Peer to Peer: At the Heart of Influencing More Effective Philanthropy

A Field Scan of How Foundations Access and Use Knowledge

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Executive Summary

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has had a long-standing commitment to increasing the effectiveness of grantmaking organizations, a commitment reflected in its Philanthropy Grantmaking Program. In 2015, the Foundation commissioned Harder+Company Community Research, in partnership with Edge Research, to conduct a field scan to inform its own strategies in this area as well as those of other organizations working to increase philanthropic effectiveness.

The Foundation was interested in learning more about **how foundations find knowledge and how it informs their philanthropic practice**. The scan focused on *practice knowledge*, which the research team defined as anything about the effective practice of philanthropy irrespective of the programmatic issues that are the goals of most grantmaking. The research team used a variety of methods to ensure that a wide range of perspectives are reflected in the field scan findings, including interviews with staff and board members from 75 foundations, an online survey of foundation professionals that had 738 respondents, four in-depth case studies, and a literature review. The field scan was exploratory and offers findings from foundation staff and board member perspectives.

Funders prefer communications with peers and colleagues over specific knowledge producers for much of their knowledge acquisition.

Funders have a myriad of practice knowledge choices. But increased choice means a greater chance that funders may grow overwhelmed and makes it harder for knowledge producers to earn funder loyalty. Indeed, interviewees frequently noted that they feel overwhelmed by the volume of practice knowledge available, and the survey results suggest average loyalty to individual knowledge producers is low. Moreover, while respondents had heard of most major knowledge producers, they tended to be less familiar with their content. Overall, respondents named many sources for practice knowledge that they trusted. No single organization, association, or publication was cited as a trusted source by more than about a quarter of funders overall.

Instead, funders preferred sources and methods for gathering practice knowledge that are informal and often serendipitous. Survey respondents and interviewees noted that they rely on their peers and colleagues, as opposed to particular organizations or publications, both as their most trusted knowledge sources and as their preferred means to gather knowledge. From peers and colleagues, funders receive advice, inspiration, and problem-solving strategies based on the individual's philanthropic experience. Peers provide mainly experiential knowledge rather than specific insights from or references to particular knowledge products.

This finding is consistent with the experience of Hewlett philanthropy knowledge grantees, who noted in a 2013 study the importance of recruiting opinion leaders and delivering knowledge through peers.[1] The finding is also consistent with extensive research that has been conducted in a variety of disciplines on how ideas and practices spread through organizations and societies. Researchers continue to find that it is not the knowledge product by itself that leads most people to adopt

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[1] Harder+Company, *Improving the Practice of Philanthropy: An Evaluation of the Hewlett Foundation's Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy*, 2013.

an idea or practice that is new to them. Rather, **it is the peer-to-peer communication about and validation of ideas or practices that leads to the consideration and use of the knowledge.**

Much of the knowledge gathering that interviewees described was informal and ad hoc. For example, funders often phone or email peers at other foundations to see what lessons and advice can be drawn from their experiences. Interviewees said they also often rely on more formal funder networks at the local, regional, and national levels. In particular, funders cited regional associations of grantmakers as being helpful in connecting them with one another.

The findings also highlight the importance of professional conferences. Over three-quarters of survey respondents (83 percent) identified conferences as a primary way they prefer to access practice knowledge. While funders value opportunities to participate in structured sessions by field leaders, oftentimes they noted in-person peer networking opportunities as being the most beneficial aspect of conferences.

According to the interviewees, sharing knowledge is an important part of internal foundation culture. Most reported that staff circulate practice knowledge frequently and across departments and roles. Despite complaints by some that their inboxes have become unmanageable, the majority of interviewees reported that email is the most common way knowledge is shared internally. Impromptu conversations are the second most common way knowledge is shared, many funders said.

Funders prefer easy to use products and sources they already know. Most believe current practice knowledge is relevant and timely but question how vetted and duplicative it is.

Given the amount of practice knowledge available, funders use a variety of approaches to assess whether specific knowledge will be useful to their practice. Source, format, and relevancy determine which knowledge catches the funder's attention. **Funders rely on their sense of trust in a person or organization to evaluate the credibility of the knowledge and if they should use it.** Funders are also more likely to use knowledge that is highly "digestible"; that is, knowledge that comes from interactive gatherings and written products that include summaries, simplified complex ideas, and involve practical tools, such as checklists and sample discussion questions. Whether the knowledge seems to relate to a process the foundation already has underway or is under consideration is another key consideration.

The research team asked survey respondents to assess the current state of practice knowledge on five key dimensions: whether or not it is relevant, timely, leads thinking in the sector, duplicative, and sufficiently vetted. More than two-thirds (68 percent) agreed it was relevant and 61 percent indicated it was timely. A somewhat lower proportion agreed that the knowledge is leading the sector's thinking (51 percent) and is vetted/it works (46 percent). Moreover, four in ten respondents (43 percent) indicated the knowledge is duplicative. This mixed assessment may be due in part to the fragmentation in the field and also, based on interviews, that funders tend to be more active consumers of program-specific knowledge than other types of knowledge. Mixed responses may also be related to the large number and varying types of knowledge producers, many of whom use communications methods that are purposely duplicative to catch funders' attention and address timing and readiness issues to encourage knowledge use.

Respondents identified their highest priority knowledge need as being about evaluation and assessment. Funders of all types and sizes are increasingly seeking grantee feedback about how they can improve, and many are acting on this information.[2] More elusive to funders, however, is determining the extent to which they are making a difference. Funders also frequently noted that they would like to know what works—and what does not work—in different contexts, and highlighted a lack of published best practices and documentation of failure. Funders particularly want more or better resources regarding best practices in collaboration, communication, governance, and strategy.

Foundations are active knowledge consumers, using it to question current practices.

Nearly all interviewees were emphatic that the organizational culture of their foundation values and encourages learning. Four out of five survey respondents reported that they use practice knowledge to question or challenge their own practices. Roughly three-quarters use it to compare their foundation to the field and to affirm current practice.

Specifically, **three-quarters of survey respondents said they have adopted or are considering adopting an idea or best practice during the last two years.** Most were willing and able to name the sources of practice knowledge that contributed to the change. Responses reveal that nearly half of respondents attributed the change in some part to practice knowledge from a funder network or from peers and colleagues (28 percent and 19 percent, respectively). Other sources cited included consulting firms and think tanks (18 percent), journals and trade publications (11 percent), and grantees (10 percent). Funders reported changes in a wide range of practice areas, including in philanthropic models and approaches, standards and ethics, diversity and inclusion, financial stewardship, governance, grantmaking, and learning and evaluation, among other areas.

In interviews, **funders noted that knowledge use and openness to practice change is usually triggered by changes in their external and internal environments.** Knowledge products alone were not typically sufficient to influence practice change. Externally, economic conditions and shifting community needs frequently trigger change. Internally, new leadership or purposeful planning often spark change. Each represents a time when foundations are more receptive to new concepts and therefore to knowledge. Interviewees also identified barriers to using knowledge and practice change, including bureaucracy, board and staff dynamics, and insufficient time and resources.

Conclusions

Drawing on data from multiple sources, the field scan identified which knowledge sources and formats are most likely to be accessed by funders, how that knowledge is assessed by its users, and the ways in which knowledge is used to shape the practice of philanthropy. The field scan has documented that knowledge producers have generated a stream of relevant and timely products that reach a wide range of foundation users. However, in a crowded and sometimes confusing marketplace of ideas, the most trusted sources of practice knowledge for most foundation professionals are typically not the organizations that compete for their attention but their own professional networks (of peers and colleagues). The knowledge that funders engage with and use most easily is accessible, brief, well-designed, graphically interesting, and emotionally engaging. The user's perception of the trustworthiness and relevancy of the source and organizational context are also critical factors in determining how the products are actually used.

While the knowledge products themselves—blogs, webinars, conference

[2] Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, *Is Grantmaking Getting Smarter?*, 2014.

presentations, publications, videos, and trainings—are important in the practice change process, they are generally not sufficient to produce practice change by themselves. For a product to produce change, it must be part of an organizational process that includes organizational readiness and staff and leadership support, among other factors. A creative, well-documented, and relevant product can start the process but the concepts presented can take their own non-linear path as the new-to-that-foundation innovation is diffused.

The field scan has shown the value of practice knowledge to philanthropy. According to field scan respondents, practice knowledge does contribute to greater effectiveness in the sector. To help knowledge producers use the results of this field scan to better connect with their audiences, the research team encourages them to consider the following questions:

- What are your target audiences' preferred sources and formats for knowledge products?
- How do your consumers rate your trustworthiness and credibility?
- What are the different pathways for funders to engage and use knowledge over time? How do your dissemination strategies take into account these pathways and differences in how foundations consume and make use of practice knowledge?
- How can you make better use of professional conferences and funder networks to share and promote your work?
- How does your foundation audience communicate to their peer funders about the products you disseminate?
- What are the goals of an individual knowledge product (i.e., introduce new conceptual frameworks, promote more effective practice)? How does it fit into the existing state of knowledge in the field? How do your communication and support strategies take the desired goals into account?

Introduction

Over the last decade, the number of grantmaking organizations in the United States has increased and the total volume of foundation giving has grown dramatically.[3] As the sector grows, foundation staff and board members are seeking evidence-based, practice-oriented information to help them do their work effectively. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has a long-standing commitment to increasing the effectiveness of grantmaking organizations. The Foundation is interested in improving the capacity of foundations to accomplish their missions, whatever their programmatic interests may be. Through its Effective Philanthropy Group, the Foundation seeks to strengthen the capacity of Hewlett Foundation grantees and philanthropy, in general, to achieve their goals and benefit the common good.

One of the key ways the Foundation encourages this type of organizational practice is by supporting the development and sharing of knowledge products. Since 2000, the Effective Philanthropy Group's Philanthropy Grantmaking Program has granted $35,220,893 to more than 40 organizations through its Knowledge for Better Philanthropy strategy. The recipients include university-based researchers, philanthropy infrastructure groups, consulting firms, and publishers of print and electronic material related to philanthropic effectiveness. In 2013, the Foundation asked Harder+Company Community Research to evaluate the cumulative impact of its work in this area. The evaluation found that the Foundation's knowledge strategy has had a significant positive impact directly through grants to infrastructure organizations and publications and indirectly through research and dissemination of research findings. However, the evaluation did not have sufficient data to document how funders use knowledge and study its impact on practice.

As a result, the Effective Philanthropy Group identified the need to examine how foundations find practice knowledge and how it informs their philanthropic practice. In 2015, the Effective Philanthropy Group commissioned Harder+Company Community Research in partnership with Edge Research to conduct a field scan in order to address these questions.[4] The Effective Philanthropy Group intends to use the results of the scan to (a) inform its own strategies in this area and (b) benefit knowledge strategy grantees and other organizations working to increase philanthropic effectiveness.

Defining Practice Knowledge

For the field scan, the research team defined *practice knowledge* broadly as anything about the effective practice of philanthropy. Practice knowledge includes the mechanics of grantmaking as well as the conceptual frameworks that guide foundation strategy and learning. It excludes information about the content areas

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[3] The Foundation Center, "Key Facts on U.S. Foundations," http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/keyfacts2014

[4] The field scan's specific research questions were: What knowledge sources and specific content do foundation staff and boards consume? How do foundation staff and boards consume knowledge and when? How do staffed foundations make decisions about and change their philanthropic practice? What characteristics and/or segments of staffed foundations are related to the knowledge they consume, how they consume it, how they use , or make practice change? What questions, topics, opportunities and/or challenges are top of mind for foundation staff and boards? What are some illustrative examples of the journey or lifecycle of knowledge products? How does information and knowledge flow within some example foundations?

or programmatic issues that are the goals of most grantmaking. While the study acknowledges the critical importance of content knowledge—be it in the arts, education, or conservation—it is distinguished from knowledge about practices that make foundations better at their work regardless of content. Practice knowledge can be found in blogs, research reports, publications or social media, and in conversations, conferences, consulting, and training. Please consider this definition when reading this report.

Methods

Harder+Company and Edge Research worked closely with the Effective Philanthropy Group's Fay Twersky and Lindsay Louie as well as an advisory group of six Hewlett Foundation knowledge strategy grantees to design and implement the field scan.[5] The research team used a variety of exploratory methods to ensure that a wide range of foundation staff and board member perspectives are reflected in the field scan findings. For each method, the focus was on staffed, United States-based foundations.

- **Interviews.** The research team conducted phone interviews with one staff or board member from 75 foundations to learn the nuances of how foundations consume and apply knowledge and to learn how knowledge changes philanthropic practice. As part of the interview pool, the research team targeted a range of foundations by type and by geography.[6] The team also targeted proportionally more larger-staffed foundations than is representative of the field and focused on more executive-level staff than program staff or board members. These specific targets were designed based on the goals of the field scan and on the discussion with the Hewlett team and advisors.

- **Online Survey.** Informed by initial findings from the interviews, the research team conducted an online survey of foundation board and staff members. The survey was designed to complement interviews by adding more breadth to the depth of the interview data. A total of 738 individuals responded to the survey, representing 528 different foundations.

