



RESULTS FROM THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY'S SURVEY OF EVERY CHILD COUNTS COMMUNITY GRANTS INITIATIVE RECIPIENTS

BACKGROUND

As part of our ongoing evaluation efforts, First 5 Alameda County Every Child Counts (F5AC) commissioned the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) to conduct a survey of past and current Community Grants Initiative (CGI) recipients. The CEP is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide data that will help philanthropic funders improve their effectiveness and impact. Since 2003, the CEP has surveyed 60,000 grantees of 231 funders (almost all of the funders surveyed are foundations, not public agencies). While F5AC has conducted several satisfaction surveys with CGI recipients in the past, F5AC decided to ask the CEP to survey our grantees in order to obtain more impartial results. Also, by participating in the CEP survey, our performance as a funder could be compared to that of other funders. CEP has found that most grantees rate their funder highly and so the relative rating a funder receives, compared to other funders, is one of the most useful aspects of the survey.

APPROACH

In Fall 2008, CEP contacted 74 past and current CGI recipients. CEP received 54 completed surveys, a 73% response rate¹.

The 10-page Grantee Perception Survey includes 58 questions and covers topics like:

- Communication from the funder about its goals and strategy
- Grant application and selection process
- Reporting and evaluation
- Interactions with the funder
- Funder's understanding of, and impact on, the grantee, the field, and the community

Grantees also completed one page of F5AC "customized" questions that asked about the ease of using ECC Online, satisfaction with the kind and amount of trainings and technical assistance, and other topics.

RESULTS

Attached are two key documents from the 106-page CEP report that presents F5AC results: "Key Findings" and a table of results showing the average rating for various measures. The table compares the ratings F5AC received to the ratings received by a "peer group" of 16 funders² and to the ratings received from the entire set of 114 funders³ that participated in the survey during the past 3 years.

Overall, F5AC compared favorably to other funders, rating similarly or higher than other funders on a number of measures including:

- Degree of overall satisfaction with funder
- Clarity of funder's communication of its goals and strategy
- Responsiveness of funder staff
- Helpfulness of reporting and evaluation process in strengthening the grantee (rated higher than 90% of other funders and higher than all other peer funders)
- Proportion of grantees that received field or comprehensive non-monetary assistance
- Degree of comfort in approaching the funder if a problem arises and extent to which funder treated grantee fairly
- Extent to which funder advanced the state of knowledge in grantee's field
- Understanding of grantee's field and grantee's local community
- Impact on grantee's field and grantee's local community
- Impact on public policy in grantee's field

Results from many of the "customized" questions were also positive:

- 70% agreed that the ECC Online application/reporting system was easy to use
- Over 75% agreed that using the Accountability Plan or Scope of Work has been helpful for internal quality monitoring or communicating results with stakeholders
- 75% were satisfied with the kind of trainings provided
- Over 80% were satisfied with the amount and kind of one-on-one technical assistance provided
- When asked to indicate the ways in which their experience as a grantee has had a meaningful impact on their organization:
 - ♦ 93% agreed there had been an increase in their ability to serve and meet the needs of the 0-5 population
 - ♦ 74% agreed there had been an increase in networking and resource sharing with other agencies
 - ♦ 70% agreed there had been an increase in their ability to track and report results

Many of the responses to the open-ended questions were similarly positive.

"This program is among the most effectively organized and supportive that our agency has worked with. The program officers are extremely responsive and very helpful. They are truly partners in the efforts to increase quality services for young children and their families."

"We are extremely impressed with the level of commitment, professionalism and clarity in all aspects of ECC operations, processes and interactions. The staff are very informed, supportive and responsive. Information is given openly and grantees are treated with respect."

AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT

For the most part, CGI recipients rated the program highly, but areas identified for improvement include:

- Consistency of information provided by communications resources (rated lower than 90% of other funders)
- Impact of funding on grantee ability to continue work (future sustainability) and impact of funder's reputation in securing funding from other sources
- Understanding of grantees' goals and strategy (rated lower than 90% of other funders)
- Helpfulness of assistance activities (inconsistent finding with other results above)
- Helpfulness of the grantee selection process in strengthening the grantee and level of involvement of funder staff in the development of the proposal
- Dollar return summary, i.e., the amount of funding received by a grantee compared to the amount of hours a grantee spent on fulfilling the funder's administrative requirements (proposal and selection, monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes)

Some of the relatively lower ratings that F5AC received are likely related to the fact that F5AC is a public agency and not a private foundation with more latitude in its grant-making processes. For example, grantees' perceptions about F5AC's understanding of their goals and strategies may be due, in part, to our requirement that grantee work address our clearly specified strategic plan goals and outcomes. Also, F5AC's involvement in applicants' development of their grant proposal is necessarily limited. And our requirements to have grantees document their work for both accountability and evaluation purposes means that grantees spend more time on reporting processes.

The relatively lower rating F5AC received for the helpfulness of assistance activities is difficult to interpret since it is inconsistent with results from other survey items (i.e., the "customized" questions and the open-ended questions, where many grantees noted how much they valued F5AC training and assistance) as well as our training evaluations. This is something we will need to continue to monitor.

NEXT STEPS

The grants team is in the process of identifying successful strategies that will be continued as well as changes that can be made to address areas needing improvement. For example, we will work on increasing the consistency of information conveyed through multiple sources. And, we have already begun to enhance our efforts to support sustainability by providing a grantee training on funding strategies.

¹ CEP's average response rate over the past 3 years is 72%.

² The peer group is comprised of funders that share the following characteristics with F5AC's Community Grants Initiative: they are regionally-focused, have a similar annual giving size, and they use a "high-engagement" approach with grantees. Examples of funders in the peer group are the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, the Stuart Foundation, the Colorado Health Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

³ Examples of funders included in the full set are the California Endowment, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.