Improving the Practice of Philanthropy

An Evaluation of the Hewlett Foundation's Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy

November 7, 2013

THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION

harder+company community research

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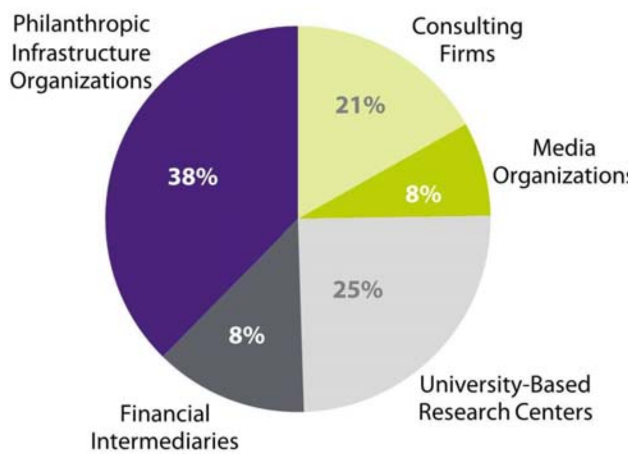
Executive Summary

Since 2000 the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has sought to inform, influence, and improve philanthropic approaches and decision making. An essential component of this effort has been the $24 million in grants awarded to 24 organizations as part of its *Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy*.[1]

In addition to supporting basic and applied research on philanthropy, these grants supported leading journals in the field that disseminate knowledge and efforts to create new systems and platforms that would provide better solutions to learning and professional development. The types of knowledge produced by grantees spanned a wide range of content areas, including philanthropic models and approaches, organizational learning and evaluation, networking and collaboration within and across sectors, and grantmaking practices that support nonprofit success.

The organizations funded include philanthropic infrastructure organizations (38 percent),[2] university-based research centers (25 percent), consulting firms (21 percent), media organizations (8 percent), and financial intermediaries (8 percent).



In May 2013, the Hewlett Foundation contracted Harder+Company Community Research, an evaluation and planning firm for the social sector, to assess the strategy and help inform its future investments in this area. The evaluation approach was exploratory and descriptive and based on the premise that learning is the primary goal. Harder+Company used a variety of research methods as part of the assessment, including

[1] The total amount funded to this strategy was $28 million to 37 grantees. This evaluation is focused on the grantees that received at least one of their grants from 2006 to spring 2013.

[2] Organizations focused on providing underlying support, services, and information for the philanthropic sector.

a literature review, surveys and interviews with grantees, an assessment of the quality of grantee products using a rubric, a review of grantee external evaluations, and interviews with experts in the field.

Knowledge Product Quality

The evaluation placed a strong emphasis on devising a system to help measure the *quality* of the knowledge products[3] produced by grantees. Based on literature from the fields of philanthropy, education, business, information systems, and healthcare, Harder+Company developed a rubric to rate grantee publications on their Technical Quality, Accessibility, and Applicability to Philanthropic Practice.[4]

The review found the quality of the products submitted to be high overall. The aggregate ratings for the grantee products were similar across all three quality categories, with an average score of 2.3 (mostly met criteria) out of 3 for Technical Quality, and 2.4 (mostly met criteria) out of 3 for both Accessibility and Applicability to Practice. However, the review identified some important areas for improvement:

- Almost none of the products reviewed discussed possible biases.
- Many of the products did not communicate their connection to previous work.
- Some products provided insufficient information to guide application of the information to practice.

A copy of the rubric and grantees whose products were reviewed can be found in the Appendix of the full report.

Target Audiences

The organizations funded as part of this cluster of grants currently have a wide range of target audiences but foundation staff are the primary audience for over three-quarters of the grantees, followed by nonprofit staff who are the audience for well over half. In response to open-ended questions, eleven grantees clarified that the CEOs and other senior staff members of the largest foundations and nonprofits are their principal targets. Relatively few respondents cited program or mid-level staff, or smaller organizations, among the highest priority audiences, in part because they do not consider them to be the most powerful lever for impact. While the primary target audiences represent a small fraction of the more than 80,000 foundations and over one million nonprofits in the U.S. in terms of numbers, grantees view them as the largest in terms of assets and influence in defining the field.

Grantee Target Audience	High Priority
Foundation staff	92%
Nonprofit staff	66%
Foundation board members	56%
Government staff	55%
Corporate/company staff	45%
Nonprofit board members	39%
Individual donors	36%
Other	31%

[3] Information produced by grantees focused on improving philanthropic practice.
[4] The evaluation team invited the 12 organizations receiving multiple grants and at least one grant in the last three years to submit up to five products that their organizations had developed in the past three years that they believe have been most effective at influencing the field and most aligned with the Hewlett Foundation's strategy.

The grantees identified several intended and unintended shifts in target audiences. Several see the future of the field as an increasingly "mixed sector" because the work itself emphasizes and demands cross-sector collaboration. They noted that foundations and individual donors do not have sufficient assets to meet society's needs and call for closer alignment among the private, public, and philanthropic sectors in solving social problems.

Multiple grantees discussed the increasing global reach of their products and services. For some this was unintended and unexpected and many attributed this new reach to greater accessibility through technology.

Some have expanded their definition of leaders, noting that knowledge is shared both top down and bottom up, and they are now aiming some of their resources beyond the senior executives.

Dissemination Strategies

Grantees consistently described their use of a wide range of distribution channels to disseminate their work. Indeed, the median number of dissemination vehicles used by grantees today is nine. Getting the message out through traditional methods alone—such as journal articles, report distribution, or conferences—is no longer viewed as sufficient by most grantees, including those in university settings. Many have developed an increasingly nuanced understanding of the value of strategic dissemination, combining multiple communications strategies with traditional approaches.

Within the cohort of grantees, a subset of highly sophisticated organizations works on a sufficiently large scale to implement carefully constructed communications plans. They often start small to test concepts and market acceptance and then implement wider campaigns with multiple strategies.

Reaching their Audience

In response to competition for the attention of busy professionals in a crowded marketplace of messages and ideas, grantees have relied on a variety of strategies:

- Translating knowledge into applicable tools
- Making products highly accessible
- Engaging opinion leaders and peer networks in the process
- Planning dissemination over a long time period, using different strategies at different times
- Face-to-face interaction and in-person speaking engagements
- Implementing their ideas via consulting or technical assistance and disseminating the results

Reach and Impact

Most of the grantees have successfully produced and disseminated quality knowledge products for their target audiences. Nearly all grantees monitor their output, downloads, and press coverage and collect information to estimate the number of individuals reached. The academic institutions often focus on journal citations as an indicator of success. Many grantees also rely on market-oriented information—such as consumer demand for products, conferences, and consulting services—as a marker of their success. The Hewlett Foundation and its grantees can point to such data to help demonstrate their reach and the strength of their market position.

About half of the grantees reported that they collect information on whether their products and services contribute to changes in knowledge or practices. Some of these grantees use external evaluators to conduct independent analyses of how the knowledge produced has affected their clients/members/users and the organizations they represent. These grantees can quantify perceived impact from the users' perspective. In addition, three grantees have well-developed internal evaluation capacity and conduct relatively rigorous surveys on a regular basis. Even grantees assessing impact at the high levels described recognize that actual impact is difficult to describe and the question of attribution is still unanswered, given the instantaneous availability of information to an unbounded audience.

Measuring impact involves finding actual evidence of change from as objective a standpoint as possible, and documenting the change that has taken place. Doing so takes capacity and considerable resources, which may be one reason that grantees report a limited ability to assess their true impact. About one-quarter of the grantees reported that small budgets and insufficient staff keep them from devoting more effort in this area. Larger grantees with greater capacity cite the challenge of conducting tightly controlled studies to isolate the impact if their work. The lack of clearly established common metrics opens the door for grantees to reach their own conclusions about their own impact—which can cause confusion in the field. A few grantees suggested that the Hewlett Foundation can help foster a learning community to address this and other common challenges.

Accepting the limitations of what is and is not knowable, grantees can point to some positive signs of change in the field that they believe to be linked at least in part to their Hewlett Foundation-funded efforts.

- After years of effort from several Hewlett Foundation grantees, the share of general operating support provided by large foundations has recently increased.[5]
- In June 2013, GuideStar, Charity Navigator, and BBB Wise Giving Alliance joined forces to denounce the overemphasis on the "overhead ratio" as an appropriate measure of nonprofit performance.
- Charity Navigator is incorporating Constituent Voice into its ratings of nonprofits.
- GEO's 2011 census of staffed foundations in the U.S. found that the percentage of foundations reporting that they seek feedback from grantees increased from 21 percent in 2003 to 31 percent in 2011, and funders indicated a reduction in their grant approval turnaround time of more than 30 days between 2008 and 2011.[6]
- In a sign of greater transparency, the proportion of large foundations having a website or issuing publications/annual reports increased between 1997 and 2009—but at 29 percent is still low.[7]

[5] Jagpal, N. and Laskowski, K., "The Philanthropic Landscape: The State of General Operating Support 2011." National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, 2013.

[6] McCray, J. "Is Grantmaking Getting Smarter?" Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2011.

[7] "Foundations Issuing Publications and Maintaining Web Sites, 1997 to 2009," Foundation Center, 2009.

While these changes are encouraging, there are few signs of change in other foundation practices that many of the grantees have promoted, including increased multi-year and capacity building support, and greater stakeholder engagement.

Interviews with philanthropy experts highlighted an increase in the number of foundations expressing an "outcome-orientation"[8] over the past ten years. While this was not a goal of the Foundation's work as part of this strategy, some attributed this increase in part to the work of the Hewlett Foundation and its grantees. However, experts had varying perspectives on whether the increased interest in making better decisions has actually led to better decision making, increased effectiveness, or societal gains. They noted a difference between the appearance of change and change itself. Some expressed their overall agreement with the concepts associated with outcome-oriented philanthropy but noted that there have been many instances where it has been misapplied. One expert interviewed opposes the entire framework of outcome-oriented philanthropy and has a strong and well-articulated point of view that the Foundation has considered: The expert questions whether philanthropy and social science will ever have the capacity to address the root causes of social problems with the same efficacy as has been achieved in the physical realm. Instead the expert advocates for smaller grants based on intensive personal acquaintance with and responsiveness to communities.

[8] Outcome oriented philanthropy includes for both the funder and grantees clearly defined goals, evidence-based strategies for achieving the goals, and monitoring of progress toward outcomes in order to make appropriate adjustments.

While the overall impact of this work on the field is not fully clear, the Hewlett Foundation's role and effect on this group of grantees is more apparent. In particular, most grantees report that the Foundation has had an impact on their organizational effectiveness; its staff members have been thought partners and collaborators; and it continues to be viewed as a leader, role model, and vital source of funding in this arena.

Trends

The evaluation also sought to explore larger trends in this field. On the knowledge creation side, a key trend has been the **hybridization between practice and research**. A decade ago, creating research to inform philanthropic practice was typically considered an academic activity. Foundations commissioned universities or think tanks to do basic or applied research. Today, a hybrid that emphasizes an interplay between practice and research, knowing and doing, is much more prevalent.

In interviews, several grantees noted a trend toward **practical and applied products based on rigorous research methods**. They believe practitioners are looking for workable solutions to real problems, but want to feel confident that the solutions have worked for others. Some grantees use an explicit production process that starts with the development and testing of small-scale prototypes and moves to full-scale evaluation with credible evaluation methods in order to ensure that their solutions have actually been effective in real field settings.

Another trend highlighted by many grantees and experts is an **increase in the volume and accessibility of information and knowledge**, which they noted can be

overwhelming for practitioners to digest and prioritize. This has led many organizations to increase their marketing and communication efforts to break through the clutter of information and become a trusted and used source of information. But such efforts can end up contributing to the very noise they seek to overcome. Several grantees and experts reported that it is becoming **harder to discern quality from marketing**.

A related trend that several grantees and experts referred to was **insufficient coordination and unnecessary duplication of effort** in the field. One grantee observed a proliferation of studies and surveys of "faux rigor" on similar topics, which the grantee felt contributed to declining survey response rates. Others lamented that a lot of the knowledge being produced does not build on or credit the earlier work done by others, a finding supported by the results of this evaluation's product quality review.

While the Hewlett Foundation was highlighted for its openness to debate, another longstanding trend grantees and experts cited is that, **in general, foundations do not learn from failure or encourage different perspectives**. Some noted the staff and boards of foundations are often more worried about public perception and protecting their brand than encouraging critical dialogue. To change this culture, both experts and grantees highlighted the **importance of fostering openness** and recognition of the value of all types of knowledge, and a few noted signs that this may be beginning to change.

Recommendations

This evaluation resulted in recommendations from grantees and expert interviewees, as well as separate recommendations from the evaluation team, Harder+Company Community Research.

Grantee & Expert Recommendations

- Provide Flexible Multi-Year Funding. Grantees encouraged the Hewlett Foundation to continue providing flexible multi-year funding to support philanthropic infrastructure, and encourage its peers to do the same. The availability of general operating support is a "major" challenge for 61 percent of grantees and "moderate" challenge for 30 percent. The availability of multi-year grants is a "major" challenge for 57 percent.

- Support Coordination and Peer Learning. Multiple grantees encouraged the Foundation to convene those working in this area to foster greater coordination and peer learning. Likewise, some suggested Hewlett convene peer foundations for the same reason. However, one grantee cautioned against full foundation consensus, noting that an ecosystem of diverse ideas and approaches is important to fostering innovation.

- Encourage Critical Reflection. Multiple experts suggested the Foundation continue to encourage alternative views, critical discussions, and reflections on failure. They argued that the field needs more honest reflection, as well as diverse perspectives and debate.

- Assess Quality. Two experts encouraged the Hewlett Foundation to consider developing a process or structure to assess the quality of knowledge products before they are then supported for dissemination.

- Elevate Dissemination. Several grantees and experts suggest greater support for dissemination, which they feel is often under-resourced. A few noted that this would be especially helpful in increasing the accessibility and applicability of more technical work.

Evaluation Team Recommendations

Harder+Company Community Research believes that the recommendations from the grantees and experts in the field are valuable and merit consideration by the Hewlett Foundation. In addition to those suggestions for future action, Harder+Company presents its own recommendations:

- Pursue the work of strengthening philanthropy in the context of the **broader literature on organizational change**. There are opportunities to learn from other fields about such issues as leadership development, managing change, improving internal efficiency and effectiveness, and strategy.

- There is broad consensus among Hewlett grantees on some of the most pressing issues facing the sector. Encourage and disseminate diverse perspectives through **grantmaking that assesses the impact of alternative theories of change or strategies.**

- Much of the research and practice support funded by the Hewlett Foundation reaches the largest and most active foundations. **Diversify the audience** for research and testing of new concepts so that more smaller and rural organizations benefit from the work.

- Results that are inconclusive or negative do not receive the same attention, although the opportunity for learning is great in these cases. **Make negative findings available** and encourage grantees to do so as well, perhaps through a clearinghouse similar to Glass Pockets.

- Explore new methods for incorporating the **user perspective**. Require grantees to include mechanisms for assessing the user perspectives on reach and impact. And/or convene grantees and other stakeholders to create a more rigorous cross-grantee approach for assessing impact on individual practice and organizational behavior.

- Given the crowded marketplace and the sometimes contradictory messages, promote the development of **standards of quality** in research on philanthropy. Philanthropy professionals can use standards to assess the quality, utility, and applicability of knowledge produced by its grantees and others interested in influencing the field.

- Information overload is one of the reasons why several grantees and experts suggested that the Foundation convene them and others in the field to help foster greater coordination and reduce duplication. **Continue to support the development of tools, systems, and platforms** that organize philanthropic information and make high quality knowledge easily obtainable and actionable for practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2000, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has provided $24 million in grants to 24 organizations nationwide through its Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy.[9] **The purpose of the grants has been to inform, influence, and improve philanthropic approaches and decision-making.** While the specific priorities of the grantmaking may have shifted somewhat over the years, the strategy has continued to be guided by a theory of change reflecting the vision initiated by Paul Brest, former president of the Hewlett Foundation. The strategy now sits within the Foundation's recently formed Effective Philanthropy Group. Established in 2012 , the Effective Philanthropy Group supports the Foundation's own philanthropic practice and helps develop the greater field of philanthropy.

In May 2013, the Foundation issued a Request for Proposals to conduct an evaluation of the Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy in order to identify what aspects of the strategy might be more or less effective and determine how it could evolve moving forward. The Foundation sought to use findings from the evaluation at three levels: 1) to inform its future investments in knowledge creation and dissemination activities; 2) to contribute to its philanthropy grantmaking strategic planning process; and 3) to share key findings and lessons learned with grantees and other interested parties.