- **Case Studies.** The research team created four case studies to provide in-depth examination of how practice knowledge is generated, how it enters foundations, and how it and other factors inform changes in practice. The research team conducted additional interviews and document reviews for the case studies. Two case studies focused on the process of practice change at a specific foundation. Two case studies highlighted how a knowledge product moves from creation to dissemination and use. Please see Appendix B for the full versions of the case studies.

- **Literature Review.** The field scan included a review of the literature on how knowledge is disseminated and used from the fields of philanthropy, education, business, information systems, and healthcare. The review also included organizational behavior literature and existing studies of the philanthropic field conducted by organizations such as Bridgespan, Center for Effective Philanthropy, and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations.

Please see Appendix C for more information about each method, respondent

[5] Please see Appendix A for a list of members. The members provided input on the overall field scan design and methods as well as reflections on the interim findings and draft final report. There were four advisory group meetings during the field scan time period.
[6] The interview pool included independent, family, and community foundations. It excluded corporate and operating foundations.

characteristics, and related protocols.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results.

- **Sampling.** The Foundation and most of its grantees focus on serving larger-staffed foundations. Therefore, the research team purposely targeted inclusion of larger-staffed foundations and foundations already connected to the Effective Philanthropy Group knowledge grantees. The interview sample purposely included a smaller proportion of foundations with one to three staff members than is representative of the overall field. In addition, the survey was sent exclusively to the audiences of participating Effective Philanthropy Group knowledge grantees, a convenience sample that may have left out perspectives of other kinds of foundations and individuals affiliated with foundations.

- **Response Bias.** Interview, survey, and case study respondents may have been motivated, consciously or subconsciously, to respond in a way that they thought the research team, the Hewlett Foundation, and/or other stakeholders would find desirable. In addition, the individuals who chose to participate in the interviews and survey (versus people that did not participate) may be biased toward consuming and using knowledge products and knowledge in general. Similarly, by being on the grantees' email lists, survey participants may be predisposed toward using knowledge and certain knowledge producers. The study attempted to address response bias by collecting data through multiple methods (interviews and survey) and from multiple people.

- **Preexisting Relationships.** Prior to this engagement, the research team had relationships with the Hewlett Foundation, with many of the grantees, and with some of the study respondents. The research team took particular care to consider and address how those relationships and previous work might introduce bias.

Practice Knowledge Phases

The process of how practice knowledge gets created, gathered, and put into use at foundations is ongoing, dynamic, and complex. While the process is by no means this simple or linear, it is helpful to think of it as a sequence of phases from knowledge creation to impact on practice, with key considerations at each step. Reviewing the field scan findings, the research team identified the main phases that describe the process of knowledge acquisition and use. The phases act as the basis for the presentation of this report.

The process starts with knowledge creation and dissemination, in which knowledge producers are faced with a variety of considerations, including level of rigor, expectations around user needs, and dissemination mode. The next series of phases emerge from the foundation staff and board member's perspective and often involve several key steps, regardless of whether the process is happening for just one person, a group of people, or an entire foundation. The process typically begins with **knowledge gathering**. This could include receiving and/or seeking out specific sources of knowledge, such as individual organizations, media, or associations. It could also include talking with internal and external peers and colleagues one-on-one or at conferences. The process may start purposely when a foundation staff or board member identifies a specific need, issue, or opportunity and seeks knowledge. Or it may happen more organically and less purposefully.

The second phase involves **knowledge vetting** in order to determine the relevance and utility of that knowledge. Vetting could be an informal or formal process of considering what knowledge to use or not. The gathering and vetting phases are continuous and often happen fast and subconsciously at the individual level and more slowly and purposely at the organizational level. Assuming that the vetting process confirms potential benefit, the third phase is **knowledge use**, in which people are faced with both barriers and facilitating factors that impact ultimate use of that knowledge. After knowledge use comes organizational impact and practice change.

This report is focused on the gathering, vetting, and use phases from the foundation staff and board member's perspective, as outlined in Exhibit 1. Each chapter (Knowledge Gathering, Knowledge Vetting, and Knowledge Use), presents key findings from the interviews, survey, and literature review, and offers examples from the four case studies. (See a brief overview of each case study below in Exhibit 1.)

Exhibit 1. Practice Knowledge Use Phases

Gather	How do funders find and consume knowledge?	• **ACTIVE OR PASSIVE**: Are funders seeking out knowledge or passively receiving it? • **SOURCE**: Where do funders turn for knowledge? • **METHOD**: How do funders gather knowledge? How do they consume it?
Vet	What criteria do funders use to consider and vet knowledge?	• **SOURCE**: How much do funders trust the knowledge source? • **FORMAT**: How digestible and useable is the knowledge? • **RELEVANCE**: How relevant is the knowledge topic and content to their work? Is it the right time to use the knowledge?
Use	How and when do funders use knowledge to inform their philanthropic practices?	• **HOW & WHEN**: How do funders use the knowledge? When do they use it? • **BARRIERS**: What are barriers to using the knowledge and practice change? • **FACILITATORS**: What are facilitators or triggers to the use of knowledge and the change in philanthropic practice?

Case Study Summary

As previously noted, the research team developed four case studies to provide an in-depth examination of how practice knowledge is generated, how it enters foundations, and how it informs changes in practice. Below is a brief overview of each case study. The first two cases focus on change processes within foundations from the grantmaker's perspective. The second pair of cases are from the knowledge producer's perspective and follow the journey of two knowledge products from creation and distribution to use. Please see Appendix B for the full case studies and Appendix C for information about the case study research methods and participants.

Practice Change at a Foundation

In 2008, the **McKnight Foundation** began using a process called Adaptive Action to help plan and implement a project within its international program area. Adaptive Action is three simple questions—What? So what? Now what?—that help people make decisions and take action within unpredictable and complex systems. After seeing its benefits on a complicated international program, Foundation leadership decided to use the process to help create its first ever strategic framework. The Foundation went on to use the process for other discussion processes and to inform core staff competencies. Overall, Adaptive Action helped transform how the entire foundation communicates and makes decisions. It also supported increased board engagement and more innovative and adaptable decisions. Key factors that made this practice change possible were that Adaptive Action was simple to use and well suited to manage complexity. The process was also well aligned with the Foundation's culture and values and was supported by staff champions and expertise from consultants.

For the last five years, the **Heinz Endowments** has been actively involving grantees and the community in one of its arts program initiatives. With increased community needs and a change in leadership, the Heinz Endowments expanded grantee engagement and inclusion to the entire organization. This practice change was supported by a strategic planning process with active community engagement, focused staff training on design thinking, and external consultants and assessments. The Endowments is also part of a Grantmakers for Effective Organizations program that supports grantee inclusion at foundations and builds adaptive leadership. While still early in this change process, the Endowments has already improved both internal and external dialogue so that people feel safer sharing feedback and ideas. Key aspects that made this change possible were staff leadership, values alignment, and commitment among both staff and board.

Knowledge Product Journey

The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) helps foundations gather feedback from key constituents through its *Grantee Perception Report* (GPR). It also produces research reports from GPR data to help foundations be more effective. To encourage greater use of its research findings from GPR data, in 2013 CEP consolidated key lessons from six of its core publications into a single action-oriented guidebook, ***Working Well With Grantees***, targeted to foundation leaders and program staff. The publication followed the grantee relationship cycle from forming to preserving relationships, offered specific steps to consider, and shared illustrative success stories from high capacity program staff across the country. CEP shared the publication via email and mail with foundation staff as well as through presentations at conferences and regional associations of grantmakers. The Rogers Family Foundation and the Kresge Foundation highlighted how the report's content and design encouraged them to make changes to practice.

From 1995 to 2011, the James Irvine Foundation led an initiative to foster and sustain a stronger network of community foundations across California. During the last phase of the initiative, the Foundation partnered with FSG and Williams Group for their evaluation and communications expertise respectively. Building on some of its previous work and informed by data from the initiative's grantees and national interviews, FSG created ***Growing Smarter: Achieving Sustainability in Emerging Community Foundations***. In close partnership with FSG and the Foundation, Williams Group created a public version of the report that was concise, visually appealing, and included illustrative examples. In 2007, the partners disseminated the report to community foundations, media, other interested funders, and at conferences such as the Council on Foundation's Community Foundation conference. In 2011, with the end of the initiative, the partners released the report again at conferences and as part of webinars. The Athens Area Community Foundation in Georgia participated in that 2011 webinar and went on to use *Growing Smarter* to help inform how it grew more sustainably.

Knowledge Gathering

Funders are constantly receiving knowledge, some of which is irrelevant and some of which is selectively ignored or passively absorbed. Funders also actively seek knowledge to inform their practice when they have specific queries, needs, or challenges.

While funders rely on formal knowledge sources—such as think tanks, journals, or academics—their preferred sources and methods for gathering practice knowledge are informal and sometimes unexpected. Specifically, survey respondents and interviewees noted that they rely on their peers and colleagues both as knowledge sources and as a means to gather knowledge.

This section's findings are consistent with the experience of Hewlett knowledge grantees, who noted in the 2013 knowledge strategy evaluation the importance of recruiting opinion leaders and delivering knowledge through peers.[7] The findings are also consistent with extensive research conducted in a variety of disciplines on how ideas, practices, and behaviors spread through societies. The importance of interpersonal networks is one of the enduring lessons from these studies.[8] Researchers continue to find that it is not the knowledge product that leads the majority of people to adopt an idea or practice that is new to them. It is the peer-to-peer communication about and validation of ideas or practices that leads people to

Where Funders Turn for Practice Knowledge

It is a crowded field for practice knowledge

Funders have a myriad of practice knowledge choices. When asked to list their most trusted practice knowledge sources, survey respondents listed over 900 sources, including organizations, associations, specific foundations and individuals, and publications.[9] Most of those sources were listed by only one or two people. However, there were 40 entities listed by one percent or more of respondents. Those 40 entities included 23 organizations and 17 funder networks (i.e., regional grantmaker associations, content-focused grantmaker associations, and other affinity groups). With so many sources, it is a crowded and competitive knowledge field that tries to capture funders' attention and trust. Interviewees frequently noted they feel overwhelmed by the volume of practice knowledge. As one interviewee shared, "*It's relentless. Daily. Multiple times a day. It's terribly annoying to be quite honest with you. Because everyone's out there trying to sell you a product or service.*"

Funders have heard of most major knowledge producers but tend to be less familiar with the knowledge they offer

Within this crowded knowledge field, funders were more familiar with some knowledge producers and their knowledge content than others. As part of the survey, the research team listed 22 organizations and asked respondents which they had heard of, and, among the ones that they had heard of, if they were familiar with the organization's practice knowledge.[10] The organizations included all of the Hewlett knowledge grantees and some other organizations identified by the Hewlett and research teams. As shown in Exhibit 2, a majority of survey respondents (over 56 percent) had ***heard of*** 16 of the 22 organizations listed. However, most reported they were ***unfamiliar with the knowledge*** produced by 10 of the 22 organizations listed. Most respondents (over 57 percent) said they were familiar with knowledge from 12 of the 22 organizations.

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[7] Harder+Company, *Improving the Practice of Philanthropy: An Evaluation of the Hewlett Foundation's Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy*, 2013

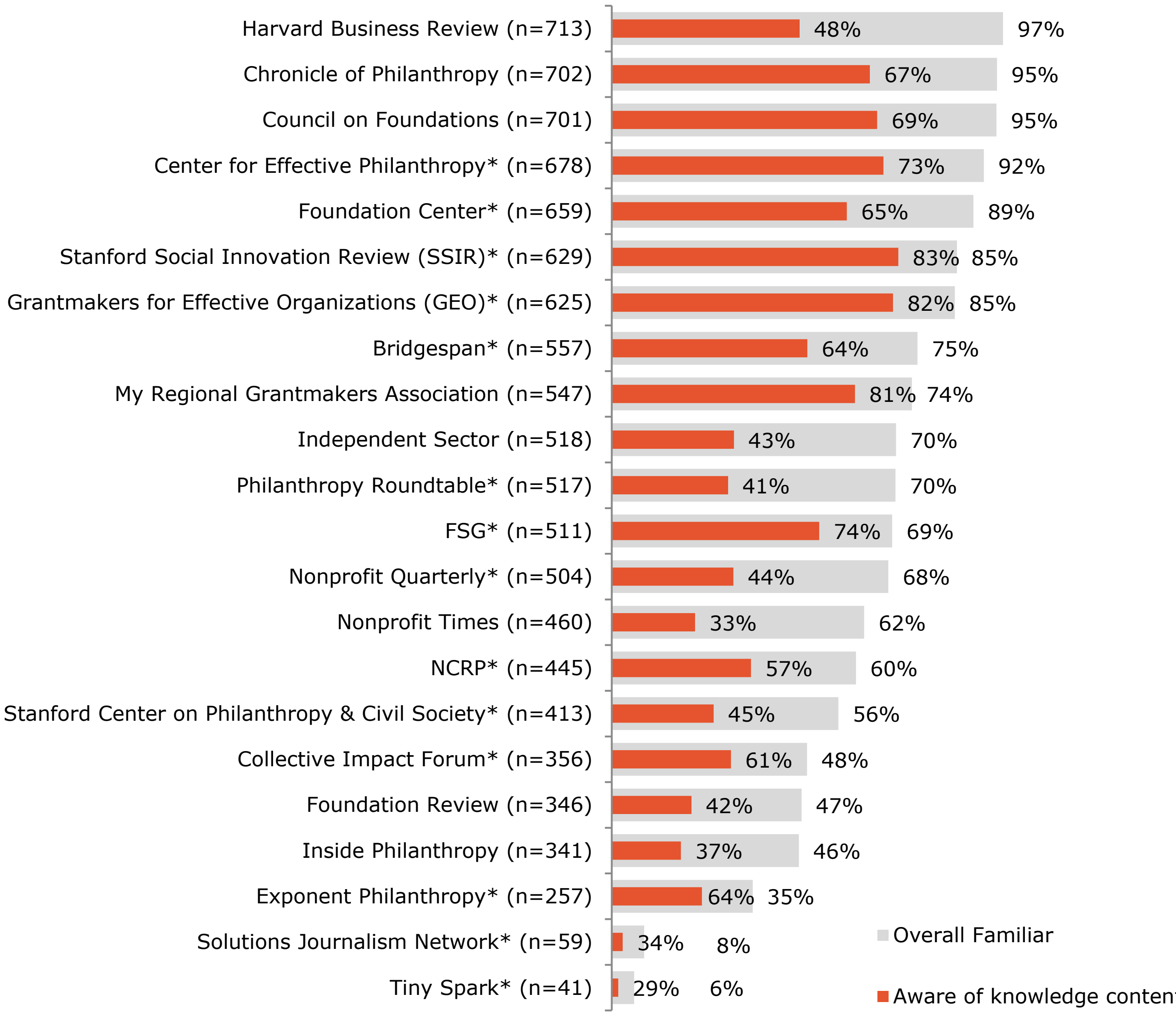
[8] See for example Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 2003, or James H. Fowler and Nicholas A. Christakis, *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*, 2011.

