



COMMUNITY **A**CTIVATION **N**ETWORK

FOR THE NONPROFIT/SOCIAL IMPACT SECTOR

Pilot Questionnaire Responses | August 11, 2020



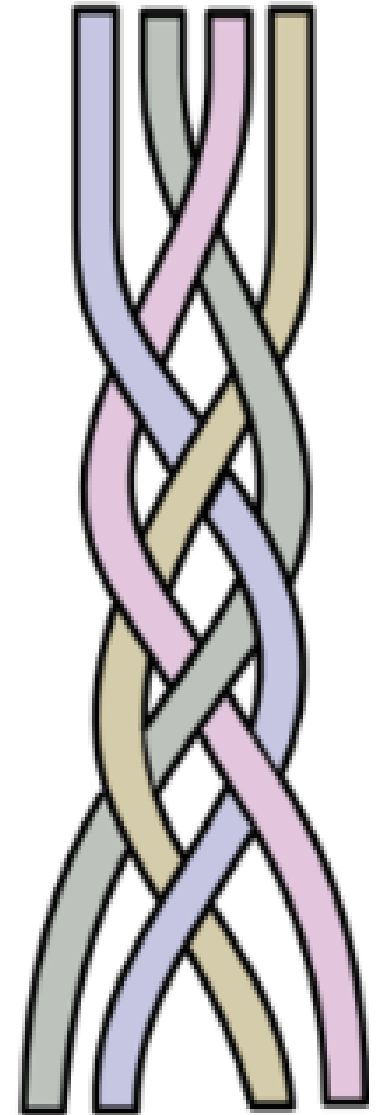
INFORMATION FLOW

CNPE conducted a pilot questionnaire to start the CAN Information Flow of asking, listening, and learning. Thirty-one respondents participated from the CAN organizing members.

Four overarching themes surfaced, from all participants (funders, nonprofits, and others). Most are interrelated:

1. **Collaboration**
2. **Funding Flexibility and Innovation**
3. **Equity and Inclusion**
4. **Awareness, Understanding, and Trust**

The good news is that we saw a lot of agreement on what really matters to participants in the nonprofit/social impact sector.



1. COLLABORATION

Collaboration was a universal theme (consistent with other CNPE surveys). Many interview respondents mentioned silos and the need to break them down – and perceived duplicated effort.

- If there is so much interest in collaboration, **why isn't it happening more?**
- What are the **barriers?**
- How can our sector facilitate more – and more effective – collaborations?

“One of my greatest frustrations as I engage the community in the work I do in the nonprofit/ social impact sector is the lack of strong partnerships.

Too often, organizations work independently [even] when it's realized that our community as a whole thrives when we work together to uplift and strengthen families and relationships.”

~ from a Nonprofit



RESPONDENTS ON COLLABORATION

- NPs:**
- Hope to have capacity to partner.
 - Hope that we are opening up to really working together in new ways. It is getting clearer that **we are interdependent** and that together is the only way forward.
 - Funders have the opportunity to **push mergers and partnerships in new and innovative ways** that address common issues and create new allies.
 - Funders should **stop forcing collaborations** and trying to make one organization be the model for all organizations.
 - Funders should stop working unilaterally – in silos.



RESPONDENTS ON COLLABORATION

- FUNDERS:**
- Frustrated by organizations operating in silos and by duplication and lack of collaboration in the sector. Small thinking and small planning.
 - Overlap in the nonprofit sector.
 - Stop duplicating efforts.
 - **Funders are not leveraging their powers** to bring support from other sectors, parties to bear.
 - Figure out how to work together.



2. FUNDING FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION

Respondents from all subsectors expressed a strong desire for funding flexibility and innovation.

A. Flexibility

- Support of general operations/capacity
- Flexible/minimal reporting requirements
- Less onerous applications

Collaboration will also involve **flexible funding**, so those two themes intertwine.

Innovative funding may include **funding startups that bring new voices** to the work – which connects to Equity and Inclusion, below.

“My greatest hope ... is the ability to obtain resources to operate independently or less dependent on community grants, especially grants that don't support operations or grants heavily weighed down with reporting requirements.

Often the identified requirements minimize the impact the grant opportunity actually has on the community.”

~ from a Nonprofit



2. FUNDING FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION

B. Increase resources through innovation

- Foundations could expand **social impact investing**.
- Foundations could choose not limit distributions to **5%** of corpus.
- More specifically, could funders **increase distribution ratios** – for instance, this year going to 6%, next year 7%, etc.? Extra funds could be used to **support voices that haven't been heard** or empowered sufficiently in the past and to innovate solutions, policy solutions, leadership.
- How might nonprofits and funders work together to create **more flow and impact?**

“The 5% rule ... [was] not meant to be the norm.”