Evaluation Approach and Process

Approach

The Hewlett Foundation engaged Harder+Company Community Research, an evaluation and planning firm for the social sector, to evaluate the Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy. Working in close partnership with Effective Philanthropy Group team of Fay Twersky, Lindsay Louie, and Sara VanLear, Harder+Company designed the evaluation to be primarily exploratory and descriptive. Analyses focused on describing the grantees' activities and their results, trends in the field, and themes or trends across the different sources of data to tell the story of these activities and their potential role in influencing the field over the past ten years.

[9] The total amount funded to this strategy was $28 million to 37 grantees. This evaluation is focused on the grantees that received at least one of their grants from 2006 to spring 2013.

In addition to the lead staff noted above, the evaluation was informed by an Evaluation Advisory Committee which met on three occasions. Please see Appendix A for a list of committee members. During Evaluation Advisory Committee meetings, members provided input on the overall evaluation design and methods as well as reflections on the interim findings.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation sought to answer the following key questions:

1) How do grantees measure and understand their impact to-date related to knowledge production and dissemination aimed at informing, influencing, and improving donors'/grantmakers'/ funders' thinking and decision-making?
2) What knowledge on philanthropy and other aspects of the social sector is being produced by grantees?
3) How have grantees disseminated knowledge on philanthropy and other aspects of the social sector?
4) Who is using the disseminated knowledge and how is it being used?
5) What has changed in the context and landscape of knowledge creation and dissemination related to philanthropy over time?

Methods

The evaluation team used a variety of research methods to ensure that a wide range of perspectives are reflected in the findings. As part of the exploratory and descriptive nature of this project, the evaluation took an iterative approach to data collection: each method built on either new information learned or perceived gaps in information from preceding data collection efforts. This process allowed the evaluation to steadily sharpen its focus over the course of the project - an important consideration given the relatively broad nature of this inquiry. Evaluation methods included the following:

+ **Grantee Document Review.** Proposals and reports from 24 grantees provided background about the grantees' knowledge production activities, approaches, and accomplishments.
+ **Grantee Surveys.** An online grantee survey gathered data from each grantee to explore lessons learned from the grant-funded activities. Specific survey topics included process of knowledge creation, dissemination, and evaluation of their work. Representatives from

23 grantee organizations completed the survey.[10] Respondents were the main organizational contact listed for each grantee.

- **Grantee Interviews.** Following the survey, in-depth phone interviews were conducted with the same organizational contact that completed the questionnaire. Interviews focused on clarifying information about selected topics in the survey as well as gathering information on topics not covered, such as grantee business models. A total of 23 grantees' contacts completed interviews.[11] Please see Appendix B for the list of the individuals interviewed for each grantee organization.
- **Literature Review.** The evaluation also included a review of the literature from the fields of philanthropy, education, business, information systems, and healthcare on how knowledge is disseminated and used—as well as standards for knowledge quality.
- **Product Quality Review.** The evaluation team used the literature review to help create a rubric of criteria to rate grantee product quality. Focusing on the 12 organizations[12] that received multiple grants and at least one grant in the past three years, the evaluators asked those grantees to submit up to five products developed in the last three years that they believed were (a) most effective at influencing the field and (b) aligned with the Hewlett Foundation's Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy. The 58 submitted products[13] included articles, reports, websites, books, webinars, blogs, seminars, and workshops. Since most of the products were either reports/articles (57 percent) and websites (26 percent), quality rubric reviews focused on those two types of products, including up to two reports/articles and two websites per grantee.[14]
- **Review of Grantee Evaluations.** Drawing from previously shared grantee evaluation reports and additional online sources, the evaluation team conducted a meta-analysis of eight past evaluations that grantees had conducted of their work. Reports were selected based on the level of information provided about the evaluation methods and findings, their relevance to the evaluation questions, and whether reports collected data from grantmaking staff within the past five years.
- **Expert Interviews.** Expert interviews provided an external perspective on the trends in knowledge creation and dissemination over time, looking at both the activities of the Hewlett Foundation grantees and trends in the broader field of philanthropy. Please see Appendix B for the list of experts interviewed.

[10] One grantee did not complete the survey.

[11] The same grantee that did not complete a survey also did not complete an interview.

[12] Please see Appendix C for a list of which grantees' products were part of the product quality review.

[13] The total does not include additional products submitted by some grantees beyond the five requested.

[14] If grantees had more than two of one of these types of products, two were randomly selected. The result was a sample of 29 products. Two reviewers completed the rubric for all 29 products and their ratings were averaged.

Limitations

This evaluation was designed to be exploratory, rather than to test specific hypotheses. While trends emerged across this group of grantees, there was great diversity among the organizations; they were distributed across a broad set of contexts and time periods, and the scope of the support they received varied greatly. Many contextual factors may have influenced the organizations, including parallel sources of funding from the Hewlett Foundation or other funders.

In addition, several methodological limitations exist for this evaluation. The evaluation collected primarily self-reported information from grantees. Moreover, many of the grantees were asked to recall activities from several years prior, which may have resulted in some response bias. While the product quality review and review of grantee evaluations provided a somewhat more objective perspective on the knowledge activities, these data were gathered from a select group of grantees, and included products the grantees were willing either to make public or share as part of the evaluation.

Finally, one of the participants in this evaluation (Grantmakers for Effective Organizations) is also a past and current client of the evaluator, Harder+Company Community Research. In addition, as part of its business, Harder+Company provides consulting services to foundations and philanthropic support organizations beyond this group of Hewlett Foundation grantees. The evaluation team took particular care to consider and address how those relationships might introduce bias.

OVERVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE GRANTEES

The grantees represented in this evaluation received funding via the Hewlett Foundation's Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy between 2000 and 2013. The specific purpose of their grants varied, but each organization sought to help inform, influence, and improve philanthropic approaches and decision making. They received multi-year (67 percent) or single-year grants (33 percent). The majority of them received general operating support[15] (75 percent), while a smaller proportion received project-based funding (25 percent). The Hewlett Foundation has been a primary source of general operating support for many grantees. Most of the organizations funded as part of this strategy have been located in the United States, with only 13 percent based in other countries. The grantees have included philanthropic infrastructure organizations (38 percent),[16] university-based research centers (25 percent), consulting firms (21 percent), media organizations (8 percent), and financial intermediaries (8 percent). Please see Appendix C for more information about the grantees.

Within the nine philanthropic infrastructure organizations, the evaluation team characterized the knowledge agenda focus of four grantees to be "neutral," four to be "advocate," and one to be "activist." "Neutral" organizations are required to be impartial on many issues because of their nature as knowledge management entities or associations with diverse members. "Advocates" have a point of view on many issues in the sector and provide some leadership on the direction it should be heading. The sole "activist" organization is much more action-oriented and provocative. Based on grantee interviews, the grantees generally fall into one of three business models:

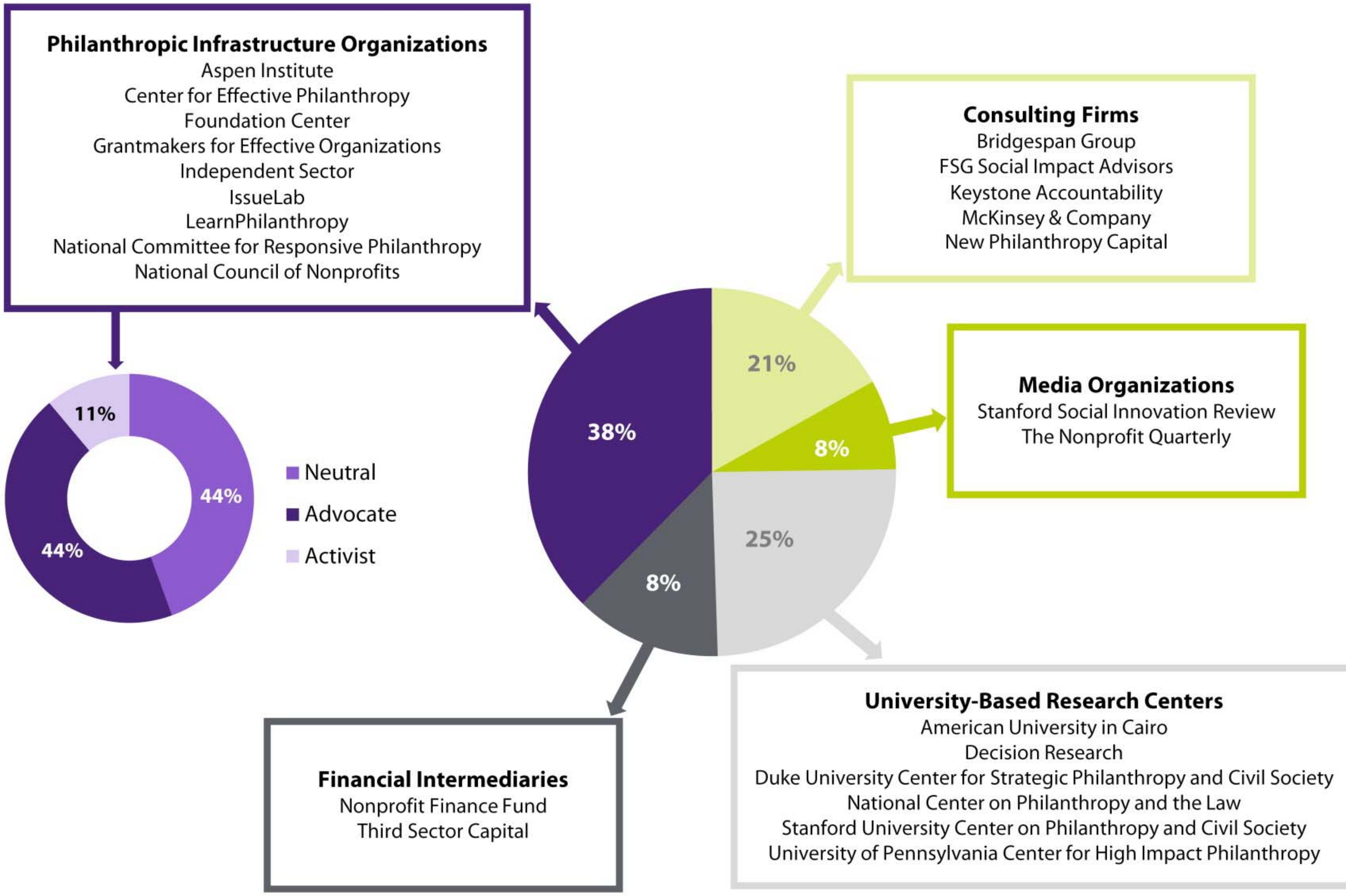
- Most grantees use a mixed revenue model with contributed and fee-generating sources.
- Four grantees use foundation funding only to support a core of knowledge generating activity, while most of their revenue (at least 75 percent) is from fees or product sales.
- Only two of the grantees reported being supported almost exclusively by grants from the Hewlett Foundation and other contributed sources.

With one exception, university-based grantees receive little to no financial support from their university. Instead the university's brand, students, and faculty connections are the main, current benefits leveraged through that affiliation.

[15] Four of these grantees also received project-based support for select granting periods.

[16] Organizations focused on providing underlying support, services, and information for the philanthropic sector. Please note that Foundation Center and IssueLab merged in 2012. However, since they received grants independently prior to the merger they are listed and considered separately as part of this evaluation.

Exhibit 1. Hewlett Foundation Knowledge Grantees, 2000-2013



KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND QUALITY

A key area of focus for the evaluation is understanding the range of grantee approaches to knowledge production, the types of knowledge produced, and overall knowledge production and quality trends across grantees and the larger field.

Methods of Knowledge Production

According to interviews, grantees determine specific knowledge products[17]/topics using a range of approaches in order to respond to the needs of their clients/members—often using a mix of processes over time. These include the following:

- **Staff driven.** Five of the grantees made very clear that knowledge products were staff driven, or even personally driven by the grantee leader. As one respondent observed, "It is all me and my brain." Others had a committee or advisory process, but they indicated that staff strongly guided the process.

- **Staff driven with support from formal advisors.** Three grantees have active advisory groups that meet regularly and are deeply involved in decision-making about options for knowledge production. These advisory groups are often mostly comprised of senior executives or consultants who are regarded to be opinion leaders or influencers. Advisors are also sometimes involved in final validation and distribution.

- **Market driven.** For three grantees, decision-making is based on data from their target audiences through their responses to surveys, comments on particular knowledge products, and closely monitoring web traffic. A respondent observed, "LinkedIn has been a great strategy. We do surveys through them. [It provides us] a list of folks who give opinions on what we should write about each year." They are also responsive to specific controversies, disasters, and hot topics. This group continuously scans the field (blogs, new stories, industry publications, interviews with sector leaders) to identify where opportunities for sector improvement may arise.

- **Hybrid.** The remaining grantees have a hybrid approach, utilizing a combination of staff, advisors, and more market driven approaches.

[17] Information produced by grantees focused on improving philanthropic practice.

Grantees also noted their responsiveness to feedback and/or controversy in the field regarding one of their knowledge products to then inform the development of a future product. For two grantees, knowledge products are also informed by their consulting work. Per one of those respondents: "We interview a lot of experts and practitioners, but the ideas always come from the consulting work and the consulting work always pushes the ideas further than the original publications."

Types of Knowledge Produced

Overall, the types of knowledge produced by grantees spanned a wide range of content areas. For this purpose, Harder+Company used the taxonomy created by LearnPhilanthropy (one of the Hewlett grantees) to categorize the knowledge produced.[18] This useful framework organizes field-wide philanthropy practice information to help users navigate the literature. Through a review of the grantee materials using these categories grantee content fell into four categories:

- **Essentials:** Philanthropic models and approaches; philanthropy's history and role in society; mission and values; standards, codes and ethics, and legal issues;
- **Developing Talent and Leadership:** Governance, organizational, and individual development;
- **Making and Managing Grants:** Grantmaking practices and mechanics; and
- **Planning for Results and Impact:** Organizational learning and evaluation.

A fifth category, not adapted from the LearnPhilanthropy taxonomy, also emerged across multiple grantees products:

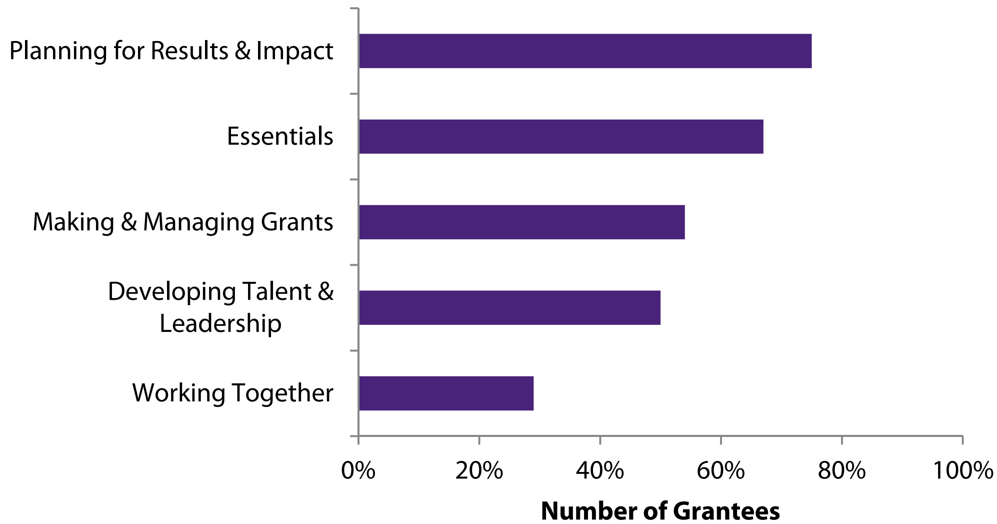
- **Working Together:** Organizational networking and collaboration.

The breakdown of how the grantees fit into each category can be seen in Exhibit 2.[19] The most common area is planning for results and impact. This focus has become an area of major interest across the field, from program officers to board members, as grantmakers seek new approaches to setting performance targets and documenting the impact of their efforts.

[18] Review focused on the grantees' final report for the most recent year Hewlett support was received. If the final report was not available, review focused on the grant application for that year. Review of grantees' websites also informed classification. For more information on the taxonomy, see: LearnPhilanthropy (March 2012). Toward a Real Simple Taxonomy: Bridging Learners and Content to Create New Value @ LearnPhilanthropy.
learnphilanthropy.net/sites/demo.learnphilanthropy.net/files/LearnPhilanthropyAboutRST_0.pdf

[19] As of October 23, 2013, all resources categorized on LearnPhilanthropy's website were 30 percent "making & managing grants", 26 percent "essentials", 25 percent "planning for results & impact", and 20 percent "developing talent & leadership."