[9] In both data collection methods, respondents were asked to list their most trusted sources for practice knowledge. They were not given any response options. They could list up to 10 specific sources.

[10] Organizations are listed in Exhibit 2.

Only two organizations had over 80 percent of respondents who were familiar with their knowledge.

Exhibit 2. Familiarity with Organizations and Awareness of the Their Knowledge Content (*n*=738)*[11]



* Organizations with an * are current Hewlett knowledge grantees. "My Regional Grantmakers Association" was intended to be the respondent's association.

[11] Percentages do not total 100 percent since people could respond about more than one organization. Organization *n*'s represent the number of participants who were asked if they were aware of knowledge content after they first noted overall familiarity with the organization. Percentages represent the percent out of the total who were familiar.

Funders have multiple trusted sources

Funders tended to have more than one trusted source for practice knowledge. Most survey respondents (62 percent) listed between two to five trusted knowledge sources (see Exhibit 3). Despite the number of sources identified, no single organization, association, or publication was cited as a trusted source by substantially more than about a quarter of funders overall (see Exhibit 4). A crowded knowledge field and lower familiarity may make it harder for knowledge producers to earn loyalty among funder audiences. The survey results also suggest average loyalty to individual knowledge producers is low. Together, this may point to some uncertainty about the usefulness of some knowledge producers and their content. (Please see the Knowledge Vetting chapter for more information about this related finding.)

Exhibit 3. Number of Trusted Sources (n=738)

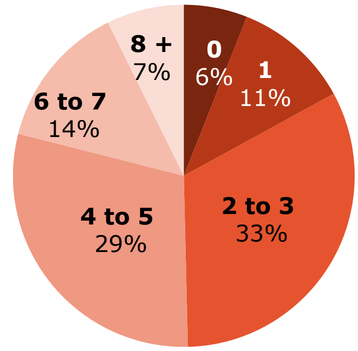
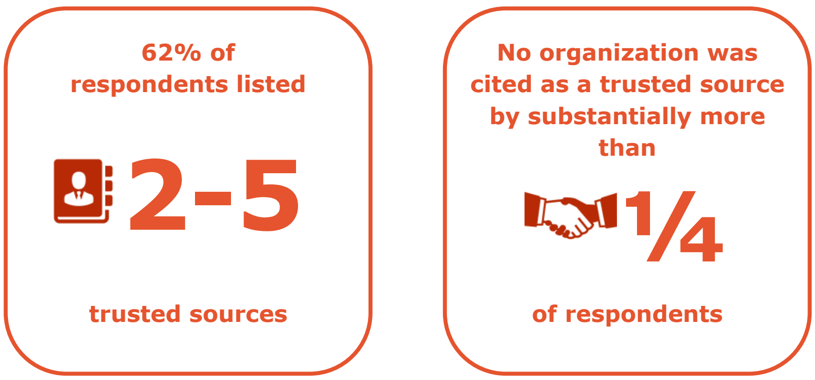


Exhibit 4. Trusted Sources (*n*=738)



Peers and colleagues are the most trusted sources for practice knowledge

Peers and colleagues, as opposed to particular knowledge producers (i.e., organizations or publications), emerged as the most trusted sources for practice knowledge noted in the survey and interviews. Foundation staff noted that they often turn to peers at other foundations and to their internal colleagues for knowledge. In turn, board members said they rely on internal staff for practice knowledge.

Peers are funders’ preferred source in large part because they can be consulted in confidence and typically provide knowledge that is tailored and vetted, and do so on demand. In addition, the crowded knowledge field, the varying familiarity with knowledge content, and the perceived quality may be reasons why funders mainly turn to their peers and colleagues.

Interviewees highlighted several characteristics of the people they consider trusted sources. The individuals have specific expertise, significant experience, and demonstrate credibility. In addition, trusted individuals are perceived as honest, open, and discreet, and they can provide relevant knowledge due to their shared characteristics (i.e., similar roles or shared foundation characteristics such as size, values, or geography).[12]

Peers offer problem solving, promising practices, advice, and encouragement based

[12] As noted earlier, this is in line with existing research. Specifically, some of these peers may be early adopters or influencers as described in Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point*, 2000.

on their philanthropic experience, interviewees explained. Peers typically provide experiential knowledge rather than specific insights from or references to particular knowledge products. Peers and colleagues provide advice and counsel, such as on developing a board and grants management systems. They also help funders identify emerging trends and important issues in specific geographic regions or focus areas.

Specifically, one interviewee said that peer sharing connects "*people from similar foundations doing similar work so I get a sense of what's important to them . . . what's happening in their institutions and related to mine. I get to use them as a sounding board for things that are troubling me.*" One funder explained, "*The majority of my practical knowledge has been really around peer learning and reaching out and connecting with, one-on-one, other foundations that may have a similar size board, have Next Gen members on their boards that they're trying to develop, this idea of really trying to create an effective governance structure.*" Another interviewee shared, "*All those endless evaluations assessments . . . are fine but they always leave out the ten percent of the stuff that you really want to know. The only way you're going to get to know it is to go talk to people and earn their trust and be able to have those relationships.*" One funder added, "*I'm very willing to pick up the phone and call colleagues and peers across the country to just see how they tackle an issue. You could do that through listservs and those kinds of things but I tend to just call somebody that I know and trust and say 'what do you think about this?'. . . I give my staff license to go visit other foundations and . . . learn how they are doing their work just to get a new perspective on how someone else does the same kind of work that we do.*"

"Part of the problem with the reports is the volume of information that comes in. Certainly over the time I've been here [it] has really increased. It can be challenging to pick through what is the most meaningful. The number of people that I interact with has not grown at that rate . . . I still feel like I have the tools to identify which person is the right person to get information from, whereas I don't really feel that I have those tools when it comes to written material."

-Senior Program Officer at a mid-sized family foundation

Peers and colleagues also help funders quickly assess activities and needs in their respective geographic regions or focus areas. As one funder said, "*Networking and learning from people who do grantmaking is one of the ways that we increase our understanding of what's going on around us.*" Specifically, interviewees mentioned a number of areas where they seek out peers and colleagues to better understand innovative approaches in the field. One funder mentioned impact investing specifically, "*A colleague and I were in the Bay Area and we visited with several who do the venture philanthropy to try to learn about that approach, so just visiting other funders.*" According to another funder working on organizational development, "*There was active pursuit as we were building out our organizational development non-profit capacity building work: active pursuit at what Packard had done; active pursuit for what Weingart was doing; actively looked at other community foundations that had [organizational development] programs. There's a target. We know we need this next. Who's doing it? Call, visit, and if there's a conference, maybe a conference.*"

"I'm very willing to pick up the phone and call colleagues and peers across the country to just see how they tackle an issue. You could do that through listservs and those kinds of things but I tend to just call somebody that I know and trust and say 'what do you think about this?'"

-President at a small community foundation

Interviewees also indicated that peers offered a valuable regional perspective, "*We're part of Community Foundations Florida and we have regular meetings that are more . . . focused and then they also are peer-to-peer groups, and in that you hear what other community foundations are doing in the way of best practices or programs. They are quick to provide resources for us to use as templates and samples. It's a matter of seeing and learning what's going on in the world, and in the field, and looking at the community and seeing what might fit.*" Another funder said, "*I called up the [regional] association and said, Who do I need to talk to? Who are the top five funders? Who are the top five non-profits I need to start meeting with to understand what's going on . . . It's that intimate knowledge of players.*"

Funders turn to colleagues and peers to better understand specific approaches and challenges. In a complex and sometimes overwhelming knowledge landscape, peers and colleagues provide practical knowledge with nuanced context and individual discussion. As one interviewee summarized, they find person-to-person interactions so valuable because "*you also get their stories and things that you don't get in reading periodicals.*"

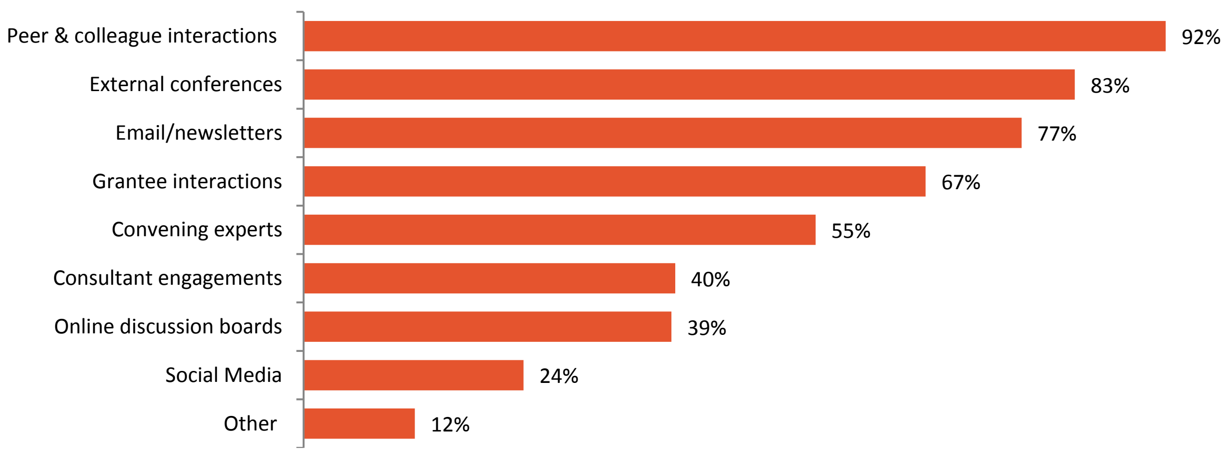
How Funders Gather Practice Knowledge

After peer interactions, conferences and emails/newsletters are the most preferred ways funders gather practice knowledge

In addition to the noted preference for peer interactions, across both the survey respondents and the interviews, conferences and emails/newsletters from professional associations, membership groups, philanthropy affinity groups, or other foundations were highlighted as one of the **primary ways** that funders gather practice knowledge. Exhibit 5 emphasizes how prevalent peers and colleagues are as a method for gathering practice knowledge. In fact, most of the other popular methods involve learning directly from people, whether at a conference or from professional associations, grantees, experts, or consultants.[13]

Interviewees also highlighted peer interactions and conferences as key ways they gather practice knowledge. Oftentimes they noted the in-person peer networking opportunities at the conference as being the most beneficial aspect of conferences. "*The relationships you build at conferences can transform your work,*" a funder said, "*Everything from having that confidant to creating collaboration.*" Another funder shared, "*To me, it's a better investment of time, because I'm a captive audience at a conference. I'll also be able to network both with some people that I know, and with other foundations.*"

Exhibit 5. What are the primary ways that you seek out practice knowledge? (*n*=738)[14]



The survey analysis also shows that the ways that funders seek out practice

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[13] In line with the preference for peer/colleague interactions, survey respondents noted that the most popular format they use for consuming practice knowledge is in-person discussion (89 percent) followed by books, reports, and article—both print and online (70 percent). These were more popular than more modern formats like virtual discussion (38 percent) and new media such as blogs, slideshares, videos, or podcasts (38 percent).

