



Grassroots Partnership Working Group Survey Summary May 2011

OVERVIEW

- **10 Foundations/Funds Participated:**
 - Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), Akonadi Foundation, Common Counsel Foundation, Groundswell Fund, Levi Strauss Foundation, Lia Fund, Mitchell Kapor Foundation, Peace Development Fund, San Francisco Foundation, Women's Foundation of CA
- **91 Grantee Organizations surveyed nationally**
- **45 Organizations answered at least one question; 29 Organizations completed the survey. Overall, a 49% Response Rate**

Of the organizations surveyed:

- The primary strategies for working in community are advocacy and organizing.
- Organizations work in primarily urban settings.
- The majority of organizations have annual budgets under \$250,000.
- On-line grant applications were strongly favored, with the caveat that online character limits and systems that "time" folks out are significant barriers. In several of the narrative comments, grantees in more rural communities shared that faster internet connection is just not available, so suggest that foundations offer alternative submission processes or adjust tech specifications. For this reason, the "online" can also be construed as an application that can be e-mailed versus a web-based form.
- The ideal time frame for a decision on a grant application is 3 months or less.
- Multi-year grants were identified as the one grant-making practices grassroots groups wish more funders would adopt. Closely followed by general support/operating grants.

FUNDER RELATIONSHIPS

Survey respondents identified the following helpful behaviors of individuals working for foundations/funds:

- True Partnership named as:
 - Willingness to work together/be thought partners on how to increase resources to the field; develop strategies to leverage greater impact.
 - Honesty & Transparency about foundation's priorities & decision-making
 - Coaching & Support on Proposal Development/Reporting -> Translation of work to foundation's guidelines/program areas.
- Organizing/leveraging support from other funds/foundations.
- Referrals to other organizations, funds/foundations
- Increased face-time/1:1 connection between fund/foundation staff and grantees

Survey respondents identified the following helpful practices of foundations/funds:

- Multi-year support; discretionary funds or other funds that support capacity of organization
- Use fund/foundation's organizational capacity to highlight work of smaller organizations who often don't have the capacity to do communications work
- Capacity Building/Technical Assistance Support – Preference was given to consultants of the group's choice versus in-house foundation staff.

Survey respondents identified the following hindering behaviors of individuals working for foundations/funds:

- Funders who are unresponsive or untimely in their response to calls/e-mails, or do not provide confirmation of receipt of application/denial of grant
- Funders who do not acknowledge all of the stakeholders in movement work and think they can set the agenda without fully participating
- Funders who are unwilling to give feedback on denied proposals

Survey respondents identified the following hindering practices of foundations/funds:

- Online applications that have a word/character limit or time-out.
- Onerous grant requirements named as:
 - Constant assessments, meetings, calls, convenings, surveys

How can individuals of grant-making organizations be better partners in the movement?

- Organize other donors/funders to increase resources for social justice movement/organizing
- Education of funders on these strategies/issues within communities
- Take time to educate yourself on the issues
- Invite grassroots folks to participate in conversations that may not lead to funding but help inform program officers about needs/gaps.

EVALUATION

- Helpful Practices:
 - Evaluation that follows proposal format, so grantees do not have to "translate" work twice
 - Simple, straightforward reporting
- Hindering Practices:
 - Onerous evaluation that doesn't adequately capture social justice work
 - Multiple evaluations/reports, especially for small grants
- Suggestions:
 - Phone interviews or in-person meetings for final reports
 - Look at "Making the Case"—report to 3-4 foundations with one report

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE?

- Helpful for funders to share funder trends and landscape of what is going on inside the field with grassroots groups
- Unified application/reporting/evaluation
- Funders need to power build for movement work

HOW CAN BAJFN SUPPORT MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE?

- Organize additional resources for movement building/social justice work
- NCRP has a list of “criteria” that foundations can adopt—maybe this can be a starting point?
- Advocate on behalf of grassroots groups to other funders
- Help identify ways to work across issues, regions
- Initiate dialogue between funders and grassroots groups on building movement
- Identify gaps in movement work/funding
- Provide vehicles for community to educate funders