Exhibit 2: Number of Grantees by Content Category*



**Grantees could be included in more than one content category. The three grantees focused on Social Impact Bonds were classified under "essentials." One of these grantees was also classified under "program planning and impact." Five grantees primarily provided collections of materials, rather than specific products. These grantees were each counted in all four LearnPhilanthropy categories since they provided content in each of these areas.*

Quality of Knowledge Produced

In addition to identifying *types* of knowledge products, the evaluation team sought to assess the *quality* of that knowledge. Based on literature from the fields of philanthropy, education, business, information systems, and health care, Harder+Company, working with Hewlett Foundation staff, created a rubric for assessing the quality of a sample of 29 of the products produced by the grantees. Select grantee products[20] were rated on their Technical Quality, Accessibility Quality, and Applicability to Philanthropic Practice. (See text box below for information on the quality review criteria.) The evaluation aimed to assess the strengths and areas for improvement of the grantees' knowledge products in order to help the Hewlett Foundation determine how to enhance similar efforts in the future. The full quality rubric and supplemental analyses can be found in Appendix D.

[20] Please see the Evaluation Approach and Process section for more information. Please also see Appendix C for a list of which grantees' products were part of the product quality review.

Product Quality Review Criteria

Technical Quality includes criteria regarding the professional presentation of material and how well the products' claims followed from specific evidence or ideas. Criteria also assessed whether the products provided information for the user to evaluate the ideas and thinking behind the final product, by discussing how the knowledge was developed, how it related to and contributed beyond previous work, and who produced the materials and their potential biases.

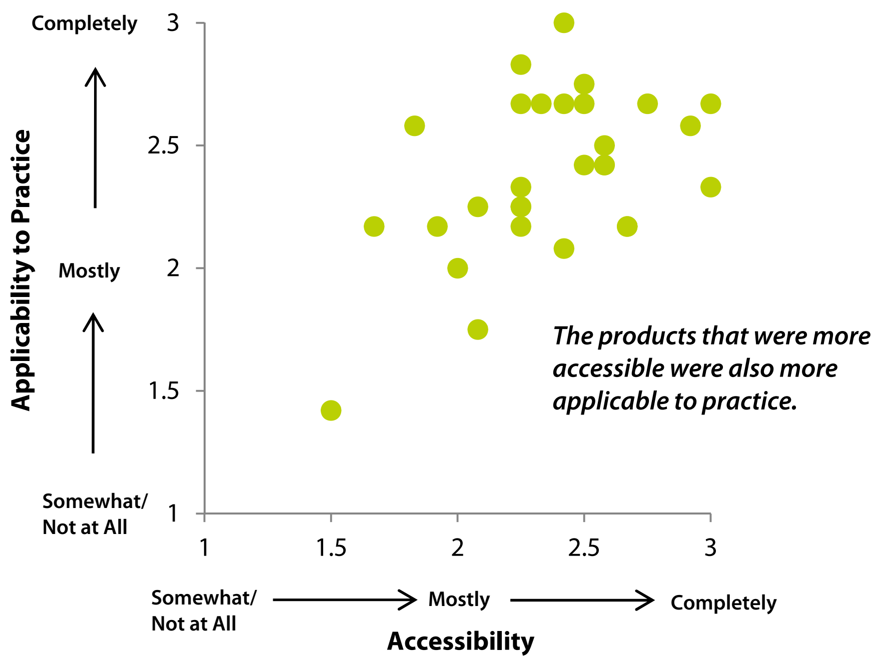
Accessibility includes how easily users could access the materials, including how affordable material was to access, whether the product was easy to navigate through and provided an opportunity to review material at multiple levels of detail. Criteria also assessed how well the products were designed to engage the user through use of clear writing, engaging visuals, and opportunities to interact with either the authors or other users of the products.

Applicability to Philanthropy Practice includes whether the content was relevant to philanthropy and practice, and provided current information. It also assessed how well the product was designed to be translated into practice through providing specific tools or practice examples, and whether it guided appropriate use of material by specifying the intended users of the product, limitations, and the date of product development.

This quality rubric is exploratory, based on the literature on knowledge quality in other fields and incorporating an understanding of the Hewlett Foundation's expectations of this set of grantees. The statistical properties of the tool have not been tested. The products assessed were selected by the grantees as their most successful products so the ratings presented here are not representative of the full set of products produced with Hewlett support. If this exploratory assessment is useful to the Hewlett Foundation and the field, the next stage in the refinement of the rubric would involve more rigorous testing of its properties. Given that the grantees were asked to submit their most effective products, the reader should be as cautious as the evaluator in making too much of these results. They suggest relationships that will require deeper analysis to confirm.

The overall ratings for the grantee products were similar across all three quality categories, with an average score of 2.3 (mostly met criteria) out of 3 for Technical Quality, and 2.4 (mostly met criteria) for both Accessibility and Applicability to Practice. In addition, as shown in Exhibit 3, products that were highly accessible also tended to be rated as highly relevant to practice. This appeared to reflect that products using clearer communication (one of the Accessibility criteria) also tended to be rated as more practice-oriented in their content, more easily transferable to practice, and more likely to specify applicability of their content to practice.

Exhibit 3. Relationship between Products' Accessibility and Applicability to Practice



While the quality review demonstrated the overall high quality of the products submitted, it also provided an opportunity to highlight areas for improvement across all products, as well as per specific grantee business models.

+ **Some products provided insufficient information to guide application of the information.** The products reviewed received a relatively lower score in the areas of *transferability to practice* and *specifies applicability*. Frequently, products would meet some but not all of sub-criteria listed in these areas, meaning they might have provided case study examples or described limitations of the content, but did not also provide clear steps for application of materials or describe the intended audience of the content.

  Meanwhile, the products often lacked information on the basis of the content, such as descriptions of authors' biases. Specifically, while many products discussed the importance of the product itself, they often did not communicate their connection to previous work in the field. Reviewers also noted that many products listed organizational sponsors, but almost none discussed possible biases in their products.

+ **Products were inconsistent in providing opportunities for personalization of information and interaction.** Products varied in whether they provided multiple channels through which to access information (*adaptable level of information*). Some of the products were rated highly in this area while others were not. For example, some of the reports that were rated highly in *adaptable level of* *information* had an executive summary, or provided a shorter and longer version of the report. But lower rated products generally only came in one format without providing additional options for accessing information on the topic.

Products also varied in whether they provided opportunities for the user to interact with other users of the product. Some products had opportunities for discussion or commentary, while others did not provide any opportunity for commenting or sharing information. It should be noted that when submitting products, many grantees described multiple ways that products were disseminated, including some methods that may have provided more opportunity for interacting with peers, such as blogs or conferences.

Exhibit 4 shows the areas where grantee products have room to improve, based on the preliminary quality assessments.

Exhibit 4. Criteria Receiving Relatively Lower Ratings*

Technical Quality	
Articulates Contribution of Work** (Average=2.0)	▪ *Discusses how the product relates to previous work* ▪ *Discusses the importance of work or how it contributes beyond previous work* ▪ *Claims or arguments are supported in part through work or ideas from outside of the author's own work or organization*
Describes Biases (Average=1.7)	▪ *Identifies sponsors for work or identifies whether there are personal biases in work* ▪ *Information about potential biases/sponsors is easy to find in the product*
Accessibility	
Interactive (Average=1.9)	▪ *Opportunities for questions, comments, discussion, interpersonal interaction or networking, beyond simply listing author or organization contact information* ▪ *Opportunity for two-way communication (e.g., person can comment on a blog and gets a response)*
Adaptable Level of Information (Average=1.8)	▪ *Users can tailor the level of information to their interests* ▪ *Provides summaries/abstract/brief report along with ways to access additional information through a full-length article, links to other resources, or lists of resources (written reports only)*
Applicability to Practice	
Transferable to Practice (Average=2.1)	▪ *Provides specific steps for application of material or relevant practice examples* ▪ *Content is designed to be easily translated into practice* ▪ *Provides clear recommendations for practice (written reports only)*
Specifies Applicability (Average=1.5)	▪ *Describes target audience for the workshop or context where information especially applies* ▪ *Describes limitations of application or cautions for use of application of information*

** Rating could range from 1=Not at all/Somewhat, 2=Mostly, to 3=Completely Met Criteria. To receive a rating of a 3 (completely meet criteria) all bullets listed must be met. To achieve a 2 all but one bullet should be met. Otherwise, the criteria are rated as a "1".*
*** "Articulates Contribution of Work" was rated for reports but not for websites*

Knowledge Production Trends

In addition to examining the particular knowledge and products produced by grantees, the evaluation also sought to explore larger trends in this field. In interviews, several grantees noted a trend toward practical and applied products based on rigorous research methods. As one grantee stated, "We're trying to strike the balance where the work is rigorous—incorporating real research and analysis but […] written in a way that is practical and useful in terms of what are the implications for use." The grantees interviewed believe the field is looking for workable solutions to real problems, but wants to feel confident that the solutions have worked for others. Several grantees use an explicit production process that starts with the development and testing of small-scale prototypes and moves to full-scale evaluation with credible evaluation methods in order to ensure that their solutions have actually been effective in real field settings.[21]

A number of grantees described an upward trend in the volume of information and knowledge being produced—and noted that this can be overwhelming for practitioners to digest and prioritize. Grantees have observed a few trends in how people consume their information in response to this trend. According to one respondent, "People want access to more but want everything personalized. People want to feel like they saw everything but they are overwhelmed by everything." Consumers typically focus only on information from their trusted sources; however, they are increasingly comfortable seeking information and resources on their own, opening up opportunities for other providers to present solutions. One implication of this trend is that the grantees have had to develop methods to find more concise and focused communication channels to engage the field. Web postings, tweets, and blogs are by nature less complex than traditional modes of communication; and making those messages brief, while still conveying credibility, is a challenge for some grantees.

Finally, several grantees spoke of insufficient coordination and unnecessary duplication of effort in the field. One of them noted a proliferation of studies and surveys on similar topics, which has led to declining survey response rates. Others lamented that a lot of the knowledge being produced does not build on or credit the work done by others that preceded it. As one grantee noted, "There is a lot of reinventing of the wheel." In the words of another grantee, "There just doesn't seem to be much citing or acknowledgment of the work others are doing."

[21] Based on the interview data, it was not clear the prevalence of specific knowledge development techniques. Interviews suggested that knowledge is developed both through internal research and evaluation efforts, as well as occasionally through partnerships with other organizations or consulting groups.

TARGET AUDIENCES

The organizations funded as part of this cluster of grants currently have a wide range of target audiences but for over three-quarters the highest priority is foundation staff, and for well over half it is nonprofit staff. Most hope to reach the other groups listed in Exhibit 5 but only a minority of grantees consider them to be high priorities.

Exhibit 5. Current Grantee Target Audiences

Audience*	High Priority
Foundation staff	92%
Nonprofit staff	66%
Foundation board members	56%
Government staff	55%
Corporate/company staff	45%
Nonprofit board members	39%
Individual donors	36%
Other**	31%

**'Staff' includes CEO's/Executive Directors*
***"Other" includes scholars, infrastructure organizations, other types of grantmakers, media, and donor intermediaries*

In response to open-ended questions, eleven respondents clarified that the CEOs and other senior staff members of the largest organizations are their highest priority. One of these grantees describes this group as the senior leaders of staffed foundations that make $5 million in grants annually. Another focuses on the CEOs of the top 100 foundations and top 500 nonprofits in the U.K. And one grantee targets "the 9,000," which it defines as the nonprofits and foundations that account for 80 percent of the revenue in the fields it serves. (Similarly, many of those targeting individual donors regard high net worth individuals as their highest priority.) Relatively few respondents cited program or mid-level staff, or smaller organizations (including those that are unstaffed which comprise the vast majority of foundations and nonprofits), among their highest priority targets. They hope to reach them, but do not consider them to be the most powerful lever for impact.

And so while the primary target audiences represent a small fraction of the over 80,000 foundations and more than one million nonprofits in terms of numbers, grantees view them as the largest in terms of size and influence in defining the field.

The grantee survey asked about the grantees' success in reaching their target audiences, and over three-quarters of respondents (76 percent) indicated they were very successful (43 percent) or successful (33 percent) in reaching foundation staff. Over two-thirds of grantees targeting nonprofit staff (71 percent) reported being very successful (53 percent) or successful (18 percent) in reaching them.

Intended and Unintended Shifts in Audiences

The core target market for the grantees' knowledge products is relatively small, but is expanding at the edges in important ways. The grantees identified several trends and audiences that play an increasingly important role in philanthropy. The specific trends they cited include:

+ **Mixed sector model.** Several grantees see the future of the field as increasingly "mixed sector" because the work itself emphasizes and demands cross-sector collaboration. They note that foundations and individual donors do not have sufficient assets to meet society's needs and call for closer alignment among the private, public, and philanthropic sectors in solving social problems. As one respondent noted, "Philanthropy funds pale in comparison to […] government funds. We would be remiss not to be trying to look at what the connection is there." In the words of another grantee, "Think about what is transformative, rather than work at the margins of individual donors and foundations."

+ **Increasing global reach.** Many of the grantees noted that the global reach of their products and services has increased and often this was unintended and unexpected. They attributed this new reach to more global accessibility through technology. As one of them commented, "people in other countries are reading our research because they can download it for free and we've had delegations from Singapore and from China coming to visit." This organization recently translated one of its research reports into Chinese and another grantee has translated some of its resources into ten different languages. Also of note is that 40 percent of Stanford Social Innovation Review's readers are from outside the U.S. In addition, those grantees that were funded to work outside the U.S. reported significant demand for their research among emerging philanthropists and civic leaders in Europe and the Middle East.

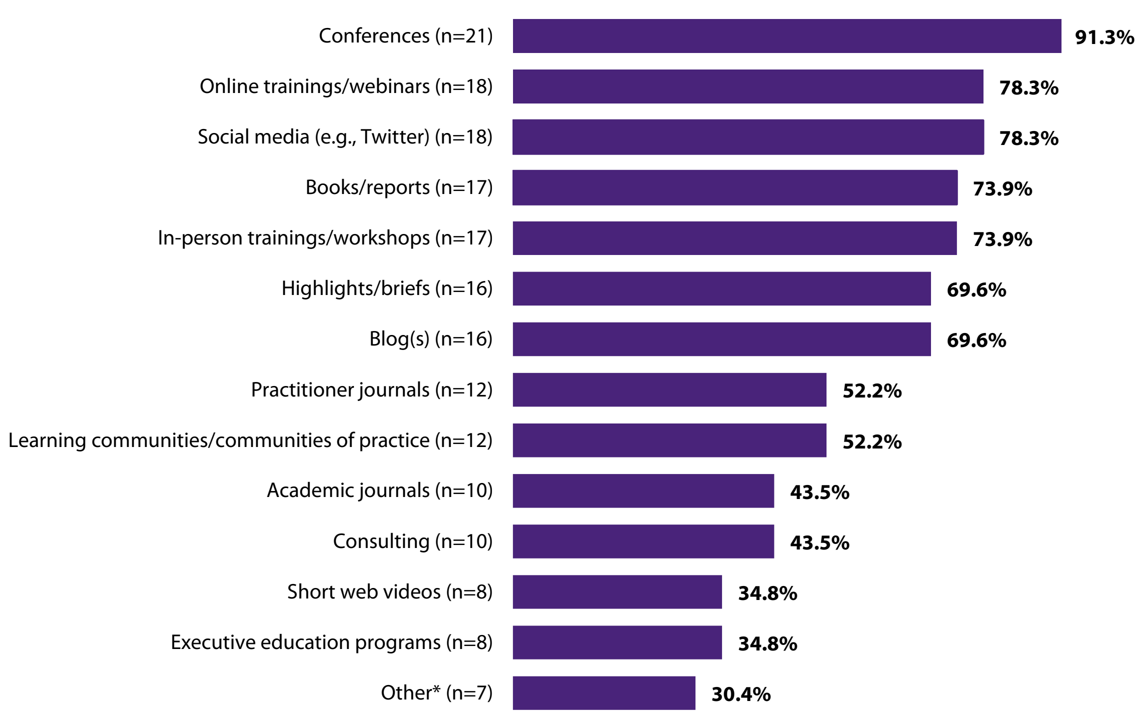
+ **Expanding definition of leaders.** Grantees noted that knowledge is shared both top down and bottom up. They observed that information can be shared from a CEO or a Vice President of Programs to program staff, or that the exchange can easily happen in the other direction. As one grantee shared, "We had a tagline about how we collaborate with nonprofits and philanthropy to get social impact. We now say we collaborate with leaders and we look at a broader set, nonprofit/profit, social enterprise, movements not captured in one nonprofit." According to another respondent, "[I]n the early years we [were] just going to provide resources to foundation CEOs, and I think we've broadened that out over time to recognize that it's leaders, trustees, and senior staff, but you know the program staff are crucial in terms of foundation effectiveness. [...] So I think more of our resources are aimed more broadly."

+ **Individual donors and intermediaries.** Two grantees noted a purposeful and recent shift toward high net worth individuals rather than organized philanthropic institutions. Two other grantees shared that they shifted their approach to focus more on intermediaries to help them ultimately reach individual donors.