[14] Participants were asked to select all that apply. The categories are defined as follows: Peer & Colleague Interactions consist of interactions via email, phone, in-person, etc. External Conferences are conferences, meetings, or convenings. Emails/Newsletters include communications from professional associations, membership groups, philanthropy affinity groups, and other foundations. Grantee Interactions may be in-person, by phone, or by email. Convening Experts refers to meetings of experts and stakeholders at a foundation. Consultant Engagements include hiring a professional consultant. Online Discussion Boards includes discussion boards, listservs, and learning communities. Social Media includes LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and other networks.

knowledge varies by the size of the foundation, type of foundation, and role in the foundation:[15]

Size[16]	**Large Foundations**	vs.	**Small Foundations**
	more likely to convene experts and use consultants		more likely to rely on email/newsletters and their grantees
Type	**Community Foundations**	vs.	**Family Foundations**
	more likely to look to emails/newsletters and online communities		more likely to learn from their grantees
Role	**Operations Staff**[17]	vs.	**Program Staff**
	more likely to use online discussions for their practice knowledge		more likely to use internal convenings of experts

Funders gather knowledge through both informal and formal networks

The interviewees offered additional nuance about how funders interact with peers to gather knowledge as well as about the important role of informal and formal funders networks. Much of the knowledge gathering that interviewees described was informal and ad hoc; for example, they often **phone** or **email** peers at other foundations to see what lessons can be drawn from their experience. *"I'm very willing to pick up the phone and call colleagues and peers across the country to just see how they tackle an issue,"* one funder said. "*You could do that through listservs and those kinds of things but I tend to just call somebody that I know and trust and say, 'What do you think about this?'—pick up the phone three times and have three conversations and see where we go."*

Some funders have formed **their own informal networks** of other foundation staff that tend to operate below the radar. For example, one new CEO explained that much of her learning has come through her participation in a national foundation presidents group that recently formed out of a specific content area challenge. "*I just realized how lucky I am, I have this national group that just happened to come together,*" the funder said. A few said they have also arranged **staff visits** to other foundations to observe and learn from their practices.

Interviewees said they also often rely on more formal **funder networks** at the local, regional, and national levels.[18] Some of these networks are organized by role, such as networks of presidents, evaluation directors, communications professionals, grants managers, and financial officers. Others are organized by foundation type, size, geography, and topic area, or a combination of characteristics. Many of the formal networks started as small groups and have grown to the point where they have staffing, an organizational framework, and regular programming. Some of the interviewees said they also read and reach out

Social Media

While some knowledge producers have invested time and resources into social media, it ranked relatively low as a preferred knowledge gathering method by most survey and interview respondents:

- Just under one-quarter of field scan survey respondents (24 percent) noted social media as one of the primary ways they seek practice knowledge. Only four percent of survey respondents cited it as among the most helpful to them in finding the knowledge they seek.
- Among those who noted they seek practice knowledge from social media sources, more than half (58 percent) cited Twitter as most helpful, followed by Facebook (35 percent) and LinkedIn (25 percent).
- Social media may become a more important method in the future. Program staff, who tended to be younger, are more likely to use social media than foundation leaders. Over one-quarter of program staff (27 percent) cited social media as a primary way they seek practice knowledge, compared to 17 percent of foundation leaders.

"There are quarterly lunches of presidents of similar sized foundations that our regional association organizes and I find those useful because I'm conversing with folks about what they're thinking, what's going on with them, and what I'm struggling with . . . It's not because somebody's sending me blogs and newsletters."

- CEO of a large independent foundation

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[15] T-tests were conducted to examine the relationship between respondents' responses by their foundation and individual characteristics. Differences in the below visual were statistically significant at:<.05.
[16] Small" versus "large" foundation comparisons are measured by both staff size and annual giving.
[17] This includes staff in grants and contracts, research and evaluation, communications, human resources, information technology, etc.
[18] There are at least 66 active funder networks, affinity groups, and associations with a national or international reach. In addition, the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers has 33 regional association members, which in turn host an additional 188 local affinity groups.

to peers through listservs sponsored by funder networks.

As a specific type of funders network, **regional associations of grantmakers** were frequently cited in interviews and surveys. Notably, the smaller the foundation, the greater the value the funder placed on regional associations for gathering practice knowledge*.* In addition to helping funders connect with one another, the regional associations play an important intermediary role in disseminating practice knowledge from the national level that may not always reach the smaller foundations that are regional in scope, have few staff, or have limited travel budgets. Regional associations can offer a more tailored experience and often provide a space for individuals from smaller and regionally focused foundations to have the in-person interaction with peers that is so essential to the spread of new ideas and practices.

Internal knowledge sharing is an important part of many funders' knowledge gathering process

Nearly all interviewees conveyed that sharing knowledge is an important part of their internal foundation culture and is another way they gather knowledge. Interviewees reported that staff circulate practice knowledge frequently and across departments and roles, often through email or in-person conversations. This is knowledge that has been vetted by a colleague but is being introduced for more full vetting and potential use by others at the foundation.

- **E-mail.** Despite complaints that their inboxes have become unmanageable, the majority of interviewees reported that email is the most common way knowledge is shared internally. A funder explained, "*When people see something of relevance or interest, we often just immediately resend it to everybody on the staff or maybe just to a couple of people, depending on what it is. That happens all the time, every day.*"

- **In-person conversations.** Impromptu conversations are the second most common way knowledge is shared, many funders said. One of them observed, "*We don't have a system . . . There are 15 people here and we're in one building. There's stuff that happens in the hallways here.*" In the words of another funder, "*People constantly bop in and out of their offices and my office to share stuff or ask questions—it's a continual process.*" To encourage more of this type of spontaneous interaction, an interviewee from one large foundation noted that they are moving to an open-plan office design. Sometimes dialogue is also more purposeful. Overall, interviewees noted face-to-face discussion as the most effective knowledge sharing method because of its dynamism and personal element.[19] With in-person interactions, staff are more likely to ask questions and gain insight and inspiration from their colleagues and the knowledge being discussed.

- **Other deliberate sharing mechanisms.** Most interviewees noted that practice knowledge also tends to be shared during regularly scheduled staff meetings at the organizational and departmental levels. Shared drives for storing documents are commonplace. The majority also have a staff development or new staff orientation process during which practice

Case Study Connection:

Using Networks to Share Ideas

The case studies developed for the field scan reflect the importance of networks. The creators of ***Growing Smarter*** (The James Irvine Foundation, FSG, and Williams Group) targeted the Council on Foundation's 2007 Community Foundation conference in the publication's dissemination plan and developed webinars with regional associations. CEP also shared ***Working Well With Grantees*** at conferences and through regional associations. Both successfully provided interactive settings for people to discuss the research findings with their peers.

[19] Many studies on workplace communication have found a positive correlation between informal face-to-face interaction among employees and productivity. Thomas J. Allen's *Managing the Flow of Technology* is perhaps the most influential work on the subject. Recent articles in the *Harvard Business Review* such as "The New Science of Building Great Teams" by Alex Pentland in April 2012 and "Workspaces That Move People" by Ben Waber, Jennifer Magnolfi, and Greg Lindsay in October 2014 helped popularize the topic.

knowledge is shared.

Larger foundations are experimenting with tools and structures to support knowledge gathering and sharing

Interviewees from larger foundations tended to be concerned that knowledge could be harnessed more effectively. Some of them described helpful tools they use to internally share knowledge. For example, the CEO of one large foundation uses an intranet (internal website) to communicate with staff, and the intranet includes a daily news feed that uses an algorithm to sort news relevant to the foundation's issue areas. Other foundations organize learning lunches, or ask staff to prepare debriefs on site visits and conferences via written memos or presentations. One large foundation has started using Saleforce's customer relations management database capacity to track conversations and information on people and organizations that are knowledge sources.

Some interviewees noted that some of their email sharing has moved onto internal communication and collaboration apps such as Microsoft Yammer, Salesforce Chatter, Slack, or Basecamp. While staff tend to use these platforms informally and not all of them participate, interviewees explained that they find them helpful for discovering what their colleagues are learning. "*Boy, you guys ought to be on Slack,*" one funder exclaimed. "*[Salesforce Chatter] gets the conversations out of email, and it makes them available for the foundation to see,*" another funder explained. "*A lot of times people will read interesting articles, post the link, and share their thoughts about it,*" the funder continued. "*Then you get a spirited back and forth amongst staff members across the organization.*"

Few funders have a single person assigned to collecting and sharing knowledge

Some interviewees said they or other staff members take on the role of curating and sharing knowledge informally as time permits. Interviewees from a few larger foundations noted they have organizational learning officers or librarians and archivists who help curate and share knowledge, while others have communications and human resources department staff that provide support for internal knowledge sharing. For example, some of those staff provide assistance with internal newsletters.

Foundation staff tend to be selective about sharing practice knowledge with trustees

Some interviewees reported that determining the appropriate material to share with trustees can be a challenge. Foundation board members come from a range of backgrounds and staff are careful about how to engage them with the limited time they have. As one interviewee noted, "*They're all volunteers and we don't have a lot of time together, so I don't spend a lot of time talking about new trends in philanthropy with them unless I think it's something that's applicable to us.*" In many cases, staff carefully distill relevant material for trustees into condensed form, such as a memo that might include a link to where they can access more information. In the words of one interviewee, "*Some practical knowledge is part of our docket process at our board meetings, so we'll include links to reports, or media pieces, or websites embedded into our electronic dockets so they can choose to go to those links and read them if they want to explore further; but, beyond that, we don't really share with them.*" Some interviewees said they occasionally arrange for board members to attend educational sessions or invite speakers to board meetings, but they said they ensure the content is "big picture," "timely" and "highly related" to their grantmaking. In a context of limited time and attention, there can be a tension between sharing knowledge about philanthropic practices versus content information about developments in the foundation's programmatic fields. Interviewees noted that they share large amounts of program information with the board of trustees and expressed concerns about bombarding them with even more knowledge to review and consider.

Knowledge Vetting

Given the amount of practice knowledge available, funders use a variety of approaches to vet and assess whether specific knowledge will be useful to their practice. Source, format, and relevancy are all important criteria that influence whether or not knowledge catches the funder's attention. Knowledge vetting can be both fast and slow. Initial vetting of knowledge is typically immediate and lasts only a few minutes before the knowledge is kept or discarded. On other occasions, such as in formal planning processes, vetting is a longer and slower process.

Funders assess knowledge based on trust in the source

In a crowded knowledge field, funders rely on their sense of trust in a person or organization to evaluate the credibility of the knowledge and if they should use it. Trust is a nuanced criterion. As one interviewee described, "*The* Chronicle of Philanthropy*, I trust. If it's from a generic website or group, I try not to sign up for those, I might discard it. If it's from a co-worker or a colleague, I will take more of a peek at it and see what it is. Or if someone sends me something and says 'this applies to you' then I'll look at it. If it comes from my boss, I'm trusting that she's already vetted it, and it's good. It depends on what I know about the source.*" Another funder shared, "*This morning, a board member sent me an article from the* Wall Street Journal*. I read it and it was fabulous. It actually comes through my feed, but I didn't see it. I saw it when it was sent from a trusted source that said, 'Pay attention to me!'*"

Even when knowledge comes from a trusted organizational source, some interviewees also check the knowledge with reliable colleagues and their network. As one interviewee said, "*Well, the credibility of the source and the quality of the information that they give us and then we always check references of people who've done it or are using it.*"

Vet or Ignore?

Interviewees revealed two responses to the volume of knowledge emails and mail that they receive.

- **Sort.** Interviewees noted that they quickly sort through their e-mail and mail and identify knowledge relevant for them and their colleagues while filtering out irrelevant information. Staff shared they simply do not have time to systematically or reliably examine the different materials. As one interviewee stated, "*It's overkill in terms of what a person can keep up with . . . Different things will catch your eye at different times so it's hard to create an artificial way to sort it; you have to scroll through them to see who's writing on what.*"
- **Ignore/Delete without review.** Some interviewees resort to deleting information without having adequately reviewed it. Interviewees acknowledged that was less than ideal, but also described it as the only way to deal with the "*fire hose of information.*" One interviewee described their tension with deleting information in the following way: "*I know there are good things that come in my inbox that I just delete because I just am not going to be able to attend to it within a few days. And if I don't attend to it within a few days, I'm not going to read it because more things will have piled up. If I had the ability, a better ability to screen what comes in, that would be great.*"

Funders are more likely to use digestible knowledge

Written products that include summaries, that simplify complex ideas, and that include practical tools such as checklists and sample discussion questions are more likely to get read and then used, some interviewees noted. Knowledge that is shared through engaging workshops or other interactive gatherings is more easily understood and applied to practice, according to many interviewees. Together those aspects of digestibility are looked for when considering knowledge since together they will help funders most effectively use the knowledge.

Interviewees stressed the importance of being succinct—of balancing brevity with being thorough. Funders want executive summaries and other presentations that are easy to digest but that also provide sufficient detail to where they can implement the work on their own and share it with diverse stakeholders.