“Fund collaboration and capacity building.”

~ both from Funders



2. FUNDING FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION

Other points made concerning funding and innovation addressed:

- **communications** with donors,
- donors being more **transparent**,
- donors being more **creative**, and
- donors **not just funding the same projects** and organizations.

What can we learn from **other communities** and **national funders**?

“I appreciate the funding collaboratives/multi-funder pools that are happening.

Those partnerships are both good for funder relationships and increasing impact, and in bringing together new grantees to increase their impact together.”

“Keep believing in us and supporting us meaningfully.”

~ both from Nonprofits



RESPONDENTS ON **FUNDING FLEXIBILITY & INNOVATION**

- FUNDERS:**
- Stop requiring huge hoops or hiring new staff ... people sit in nice offices, more of whom are not subject-matter experts, create the **horrible culture of non-profits begging the ... staff for money.**
 - Make your donations and your processes more transparent. It's weird that donors don't want organizations to know what other organizations they support and at what level.
 - Must be willing to **think longer term.**
 - Fund collaboration and capacity building.
- NPs:**
- Invite nonprofits to the table to **create reporting requirements.**
 - Stop overburdening nonprofits with **excessive reporting requirements.**
 - Build on successful programs and agencies versus moving on to something else.
 - Fund new collaborative ventures – go beyond comfort zones.
 - **Support operational costs** and staff salaries.



RESPONDENTS ON **FUNDING FLEXIBILITY & INNOVATION**

- NPs:**
- Question long-time practices. Consider how to use their endowments – **moving beyond grantmaking**, spending more than their required minimum distribution, etc.
 - Be **more flexible** with nonprofits and offer more opportunity for nonprofits to shift their programming so that they can move with and meet the needs of the community.
 - Consider **allowing nonprofits to simply do the work**. Funders can conduct the program evaluation by observing, and/or funders can individually connect to a project by participating in the project. It's important to know how the grant dollars are being spent.
 - Start thinking more creatively about social impact investing and consider investing 5% of their endowment corpus (foundations in particular) towards social investment opportunities that have a 1% to 2% return – **if the top ten foundations in KY did this, they would put over \$500 million of capital to work**. We (the sector) should also work to engage more individual donors to give more as that is where the growth in philanthropy will come from – 80% of all giving is from individuals, 10% from foundations, and 10% corporate.



3. EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Leadership, unconscious bias, and capacity were major themes.

- Big shift in conversation **from who NPs are serving to who is leading them**. This point came up repeatedly.
- **Bias, both implicit and explicit**, was raised repeatedly.
 - ✓ Affects who funders support.
 - ✓ Creates **barriers to entry** that can surface in subtle and not-so-subtle ways.(complicated applications and reporting requirements).

“[The] status quo ... prioritizes a limited set of disciplinary and demographic expertise to a chosen few at the exclusion and erasure of black community members, activists, artists, and scholars.”

“We must shift how we fund Black-led organizations. The sector’s resources could unlock the potential of their leadership to show the way forward in these dark times.”

~ from an “Other” respondent



3. EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Capacity an issue for Black-led nonprofits. **Foundations expect grantees to articulate their funding needs** in a certain way that may not match the way leaders present.

How will our sector:

- Identify and **dismantle bias**?
- Take steps to **create equity** in funding and leadership roles?

“Ensure as you are planning to keep in mind that the people who are closest to the pain are closest to the solution.”

~ from an “Other” respondent



RESPONDENTS ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION

- FUNDERS:**
- Lack of funding distributed through an equity lens/underinvestment and neglect of Black-led institutions for social change that is fueled by explicit and implicit bias which falsely holds the notion that black led institutions are ineffective, inferior and fraudulent, and therefore unworthy of great philanthropic investment
 - The social impact sector has an opportunity to redress racial inequities ... shift how we fund/invest in Black-led institutions focused on equity and justice.

- NPs:**
- Our system is structured to serve white mainstream, with white ideologies.
 - Funders should start to fund to build capacity of Black-, brown-, and queer-led organizations
 - Nonprofits should keep promoting equity and not equality
 - Funders should partner more with organizations led by people of color.



4. AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND TRUST

“Change moves at the speed of trust.” ~ Stephen Covey

Lack of awareness, information, knowledge, and understanding about nonprofits was a major theme in all question areas for all respondents.

The need to listen to (and understand) each other was a frequent theme – in particular, **trusting the front line and those doing the work.**

There is an opportunity to:

- improve communications and
- address awareness/understanding about the sector and expectations vs. resources.

“Bring in new, innovative, diverse people to invest in communities.”