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

Grantees consistently described their use of a wide range of distribution channels to disseminate their work. Indeed, the median number of vehicles used by grantees today is nine. Getting the message out through traditional methods alone—such as journal articles, report distribution, or conferences—is no longer viewed as sufficient by most grantees, including those in university settings. Most have developed an increasingly nuanced understanding of the value of strategic dissemination, combining multiple communications strategies with traditional approaches. (See Exhibit 6 for details).

Exhibit 6. Dissemination Vehicles Used by Hewlett Foundation Grantees



**"Other" includes podcasts, case studies, and congressional testimony.*

Within the overall cohort of grantees, a subset of highly sophisticated organizations works on a sufficiently large scale to implement carefully constructed communications plans. They often start small to test concepts and market acceptance and then implement wider campaigns with multiple strategies. One such organization creates separately funded initiatives with staff members dedicated to ongoing market research. Its five-person communications team includes a full-time position devoted to social media. According to that organization's interview respondent, "[We] use multiple forms of communication and mount a campaign around each idea, including short and long publications, videos, webinars, conferences, social media, and blog posts." Meanwhile, another grantee within this subset described its approach identifying and acting on emerging trends in the philanthropy market:

> *"We usually start with a piece of research to understand the trend, then do a big idea around it and then create a how-to article… Once that's done, we just keep pounding the message into different markets: blogs, op-eds, speeches, and conference presentations."*

Many grantees displayed an appreciation of the value of diverse dissemination efforts and the benefit of matching channels to audiences. Traditional academic publications and highly credible newspapers and professional publications co-exist with widely available social media, specifically Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube. The most sophisticated grantees know how to work effectively in both of these environments, as well as in the middle ground occupied by conferences, reports, and trainings. In fact, conferences appear to serve as an especially effective bridge between traditional methods and social media. Four grantees reported the value of conferences in having a strong face-to-face communications benefit while also stimulating blog posts and tweets from participants. Those electronic methods amplify the written or spoken material from the conference. One grantee described this process:

> *"We're doing more speaking gigs out there at regional associations and conferences because we might get 240 funders in a room and be able to talk about what was learned in a research piece. If we can tell a story about it, that seems to have worked from the standpoint of getting blog readership numbers and tweets with links to the blog post."*

All of the grantees face a common challenge of competition for the attention of busy professionals in a crowded marketplace of messages and ideas. Through the survey and interviews, grantees identified a variety of strategies that they have found successful:

- **Translate the knowledge into applicable tools.** Nearly all (95 percent) grantees indicated that "translating knowledge into applicable tools: frameworks, instructional materials, worksheets, illustrative case studies"[22] is an "important" or "very important" strategy. As a grantee advised, "Make sure the frameworks are relevant to the needs of practitioners and offer clear guidance for implementation."

[22] The grantee survey included a question that asked respondents to rate the importance of several knowledge dissemination strategies. The source for some of the strategies including this item was Williams Group's "Marketing Your Knowledge" report published in 2003.

- **Make the information highly accessible.** Also among the most common practices is the creation of a very brief, easily understood version of the original product—such as highlight documents, blog posts, tweets, or videos—to make it easier for busy readers to glean the main points and follow up for more information on their own. Several grantees noted that, whenever possible, knowledge should be "delivered via a channel that the practitioner already goes to." One of these grantees also emphasized that practitioners need "curated collections and summary overviews of current knowledge on a topic, direct and open access to knowledge products rather than just links or citations, and support in maintaining ongoing and current collections for themselves and their own members/audiences."

- **Recruit highly regarded opinion leaders.** Over three-quarters of the grantees (83 percent) noted that "targeting opinion leaders among target users" is an important or very important strategy. Some of the grantees are intentional in ensuring that leaders in the field with established reputations (e.g., foundation CEOs and other executives, researchers at elite universities, well-respected writers) have a chance to participate in the creation of the knowledge products, often by providing an opportunity to preview the products or help support dissemination. One grantee noted the value of "having a dynamic community of folks that others admire." Another said, "It's important to make sure that a handful of respected thought leaders are with you throughout the creation of a product. They can be used for dissemination."

- **Keep beating the drum.** Some grantees plan their dissemination over a long time period, with an emphasis on different strategies at different times. As one grantee reported, "It's important to find ways to keep it fresh over a 12 month period and keep it in front of people. Give them opportunities to engage with it. We've realized that we need to continue to beat the drums. We have to be the chief reminder officers." In an era of data overload these grantees often work very hard to make sure their target audiences stay aware of their messages until the opportunity comes to incorporate them.

- **Deliver knowledge through peers.** Over three-quarters (80 percent) reported that "delivering knowledge through practitioner peer-to-peer networks" is an important or very important strategy, and this was echoed in responses to open-ended questions. "Adults learn best hands on and in cohorts," a grantee explained. "Meet in person with practitioner peer-to-peer cohorts so they can ask questions together and then build upon each other's knowledge to create a safe space for others to see that the work is possible." Given the importance practitioners place on learning from their peers it is worth noting that only four of the grantees included in this strategy are networks/associations.

- **Take the show on the road.** Several grantees noted the continuing importance of face-to-face interaction and in-person speaking engagements. "Our presentations have been effective," a grantee explained, "because they allow for foundation leaders to participate in a […] real-time dialogue format that articles and other publications have not been able to provide."

- **Create some controversy.** Two of the grantees reported that they sometimes take provocative stands in order the break through the crowded marketplace by attracting attention. For example, one grantee set specific benchmarks and challenged foundations to exceed them. They shared that their specific call to action was controversial which then helped increase engagement and attention about it.

Grantees identified several communication platforms that they found particularly useful. Webinars were mentioned by four grantees as a successful strategy because they are "a cost effective and efficient way of reaching lots of folks." For some grantees, webinars have a low marginal cost for delivery after they are developed, and if an organization develops one that is popular, it can use it repeatedly. Unlike publications, webinars have an audio visual component and can be interactive, which some learners prefer. While a relatively small proportion are using short web videos (35 percent), many of these grantees believe they can be a very effective mechanism, particularly when the practitioners are featured as opposed to intermediaries.

Putting knowledge into practice was also identified as a valuable form of dissemination. According to the interviewees, many of their target audiences need to see a concept translated into practice before they become interested in adopting it. Grantees provide consulting or technical assistance where they implement their ideas. They can then disseminate the results of those implementation efforts, extending the life cycle of the original knowledge produced. Several of the grantees say that is the only way to achieve widespread reach with the knowledge they created with Hewlett Foundation support.

Finally, a few grantees emphasized the importance of funding for longer term, strategic dissemination plans and noted that the lack of resources for more systematic efforts to be "a huge constraint." As one general operating grantee commented, "We find little willingness to fund the further broad dissemination of an idea once it has gained traction and the ancillary events like videos, webinars and conferences, [and] social media."

IMPACT OF KNOWLEDGE

The Hewlett Foundation's intention for this funding strategy is to improve the practice of philanthropy and to increase the effectiveness of philanthropic resources consistent with the goals of individual funders. Better knowledge produces better practice; better practice produces greater community impact. The ultimate metric should be whether grantmaking and other foundation activities produce the intended change. For the Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy, this theory of change starts with the reach of the knowledge created and then posits change resulting from the use of that knowledge. This section addresses both types of results.

Reach of Grantee Work

Many of the grantees have successfully produced and disseminated quality knowledge products for their target audiences. Nearly all grantees monitor their output, downloads, and press coverage and collect information to estimate the number of individuals reached. The Hewlett Foundation and its grantees can point to such data to help demonstrate their reach and the strength of their market position. For example,

- In 2012, The Foundation Center's GrantSpace website attracted close to 1 million unique visitors, its five regional library/learning centers served 45,000 people, and its philanthropy information network partners grew to 475 locations in 13 countries.
- That year Bridgespan, FSG, Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP), and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) combined released more than 52 reports, had more than 500,000 unique visitors to their websites, and more than 660 major media hits on their publications.
- FSG's "Collective Impact" article has been downloaded more than 200,000 times in two years and has become the most popular article in Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR) history. FSG engaged in more than 200 speaking engagements, reaching more than 50,000 people in more than 30 countries in 2012.
- Bridgespan's "Funding Models for Nonprofits" is the second highest downloaded article ever from SSIR.org.
- SSIR's current circulation is 12,000 people, and with pass-along its reach increases a total of 40,000 people. Its website attracts more than 100,000 unique monthly visitors.

- GEO's membership has grown from 190 grantmaking organizations in 2004 to more than 425 organizations today, with 3,600 individual members.
- In aggregate, CEP has now worked with 17 percent of the foundations it targets (foundations with over $5 million in grantmaking).

To put this in context, there are over 80,000 foundations in the United States, but only about 5,000 are staffed.[23] These foundations employ close to 9,000 full time professional staff (the total employed is close to 17,000 when adding support and part time professional staff).[24] There are more than one million nonprofits[25] with over 10 million staff members in the United States.[26]

Grantee Assessment of Impact of Their Work

Successful knowledge creation and dissemination is not defined solely by the number of people visiting websites or downloading articles. Nor does successful dissemination ensure impact on philanthropic practice. As one grantee noted, "We tend to move too quickly from an idea to action to products to dissemination. If we had additional resources, we'd spend more time in R&D mode. We're under constant pressure to 'produce,' but it takes a long time to really understanding an issue and how to effect change." With this in mind, grantees were asked to consider the actual impact—or demonstrable effects—of their work.

In interviews, many grantees expressed some concern that they are not really able to capture the impact of their work in a systematic way. Most of the interviewees began their answers about impact with half-apologies for not doing a better job in this area. As noted above, all of the grantees collect output information on printed materials distributed, documents downloaded, visits to websites, and participants in trainings, conferences, and workshops. Survey results indicate that most grantees relied on process data to assess the reach and impact of grant supported knowledge products. One grantee described its approach to measuring impact this way: "We track downloads and attendance at webinars and conferences, the number of speaking engagements, we track related media, and national and international media, we pay attention to dollar revenue from consulting work and momentum around conferences."

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[23] McCray, J. (2011). Is grantmaking getting smarter: A national study of philanthropic practice. Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. Retrieved October 24, 2013, from http://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/Is-Grantmaking-Getting-Smarter.pdf.
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Many grantees rely on market-oriented information—such as consumer demand for products, workshops, and consulting services—as a marker for impact. Some grantees believe that if their work passes the market test they "must be doing something right." One university grantee said, "Each year people come back and each year people are banging on the door to get in." According to another respondent, "There was more information produced so people could learn more—and [they] did. Whether it translated into grantmaking, we didn't really track it. We know people showed up. We catalogued outputs, but in terms of outcomes, we do not have metrics either way." Another grantee noted that it judges its impact by the growth of its subscriber lists, increased revenue, and its citations in the leading publications in the field.

Despite these acknowledged limitations, one-quarter of grantees have fairly well-developed measurement systems, using an external evaluator to conduct independent analyses of how the knowledge produced has affected their clients/members/users. They are able to describe who uses what materials for what purposes, as well as the levels of satisfaction of those users. The grantees that use external evaluators can quantify perceived impact from the users' perspective. In addition, three grantees have well-developed internal evaluation capacity and conduct relatively rigorous surveys on a regular basis. Even those assessing impact at this high level recognize that actual impact is difficult to describe and the question of attribution is still unanswered, given the instantaneous availability of information to an unbounded audience. As one grantee commented, "I would say that anyone who can tell you that they are able to measure the impact of their knowledge work on policy change in any area is wrong. We try to be humble on what we can actually know there. We try to pursue it as far as we can without ever actually knowing why anyone does anything."

Notably, academic institutions view the question of impact differently. In keeping with the currency of academic work, they often focus on citations in bibliographies as a marker of success, although they acknowledge that the question of impact is not addressed directly through such an approach and that they would like to improve their practices in the future. Tracking of citations is also common among non-academic grantees that produce publications for journals and reports. This approach was more common among the project-level grants, which tended to be more technically-oriented on a single topic.

In the grantee survey, respondents were asked the extent to which they believe that their work has made a difference in the field. A majority of respondents reported that their organizations had contributed to changes for foundations to a "good" or "great" extent, including in the following areas:[27]

- Increased knowledge (78 percent) and improved practices of foundation staff (59 percent);
- Improvements in the way non-monetary foundation resources are applied or allocated (53 percent); and
- Increased foundation effectiveness (53 percent).

[27] Please note that 58 percent of survey respondents indicated that for "many" or "all" grant supported products they collected information on whether the products contributed to changes in knowledge or practice. However, the survey did not ask respondents to cite the information sources used to help form the basis of their answers to this series of questions.

A smaller proportion of respondents asserted they had contributed to changes in foundation policies (25 percent) or improvements in the way foundation grant dollars are applied or allocated (28 percent) to a "good" or "great" extent with support from the Hewlett Foundation grants.

User Perspective of Impact

About half of the grantees reported that they collected information on whether their products and services contributed to changes in knowledge or practices. For instance, in CEP's last Market Impact Study, 92 percent of respondents reported they had changed practice as a result of CEP resources (including research and tools). In a 2012 survey of GEO members (conducted by Harder+Company through a separate engagement), 76 percent of respondents noted that involvement in GEO led to a change in practice at the organizational level.

In order to identify any common perspectives regarding impact, the evaluation team conducted a review of evaluations from this smaller group of grantees that collect feedback from their users. Among other things, the review found that the overall users view them favorably. But appreciating the work is also not the same as changing practice or having real impact. The evaluation team's analysis surfaced the following other findings:

- Across grantee evaluations reviewed changes in knowledge or thinking at the individual staff level were more frequently reported than changes in practice.[28]
- While it was difficult to attribute downloading or reading information with actual use and application, some vehicles seemed to be *accessed more* than others. However, the reviewed reports did not provide clear information on whether certain vehicles as a whole are seen to be *more useful* or *impactful* than others.
- While some products were highly accessed, they were not necessarily highly applied to practice. On the other hand, some products were found to be easy to apply to practice but were critiqued regarding the strength of information they provide.

In addition to these particular findings, the review reinforced the conclusion that many challenges exist attributing field-wide changes to specific organizations, since there is overlap in what some of these organizations aim to accomplish.

Barriers to Assessing Impact

A one-time evaluation survey is an imperfect tool for assessing real change, both because it relies on self-report and captures data at a single point in time. Measuring impact involves finding actual evidence change from as

[28] One grantee's evaluation found a relationship between reporting changing one's thinking due to grantee's publications and use of practices discussed in those publications. Since the other evaluations did not explore the relationship between changes in thinking and practice, it was not clear if that trend extends to other grantee's work.

objective a standpoint as possible, and documenting the change that has taken place. Doing so takes capacity and considerable resources, which may be one of the reasons that the grantees themselves report a limited ability to assess their true impact. About one-quarter of the grantees reported that small budgets and insufficient staff keep them from devoting more effort in this area. Two grantees acknowledged having difficulty in making good use of their own data collected from users. They describe lacking the time and resources to conduct a thoughtful analysis of their own data. Other grantees cite their own lack of capacity, while some (generally the project-level grantees) assert that the use of their products by opinion leaders in credible journals are indicators of the impact of their work.

Larger grantees with greater capacity cite the challenge of conducting tightly controlled studies to isolate the impact if their work. Indeed, some of the more commonly used evaluation methodologies currently in use in the field are not well-suited to the question of determining impact in this way. The lack of clearly established common metrics opens the door for grantees to reach their own conclusions about their own impact—which can cause confusion in the field. For instance, in interviews, three grantees claimed that the current widespread emphasis on performance measurement in philanthropy results from their particular work because of the wide use of their materials and the growth of their consulting practices. When new concepts become part of the lexicon of the profession in a short period, grantees may be inclined to assume their impact is based on anecdotal evidence rather than through more systematic measurement.

Impact on the Field

Accepting the limitations of what is and is not knowable, grantees can point to some positive signs of change in the field that they believe to be linked to their Hewlett Foundation-funded efforts. These include the following:

- After years of effort from several Hewlett Foundation grantees (such as Bridgespan, Center for Effective Philanthropy, FSG, GEO, Independent Sector, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, and the Nonprofit Finance Fund), the share of general operating support provided by large foundations has recently increased. A recent analysis of grants data conducted by National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy and the Foundation Center found that the share of grant dollars reported as operating support among large foundations increased from an average of 16 percent in 2008-2010 to 24 percent in 2011.[29] Increasing the proportion of dollars allocated for the more flexible core operating support may have been funders' independent response to the Great Recession, may be a response to the Knowledge grantees, or may be a combination of the two.
- In June 2013, GuideStar, Charity Navigator, and BBB Wise Giving Alliance came together to denounce the overemphasis on the "overhead ratio" as an appropriate measure of nonprofit performance.

[29] Jagpal, N. & Laskowski, K. (2013). The philanthropic landscape: The state of general operating support 2008-2010. National Committee for Responsible Philanthropy. Retrieved October 24, 2013, from http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/PhilanthropicLandscape-StateofGeneralOperatingSupport.pdf.