Relevance and timing are key to whether funders use practice knowledge

Asked to identify what about a knowledge product made them consider and then use it, many interviewees explained that it was simply because of its relevance to their interests or needs at that particular moment in time. One interviewee observed: "*I received a link to a report that came just at the right moment. I actually clicked through. I would say my click-through rate on emails is close to five percent, and this one was one where it was the right timing and the right report for what I was thinking about at that moment.*"

Relevance of the knowledge to current organizational and staff concerns impacts the likelihood of it cutting through the torrent of information marketed to foundations. Staff may subscribe to and receive publications on a regular basis, but the extent to which knowledge shapes foundation practices may be determined by whether or not a post, article, or report seems to relate to a process already underway or being considered at the foundation. One interviewee contrasted how relevant knowledge is treated compared to more general topics, "*[If some knowledge] will apply directly to my work . . . I'm going to read it rather than some report that's more for a general audience.*" Another interviewee described, "*I don't always read the full [specific name] magazine because I just don't really need everything in it. But on the cover was an article that was something that was kind of burning a hole in my brain. It's like, for the first time in two years, it was the first thing I picked out of the mail pile and went to that article.*"

Case Study Connection:

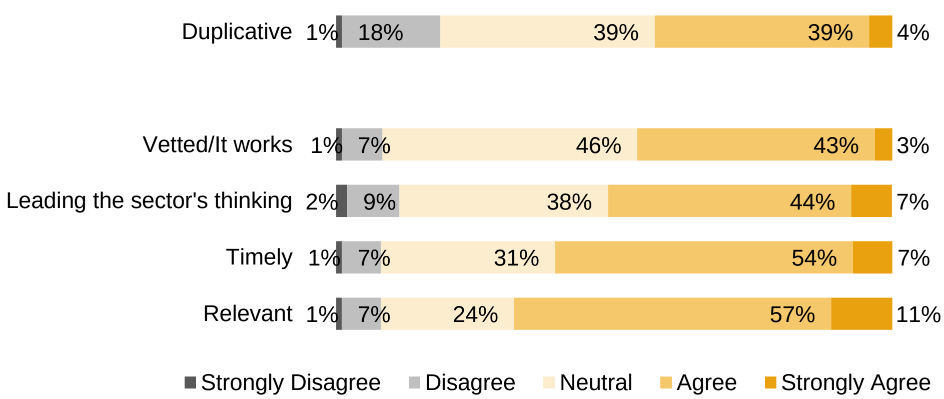
Keeping Things Short and Sweet

To help make the knowledge most useful to emerging community foundations, the creators of ***Growing Smarter*** (Irvine, FSG, and Williams Group) made a brief document with minimal jargon yet full of specific examples and quotes. They also developed a PowerPoint slide deck and discussion questions for foundations to use with their boards of trustees. All elements of the publication and supporting documents were designed with the target user in mind and the specific action intended. For the **McKnight Foundation**, Adaptive Action was a simple and easy to use process. That model's three simple questions (What? So what? Now what?) made it effective to use with staff, board, and partners. Staff were able to adapt the approach to individual conversations or for large scale convenings. This simplicity helped it spread from one program area to an approach that changed the overall foundation's communication and decision making.

Funders believe practice knowledge is relevant and timely, but some question whether it has been vetted or is duplicative

Survey respondents were asked to assess the current state of practice knowledge on five key dimensions, including whether or not it is relevant, timely, leads thinking in the sector, duplicative, and sufficiently vetted. Exhibit 6 below shows that 68 percent agreed it was relevant and 61 percent indicated it was timely. However, a lower proportion agreed that available knowledge is leading the sector's thinking (51 percent) or is vetted (46 percent). Moreover, four in ten respondents (43 percent) indicated the knowledge they receive is duplicative. The ambivalence may be due in part to the fragmentation in the field and, based on interviews, that funders tend to be active consumers of program-specific knowledge and see similar messages from multiple sources.

Exhibit 6. In general, how would you evaluate the practice knowledge that you receive about the philanthropy sector through emails, publications, webinars, conferences, etc.? (*n*=738)[20]



Interviews also revealed some uncertainty about the quality and applicability of practice knowledge. Specifically, interviewees noted that quality varies, and the research orientation of some sources can make practice knowledge hard to apply. "*Some is better than others,*" one interviewee said, "*Sometimes it can be a little too collegiate. I think some of the issues were not dealing with anything new and sometimes it just can be a little too academic in nature, but I would say that it runs the gamut really on quality.*" Another interviewee observed that some knowledge products are "*one step up from opinions,*" and several interviewees expressed frustration with agenda-driven, non-scientific opinion pieces. This context may explain why funders tend to rely on trusted, familiar sources along with colleagues and peers.

New Knowledge Needs

As noted earlier, funders assess practice knowledge based on their current interests and needs. To learn more about what topics foundations are most interested in, the research team asked respondents to list their top knowledge needs in both interviews and surveys.[21] In open-ended survey responses, evaluation and assessment was the dominant need (see Exhibit 7).

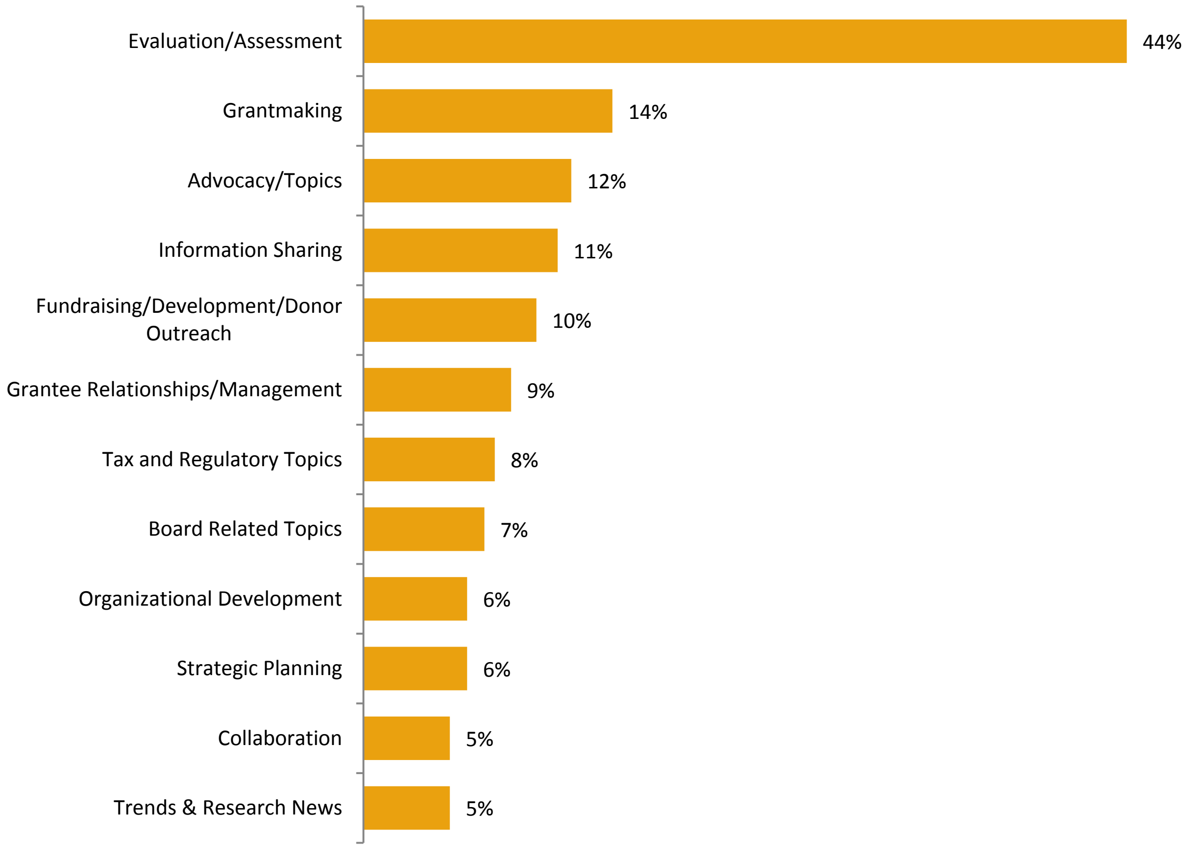
Case Study Connection:

Knowledge is Only Useful When an Organization is Ready for It

The Executive Director of the Athens Area Community Foundation first received an email about ***Growing Smarte***r in 2007 from a mentor at another Georgia community foundation. However, at the time the Foundation was focused on getting started and on educating the community about the role of the foundation. It was not until 2011 when the Executive Director received emails about a Growing Smarter webinar from the Council on Foundations and its regional grantmakers association that the Foundation was ready to think about and discuss the financial sustainability questions that the report raised.

[20] For four of the five categories *agree* and *strongly agree* are a positive rating. For the fifth area (duplicative), *agree* and *strongly agree* are not a positive rating.
[21] In both data collection methods, respondents were asked to list their practice knowledge needs. They were not given any response options.

Exhibit 7. What practice knowledge do you need to inform your philanthropic work? Please list the top three practice knowledge topic areas that you need the most at this time (*n*=623)



This need was the second most cited need among interviewees after knowledge about best practices. Additional details about the evaluation and best practices knowledge needs as well as some other specific needs by respondent characteristic are noted below.

Evaluation and assessing impact: Respondents highlighted evaluation and assessment as an important knowledge need. This finding is consistent with recent internal market research conducted by Hewlett knowledge grantees, such as Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, FSG, and Bridgespan. Indeed, "planning for results and impact" has been the most common topic area covered by Hewlett knowledge grantees.[22] Funders of all types and sizes are increasingly seeking feedback from grantees and others about how they can improve, and many are acting on this information.[23] Far more elusive to them, however, is determining the extent to which they are making a difference and thus knowing where, when, and how to invest. As one funder said, "*How we measure effectively, cheaply, whether what we're doing is working*," was a common response. Funders have become more outcome-oriented over the past two decades but still struggle to effectively measure and articulate their impact. Interviews revealed three specific evaluation knowledge needs on the following figure.

[22] Harder+Company, *Improving the Practice of Philanthropy: An Evaluation of the Hewlett Foundation's Knowledge Creation and Dissemination Strategy*, 2013
[23] Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, *Is Grantmaking Getting Smarter?*, 2014

Outcome and Impact Measurement
• Measuring the impact of their investments
Implementation Lessons
• Better understanding of why investments reap results with one agency versus others • Unpacking why things do not work
Resources and Supports
• Education about why evaluation is important • How to evaluate well at different stages of a project • How to measure impact • How other organizations implement and evaluate their programs • Different assessment techniques

Best practices: Knowledge about best practices was the most cited need among interviewees. Funders frequently noted in the interviews that they would like to know what works in different contexts, and they spoke about the lack of published best practices. Funders particularly want more or better resources regarding best practices in impact assessment, collaboration, communication, governance, and strategy. "*When we're sitting and looking at a finite amount of money, are we better off spreading it and helping 30 organizations or what if we took on three or five a year in the capacity building realm and really tried to go deeper and work in a more thorough way with them? How do we weigh that? We don't know, because we haven't tried it. What has anybody else done and what have they found?*" one funder explained. Several funders also observed that it was even harder to find information on what does not work.[24] As a funder commented, "*In health and healthcare and in philanthropy especially, we don't document our failures very often. . . . That's the kind of thing you have to talk to people who are brave enough to say something in a conference or meeting.*"

Other knowledge needs by respondent characteristic: While the dominant knowledge needs across respondents were evaluation and best practices, there were some modest differences in interests depending on the size of the foundation, type of foundation, and role in the foundation:[25]

Size	**Smaller Staffed Foundations** are more interested in board-related knowledge **Very Small Foundations (with staff of one)** more interested in tax and regulatory topics
Type	**Community Foundations** are more interested in fundraising and development, and tax and regulatory topics **Family Foundations** are more interested in knowledge about grantee relationships
Role	**Board Members** are more interested in impact investing, sustainability, and governance and board-related topics **Operations Staff** and **Other Executive Staff** are more interested in information about strategic planning

[24] This is consistent with recent research from the Center for Effective Philanthropy, *Sharing What Matters: Foundation Transparency*, 2016.
[25] T-tests were conducted to examine the relationship between respondents' responses by their foundation and individual characteristics. Differences in the below visual were statistically significant at:<.05.

Knowledge Use

Funders use practice knowledge, which includes concepts as well as products, to inform decision-making about specific procedures as well as their overall approach and strategy. This in turn can lead to organizational change, although the pace of change can vary widely. There are a variety of factors that facilitate and inhibit knowledge use and change at foundations. Leadership changes and external factors often help trigger use and openness to change, whereas bureaucracy and available time are among the many barriers.

