting in a response rate of 66.6 percent.

Among the 86 foundations that received grantee feedback, 58 were independent foundations (including nine health conversion foundations), eight were community foundations, eight were public charities, and five were corporate foundations. Seven foundations identified themselves as "other" instead of one of the aforementioned categories.[21] The median foundation in the dataset had 22 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, $523 million in assets, and an annual giving amount of $18 million.[22]

Foundation Characteristics	Range	Median Value
Staff Size	1 FTE to >400 FTEs	22 FTEs
Assets	<$3 million to >$30 billion	$523 million
Giving	<$1 million to >$500 million	$18 million

Quantitative Analysis

To analyze the quantitative survey data used to inform this report, a combination of correlations, factor analysis, and regression analysis was used. An alpha level of 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance for all inferential tests conducted.

Regression Analysis

An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted to understand the predictors of grantee ratings on the funder–grantee relationship summary measure. Because OLS regression carries assumptions that our data could not meet, robust regressions, calculating Huber estimators and MM estimators, were also run to understand whether the non-normal distribution of our dependent variable (i.e., the relationship summary measure) biased the results of the model. The robust regressions confirmed the findings of the OLS regressions; therefore, the OLS regression findings are presented in this report.

The R^2 for the OLS regression predicting relationships was 63.3 percent, meaning that the variables in the model chosen explained 63.3 percent of the variation in respondents' relationship ratings. The standardized beta

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21 As categorized by Foundation Directory Online and CEP's internal contact management software.

22 Staff size data were self-reported at the time the GPR was administered. All data on a foundation's annual giving and total assets were provided by Foundation Directory Online.

coefficients, which indicate the relative predictive power of each variable, are as follows, in descending order:

- Understanding summary measure[23]: 0.347
- Overall transparency of the foundation with the grantee organization: 0.322
- Helpfulness of the foundation's selection process in strengthening the grantee's organization or program funded by the grant: 0.121
- Openness of the foundation to suggestions from its grantees on its strategy: 0.119
- Pressure the grantee felt to modify his/her organization's priorities to create a grant proposal that was likely to receive funding: -0.109

DATA FOR HIERARCHICAL LINEAR MODELING

To determine what amount of variance in grantee ratings could be attributed to the foundation providing funding compared with a grantee's program officer at the foundation, hierarchical linear modeling analyses were run.[24]

CEP only collects program officer data from a subset of foundations that commission GPR surveys, so to achieve a sample large enough for analysis, a larger subset of GPR results was used compared to the dataset used in the regression analysis described above.

Between spring 2005 and fall 2015, 282 foundations commissioned a GPR and 65,845 of their grantees were invited to participate in the GPR survey. Of those surveyed, 43,477 grantees responded, resulting in a response rate of 66 percent.

Of these foundations, 72 asked grantees to indicate their primary contact. Of the 72 foundations, 61 had at least three different staff members for which at least 10 grantees indicated that staff member was their sole primary contact. For this analysis, we looked exclusively at these 61 foundations. In total, 11,234 grantee responses associated with 508 program officers were analyzed.

Of the foundations in our final sample of respondents, 49 were independent foundations, seven were community foundations, four were public charities, and one was a corporate foundation. Health conversion foundations accounted for four of the independent foundations and two of the public charities. The median asset size for foundations in the dataset was $600.3 million, and the median annual giving level was $31.7 million. The median staff size was 25 FTE staff.[25]

Foundation Characteristics	Range	Median Value
Staff Size	3 FTEs to >1000 FTEs	25 FTEs
Assets	<$32 million to >$33 billion	$600.3 million
Giving	<$3 million to >$3 billion	$31.7 million

GRANTEE QUOTE COLLECTION

Quotations from grantees in this report, related to grantee perceptions of and experiences with their program officers and foundation funders, were selected from responses to open-ended survey items included in the GPR.

GRANTEE QUOTATION SELECTION

Quotations were deemed eligible for review if the grantee:

- responded to the survey during or after 2010[26];
- responded to all five measures that make up the relationships summary measure.

Grantees from 231 foundations were deemed eligible from the above criteria.

Of these 231 foundations, 25 percent were randomly selected for a total of 59 foundations. Grantee responses from the GPRs of these randomly selected foundations were reviewed. To ensure that these foundations were representative of the population from which they were selected, they were stratified by the following variables:

- Type of foundation (independent vs. community foundation)
- Giving (for independent foundations, split up into quartiles based on self-reported annual giving information)

This stratification resulted in five groups: one for community foundations and four for independent foundations, based on annual giving quartiles. Twenty-five percent of foundations were randomly selected from each of the stratified groups, combining for a total of 59 foundations.