- Charity Navigator is incorporating Constituent Voice into its ratings of nonprofits.
- GEO's 2011 census of staffed foundations in the United States found that the percentage of foundations reporting that they seek feedback from grantees increased from 21 percent in 2003 to 31 percent in 2011, and funders indicated a reduction in their grant approval turnaround time of more than 30 days between 2008 and 2011.
- In a sign of greater transparency, the proportion of large foundations having a website or issuing publications/ annual reports increased between 1997 and 2009—but at 29 percent is still low.[30]

These changes cannot be attributed directly to the work of the Hewlett knowledge grantees but they reflect the evolution of the field in a direction that aligns with the work of the grantees. While these changes are encouraging, there are few signs of change in other foundation practices that many of the grantees have promoted, including increased multi-year and capacity building support, and increased stakeholder engagement.[31] Meanwhile, expert interviewees highlighted two major changes in the field related to the use of high quality research to inform grantmaking over the last decade:

- **Increase in outcome-oriented and data-driven philanthropy but unclear impact on enhancing philanthropic practice.** Multiple experts interviewed noted an increase in "outcome-oriented"[32] philanthropy over the past ten years. However, experts had varying perspectives on whether funders are fully incorporating all the principles of this approach into practice. As one expert noted, "The field of practice has changed a lot for a variety of reasons. There seems to be more interest among donors in trying to figure out how to make better decisions. There has been a lot of writing on the subject [and] a lot of strategy. […] The fact that everyone talks strategy doesn't mean they are doing strategy. […] It is hard to see if the talk about strategy is translated into more extensively strategic decisions. Some foundations have been more deliberate about it and some have been more casual about it." As another expert shared, "GEO surveys said philanthropy has become more data driven. I always took that with grain of salt. They might collect data and evaluation but are they using it? There is more of a push to provide outcome data and a theory of change. But overall for the field it is not impacting decision making and roles with grantees. Some foundations are doing this but others not. Few are using this information."

- **Changing lexicon but unclear impact on the field.** Multiple experts and grantees shared that the frameworks foundation and nonprofit staff use to organize their efforts have changed over the last ten years. The use of such terms such as "scalability strategy" and "shared measurement" are now

[30] The Foundation Center. (2009). Foundations issuing publications and maintaining websites, 1997 to 2009. FC Stats: The Foundation Center's Statistical Information Service. Retrieved October 24, 2013, from http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/statistics/gm_public.html.

[31] McCray, J. (2011). Is grantmaking getting smarter: A national study of philanthropic practice. Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. Retrieved October 24, 2013, from http://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/Is-Grantmaking-Getting-Smarter.pdf.

[32] Outcome oriented philanthropy includes for both the funder and grantees clearly defined goals, evidence-based strategies for achieving the goals, and monitoring of progress toward outcomes in order to make appropriate adjustments.

common. Some experts see this as a sign of positive change in the field. As one expert noted, "You like to believe that talk is not a bad leading indicator of practice. It seems to me that there is not a lot of talk without some effect on practice. The talk is within a limited number of foundations and nonprofits." Others were more skeptical. As one expert noted:

> *"After ten years, can Hewlett put on our desk a pamphlet or a booklet of things that we really do know about effective philanthropy that any foundation can learn from and incorporate into our work? Do we have a body of knowledge equivalent of the Germ Theory? The answer is no, we don't have it. I would say that we are not getting closer to it. […] So the level of interest is very high, but the level of achievement, bodies of knowledge that we have now generated and can rely on for more than ten minutes in more than six locations in the United States? Not so much."*

Some of the grantee and expert interviewees noted that the terminology in the sector has changed partly as a result of the work done by Hewlett grantees. However, changing the lexicon is not the same as changing practice, increasing effectiveness, or achieving greater societal impact. Expert interviewers felt that while institutional funders may have started to get the message that they should become more outcome-oriented or mindful, in reality those funders may have done little to change practice. In addition, as some of the interviewees pointed out, there are instances where core ideas that the Hewlett Foundation and its grantees promoted may have been adopted but misapplied. As one grantee commented,

> *"We as a field are feeling the negative effects of the unsophisticated application of what are basically 'good' ideas, such as strategic philanthropy or evaluation. (Foundations that narrow in so drastically that they get tunnel-vision or ask for field-level impact when their grant was much too small to warrant it). When executed poorly, many ideas can be wasteful or do harm. Spending more time on the front end may help us all get more specific about the execution and implementation of such 'good' ideas in context."*

Interviewees provided some thoughts on why outcome-oriented talk might not be translated into practice, such as low capacity. For example one expert commented:

> *"There is a huge demand for data but the barrier is partly about capacity - not enough time and systems to use it. There is still a knowledge gap with people knowing how to implement data or use it. Staff may use it but trustees are not connecting the dots. Foundation boards have even lower capacity than the staff."*

THE HEWLETT FOUNDATION'S ROLE

While the overall impact of this work on the field is not fully clear, the Hewlett Foundation's role and effect on this group of grantees is more apparent in regard to both non-grantmaking and grantmaking. In particular, the evaluation showed that the Foundation has had an impact on the grantees' effectiveness; it is thought of as a grantee thought partner and collaborator; and it continues to be looked toward for its leadership and role modeling to the field.

Increasing Grantee Effectiveness

A majority of grantee survey respondents reported that the Hewlett Foundation grants contributed to their organizational effectiveness to a "good" or "great" extent in a variety of ways.

- Over three-quarters of respondents noted that the grants impacted their organizations' products and services to a "good" or "great" extent. Most noted **increased output** (86 percent), **improved quality** (90 percent), and **increased effectiveness of products and services** (81 percent) to a "good" or "great" extent.

- Many respondents reported the grants helped their organizations **attract additional funding** (60 percent), **increase the effectiveness of their organization's internal operations** (65 percent), and **increase organizational sustainability** (65 percent) to a "good" or "great" extent.

In addition to improving organizational effectiveness, many grantees credited the Foundation for its role as a thought partner, collaborator, and promoter that helped to build connections elsewhere in the sector. The previous Hewlett Foundation President and Philanthropy Grantmaking Program Director (whose tenures spanned much of the grantmaking period examined in this evaluation) were named as champions for providing seed funding and intellectual support for this kind of innovative work.

Other grantees reported that the grants raised their visibility and credibility in the sector. These respondents felt that receiving Hewlett Foundation funding gave legitimacy to their work. As one grantee shared, "It was a vote of confidence of our legitimacy." Hewlett Foundation funding was also cited as enabling most grantees to establish a reputation that helped bring other partners and funders to the table. Finally, most grantees noted that the funding allowed for experimentation and risk. According to one respondent, "We were executing on an ambitious strategic plan, so the general support [was] very important. This gives us stability." Another commented, "They gave us the ability to innovate and experiment and explore."

As is common in any funding initiative, a small number of grantees, including a few that had received substantial amounts of funding over multiple years, expressed dissatisfaction that the funding was insufficient or had ultimately been reduced. And one grantee complained that while the Foundation provided general operating support "it was actually directive on how and for which products the funds could be used."

Outcome-Focused Impact on the Field

Many experts interviewed described the Hewlett Foundation's leadership in the field advocating for outcome and data-driven philanthropy, and noted that this has influenced the field over the past ten years.[33] Two experts stated that the Foundation has led by example, encouraging debate and dialogue on this topic. Others cited Hewlett for being one of the first foundations to publish an unedited version of its Grantee Perception Report which led others to follow suit. One expert credited Paul Brest with introducing the concept of negotiated general operating support in his 2003 article "Smart Money." In the article Brest explains how general operating can be strategic and the impact measurable. Some experts praised the Foundation's continued commitment to effective philanthropy and encouraged it to continue this role. However, several grantees and experts also criticized the foundation for overemphasizing the use of logic models and theories of change.

Supporting Philanthropic Infrastructure

Grantees and several experts reported that the Hewlett Foundation is a primary source of support for philanthropic infrastructure and one of the few foundations with a program devoted to it. Multiple expert interview participants stated their admiration for the Foundation's leadership and continuous commitment on this front. Indeed, an analysis conducted by The Nonprofit Quarterly in 2008 found that more than half of the grant support to 104 infrastructure organizations came from only 10 foundations, and over two-thirds from 25 foundations. (The remainder came from nearly 1,300 foundations.)[34] In interviews grantees reported that they have received significant funding from the Ford Foundation, Gates Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Mott Foundation, Packard Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation among others. A 2012 Hewlett Foundation survey of 20 large foundations found that funding for philanthropic infrastructure remained virtually unchanged in the $45 to $47 million range during 2007, 2008, and 2010, with the exception of 2009, when it declined precipitously to $37 million along with foundation assets.

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[33] Please note that this was not an explicit goal of the Foundation's Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy.
[34] (2009). The nonprofit quarterly study on nonprofit and philanthropic infrastructure. The Nonprofit Quarterly. Retrieved October 24, 2013, from http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org/images/infrastudy.pdf.

On a more immediate level, some of the grantees noted they owe their very existence to the support provided by the Hewlett Foundation. Because of difficulty obtaining other funding, one grantee reported that it is shrinking to a more modest size and that its future is in question. The grantee survey found the availability of general operating support to be a "major" challenge for 61 percent of grantees and "moderate" challenge for 30 percent. The availability of multi-year grants is a "major" challenge for 57 percent. As one of grantee explained,

> *"Grants are modest and provided on an annual basis, mostly resulting in organizations cutting corners to survive, not doing adequate due diligence, and all too often chasing after an idea where money seems to be, rather than making a serious case for the direction they wish to advance and then providing supporting evidence or a compelling rationale for that direction. It also results in less collaboration."*

Meanwhile, many grantees indicated that they have a lot more ideas for knowledge creation than they can pursue. Generating revenue from knowledge products is also a challenge a few of the grantees reported. "With the level of access users have to knowledge/information sources, they can feel like what they get for free is 'good enough,'" one respondent explained. In the words of another grantee,

> *"Fewer people want to pay for content and as a result, many media products have gone [away] and quality has dropped. Our biggest challenge is to continue to generate revenue from our media products and develop new ones so that we can cover most of our operating costs."*

One expert hypothesized that foundations do not devote more resources to philanthropic infrastructure because they do not see how it is connected to solving the pressing societal issues they have prioritized, they believe that measuring the impact would be too difficult, or because their funding is restricted to a small geographic area and much of this work has a national or international scope. Nonetheless, the same expert argued that "the potential leverage is huge and it requires sticking with it."

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Between 2000 and 2011, the number of foundations in the United States has increased 44 percent, from 56,582 to 81,777, along with a 36 percent increase in total foundation assets, from $486 billion to $662 billion.[35] During this period, a new type of grantmaker has emerged from the wealth created through technology innovation. From eBay founder Pierre Omidyar to Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, this new wave of philanthropists is changing the field through the different structures and approaches they utilize. In addition, the "giving while living" movement and The Giving Pledge[36] have both generated broader participation in recent years.

Together, along with other societal shifts, these trends have created a changing philanthropic environment of new technology; new social, political, and economic conditions; new money; and new leaders[37] providing both opportunities to reconsider a more diverse sector and new needs for practice-related research.

Building on previous sections in this report and the general landscape shifts noted above, the following are considerations for the Hewlett Foundation's knowledge creation and dissemination work moving forward.

Consideration #1: Knowledge creation and dissemination have increased over the past ten years, affecting the user's ability to assess quality of the knowledge and the creator's business model priorities.

Multiple experts and grantees interviewed noted that today compared to ten years ago there is more knowledge created and disseminated overall along with more potential instant access to mass audiences. Any author or researcher can make her or his work widely available globally. Nearly all of the experts commented that practitioners feel overwhelmed by the volume of information disseminated. The increased competition for the

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[35] The Foundation Center. (2013). Number of foundations, assets, total giving, and gifts received, 1975 to 2011. FC Stats: The Foundation Center's Statistical Information Service. Retrieved October 24, 2013, from http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/statistics/pdf/02_found_growth/2011/04_11.pdf.

[36] http://givingpledge.org

[37] Fulton, K. & Blau, A. (2005). Cultivating change in philanthropy: A working paper on how to create a better future. The Monitor Group. Retrieved October 24, 2013, from http://monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/looking-out-for-the-future/Cultivating_Change_in_Philanthropy.pdf

attention of practitioners has in turn influenced the knowledge creators' business models and willingness to experiment with new forms of collaboration.

- **The Knowledge field is crowded and the "commercials" are louder than the program**. The majority of experts and some grantees interviewed highlighted the competition for the philanthropic sector's funds, time, and attention. This competition has increased the marketing and communication efforts of many in the knowledge field to break through the clutter of information and to become a trusted and used source of information. It is more and more difficult for the average program officer to know what to read, share, and/or use. There is a tendency to rely on the information that is easiest to get and from trusted sources. According to the evaluation's review of grantee evaluations, users preferred to use information from trusted sources. The analysis also noted that trust was determined by an organization having a strong reputation, or whether the source was thought to be "selling something."

  As a result of the crowded marketplace, some of the Hewlett Foundation grantees have developed dynamic and sophisticated marketing campaigns for each new knowledge product. As noted earlier in this report, these campaigns have sometimes resulted in new dialogue, yet it is unclear the actual impact on improving philanthropic practices. As one expert noted, "The volume on certain issues becomes so loud. The commercials are louder than the program. They are just in your face. It is so easy to send emails about this conference or that conference just got one three days ago and here is another email. It hits you in face and it is almost impossible to avoid. There are so many ways we are bombarded." As another expert shared, "…the good news is there's more stuff being documented, talked about, blogged about, and so on. The bad news in that it's really hard to filter out what's quality from just ambient noise."

- **There is intellectual and financial competition among knowledge creators.** Although many of the grantees are familiar with one another, they do not tend to work together on knowledge creation. When they do collaborate with other knowledge creators in this space it is usually for dissemination purposes. Among this group of grantees there is sometimes a culture of intellectual competitiveness as well as competition for audiences and funding instead of building off of each other's knowledge. Two experts noted a challenge of duplication and redundancy of knowledge with unclear connection to other, past knowledge created. As one expert noted, "My criticism of all this new information is it often does not regularly acknowledge what's been attempted in the past." A grantee shared, "there are multiple reports that come out about the same issue and some of them don't even acknowledge that other organizations have published on these topics."

  The intellectual competition may be related in part to grantees' business models and the limited funders supporting knowledge creation. Grantees are able to sell the knowledge they produce, not just to generate revenue but also to judge market response to ideas that they have created. Some grantees use the foundation grants to support the basic research but charge fees for products and services based on that research. This includes not just the consulting companies, but also the intermediaries that also sell products in the marketplace. Grantees use both the grant economy and the market economy to develop and test products for their own sustainability. Within these organizations, there are cross-subsidies with grants supporting some of the practice work and the consulting fees support some of the basic research work. As noted in the Target Audiences section, many of the grantees are reaching the same, relatively small group of funders. This makes competition for the audiences' earned income support potentially impact the grantees partnering decisions. It also impacts marketing and communications decision-making with the vital importance of grantees being seen and heard in this crowded knowledge market place.

Consideration #2: Funders and their knowledge needs are changing.

New funders have entered the field as well as the needs of current funders and funder groups are evolving. Multiple experts interviewed highlighted the different types of information needed by these new philanthropic participants as well as changes in how they want to learn and from whom. In addition, different dissemination strategies will be an important consideration for these new funders as well as rising next generation leaders.

- **Current Hewlett Foundation knowledge strategy does not directly support learning between peer organizations.** As one expert noted, "…the next several really big foundations on the landscape are going to be created by people who make this money young, who make this money off the internet...I am not convinced the Zuckerbergs of the world are turning to intermediaries first. They are turning to their peers first." Most of the knowledge strategy's grant dollars were distributed to intermediaries. Two experts specifically indicated that the Hewlett Foundation strategy does not support peer to peer learning. The Hewlett Foundation model has emphasized intermediaries, whether infrastructure organizations or consulting firms, more so than peer networks such as those organized by region (e.g., Southern California Grantmakers), focus area (e.g., Grantmakers for the Arts), funder size (e.g., Association of Small Foundations), funder type (e.g., community foundation leagues), job function (e.g., Grant Managers Network), and level/years of experience (e.g., Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy). Implicit in the current focus is an assumption about how the market works that may ultimately not be a good market for everyone.
- **The Hewlett Foundation's current strategy may be more focused on large funders.** Review of the grantee evaluations[38] suggested that Hewlett Foundation grantees appear to be reaching larger funding organizations more than smaller organizations. Several surveys reported that practices the grantee organizations had been advocating for, such as conducting evaluations of their grantees, were more prevalent among larger organizations than smaller organizations. In addition, one organization's survey reported that their tools seen to be more applicable to the larger organizations rather than smaller organizations. Overall, the Hewlett Foundation's strategy and grantees funded have not

[38] Please see the Evaluation Process and Approach section and Appendix C for more information about the review and the participating grantees.

emphasized small foundations. In the United States small foundations[39] include approximately 60,000 foundations that make up close to half of the total foundation grant dollars.[40]

Consideration #3: There is more information but very little debate.