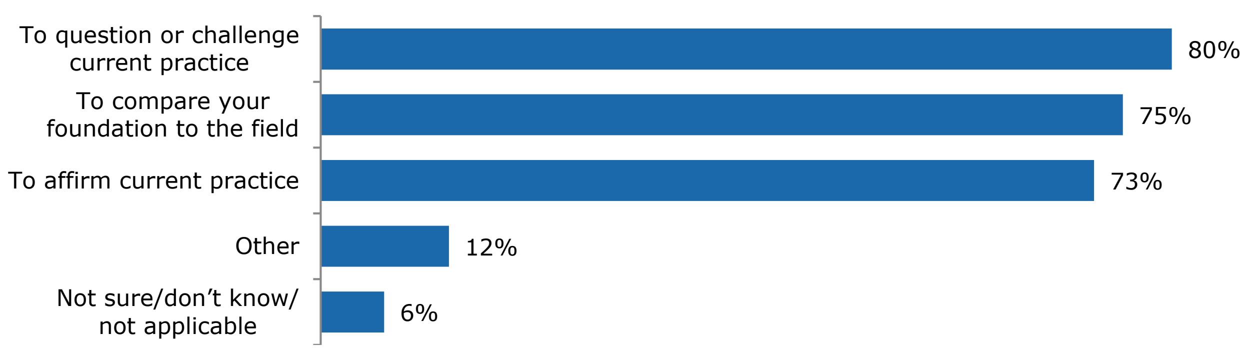
How Funders Use Practice Knowledge

Most funders are interested in and actively use practice knowledge

Nearly all interviewees were emphatic that their organizational culture values and encourages learning. "*There is an explicit goal here: Our knowledge is as important as our money, and in most cases, probably more important,*" a funder related. "*It's like oxygen here,*" another funder observed. "*We're either sharing electronically or literally handing a book off to each other, or we're saying, 'Watch this video,' or we're saying, 'Let's go hear this guy talk,' every day.*"

Most respondents indicated that they use practice knowledge for a variety of purposes. Four out of five survey respondents reported that they use it to question or challenge current practice (80 percent). Roughly three-quarters use practice knowledge to compare their foundation to the field (75 percent) and to affirm current practice (73 percent) (see Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. In the past year, have you used practice knowledge for any of the following purposes at your foundation? Select all that apply (*n*=738)

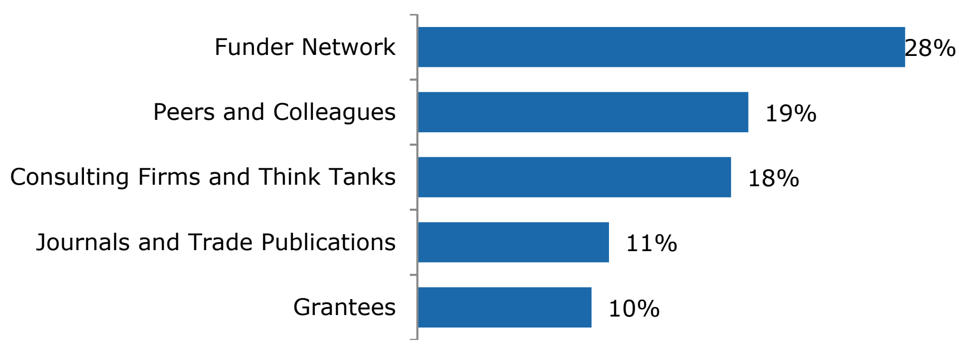


In line with the survey data in Exhibit 5, the interviewees offered similar examples of how and why they use knowledge. One funder shared, "*For a small organization, other than the seven of us who are looking at each other in the mirror, we have to go outside to talk to others—'what are you doing, what are you up to?' We have to read the* Chronicle of Philanthropy *and the* Daily Journal *to make sure that we are up to speed about what's going on.*" Another funder explained, "*I have tried to use evidence that I have seen—an article from the* Chronicle of Philanthropy *or whatever the Ford Foundation's new shift now—to say, 'See! We're in good company. In fact, we're not just tagging along at the end. We've been pushing ourselves, even before we saw all this other movement there.'*" One funder shared, "*We've just completed a second round of CEP's grantee perception study and that is useful and sometimes painful practical knowledge about how you're perceived . . . We have an internal committee now working to respond to what we learned there and one of the things that we're very interested in is the issue of transparency between us, grant seekers, and our grantees; and how that transparency manifest itself . . . the study is making the big difference in what we do.*"

Most funders can name the sources of practice knowledge that contributed to ideas they have adopted or considered adopting

Three-quarters of survey respondents (72 percent) said they have adopted or are considering adopting an idea or best practice during the last two years (see visual to the right). Most were willing and able to name the sources of practice knowledge that contributed to the change. (Respondents were not given a list; they were asked to volunteer an answer of their own.) Responses to this open-ended question reveal that nearly half of respondents attributed the change in some part to practice knowledge from a funder network or from peers and colleagues (28 percent and 19 percent, respectively). As noted earlier, peers offer problem solving solutions, good practices, and advice based on their philanthropic experience. Other sources cited included consulting firms and philanthropic infrastructure organizations (18 percent), journals and trade publications (11 percent), and grantees (10 percent). Funders reported changes in a wide range of practice areas, including in philanthropic models and approaches, standards and ethics, diversity and inclusion, financial stewardship, governance, grantmaking, grants management, and learning and evaluation, among other areas.

Exhibit 9. To the best of your recollection, what practice knowledge contributed to your foundation's decision to make this change? As best you can, please name all the sources of the knowledge (i.e., specific publication, conference, another foundation, conversation with a colleague) (*n*=480)[26]



Knowledge products are important in the practice change process, but they are often not sufficient for producing change by themselves

All three field scan data sources (interviews, survey, and case studies) highlighted the use of knowledge products and the role of products in practice change. However, the knowledge products were typically one piece of knowledge combined with colleague and peer advice and experience. Together, multiple pieces of knowledge and peer and colleague experience influenced practice change. Use of the products and experimental knowledge was also influenced by organizational readiness and leadership's openness to change. Every potential user has his or her own criteria for assessing credibility and a unique set of internal organizational

Case Study Connection:

Using Practice Knowledge to Promote Reflection

A Kresge Foundation staff member highlighted how the Foundation sought to improve its grantee communication and relationships after a decline in its Grantee Perception Report results. The Foundation formed a staff committee to address the results and shared ***Working Well With Grantees*** as reading before Foundation-wide discussions. The staff person noted that the publication was helpful to the foundation's practice change process since it provided specific advice, considerations-grounded research, and perspectives on how other funders work effectively with grantees.

[26] Survey respondents could list more than one source of practice knowledge. This chart illustrates only the most frequently noted source categories.

barriers and facilitators.

The role of specific knowledge can be seen most clearly in the field scan's case studies. (See Appendix B for full case studies.) For example, the Heinz Endowments' practice change was influenced by its participation in Grantmakers for Effective Organization's Change Incubator, where they could learn from peers, and data from their own grantee interactions from a Center for Effective Philanthropy's *Grantee Perception Report*. That all combined with new leadership and organizational knowledge and culture were necessary to change their practice toward more active grantee involvement. Across the interviews, funders found it challenging to name one knowledge product that influenced practice change. Instead, they cited circumstances and multiple sources of knowledge (both products and peers and colleagues) that informed and influenced change. It may be unrealistic to expect one specific knowledge product on its own to influence change. In most cases, funders gather multiple sources, including products and experiential advice from other funders, to inform their decision-making.

Barriers to Knowledge Use and Practice Change

The spread of ideas and practices among organizations is more complex than it is among individuals. It is much more difficult to change organizational behavior than individual behavior. Specifically, in *Leading Change*, the seminal work on organizational change originally published in 1996, John Kotter shared research findings that 70 percent of organizational change programs in the private sector fail. A 2008 McKinsey survey of 3,199 executives found the success rate to be unchanged despite the proliferation of knowledge products Kotter's work inspired.[27] Interviewees discussed a variety of barriers to using knowledge and practice change, including bureaucracy and board and staff dynamics.

Bureaucracy: Interviewees often referred to internal bureaucracy as a barrier. "*Foundations are giant cruise ships that take a long time to turn,*" one funder asserted. Some attributed this in part to their tendency to plan their grantmaking agendas far in advance and the need to wait for the board to meet to make significant decisions. Others referred to siloes of learning and communication inside their organizations, such as by program content area.

Risk-averse culture: Some interviewees reported that their board members can be risk averse. As volunteers, board members may have an inadequate understanding of the issues being addressed and may have limited time to build their knowledge of good practice in philanthropy. Together these issues may impact board members' openness to practice change. Others noted that the CEO of a foundation can be a barrier, particularly when the CEO's personality, style, or tone can stifle new, dissenting, or alternative points of view.

Lack of accountability: Lacking honest feedback and a bottom line, it is easy for foundations to become complacent, some interviewees explained. As one of the funders noted, "*We don't have a lot of accountability. Unless there's an external pressure, folks are not apt to do as much as they could.*" This lack of accountability impacts the incentive for knowledge use and practice change.

Insufficient time and resources: While foundations are often perceived as organizations with plenty of resources, most are mindful of their responsibility to limit operating costs and maximize financial resources invested in their grantees and programmatic work. Interviewees described the tension between knowing the

[27] Carol Aiken and Scott Keller, "The Irrational Side of Change Management," http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-irrational-side-of-change-management

important role practical knowledge plays in foundations' work versus the lack of time and sometimes resources to adequately explore, reflect upon, and implement new knowledge. Interviewees struggle to balance the competing demands. Interviewees from small foundations in particular observed that their organizations try to stay lean and thus do not provide many resources for staff to explore new ideas, programs, and models. For example, an interview respondent from a small community foundation noted, "*For us to send a delegation to a national conference is very expensive and not part of our budget . . . And we live in a part of the country without an active regional association.*"

Facilitators of Knowledge Use and Practice Change

In interviews, funders noted that knowledge use and openness to practice change is usually triggered by changes in their external and internal environments. Externally, economic conditions and shifting community needs frequently trigger change. Internally, new leadership or purposeful planning often spark change. Each represents a moment in time when foundations are more open to practice change and therefore to knowledge.

Shifts in external environment: Interviewees explained that opportunities, threats, and changes in a foundation's environment can prompt discussion, use of knowledge, and action. This came up particularly in interviews with community foundation staff. Important shifts can include demographic change, political and social upheaval, and changes in the economy. "*About three and a half years ago . . . the trustees began a process of thinking about how the foundation could be more strategic with its grantmaking, more impactful with its grantmaking [and using knowledge to inform that process],*" a funder observed. "*That was triggered by a few factors: One was the impact of the recession, both on the local community, the nonprofit community, and on philanthropy in a sense that many funders had as a result of perceived greater post-recession need in the human services area had pulled back from support of arts and culture.*" Another funder shared, "*If we find ourselves having to pare down our budget, it does force us to think about our strategies more intentionally . . . When the foundation is more in a growth mode, it's easier to sail on and be more opportunistic.*" Because they manage donor-advised funds, community foundations in particular can also be catalyzed to act in entirely new areas by donors, living or deceased, a few interviewees commented.

New senior leaders: Changes in senior leadership often provide the opening for knowledge use and practice change, according to several interviewees. "*When you have new leadership, then you have an opportunity to reset,*" a foundation board chair observed. The chair noted that only when the foundation's dominant CEO departed did board members take steps to reclaim ownership of governance. The new leader can also bring new information and relationships to help build knowledge and practice change. For example, a new CEO at a different foundation discussed how a leadership change can be used as a "pivot point" after many years of "business as usual." The CEO in turn brought in new personnel who are helping to carry out the organization's updated vision.

Purposeful planning and assessment: Foundations often start to think about what is happening in the field and are actively gathering practice knowledge when they need to engage in planning or assessment efforts, such as formal strategic planning, operational reviews, and needs assessments. The initial planning process, as well as a review of interim and final results, can prompt knowledge use and practice changes. Others noted that they solicit feedback from grantees and other stakeholders and that negative feedback about the foundation can also prompt knowledge use and change. As one interviewee observed, "*We learned a great deal from engaging with people who were finding fault with the foundation.*"

Case Study Connection:

The Role of Planning and Assessment

In all four case studies, planning and assessment play an important role in knowledge use and practice change. The **Heinz Endowments** used strategic planning to help implement grantee inclusion ideas and to model its new focus. The **McKnight Foundation** used Adaptive Action to help facilitate its strategic planning process and to be a central tenant of the Foundation's work and values. The **Athens Area Community Foundation** used Growing Smarter at a board retreat, which helped support the knowledge being fully considered and used. The **Kresge Foundation** asked its grantees for feedback and then used Working Well With Grantees to help discuss and address the feedback.

Conclusions

This exploratory field scan examined how staffed foundations consume, use, and share practice knowledge. The field scan has documented that knowledge producers have generated a stream of relevant and timely products that reach a wide range of users. Funders assess the credibility and utility of those products using formal and informal criteria, relying heavily on peer networks. In some instances, those products are used to improve the practice of philanthropy. The products that contribute most to practice improvement are those that are shared by trusted sources, are vetted by the user's informal network of other funders, and respond to the needs of the organization using the information. The field scan has shown that knowledge products can play an important role in organizational and practice change, under the appropriate conditions.

The most consistent finding from this field scan is that **informal sources (peers and colleagues in the funding world), are the most trusted sources of practice knowledge.** Funder networks (regional associations and affinity groups) are also highly valued sources of knowledge. In a crowded and sometimes confusing marketplace of ideas, the most trusted sources of practice knowledge for most foundation professionals are not the organizations that compete for their attention but their own professional networks. Those sources that are closest to funders are those they rely on the most.

With some important exceptions, **trust in, and loyalty to, specific knowledge producers appears relatively low.** Despite a large network of knowledge producers and distributors—including Hewlett Foundation knowledge grantees, who create knowledge products—there is not widespread or consistent positive response among funders to these sources of information, despite relatively easy access to this type of practice knowledge.