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23 The understanding summary measure is the average of seven items related to grantees' perceptions of foundation understanding in the GPR: understanding of grantee organizations' strategy and goals; understanding of the field in which grantees work; understanding of the local community in which grantees work; understanding of the social, cultural, or socioeconomic factors that affect grantees' work; awareness of the challenges that grantee organizations face; understanding of intended beneficiaries' needs; and the extent to which funding priorities reflect a deep understanding of intended beneficiaries' needs.

24 For this study, variance in grantee ratings explained by the program officer was compared with variance in grantee ratings explained by the foundation. Any variable for which more than 60 percent of this combined variance was explained by the program officer was deemed to be more attributable to the program officer than to the foundation. Conversely, any variable with more than 60 percent of this variance explained by the foundation was deemed to be more attributable to the foundation than to the program officer. All other variables were deemed to be equally attributable to the foundation and to the program officer.

25 All data on a foundation's annual giving, total assets, and staff size were self-reported at the time the GPR was administered.

26 2010 was used as the cutoff to avoid including quotations examined during the analysis involved in CEP's 2010 report, "Working With Grantees."

GRANTEE QUOTATION CODING

Content analysis was conducted on the responses to the following open-ended survey items:

- What specific improvements would you suggest that would make the foundation a better funder?
- Please comment briefly on the quality of the foundation's operations, processes, interactions, and communications.
- Please comment on the most important impact the foundation is having on your field, community, or organization.

Quotations were coded according to the predictors of relationships described in this report:

- Foundation understanding;
- Foundation transparency with grantees;
- Foundation selection processes; and
- Foundation openness to ideas about its strategy from grantees.

Qualitative data was not used for analysis and therefore no inter-rater reliability was conducted. Selected quotations were included in this publication. All positive quotations come from grantees who rated the foundation above the mean rating on the relationships summary measure in the GPR dataset. All negative quotations come from grantees who rated the foundation below the mean rating on the relationships summary measure.

PROGRAM OFFICER QUOTATIONS

We interviewed 11 program officers representing 11 different foundations for this report to provide examples of the different choices program officers make while building relationships with grantees.

To create a list of program officers to interview, a k-means cluster analysis was run to determine groupings of program officers according to grantee ratings.

A cluster analysis was run for each of the five variables that make up the relationships factor, as well as the five variables thought to be the most relevant to a program officer's interactions with grantees given previous research.[27] All variables included in the analysis asked grantees to rate a foundation on a one to seven Likert scale. For each individual variable used, proportions of ratings on this scale were used to examine patterns in ratings of program officers. After each cluster analysis was run, the cluster containing the highest grantee ratings was identified. The program officers in this cluster were referred to as "highly

rated." Using an analysis of variance, the highly rated cluster was tested to ensure it was distinct from other clusters identified during the analysis. For two of the 10 variables checked, no highly rated cluster was identified, leaving eight variables for consideration.

Program officers were considered eligible to be interviewed as part of this report if they

- were in the cluster of highest-rated program officers for at least six of the variables under consideration; and
- had a title of program officer, or had a title of program manager or equivalent, at a foundation with no listed program officers as identified through the foundation's website.

We invited 12 of the program officers who met the eligibility criteria to be interviewed for this study. One foundation declined to have its eligible program officer participate. Interviews were conducted via phone and lasted approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Follow up questions were asked via e-mail. The program officers interviewed reviewed any quotations that appear in this report and agreed to share them publicly here.

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27 The variables used in this process were perceptions of the clarity of the foundation's communications; the consistency of the foundation's communications; foundation staff's responsiveness; grantees' comfort in approaching the foundation if a problem arises; how fairly grantees are treated by the foundation; the foundation's overall transparency; the foundation's understanding of grantee organizations' goals and strategies; the foundation's understanding of the socioeconomic factors that affect the grantees' work; pressure grantee felt to modify organization priorities to create a grant proposal that was likely to receive funding; and the helpfulness of the foundation's selection process in strengthening the grantees' organization or program funded by the grant. For more information, see Ellie Buteau et al., "Sharing What Matters: Foundation Transparency" (The Center for Effective Philanthropy, February 2016), http://research.effectivephilanthropy.org/sharing-what-matters-foundation-transparency, 12.

NOTES