Most experts interviewed noted the lack of true critical assessment and open discussion including contrarian perspectives in the knowledge field and discussion about failure. As one expert noted, "These tools in a sense are custom built for asynchronous discussion, which foundations have in the works. None of the dissemination channels is opening themselves up to be disagreed with." In line with the experts' observation, the evaluation's quality review noted a relatively low score for interactivity across all products reviewed. While the Hewlett Foundation was highlighted for its openness to debate, experts noted that the philanthropic field in general does not learn from failure or encourage different perspectives. As some experts and grantees noted the staff and boards of foundations are often more worried about public perception and their brand than encouraging critical dialogue. As one expert shared, "…there is a reticence to share about failure. Foundations are worried about brand and reputation. Professional staff worry how trustees will react. It is rare that people will put out failures." To change this culture, both experts and grantees highlighted the importance of openness and recognition of the value of all types of knowledge, not just success stories.

However, there are recent signs that this is starting to change. As one expert noted, foundations seem less interested in coming out with "puff pieces" and the journals are trying to produce information to excite and engage people. Recent examples include:

- Alliance magazine published a series of articles critical of the Gates Foundation in 2011 supplemented with a forum at The Hudson Institute.
- Emmett Carson's critique of Collective Impact appeared in The Huffington Post in August 2012.
- In March 2013 Phil Buchanan wrote an article in the Chronicle of Philanthropy in which he openly criticized FSG's research and the "Daring to Lead" study produced by CompassPoint and the Meyer Foundation.
- National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy published an article extremely critical of the Council on Foundation's new direction in its summer 2013 newsletter.
- William Schambra and Paul Brest reignited their debate about strategic philanthropy in The Nonprofit Quarterly in August 2013.
- In its fall 2013 issue Stanford Social Innovation Review introduced a new feature called "Up for Debate" that provides a forum for different perspective on important topics.

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[39] The Association of Small Foundations defines small foundations as foundations with two or less staff.
[40] http://www.smallfoundations.org/about/

Consideration #4: There is interplay between practice and research, along with an increased demand for practical, applicable, and accessible knowledge.

A decade ago, creating research to inform philanthropic practice was typically considered an academic activity. Creating knowledge in the field was something foundations made grants to universities or think tanks to do basic or applied research. The hybrid that evolved over the years has produced much more of an interplay between practice and research, between knowing and doing. Some of the grantees talked about the benefit of having an opportunity to put into practice the concepts and ideas that were generated. In many of the products there is a combination of research lying at the foundation of a range of practice-oriented strategies. One grantee commented that the research that they are doing for their client work comes first and the writing they do comes out afterward. This is the reverse of how universities think about translating work into action.

A strong theme across experts and grantees interviewed was the increased demand for applied toolkits and useable solution steps written in a concise and practical manner. Grantees in particular stressed the need to translate and make knowledge accessible in order for it to be read and to then potentially impact practice. While there is the acknowledgement of this need, most grantees have not yet successfully made their products easily adaptable to practice. Frequently, grantee products reviewed in the quality analysis included case study examples or described limitations of the content, but there were not clear steps for application of materials or description of the intended audience of the content. One expert noted, “Some of the best work has an academic flavor to it and it’s not accessible or user-friendly and it doesn’t get a lot of uptake. So the other thing I would wish they [Hewlett Foundation] would do is take some of the very best work out there and help to get it where it is needed.”

CONCLUSIONS

The Hewlett Foundation engaged Harder+Company Community Research to evaluate its strategy for creating and disseminating knowledge to advance the work of philanthropy. Through a series of grants over a ten-year period, the Foundation supported a range of grantees, including consulting firms, academic institutions, media organizations, financial intermediaries, and infrastructure organizations serving philanthropy. Harder+Company used a variety of research methods to assess the strategy and identify areas for further work in this sector.

The Hewlett Foundation's grantees have made significant and widely influential contributions to improving basic and applied knowledge in the field. The efforts of these grantees have produced new strategies for increasing the effectiveness of philanthropy in the areas of planning for results, foundation essentials, making and managing grants, developing talent and leadership and development of innovative models for collaborative work. The area where the impact of this work is most visible is in the promotion of strategies, methods and metrics for determining the results of grantmaking. A review of the types of products that grantees produced found that 80 percent of grantees produced information related to the planning for results and impact. Harder+Company conducted an exploratory analysis of product quality, using a rubric created for this evaluation, and rated almost all of the grantee products submitted high in the areas of technical quality, accessibility, and applicability to practice.

As a group, the grantees have been effective in disseminating their products to their target markets using traditional and new distribution channels. Those grantees that intended to reach wide audiences, within the philanthropic sector and beyond, have done so. The media organizations, consulting firms, and infrastructure groups have developed sophisticated tools and communication strategies to disseminate their content (and content provided by others) to foundation staff and employees of nonprofit organizations. So effective are these groups in communicating with others that some in the field are concerned that there is too much contradictory information disseminated resulting in occasional overload and confusion. This appears to be a consequence of the effective use of channels which allow mass distribution of content to a relatively small audience.

Although the funded knowledge creation is intended to reach all grantmakers and philanthropic intermediaries, most of the users are from larger foundations with greater organizational capacity. There is limited engagement from smaller foundations according to the user data some of the grantees were able to provide. While this may be a natural consequence of the limited capacity of smaller funders to seek out and implement new models, there is still an opportunity for the Hewlett Foundation to guide its grantees in developing models that specifically respond to the needs of smaller foundations. There is also an opportunity to assist the grantees in obtaining more comprehensive and higher quality data on those who use the products created and disseminated with the support of the Foundation.

The evaluation found that grantee approaches to assessing the user perspective vary with many grantees unable to document fully the use of their products. One-quarter of the grantees conduct formal surveys of their users, assessing use patterns and user satisfaction with publications, websites, conferences, training and consulting services, and other products. While these efforts to understand how the products are used are useful, the grantees acknowledge that there is no rigorous evidence of the long-term impact of knowledge on practice or organizational change. Conducting such research is beyond the formal scope of the Hewlett Foundation grants and at least one grantee is developing a more formal and rigorous methodology to address this issue in the coming year. This area represents an opportunity for the Hewlett Foundation to work with its grantees and other experts in this field to investigate options to produce a deeper understanding of how knowledge creation actually affects organizational change and the effectiveness of grantmaking.

The field of philanthropy has changed considerably since the Hewlett Foundation began funding in this area ten years ago. The number of foundations has grown by 44 percent while total sector assets have grown 36 percent since 2000. Foundations continue to invest in community benefit programs but are also more likely to work simultaneously at the policy and systems levels to achieve lasting improvements. The Hewlett Foundation itself contributed to those changes by supporting outcome-oriented philanthropy, the use of new dissemination strategies and vehicles, and the promotion of hybrid models that combine fee-for-service revenue with grant funding for organizations working in this sector. These concepts are now accepted as the new paradigm by many institutional grantmakers and university-based research centers. They have also been adopted by many larger nonprofits who continue to seek strategies to become more effective, sustainable, and attractive to funders. The work of the Hewlett Foundation grantees has shaped this field and many of the experts interviewed for this evaluation share this perspective.

There is a need for the Hewlett Foundation to ensure that its grantmaking continues to evolve as the field evolves. There is growing interest in collaborative work among groups that share some goals but have not found a common language for undertaking shared work. Business and government now participate more often in common efforts with philanthropy to have community impact. These sectors are looking for ways to leverage their work and resources, as seen by their increasingly frequent use of the Hewlett Foundation-supported materials, some of which address this type of partnership specifically. There is an opportunity for the Hewlett Foundation and its grantees to continue to develop new models for supporting this new type of work. There must also be recognition that not all of those working for change in this sector share the values of the new framework. Strategic, or outcome-oriented grantmaking, from this perspective, can lead to wasted resources while the real underlying needs of communities go unmet. The Hewlett Foundation has welcomed the diversity of these voices in some of its forums. The field needs more, however. There should be greater critical discussion of these issues in forums where the broad sector can hear these voices and make their own determination of which perspectives have merit.

The Hewlett Foundation program to produce and disseminate knowledge to deepen and strengthen philanthropy has been successful. The work of the grantees has shaped the field over the past ten years, directly and indirectly. The Foundation's thought leadership has inspired many of the grantees to pursue these new directions. Beyond the innovative models, the Foundation has also supported a wide range of intermediary organizations that serve philanthropy, increasing their capacity to respond to the sector and create new models as the field has evolved. As the Foundation considers its options going forward, there is a very strong framework from which it can launch its new directions. The Foundation has an opportunity to be transparent in its direction-setting, inviting other opinions, and sharing its own rationale. The grantees and the non-grantee experts alike are looking to the Hewlett Foundation for leadership, inclusion, and inspiration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation resulted in recommendations from grantees and expert interviewees, as well as separate recommendations from the evaluation team, Harder+Company Community Research.

Grantee and Expert Recommendations

In line with the conclusions highlighted in the previous section, grantee and expert interview participants provided a range of recommendations for the Hewlett Foundation moving forward. Multiple participants emphasized bringing people together for discussion and dialogue, while others encouraged the Foundation to refine its strategy to truly impact philanthropic practice. The list below includes recommendations highlighted by multiple experts and/or grantees during interviews.

1. **Convene funders, grantees, and non-grantees.** Both grantees and experts saw the Hewlett Foundation as one of the key leaders in the knowledge creation field. As a result, both groups interviewed encouraged the Foundation to bring together the grantees as well as others in this field to share, learn, and prioritize. Despite sometimes having competitive and siloed relationships with one another, multiple grantees encouraged the Foundation to bring them together in order to share and learn. Some grantees did not know who or what else the Hewlett Foundation funds in this area. Other grantees encouraged bringing the cohort together so that they could discuss and develop knowledge performance measurements and/or a study to inform their work.

   Grantees and experts also saw the role of the Foundation in bringing together the field. As one grantee shared, "Hewlett is in a unique position to credibly lean on its colleague foundations. [It] should bring together a small group of grantees and non-grantees […] to help think about solutions and focus." Another grantee stated, "It is important to connect the knowledge of the whole sector. If not there are just silos and competitive projects. Hewlett can get people on the same page." However, one grantee as well as one expert cautioned against full group consensus. "There are only a few funders funding knowledge creation," the grantee noted. "I think it would be a danger if all of them thought in the same way and funded the same things. There is a danger in aligning with others in this instance. You don't always know where good innovation will come from. Therefore, you need a variety of knowledge creators from a variety of perspectives. An ecosystem of different kinds of approaches is important."

2. **Elevate the dissemination part of the conversation.** Grantees and experts alike shared that the dissemination of knowledge is not as supported as the creation of knowledge. They encouraged the Foundation to support dissemination specifically. As one grantee noted, "There is a continuum from knowledge creation to dissemination to having there be internalization of knowledge - changing people. Hewlett has not emphasized the latter end and instead focusses on the front end knowledge creation." One expert encouraged specific dissemination support, "Elevate the dissemination part of the conversation. When grants are made for knowledge creation, include resources for dissemination as well as for technical assistance around dissemination. For example, Spitfire to help with the grantee's communications strategy. A lot of organizations have their ways to disseminate but it is often an afterthought. There are also capacity issues around dissemination with communications functions often under resourced."

3. **Continue general operating, flexible, and long-term funding.** Overall grantees encouraged the Hewlett Foundation to continue to fund and partner in this area with continued general operating support. Some specific priorities and feedback include:

   - **Continue to fund flexibly as risk capital.** Grantees thought it was important for the Hewlett Foundation to "gamble on what we think will be the field is not even really woken up to yet." According on another grantee, "Philanthropy needs to be society's risk capital. Philanthropy can be a catalyst, driver, or partner."

   - **Make modifications such as longer-term grants.** One grantee encouraged connecting the grants and who they fund into a more focused and systematic approach: "[M]y hunch is that if the Hewlett Foundation really wants to achieve what I think it wants to achieve in this space, it's not possible to do that by a series of discrete grants to individual organizations unless those are tied up into some much more systematic approach."

4. **Understand needs of new funders.** As noted earlier in this report, experts interviewed noted great changes in who is part of the philanthropic sector today as well as how and from whom these new philanthropists are seeking knowledge to improve their practice. Experts encouraged the Hewlett Foundation to understand the needs of new funders as well as to consider this new group and ensure that its knowledge strategy moving forward addresses them and their different needs and issues.

5. **Encourage alternative views, critical discussions, and reflections on failure.** Multiple experts noted that people are tired of "sugar coated" information and are hungry for more honest reflection as well as diverse perspectives and discussion. As one expert noted, "All of the social media things, I think they are all great, but the critical thing that is missing is not information, it's opposing views. […] The way you get to truth is opposition."

6. **Validate knowledge quality.** Two experts encouraged the Hewlett Foundation to consider developing a process or structure to assess the quality of knowledge products before they are then supported for dissemination. One expert suggested a group of advisors to validate quality. Both experts encouraged validation of quality to avoid and circumvent the current reliance on the market.

As one expert shared, the Foundation has made "grants in the past for building knowledge. […] Some of the work has been good, deep work; some of it has been superficial, but the work that has gotten traction is the work where the grantee is good at communications and at creating campaigns. So what I would do if I were Hewlett is I would make the knowledge building grants first. I would vet the quality of the product and then I would make the follow-on grant for diffusion and campaign around it once I was really able to assure that the quality of the knowledge was exemplary."

Harder+Company Recommendations to the Hewlett Foundation

Harder+Company believes that the recommendations from the grantees and experts in the field are valuable and merit consideration by the Hewlett Foundation. In addition to those suggestions for future action, Harder+Company presents its own recommendations:

1. **Pursue the work of strengthening philanthropy in the context of the broader literature on organizational change.** Much of the work supported by the Hewlett Foundation views the philanthropy sector as separate from other professional settings, such as healthcare management or other professional services. To a large extent, this is justified by the unique role of philanthropy in American society. However, there are sufficient similarities in organizational behavior to look for successful practices outside of philanthropy as well as within that world. There are opportunities to learn from other fields about such issues as leadership development, managing change, improving internal efficiency and effectiveness, and strategy. The Hewlett Foundation should examine how the lessons learned in other fields can be applied to philanthropy.
2. **Encourage and disseminate diverse perspectives.** The Hewlett Foundation supports a range in grantees in its efforts to strengthen philanthropy. There is broad consensus among them on some of the most pressing issues facing the sector. Yet there are other voices who do not share those perspectives but whose opinions are credible and legitimate on issues such as strategic philanthropy. The Hewlett Foundation already includes some of these diverse opinions in its conferences and other convenings. There may be an opportunity to support these alternative perspectives through grantmaking that assesses the impact of alternative theories of change or strategies. In an effort to seek empirical evidence of the effectiveness of various approaches to strengthening the sector, more options should be included.
3. **Diversify the audience for research and testing of new concepts.** Much of the research and practice support funded by the Hewlett Foundation reaches the largest and most active foundations. However, there are many more small foundations, or those outside of major urban areas, that could benefit from this work. The Foundation should encourage its grantees to find specific methods to reach and serve these groups. This could include adjustable fee schedules so that smaller foundations are not priced out of the services they need. There may also be opportunities to target products to

smaller foundations using their professional associations for dissemination or to support the development of new products addressing their unique needs directly.

4. **Make negative findings available and encourage grantees to do so as well.** The research that the Hewlett Foundation supports includes some evaluations of the effectiveness of various approaches to improving the work of philanthropy. When those efforts produce positive results, they are widely publicized. Results that are inconclusive or negative do not receive the same attention, although the opportunity for learning is great in these cases. The Hewlett Foundation should encourage its grantees to make all of their results available to the field or it may consider creating a clearinghouse to help disseminate these results, similar to Glass Pockets.

5. **Explore new methods for incorporating the user perspective.** The grantees acknowledge that assessing the impact of knowledge development on foundation practice is difficult. Harder+Company suggests two approaches to this issue. The first is to explicitly require all grantees (or at least those over a certain size) to include mechanisms for incorporating user perspectives on reach and impact. The second approach is to convene the appropriate grantees and other stakeholders to create a more rigorous cross-grantee approach for assessing impact on individual practice and organizational behavior. The broader field of organizational studies will have methodological lessons to offer.

6. **Promote the development of standards of quality in research on philanthropy.** In support of the previous recommendation, Hewlett should consider some framework (such as a quality rubric) that philanthropy professionals can use to assess the quality, utility, and applicability of knowledge produced by its grantees and others interested in influencing the field. Given the crowded marketplace and the sometimes contradictory messages, some approach to sorting the various products would be very helpful to the field.