The field scan has demonstrated that **products and processes work together to promote effective knowledge acquisition and use.** The knowledge products often find eager and engaged consumers when they are promoted by an explicit communications strategy. Formal campaigns using multiple communication strategies maximize the benefit of formal and informal channels. According to our data, for many funders, conferences are key to knowledge exchange. They incorporate the peer communications strategy and also offer formal presentations of new material. The disadvantage of conferences is that those smaller foundations with fewer resources, or those in more remote areas, are challenged by the cost or inconvenience of attending. Several of the Hewlett grantees acknowledge that smaller foundations are not a primary audience for much of their work. Since conferences are a core strategy in their communications approach, smaller foundations do not benefit as much as do larger, better-resourced foundations.

Foundation audiences find brief, well-designed, graphically interesting, and emotionally engaging knowledge products the most engaging and easily accessible. These types of products, which respondents referred to as "digestible," allows some products to stand out in the marketplace. Given the almost constant flow of information across the screens and desks of funders, some knowledge products designed for easy access and disseminated to the intended audiences using multiple strategies are successful in reaching their intended audiences. Other products may not be strategically disseminated but may still stick in the memory of a reader to be recalled and re-examined when they can meet a need. The diffusion of practice-related knowledge is just as likely to be serendipitous as carefully planned. The user's perception of the trustworthiness of the source and the organizational context are critical factors in determining how the products are actually used.

One of the most important findings is that **while the knowledge products themselves (blogs, webinars, conference presentations, publications, videos, and trainings) are important in the practice change process, they generally are not sufficient to produce change by themselves.** For a product to produce change, it must be part of a process that includes trust, accessibility, peer support, organizational readiness, and leadership support. A creative, well-documented, and relevant product can start the process but the concepts presented can take their own non-linear path as the new-to-that-foundation innovation is diffused in complex settings. All potential users have their own criteria for assessing credibility and their own set of internal organizational barriers and facilitators. Knowledge producers who understand the importance of these factors can create support strategies that allow their products to emerge from a market of sometimes duplicative information to achieve deeper organizational and field impact. In addition, some knowledge producers may be purposely duplicative to catch funders' attention, may address timing and readiness issues to encourage knowledge use, and may build on existing knowledge.

The large number of producers—and the funders' low level of knowledge about and loyalty to many of those producers—makes many consumers skeptical or unenthusiastic about what is being offered. Everyone involved in this work should consider how knowledge producers can better connect with their audience and increase trust and loyalty. To help knowledge producers use the results of this field scan, the research team encourages them to consider the following questions:

- What are your target audiences' preferred sources and formats for knowledge products?
- How do your consumers rate your trustworthiness and credibility?
- What are the different pathways for funders to engage and use knowledge over time? How do your dissemination strategies take into account these pathways and differences in how foundations consume and make use of practice knowledge?
- How can you make better use of professional conferences and funder networks to share and promote your work?
- How does your foundation audience communicate to their peer funders about the products you disseminate?
- What are the goals of an individual knowledge product (i.e., introduce new conceptual frameworks, promote more effective practice)? How does it fit into the existing state of knowledge in the field? How do your communication and support strategies take the desired goals into account?

Appendix A: Advisory Group Members

Henry Berman	Chief Executive Officer Exponent Philanthropy
Phil Buchanan	President Center for Effective Philanthropy
Rebecca Graves	Managing Director FSG
Katie Smith Milway	Partner, Head of Knowledge Unit The Bridgespan Group
Shannon Thompson	Publishing and Marketing Director Stanford Social Innovation Review
Joel Toner	President and Chief Operating Officer The Nonprofit Quarterly

Appendix B: Case Studies

The research team developed four case studies to provide an in-depth examination of how practice knowledge is generated, how it enters foundations, and how it informs changes in practice. The first two of these cases focus on change processes within foundations. The latter pair of cases follow the journey of two knowledge products from creation and distribution to use. Please see Appendix C for information about the case study selection process, approach and analysis, and interviewees.

Practice Change at a Foundation

McKnight Foundation: Transforming Internal Communication and Decision Making. Foundations use a variety of methods to help plan and evaluate their work. The McKnight Foundation implemented a specific process for its international program and later leveraged that process to benefit and transform how the entire foundation communicates and makes decisions.

Heinz Endowments: Expanding Grantee Involvement. Like many foundations, the Heinz Endowments sees grantees as vital partners in achieving their desired impact. In line with that philosophy, the Endowments recently took significant steps to expand inclusion of grantee voices within the entire organization.

Knowledge Product Journey

Working Well With Grantees. To inform how foundations can work more effectively with their grantees, the Center for Effective Philanthropy developed a resource document that distilled insights from multiple previous publications.

Growing Smarter. The James Irvine Foundation partnered with FSG and Williams Group to develop a publication to inform how emerging community foundations can approach sustainable growth.

McKnight Foundation:
Transforming Internal Communication and Decision-Making

Foundations use a variety of methods to help plan and evaluate their work. The McKnight Foundation implemented a specific process for its international program and later leveraged that process to benefit and transform how the entire foundation communicates and makes decisions.

Background

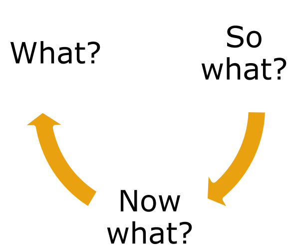
Founded in 1953, the McKnight Foundation is a Minnesota-based family foundation that seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. While the Foundation's primary geographic focus is the state of Minnesota, it also directs considerable resources to grantees in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. In 2008, the Foundation decided to reorganize its approach to international grantmaking. Specifically, it sought to refocus and expand its Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP), which focused on research with and for smaller farmers, non-governmental organizations, and national scientists in 12 countries.

Newly appointed international Program Director Jane Maland Cady recognized that the complexity of the CCRP program—which involved numerous programmatic and funding partners—would require an adaptive and developmental approach to planning and evaluation. She engaged several key advisors in this process, including Glenda Eoyang, the Executive Director of the Human Systems Dynamics Institute and creator of the theory of Adaptive Action.

Adaptive Action is a process that helps people make decisions and take action within unpredictable and complex systems. As Glenda Eoyang described, "*How do you take action when you can't predict what's going to happen? The answer is that you do iterative cycles of meaning-making and action-taking. You just do a little thing, and then you see what happens, and then you do the next one, and you see what happens . . . Adaptive Action was a response to the kind of unknowability and unpredictability of a complex environment.*"

Specifically, the Adaptive Action approach asks three questions: What? So what? Now what? People use the three questions to guide their discussion during one-on-one conversations, large group discussions, and cross organization convenings. **What** is the context, data, stakeholder input, trends, and/or patterns? **So what** is the interpretation and meaning of the information? **Now what** are the implications and actions we will do?

Adaptive Action



The McKnight Foundation integrated Adaptive Action into all aspects of the international program, including one-on-one conversations, large team meetings, and reporting. The approach helped the diverse partners make meaning together, build consensus toward action, and evolve their approach over time. According to McKnight Foundation President Kate Wolford, "*Through this* *process, the CCRP has more clearly articulated its theory of change and core approach, strengthened the quality of its research, and increased its knowledge-sharing and influence.*"

Steps Taken for Foundation-Wide Implementation

McKnight Foundation staff and board members attended some of the international program discussions and observed Adaptive Action first hand. Kate Wolford noted that the discussions started "*with what seems like barely contained chaos as participants bring forward research data, observations that transcend disciplines and cultures, and new factors in the external context. But by the meeting's end, shared meaning and decisions emerge, and next steps are agreed upon.*"

The experience with the international program inspired Wolford to explore the benefits of the Adaptive Action approach for the whole Foundation. In 2010, she asked Glenda Eoyang to facilitate a board retreat that led the Foundation to use Adaptive Action to help create a strategic framework. The Foundation integrated Adaptive Action in several key ways.

Strategic framework

Prior to 2011, the McKnight Foundation had never conducted a strategic planning process. 2011 brought multiple organizational changes, including recent generational shifts in the board and a 25 percent growth in staff. Wolford and other staff also found that the various program areas were disconnected from one another. Many were also focused on complex systems.

Wolford highlighted that, "*The traditional model of strategic plans just didn't seem to make sense for an organization that by design allowed for not only very different program focuses, but also different ways to structure programs . . . I was searching for something that would allow us to develop a level of coherence across the foundation while still honoring difference.*" The Foundation needed to develop a common understanding of its role and approach to advancing its desired impact. Wolford shared, "*We were holding ourselves back collectively because of the weight of lurking policies and practices that no longer were particularly useful or relevant.*"

Through the use of Adaptive Action, the Foundation developed its first strategic framework for 2012–2014. The Foundation also updated the framework for 2015–2017. Adaptive Action became a core commitment for the Foundation. Specifically, the 2015–2017 framework notes that the Foundation will "*employ Adaptive Action to enhance our effectiveness as we work within complex and interconnected issues and systems. First we look for patterns. Then we dive deeper to explore the implications and options for moving forward. Finally, we take adaptive action based on what we've learned.*"

Ongoing internal discussions and trainings

Beyond the strategic framework and continued use in the international program, the Foundation operationalized Adaptive Action in several other ways. Staff champions, such as Jane Maland Cady and Vice President of Operations Bernadette Christiansen, modeled Adaptive Action in team conversations and decision making. Glenda Eoyang conducted several trainings with staff. The board of trustees used the process in their meetings. The questions became shorthand for board and staff communication and decision making such that someone could refocus a discussion by simply saying, "So what?" The Foundation also identified several core staff competencies that support Adaptive Action. They are: manages complexity, strategic mindset, drives results, collaborative, builds networks, communicates effectively, instills trust, and resilient. The Foundation considers these competencies when evaluating a potential new team member and when considering how to support the development of existing team members.

Impact

Adaptive Action spread organically from one program area to the entire Foundation. It helped the Foundation move from working in silos to active co-creation and enhanced dialogue. As Wolford shared, "*Because we have such big portfolios, it's allowed me to better understand the decision making and thinking of our program staff. It helps you get into their heads in really powerful ways. It ultimately allows us to evaluate ours strategy more effectively.*" Other specific benefits included:

Shared process and terminology. The three questions were easy to remember and simple for both the staff and board to use as part of discussions. The questions provided a consistent structure as well as a common language. The Foundation added additional learning and reflection tools to reinforce the process. For example, to help people be open and less defensive, they reminded each other to "*Trust the intentions, question the analysis.*" This shared process and language helped promote reflection and co-creation across the Foundation. As board member Debby Landesman shared, "*[Adaptive Action] was straightforward. It was practical. It was simple. But beyond that I think it was very much in alignment with the foundation's deep-seated ambition to be a learning organization . . . it provided a framework that enabled you to continually be in a mode of questioning, learning, and adapting.*"

Decisions that stick. Adaptive Action helped the staff and board make decisions more collaboratively and efficiently. For example, the Foundation wanted to do a better job of sharing knowledge across the whole organization. But different staff members had different expectations for what a knowledge management system might look like. The planning process for knowledge management began taking more time than originally planned. Then, during a staff retreat, they used Adaptive Action to take all the perspectives into account (What?) and to help move them toward practical action (So what? and Now what?). As Wolford shared, "*It has helped us become unstuck on some things where otherwise you could end up in circular conversations, because of just wanting to be absolutely right. I think we've been able to let go of some of that.*"

Increased board engagement and strategic conversations. Adaptive Action helped the board of trustees have more productive conversations about strategy as well as communicate more openly about what is being learned and what risks are present. Instead of focusing on specific grants or program areas, the board is now having higher-level discussions about overall impact and the role of the Foundation. As Wolford described, "*The board discussion is focused less on individual grant transactions and more on strategy and how grant and non-grant activities fit together as a whole portfolio. This allows for deeper conversations around when we are supporting existing knowledge and practices versus more emergent areas of learning and discovery.*"

Enhanced innovation, adaptability, and risk taking. The iterative nature of Adaptive Action helped the Foundation take more risks and experiment. As Jane Maland Cady shared, "*We've been given the freedom to respond to changes in these complex and interconnected systems and issues . . . We're more responsive. We're more thoughtful in our work. We're not straitjacketed or constrained to follow something we said two years ago.*" Bernadette Christiansen added, "*People are increasingly aware that not very many issues are discussed, resolved, and it is* *done . . . So the 'what' is often 'for now,' then you begin the process again. I think people are becoming more aware of and more comfortable with the fact that our work is not finished very often."*

Key Factors in Practice Change

Several factors made these positive benefits at the McKnight Foundation possible.

- **Adaptive Action's focus on complexity:** Adaptive Action was created for complex systems and asks for both inquiry and action planning. This lent itself to the complexity of the McKnight Foundation's program areas, diverse contexts, and numerous partnerships.

- **Adaptive Action's ease of use:** Adaptive Action's three questions are simple, easy to remember, and easy to use in various situations and at various levels of planning and decision-making. This made the questions incredibly accessible and useable in a variety of ongoing ways to both staff and board.