~ from a Funder

“To improve this sector, funders should start to allow the nonprofits they fund to do the work without the rigid restrictions (something that has occurred since COVID-19). Trust the work will get done with the entities that vetted to get the funding.”

~ from a Nonprofit



4. AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND TRUST

An interesting, emerging dynamic among messages:

- Nonprofits should **collaborate** more; **and**
- Nonprofits should **lead in their sector** and **seek policy + systemic changes**; **and**
- Nonprofits need to **“stay in your lane”** and **“stay focused.”**

Will nonprofits have the capacity to focus time/energy on creating more awareness, understanding, and trust?

Will funders be willing to fund these types of programs?

“Keep being resilient, treating staff with the same love that we treat our community and continue sharing our truth.”

“Do not give up on making the world and work better. Invest in taking care of themselves, be fearless about stepping into the community leadership space, and develop connections across the sector.”

~ from a Nonprofit



RESPONDENTS ON AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, & TRUST

- FUNDERS:**
- Frustrated with lack of knowledge at all levels (gov't, corp, funders) about equity, challenges and current affairs
 - Frustrated with not understanding what the community priorities are and **who's doing innovative work** (outside of the organizations that are well-known)
 - Frustrated with **low level of awareness the community has** about what is going on ... and its low level of financial giving toward solutions to the needs of the not-for-profits sector
 - Hope to increase the level of awareness of the community about solutions to the needs of the community being provided by the not-for-profit sector
 - Hope to see sector as a leader at the table



RESPONDENTS ON AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, & TRUST

- FUNDERS:**
- Stop failing to provide education and leadership to their boards.
 - Stop having all the answers, being **defensive**.
 - Funders should lead!! Quit letting the **politicians set social priorities**.
 - Listen more to the experts in the trenches.
 - Engage collaboratively in public policy advocacy.
 - Think **longer term**.
 - Share information and access to network and resources.



RESPONDENTS ON AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, & TRUST

- NPs:**
- Hope that the community understands that the nonprofit **sector is vital** to community success.
 - Hope to see greater sense of **urgent, mission-driven results** and COLLECTIVE impact.
 - Stop focusing on deficits vs strengthening asset-based perspectives.
 - Nonprofits should communicate better.
 - Nonprofits should see themselves as **equal partners with government** and funders in solving community challenges.
 - Nonprofits should **align missions, share data, establish measures/metrics** for greater impact.



RESPONDENTS ON AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, & TRUST

- NPs:**
- Stop making it so hard for nonprofits to raise money. **Start trusting more and build relationships.**
 - Start tackling systemic policy change.
 - Create shared metrics and outcomes.
 - Treat nonprofits as equal partners in solving community challenges.
 - Maintain better relationships, get involved **beyond the check**. Also be patient with new solutions.
 - **Listen to the front line** and those doing the work. Funders have a lot of opinions about what should be funded, how to be strategic, and they need to be more open and understand the world from those doing the work.
 - Ask nonprofits what they need. Then listen.
 - Keep in mind that **the people who are closest to the pain are closest to the solution**. Make sure they are at the table.



RESPONDENTS ON AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, & TRUST

- OTHERS:**
- Hope that [the nonprofit] is seen as a "need to have" versus a "nice to have"; and that the community understands that the nonprofit sector is vital to community success -- it's the 4th largest employer in the Commonwealth; is a driver for economic impact for the region; and meets critical needs -- but people, and other business / government leadership don't know that or treat the sector in that manner.
 - The sector has to recognize the methods may be radical and political in nature. **Organizations led by people of color consistently face criticism** about their methods of enacting change. Many grant makers have explicit restrictions on funding advocacy and political action in favor of short-term, measurable programs that “avoid doing the one thing that would significantly change systems.” We must **be willing to accept the change necessary to make change.**



WHAT WILL MOTIVATE YOU TO SHOW UP?

General themes: break down silos, facilitate and inspire partnerships, and make progress.

- FUNDERS:**
- Make data and relevant information for decision-making accessible.
 - Issues: all is of interest but how subsectors intersect, duplicate, collaborate or compliment each other and the data that backs up the programming needs and highlights the GAPS in services, needs and those served.
 - Move. **Seeing progress.** Not more talking, not more time, not more meetings. A clear, focused plan and action associated.
- NPs:**
- Keep people inspired to partner together in new and different ways. Discourage the **usual bias towards big funders** (the gorillas in the room) – **promote equity** among the members of CAN – whether nonprofit or foundation or public sector leaders – equal voices. Nonprofits should keep promoting **equity and not equality**. Be real.
 - Find partners willing to collaborate, think outside the box; look at successful programs in other states, etc.



CONTINUING THE INFORMATION FLOW

NEXT STEPS

- Share survey sector-wide.
- Continue information flow.



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