7. **Continue to support the development of platforms to organize knowledge.** Information overload was cited by both grantees and experts throughout the evaluation. It was also one of the reasons why the Foundation was encouraged to convene grantees and others in the field to help foster greater coordination and reduce duplication. The Foundation has influenced the creation of information tools, systems, and platforms (e.g., IssueLab and LearnPhilanthropy). Harder+Company encourages continued support of platforms that organize philanthropic information and make high quality knowledge easily obtainable and actionable for practitioners.

APPENDIX A: EVALUATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Amy Arbreton	Evaluation Officer, Effective Philanthropy Group, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Elisha Smith Arrillaga	Program Fellow, Effective Philanthropy Group, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Barbara Chow	Program Director, Education Program, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Kim Hamilton	Director of Strategy, Planning & Management and Charitable Sector Support, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Andrea Jeong	Administrative Associate, Effective Philanthropy Group, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Lindsay Louie	Program Officer, Effective Philanthropy Group, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Diana Scearce	Director, Evaluation and Learning, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Fay Twersky	Director, Effective Philanthropy Group, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Sara VanLear	Program Associate, Effective Philanthropy Group, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
June Wang	Organizational Learning Officer, Effective Philanthropy Group, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

APPENDIX B: EXPERTS INTERVIEWED AND GRANTEES INTERVIEWED/SURVEYED

Experts

Henry Berman	Chief Executive Officer, Association of Small Foundations
Lucy Bernholz	Philanthropy 2173 Visiting Scholar, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation Visiting Scholar, Stanford University Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society Fellow, Hybrid Reality Institute Former Fellow, New America Foundation
Paul Brest	Former President, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Joel L. Fleishman	Professor, Law and Public Policy, Duke University Director, Sam and Ronnie Heyman Center for Ethics, Public Policy and the Professions, Duke University Director, Center for Strategic Philanthropy and Civil Society Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University
Rahsaan Harris	Executive Director, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy
Barbara Kibbe[41]	Director, Organizational Effectiveness S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation
William Schambra	Director, Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal, Hudson Institute
Christine Tebben	Former Executive Director, Grantmakers for Education
Garland Yates	Senior Advisor and Former Interim Executive Director, Neighborhood Funders Group Former Senior Associate, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Grantees[42]

Diana Aviv	President and CEO, Independent Sector
David Bonbright	Founder and Chief Executive, Keystone Accountability
Phil Buchanan	President, Center for Effective Philanthropy
Ellie Buteau	Vice President of Research, Center for Effective Philanthropy

[41] Stuart Burden, Associate Director of S. D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation's Organizational Effectiveness, also participated in the interview.

[42] If multiple people are listed from the same grantee organization, they all participated in the one phone interview with the evaluation team. Only one survey was completed per grantee organization.

Marcia Chong	Analyst, Advisory Services, Third Sector Capital Partners
Tim Delaney	President and CEO, National Council of Nonprofits
Aaron Dorfman	Executive Director, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
Kathleen Enright	President and CEO, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
Gabriela Fitz	Director, Knowledge Management Initiative, Foundation Center Founding Director, IssueLab
Kristin Giantris	Managing Director, Strategy & Innovation, Nonprofit Finance Fund
Barbara Ibrahim	Director, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement Member, Institute for Gender and Women's Studies American University in Cairo
Lisa Schorr Kaplan	Practice Manager, Youth Development, Bridgespan Group
Mark Kramer	Managing Director, FSG
Tris Lumley	Head of Development, New Philanthropy Capital
Jill Manny	Executive Director, National Center on Philanthropy and the Law Professor, New York University School of Law
Ruth McCambridge	Editor in Chief, The Nonprofit Quarterly
Kim Meredith	Executive Director, Stanford University Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society
Katie Smith Milway	Partner, Head of Knowledge Unit, The Bridgespan Group
Eric Nee	Managing Editor, Stanford Social Innovation Review
George Overholser	CEO and Co-Founder, Third Sector Capital Partners
Tim Pennell	Associate, Strategic & Financial Partnerships, Third Sector Capital Partners
Regina Starr Ridley	Publishing Director, Stanford Social Innovation Review
Katherina Rosqueta	Executive Director, The Center for High Impact Philanthropy, University of Pennsylvania
Marcia Sharp	Team Lead, LearnPhilanthopy
Edward Skloot	Former Director, Center for Strategic Philanthropy and Civil Society, Duke University
Paul Slovic	Founder and President, Decision Research
Bradford Smith	President, The Foundation Center

APPENDIX C: KNOWLEDGE CREATION AND DISSEMINATION GRANTEES

Organization	General Operating/ Project Support	Time Range of Grants (First Year, Most Recent Year)	Total # of Grants	Total Grant Amount	Included in Product Quality Review[43]	Included in Review of Grantee Evaluations
American University in Cairo	GenOp	2007	1	$300,000		
Aspen Institute	Project	2009, 2013	4	$250,000		
Bridgespan Group[1]	GenOp	2000, 2012	9	$6,525,000	X	X
Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP)	GenOp	2004, 2013	8	$4,400,000	X	X
Council on Foundations (for LearnPhilanthropy)[2]	Project	2011	1	$100,000		X
Decision Research	Project	2006	1	$100,000		
Duke University Center for Strategic Philanthropy and Civil Society[1]	GenOp	2003, 2010	4	$1,455,000	X	
Foundation Center[1]	GenOp	2003, 2013	7	$1,180,566	X	X
FSG Social Impact Advisors (FSG)[1]	GenOp	2006, 2013	6	$1,250,000	X	
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO)[2]	GenOp	2010, 2013	3	$500,000	X	X
Independent Sector[2]	Project	2003, 2012	5	$1,575,000	X	
IssueLab[44]	GenOp	2008, 2010	2	$575,000		
Keystone Accountability	GenOp	2007, 2008	2	$700,000		X
McKinsey & Company (for Social Impact Bond/Pay for Success research)	Project	2012	1	$50,000		
National Center on Philanthropy and the Law	GenOp	2008	1	$100,000		
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy	GenOp	2002, 2006	3	$75,000		X
National Council of Nonprofits	Project	2012	1	$75,000		
New Media for Nonprofits (for IssueLab)	GenOp	2007	3	$300,000		
New Philanthropy Capital	GenOp	2009, 2013	3	$500,000	X	X

[43] Two grantees who met quality review grantee selection criteria were not included in the review. One did not respond to the evaluation's product request. Another was a very new grantee focused on social impact bonds and therefore no products were requested from that organization.

[44] Please note that IssueLab and the Foundation Center merged in 2012. However, since they received grants independently prior to the merger they are listed and considered separately as part of this evaluation.

Nonprofit Finance Fund (for Social Impact Bond/Pay For Success research)	Project	2012, 2013	2	$200,000	
Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR)	GenOp	2007, 2011	3	$1,149,687	X
Stanford University Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society	GenOp	2006, 2013	5	$2,849,229	X
The Nonprofit Quarterly[2]	GenOp	2005, 2013	4	$305,000	X
Third Sector Capital Partners (for Social Impact Bond/Pay For Success research)	GenOp	2012, 2013	1	$250,000	
University of Pennsylvania Center for High Impact Philanthropy	GenOp	2012, 2013	2	$200,000	X

Note. Grantees were classified as receiving either General Operating or Project Support based on grantee interview responses, and if needed, using information from the grantee list and the grantee final reports.
1. The majority of the granting periods were for general operating support, but the grantee received project support for select years.
2. The total listed does not represent the full extent of the Philanthropy program's funding and partnership with this organization, but instead represents the funding received in direct association to the knowledge creation and dissemination strategy.

APPENDIX D: KNOWLEDGE QUALITY REVIEW

Approach for Rating Product Quality

Overview

The quality review sought to understand the level and nature of quality of products developed by Hewlett Foundation knowledge grantees. Given the large number and range of grantee knowledge products listed in grantee reports to the Foundation, the evaluation team focused on learning from a specific group of products. Focusing on the 12 organizations[45] that received multiple grants and had received at least one of the grants in the past three years, the evaluators asked those grantees to submit up to five products developed in the last three years that they believed were (a) most effective at influencing the field and (b) aligned with the Hewlett Foundation's Philanthropy Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy. The review focused on products considered most effective to allow further understanding of the characteristics of successful knowledge products, and also to identify any gaps that existed in quality even among some of the leading products in this field.

This quality rubric is exploratory, based on the literature on knowledge quality in other fields and incorporating an understanding of the Hewlett Foundation's expectations of this set of grantees. The statistical properties of the tool have not been tested. The products assessed were selected by the grantees as their "most successful," and as such the ratings presented here are not representative of the full set of products created with Hewlett Foundation support. Given that the grantees were asked to submit their most effective products, the reader should be as cautious as the evaluator in making too much of these results. They suggest relationships that will require deeper analysis to confirm. If this exploratory assessment is useful to the Hewlett Foundation and the field, the next stage in the refinement of the rubric would involve more rigorous testing of its properties.

Development of Criteria

- **Literature Review.** The evaluation team conducted a literature review in June 2013, drawing from the fields of philanthropy, education, business, and knowledge and information systems. This literature review generated a list of possible criteria for knowledge quality. These criteria represent characteristics assumed to be related to whether a product would be likely to be used, likely to be used appropriately, and is worth using.

[45] Please see Appendix C for a list of which grantees' products were part of the product quality review.

- **Selection of Criteria.** This list of possible criteria was then organized into larger categories. Some criteria were removed if they would be very difficult to rate.[46] When possible, criteria were selected that could be applicable across different types of products. Criteria were also designed so that the rater would not have to thoroughly read the entire product in order to assign a rating. While it is recognized that the target audience of the knowledge products will vary by product, criteria assume the audiences are practitioners (rather than academics), educated, and possess some basic knowledge of philanthropy.

- **Refinement of Criteria.** The Hewlett Foundation team and the Evaluation Advisory Committee reviewed the potential criteria. Harder+Company made revisions based on their feedback. Two raters piloted this tool with a selection of products and further refined these criteria.

Selection of Products

In response to the request for knowledge products, grantees submitted a total of 58 products[47] including articles, reports, websites, books, webinars, blogs, seminars, and workshops. Since most of the products submitted were either reports/articles and websites, the quality review focused on those two types of products, including up to two reports/articles and two websites per grantee.[48] An initial review of grantee's products indicated that the quality was fairly consistent across each individual grantee's products. Given this consistency, the number of products was reduced to 29 total products, including 16 reports and 13 websites. If a grantee had submitted more than 2 of these types, two were randomly selected to be included.

Approach to Rating

Each rater used the rubric beginning on page 63 to rate the same set of 29 products, and their ratings were averaged. Their total scores were significantly correlated with each other ($r=.57$, $p<.01$)[49], suggesting that there was some consistency in the overall ratings provided by the two raters.

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[46] For example, it would be difficult to rate whether the information is one-sided or balances a variety of perspectives and sources.

[47] The total does not include additional products submitted by some grantees beyond the 5 requested. Two grantees submitted more than the 5 products requested, and two grantees submitted 4 products

[48] If grantees had more than two of one of these types of products, two were randomly selected. Two reviewers completed the rubric for of the 29 products and their ratings were averaged.

[49] Pearson's r is a metric that indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. Pearson's r can range from -1 (completely negatively related) to 0 (not at all related) to +1 (completely positively related).

Quality Rubric Results

Overall Scores by Quality Category

Ratings were assigned on a scale from 1(not at all/somewhat met criteria), 2 (mostly), to 3 (completely). As displayed in the Exhibit 7 below, most of the products were given an average rating corresponding to "mostly met criteria." This suggested that products were of high quality, with some area for improvement. These high ratings likely reflect that grantees were asked to submit the products they perceived to be most effective.

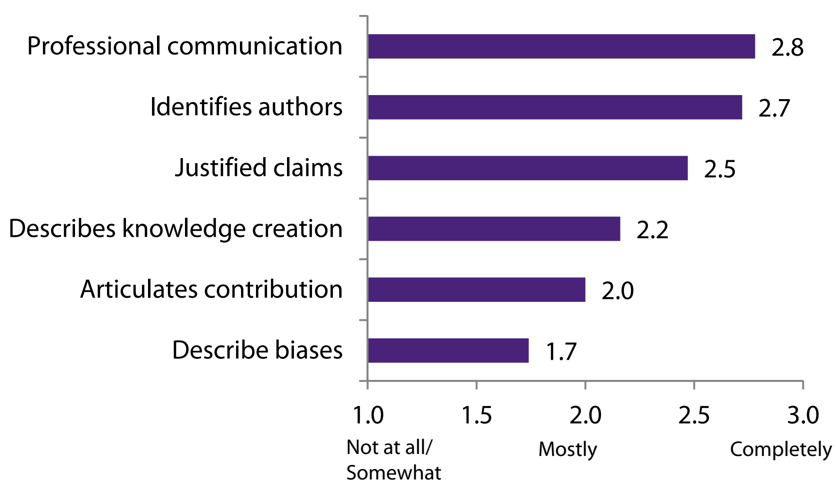
Exhibit 7. Percent of Grantees Receiving Various Levels of Quality (n=29 products)

	Not at all/ Somewhat	Mostly		Completely
	1.00-1.49	1.50-1.99	2.00-2.49	2.50-3.00
Technical Quality	0.0%	13.7%	51.7%	34.4%
Accessibility	0.0%	13.6%	44.7%	41.2%
Applicability to Practice	3.4%	3.4%	51.5%	41.2%
Average Quality[50]	0.0%	10.2%	58.0%	30.7%

Ratings by Individual Criteria

The following three graphs show the average rating for each of the criteria in the rubric. These graphs show that within each of the three larger categories (e.g., Technical Quality) there were some criteria that were rated quite highly, such as Professional Communication, while others were rated lower, such as Describes Biases. A detailed description of each of these criteria is provided in the Quality Rubric beginning on page 63.

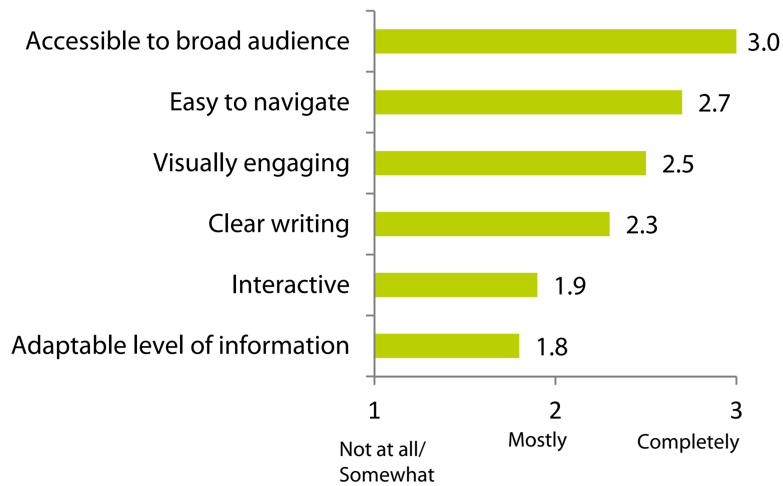
Exhibit 8. Technical Quality Average (n=29)



[50] Average Quality for each product was determined by averaging the three category scores, giving technical quality twice as much weight as the other two. Average Quality = [(2 x Technical Quality) + (1 x Accessibility) + (1 x Applicability to Practice)] / 4

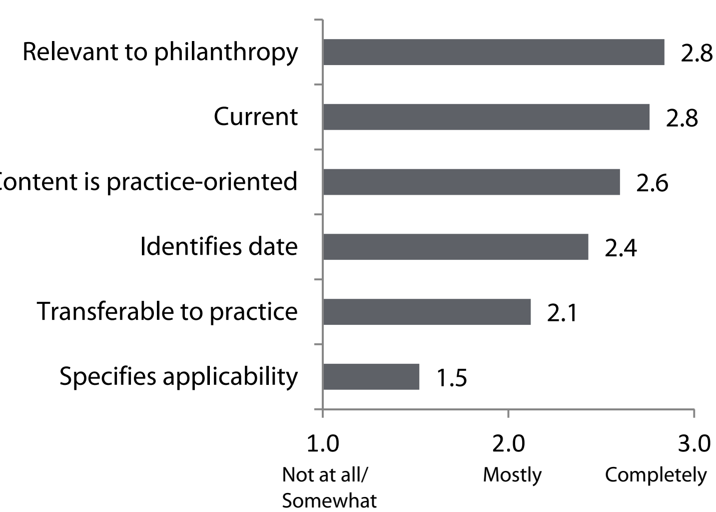
Technical Quality *includes criteria regarding the professional presentation of material and how well the products' claims followed from specific evidence or ideas. Criteria also assessed whether the products provided information for the user to evaluate the ideas and thinking behind the final product, by discussing how the knowledge was developed, how it related to and contributed beyond previous work, and who produced the materials and their potential biases. Three criteria, "Describes process of knowledge creation, articulates contribution of product, and justified claims" are only reported for reports (n=16), and not websites (n=13).*

Exhibit 9. Accessibility Quality Average (N=29)



Accessibility *includes how easily users could access the materials, including how affordable material was to access, whether the product was easy to navigate through and provided an opportunity to review material at multiple levels of detail. Criteria also assessed how well the products were designed to engage the user through use of clear writing, engaging visuals, and opportunities to interact with either the authors or other users of the products.*

Exhibit 10. Applicability to Practice Quality Average (n=29)

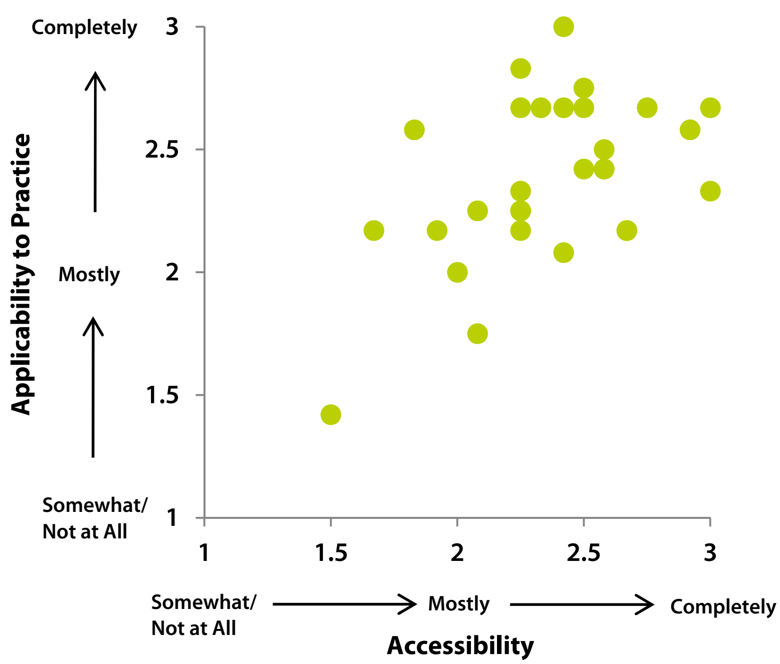


Applicability to Philanthropy Practice *includes whether the content was relevant to philanthropy and practice, and provided current information. It also assessed how well the product was designed to be translated into practice through providing specific tools or practice examples, and whether it guided appropriate use of material by specifying the intended users of the product, limitations, and the date of product development.*

Relationship Between Quality Categories

Analyses assessed the relationship between the three quality categories to see whether products high in one aspect of quality were also high on other aspects. This was explored through examination of scatterplots and calculation of Pearson's r.[51] As displayed in the graphs below, there appears to be at least a small positive relationship between each of the three categories, suggesting that products that were strong in one aspect of quality, also tended to be stronger in others. Since ratings focused on products already considered to be of high quality, it is unknown what these relationships would be for other grantee knowledge products that were not included in this review.

Exhibit 11. Relationship Between Accessibility and Applicability to Practice (r=.50)



[51] Pearson's r is a metric that indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. Pearson's r can range from -1 (completely negatively related) to 0 (not at all related) to +1 (completely positively related).

Exhibit 12. Relationship Between Accessibility and Technical Quality (r=.37)

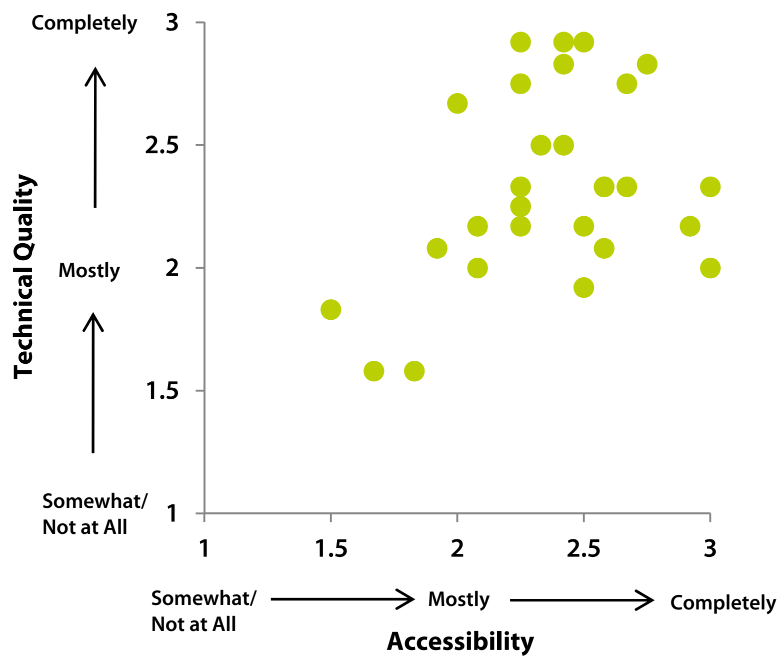
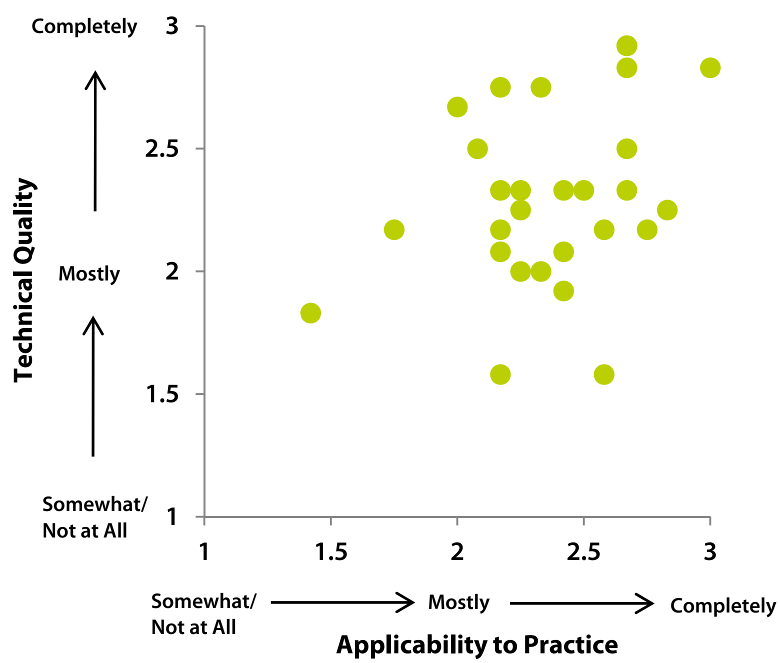


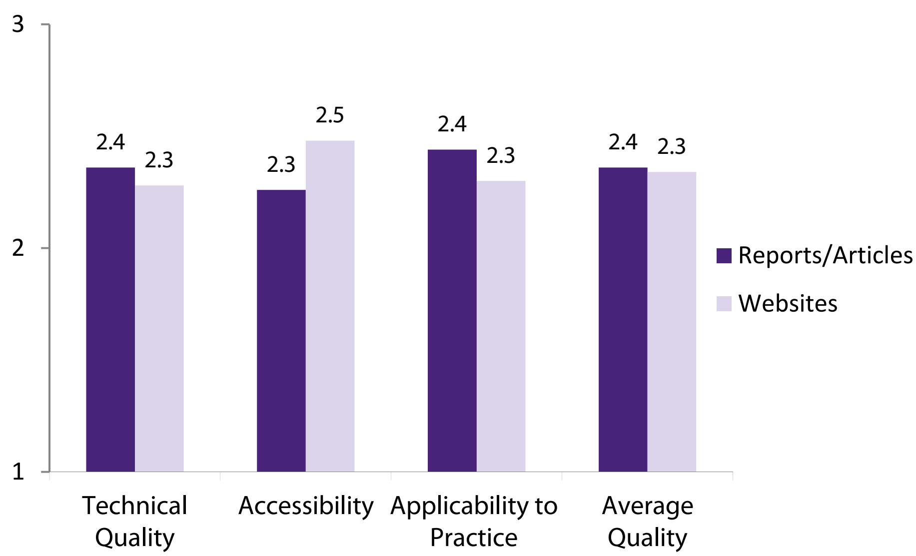
Exhibit 13. Relationship Between Applicability and Technical Quality (r=.37)



Differences in Quality by Type of Product

The review also allowed comparison of the quality of reports and websites. As shown in Exhibit 14, overall, these two types of products were rated similarly, with the exception of slightly greater accessibility for websites than for reports.

Exhibit 14. Quality for Reports vs. Websites*



*Note. The Average Quality score more heavily weights technical quality. For websites, 3 criteria of technical quality were not included in analysis (justified claims, articulates contribution of work, and describes process of knowledge creation), since these were not applicable for many of the website products.

Hewlett Foundation Knowledge Evaluation: Quality Rubric

Type of product assessed

____Written reports
____Books
____Websites with resources, tools or collections of publications
____Blogs
____Workshops or conferences. For these products, a description of the event will be available for review.
____Webinars
____Other________________

Method of rating

- The rating tool includes a list of criteria for rating the product's knowledge quality, accompanied by a description of each quality criteria.
- Each criteria is rated on a three point scale:
  3-Completely, 2-Mostly, 1-Somewhat/Not at All, NA-Not Applicable
- To achieve a "3" all applicable sub-criteria (each "bullet") should be completely met. To achieve a "2", all but one applicable sub-criteria should be met. Otherwise, the criteria should be rated as a "1".
- If only one bullet is applicable, if the bullet is met it should be rated as a 3; otherwise it should be rated as a 1
- If it is not clear whether something has met the bullet, do not select the bullet.
- In the case of workshops or conferences where certain information about the product is not available, the rating NR should be used, which is equivalent to a NA rating.
- The rater can provide brief notes to justify their ratings.

Scoring

Category	Average Category Score (1-3)	Category Weight
Technical Quality (TQ)		50%
Accessibility (AC)		25%
Applicability to Philanthropic Practice (AP)		25%
Average Quality (1-3)		

Use the following formula to calculate the total score: [(2 xTQ) + (1 xAC) + (1xAP)] / 4 = Average Quality

Technical Quality			
Criteria	**Description**	**Score**	**Justification for Rating**
1. Professional style of communication	▪ Professionally and consistently formatted ▪ Uses a professional tone and communication is not informal or overly conversational given the type of product[c] (*not applicable to workshops/conferences*) ▪ No obvious typos or technical issues, such as the website not loading *Note: For workshops/conferences the agenda or workshop description can be rated*		
2. Identifies authors, speakers or event organizers	▪ Information is available as part of the product ▪ This information should be easily found within the product, rather than hidden or require a separate web-search for this information		
3. Describes potential author biases	▪ Identifies sponsors for work (*stating the author's affiliation is not sufficient, unless it can be assumed that the institution sponsored the work*) ▪ Identifies whether there are personal biases in work ▪ Information about potential biases/sponsors is easy to find in the product		
4. Justified claims[a,b]	▪ Claims are justified through some reference to other reports, experts, empirical evidence, data, previous work or experience, accepted principles or knowledge, or practice examples ▪ Main claims or conclusions of the product (if applicable) appear to clearly follow from other parts of the product or to be warranted given the evidence or arguments provided in the remainder of the product		
5. Articulates contribution of work[a]	▪ Discusses how the product relates to previous work ▪ Discusses the importance of work or how it contributes beyond previous work ▪ Claims or arguments are supported in part through work or ideas from outside of the author's own work or organization		
6. Describes process for knowledge creation[a]	▪ Describes the approach for gathering resources or developing the knowledge product ▪ Describes process for gathering information for a web tool or online repository of products (*website only*) ▪ For an empirical study: describes methods of sampling, data collection and analysis		
	Average Score		

Score: 3-Completely, 2-Mostly, 1-Somewhat/Not at All, NA-Not Applicable

To achieve a 3, ***all applicable*** *criteria (bullets) should be completely met. To achieve a 2,* ***all but one applicable*** *criteria should be completely met.*

a. This criteria should be rated as NA for in-person workshops or conferences.

b. This criteria should be rated as NA for websites if the website is primarily a dissemination tool and does not present claims or arguments.

c. For example, a blog might be expected to use more conversational language than would a report.

Accessibility			
Indicator	**Description**	**Score**	**Justification for Rating**
1. Easy to navigate	▪ Provides a table of contents (*pdf-style report*), agenda or schedule (*workshop/conferences*) or menu headings (*website*) ▪ Has sections that are bulleted, numbered or with clear subheadings (*applies even if the publication or website used to disseminate the product already has a standard format*) ▪ Includes page numbers (*written reports available as a separate pdf only*) ▪ Lists location and direction for workshops (although this might only be available to those who register) or describes how to register and sign up (*workshops/conferences only*)		
2. Clear writing or speaking style[a]	▪ Includes tables, pull-out boxes or figures ▪ Uses clear communication ▪ Provides summaries or clear, easy to find main points ▪ Infrequent use of jargon ▪ Uses active voice *Note- this is NA for workshops/conferences since the communication style cannot be rated*		
3. Accessible to a broad range of target users	▪ Affordable to access ▪ Available without being restricted to certain target users ▪ Attendance is not restricted to certain groups within the target users (*workshops/conferences only*)		
4. Interactive	▪ Opportunities for questions, comments, discussion, interpersonal interaction or networking, beyond simply listing author or organization contact information ▪ Opportunity for two-way communication (e.g., person can comment on a blog and gets a response)		
5. Visually engaging[a]	▪ Includes engaging graphics or visuals ▪ Visually appealing		
6. Adaptable level of information	▪ Users can tailor the level of information to their interests ▪ Provides summaries/abstract/brief report along with ways to access additional information through a full-length article, links to other resources, or lists of resources *(written reports or blogs only)* ▪ Offers multiple sessions or options within a day or event *(workshops/conferences only)*		
	Average Score		

Score: 3-Completely, 2-Mostly, 1-Somewhat/Not at All, NA-Not Applicable

*To achieve a 3, **all applicable** criteria (bullets) should be completely met. To achieve a 2, **all but one applicable** criteria should be completely met.*

a. This criteria should be rated as NA for in-person workshops or conferences

Applicability to Philanthropic Practice			
Criteria	**Description**	**Score**	**Justification for Rating**
1. Main topic of the product is directly relevant to philanthropy[d]	▪ Information directly informs grantmaking/philanthropic activities **OR** ▪ Information directly informs foundation strategy **AND** ▪ Does not just describe information about nonprofit practice that is not very explicitly relevant to philanthropic activities		
2. Content is practice-oriented rather than primarily theoretical or academic[d]	▪ Frames problem as a practical rather than a theoretical one ▪ Practice-orientation of the product is clear throughout, rather than at very select parts of the product ▪ Research (if applicable) is conducted in real-world settings with the type of people and context to which it is designed to generalize		
3. Current[d]	▪ Describes practices or research occurring within the last 3 years of the product's publication date *(bullet is not ratable if the date is not clear)* ▪ Appears to provide up-to-date information *(it is okay for this to be somewhat inferred)*		
4. Identifies date of knowledge production[a,d]	▪ Includes date of last document or website update (*online information only*) or date of publication ▪ Date information is easy to find in the product ▪ Describes extent to which information is up to date (*it is okay if this is not very explicit*) ▪ If the focus of the product is sharing research findings, describes the time period of the data collection		
5. Easily transferable to practice[d]	▪ Provides specific steps for application of material or relevant practice examples ▪ Content is designed to be easily translated into practice *(not ratable for workshops/conferences)* ▪ Provides clear recommendations for practice *(written reports only)* ▪ Discusses or provides opportunity to discuss how to apply workshop/webinar material to practice *(workshop/webinar/conference only)*		
6. Specifies applicability of content	▪ Describes target audience for the workshop or context where information especially applies – Saying that the workshop or product is applicable to "everyone" or something similar is not sufficiently specific. However, saying that the product is applicable to any nonprofit staff would be sufficiently specific. ▪ Describes limitations of application or cautions for use of application of information		
	Average Score		

Score: 3-Completely, 2-Mostly, 1-Somewhat/Not at All, NA-Not Applicable

*To achieve a 3, **all applicable** criteria (bullets) should be completely met. To achieve a 2, **all but one applicable** criteria should be completely met.*

a. This criteria should be rated as NA for in-person workshops or conferences

d. Should be NR for workshop if sufficient description of content is not provided

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community research

Harder+Company Community Research is a comprehensive social research and planning firm with offices in San Francisco, Davis, San Diego, and Los Angeles, California. Harder+Company's mission is to help our clients achieve social impact through quality research, strategy, and organizational development services. Since 1986, we have assisted foundations, government agencies, and nonprofits throughout California and the country in using good information to make good decisions for their future. Our success rests on providing services that contribute to positive social impact in the lives of vulnerable people and communities.

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