- **Organizational values and culture:** The Foundation's staff and board had an existing core commitment and openness to active dialogue, continuous refinement, and using data to make decisions. This flexibility and openness made Adaptive Action a philosophical fit for the Foundation. As can be seen in its 2015–2017 strategic framework, Adaptive Action also connects to the Foundation's values of accountability, innovation, integrity, and respect.

- **Champions and expertise:** Several staff members brought their own expertise and acted as Adaptive Action champions. Jane Maland Cady had existing experience and training in Adaptive Action, which she used to bring in and test Adaptive Action in the context of the international program. Kate Wolford had previous experience with appreciative inquiry, experience she noted as helping to make her more open to Adaptive Action. In addition, Glenda Eoyang brought her deep expertise in Adaptive Action and tremendous facilitation skills to a long-term consulting engagement with the Foundation.

The Foundation is now considering how Adaptive Action can be integrated into their work with grantees.

Heinz Endowments:
Expanding Grantee Involvement

Like many foundations, the Heinz Endowments sees grantees as vital partners in achieving their desired impact. In line with that philosophy, the Endowments recently took significant steps to expand inclusion of grantee voices within the entire organization.

Background

Based in Pittsburgh, the Heinz Endowments is a private family foundation that helps its region thrive while advancing knowledge and practice in the specific fields in which it works. These fields include arts and culture; children, youth, and families; community and economic development; education; and environment. According to its website, the Endowments also considers the Pittsburgh region "*a laboratory for the development of solutions to challenges that are national in scope.*"

In 2011, the Endowments' arts and culture program team reflected on external evaluation data and staff observations and determined that despite the great work of many teaching artists and administrators, its arts programs focused on African American culture and neighborhoods were not having the impact they had hoped for or intended. According to Senior Program Officer Justin Laing, "*While we felt that there were some good things that happened with the grants . . . It wasn't as impactful as we thought it could be. We thought maybe a critical flaw was that it was not designed with the people who would eventually implement the program. There was a small advisory board for meeting with potential applicants to review the Request for Proposals . . . but they advised after the program had been designed for the most part.*"

With this observation in mind, the arts and culture program took a new, more active approach to grantee and community involvement for its new program, the Transformative Arts Process (TAP). This attention to inclusion and engagement was present at every step to date, beginning with design through implementation. In 2012, the program convened grantees and community members to engage in a six month process that included travel to three different cities and a review of Pittsburgh neighborhood data to think about how the arts might be transformative in the lives of youth living in African American and distressed neighborhoods. Over time, the Endowments created a formal advisory board comprised of grantees and community members to help design their own role as well as the TAP program overall.

In June 2014, the Endowments went through a leadership transition. Grant Oliphant joined the Heinz Endowments as its President, having previously served in other leadership roles at the Endowments and at the Pittsburgh Foundation. He brought with him strong, existing relationships at the Endowments and an inclusive, community-driven mindset from his time at both organizations. He also had expertise teaching organizational development and culture change at the graduate level.

Informed by discussions with the staff and board, Oliphant identified the need to collaborate more deeply with grantees in order to achieve the kind of impact that the Endowments sought to make. He noted, "*[If] we're going to make fundamental decisions as a region . . . we need to accelerate a movement on behalf of choosing the right outcomes . . . we've gone from a place where including voices from the people that you're trying to help is 'best practice'. . . to 'central practice' . . . Not only do we have to listen really closely, but we have to listen with empathy, and then we have to figure out how to awaken empathy in others to get them to move.*"

Steps Taken for Foundation-Wide Implementation

Through Oliphant's leadership, and with successful experience in the arts program, the Endowments decided to take a more active approach to including grantees across all programs and with the entire organization. The board's and the staff's values were already in line with that approach. As Oliphant shared, "*The Heinz family have always had a bias towards wanting to know what the community thinks . . . I remember having a really important conversation with Teresa Heinz at one point where I was sharing with her that I was worried that our grantee community was getting worried about a new direction we were going in . . . Her immediate answer was, 'Well, why don't you just ask them?' . . . They're very community-oriented. I think the next generation [of the Heinz family] is very mindful of how power has changed, and how it's important for foundations to be closer to the ground.*" However, there were some existing organizational structures and beliefs that acted as barriers to grantee inclusion. As Justin Laing shared, "*How will I advocate the grantee voice if I don't have an organization where my own voice feels empowered? . . . I think it's really important to address that issue if you're going to do this grantee inclusion. Do you have a culture where you'll be able to bring on ideas?*" Therefore, the Heinz Endowments took several steps to integrate grantee voices into planning efforts while simultaneously building structures and systems to support grantee inclusion as part of the organization's culture.

Strategic planning

Several months into his tenure, Oliphant identified the need to conduct a strategic planning process as a means to clarify desired outcomes and to fully engage staff, the grantees, and the community in that process. The Endowments hired consulting firm the Art of Democracy to lead the community engagement process in partnership with the staff. Through the planning process, the Endowments also sought to address some of the feedback gathered in its 2015 *Grantee Perception Report*.[28] For example, grantees had indicated that they were not clear about the Endowments' strategies and decision-making process. To date, approximately 300 grantees and community members have been engaged in three active discussions. The process is expected to be completed in late 2016.

Participation in GEO's Change Incubator

In 2015, the Endowments was selected to be part of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations' (GEO) Change Incubator.[29] The Incubator focused on strengthening the field's practice of grantee inclusion. Specifically, it was designed to help foundations learn the practice of adaptive leadership so as to improve their capacity to experiment with grantee inclusion, a practice GEO felt was not being employed as frequently as it should, despite research showing the relationship to foundation effectiveness. The Heinz Endowments chose to focus its incubator participation on TAP and then expanded to include other staff members to help

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[28] Conducted in partnership with the Center for Effective Philanthropy.
[29] GEO, "Grantmakers Are Coming Together to Shift the Culture of Philanthropy from Transactional to Transformational," http://changeincubator.geofunders.org

spread the learning across the foundation. To date, a team of four Heinz Endowments staff have participated in two multiple day gatherings with three other foundations. They also completed an online curriculum about adaptive leadership.[30] As Incubator team member Program Officer Megan Andros shared, "*The process that GEO has laid out is making us commit to milestones. If we say we want to be more inclusive of grantee voice, how do you actually do that?*" As a result of the process, the participating team developed and shared specific recommendations with Oliphant. Oliphant highlighted, "*They came back to me and to others with the observation that one of the things that is going to get in the way of what we're trying to do is some aspects of our culture that are traditionally hierarchical. So, I authorized them to conduct a series of experiments. To have overt, safe conversations in the foundation about what it would look like to do things differently.*" For example, Senior Impact Officer Wayne Jones proposed use of the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument.[31] "*It sets up a framework for concrete changes you can try to change culture. Culture is really hard to change. If we have a culture that is not open, how can we make it more open? There are methodologies that have been developed by the researchers who created the tool.*"

Staff Training In Design Thinking

In order to further support grantee inclusion efforts, Oliphant asked staff to participate in design thinking training.[32] Design thinking is a process used to create new ideas and solve problems. It encourages small experiments or prototyping to test ideas and practices. The customer, or in this case the grantees and the community, are the focal point of design thinking. It focuses on bringing diverse perspectives together and leveraging collective expertise. At the Endowments, design thinking was intended to help support the shift toward more openness and inclusion of others ideas and perspectives, both internally and externally. To date, numerous staff members have participated in design thinking trainings either at Stanford University's d.school or the LUMA Institute in Pittsburgh.

Impact

While the Heinz Endowments is still early in the process of implementing new approaches to grantee engagement, some specific benefits include improved dialogue and understanding, both internally and externally.

Improved internal dialogue. Through participation in activities such as GEO's Change Incubator and design thinking trainings, staff felt encouraged and safer questioning the Endowments processes and decisions. As Laing shared, "*[GEO Change Incubator] has given me some courage to take some steps because I have a shared team I'm a part of that also is giving me feedback and saying, 'You're not crazy. This is happening to me too.'*" Wayne Jones added, "*I think the GEO Change Incubator has opened the door for us to have conversations about all of those issues in a way that is safer. Looking at the deeper cultural issues. 'Well, why haven't we involved our grantees? Why haven't we sought out suggestions for improvement, and shared our vulnerabilities?'*" These candid discussions also helped staff learn that other people and program areas had similar challenges. This built new perspective that supported programmatic work and increased commitment to grantee inclusion. For example, Megan Andros highlighted, "*I'm*

[30] The adaptive leadership training was a partnership between GEO and Cambridge Leadership Associates. Adaptive leadership came out of decades of research by Harvard University's Dr. Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky.
[31] OCAI Online, "Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument Online," http://www.ocai-online.com
[32] Ideo, "About Ideo," https://www.ideo.com/about/. Design thinking originated from global design firm Ideo and is taught at Stanford University's d. school. Oliphant was influenced by design thinking and some other sources influenced by it such as Peter Sims, *Little Bets: How Breakthrough Ideas Emerge From Small Discoveries*, 2010.

struggling a little bit with communications in the same way that arts and culture program is struggling with communications . . . [talking with the arts program about their work has] given me more confidence that it's okay to be very close to the community. It's okay to be honest and open . . . I think having these conversations with my colleagues has made me more willing to be more communicative with [the community] and learn from them and open with them."

Improved external dialogue. The Foundation addressed two barriers related to external dialogue: (1) travel and (2) providing a meaningful opportunity for grantee and community dialogue. The Endowments had a policy restricting staff to no more than ten days out of town for work-related travel per year. The policy inhibited staff attendance at conferences and site visits to learn from other communities and foundations. This policy also made staff more likely to engage with grantees via phone or email, rather than meeting one-on-one or at community events. With the new focus on grantee inclusion and a more open approach to learning, Oliphant discontinued the travel policy. He also modeled the importance of face-to-face interactions and local and national travel. This encouraged staff to do more local and national travel to build relationships and to inform their work with needed knowledge and context. The strategic planning process provided a timely and meaningful opportunity to engage grantees and the community. The Endowments engaged hundreds of people and actively listened to their feedback and ideas. It also led to other opportunities to ask grantees for feedback. For example, Wayne Jones shared that they recently asked grantees for feedback on potential software for reporting on grants. Grantees appreciated the Endowments openness and the opportunity to share suggestions before the software they would be required to use was selected. Informed by the grantees' feedback, the Endowments decided not to pursue the software at this time. The Endowments may eventually adopt such software, but they noted they would do so after additional consultation with grantees. Overall, the engagement process helped bring new staff openness to feedback. As Megan Andros shared, "*I think we've been much more open to [negative feedback] than we used to be. Not that we weren't open to feedback, we just never asked for it before. I hope and I think that it's going a long way to making people in the community feel like the Endowments is really wanting to be more of a part of the community and cares . . . I think we always did, but again, we never asked. I think the perception of the Endowments is changing.*"

New space created to encourage dialogue and inclusion. To support this shift toward ongoing inclusion and more internal and external dialogue, the Endowments rented an additional half floor of space in its building. Staff are designing the space to be visually open and conducive to active discussions among grantees and staff. It will be a space to convene people and encourage dialogue. Wayne Jones noted, "*The intention is that we will convene our grantees more often. Now we have the space where we can do something. If we want to do programming, or bring in consultants, or TA providers, we would have space to do that.*" This new space illustrated the Heinz Endowments' long-term and financial commitment to dialogue and inclusion.

Key Factors in Practice Change

Several factors made these positive benefits at the Heinz Endowments possible.

- **Timing and need:** The Endowments had gone through a period of disruption before Oliphant arrived. He shared, "The departure of my predecessor and a couple of senior team members had unsettled the staff, but that created both the need and the willingness for us to form a new kind of team and new set of relationships." In addition, the Pittsburgh region faced considerable challenges and opportunities. Together these helped the Endowments be ready for the shift toward grantee inclusion and the organizational culture adjustments that supported it. As Oliphant shared, "If you're going to change an organization, you have to get it unfrozen or unstuck from all the traditions, culture, and practices that bind it in place."

- **Leaders who modeled the change:** Oliphant and other key staff members, such as Justin Laing, brought experience and acted as champions who modeled and supported grantee inclusion and the needed organizational culture shift. For example, as the leader of the Heinz Endowments, Oliphant came in with an open and listening mindset and modeled that to the staff. He also recognized that the internal culture needed to shift and was open to staff ideas. He supported experiments and systems to support this culture change, including working with GEO's Change Incubator. As Jones shared, "[Grant] was a stabilizing force. He'd been here before. He's a good guy. People like him. . . . I think Grant made it really clear that it was okay for us to get out, and to be more visible. He did that . . . it sent the message to staff about being out there, about being connected, about being visible."

- **External expertise and assessment:** The Heinz Endowments sought out support and ideas from external sources to help support the change process. It worked with the Center for Effective Philanthropy to conduct both a new Grantee Perception Report and a Staff Perception Report. It became part of GEO's Change Incubator. It worked with consultants such as Art of Democracy and LUMA Institute. It also sent staff to Stanford University's d.school and LUMA Institute trainings. This marked a shift from its previously more internally informed approach.

- **Smaller-scale tests and experiments:** The Heinz Endowments had previously emphasized grantee inclusion as part of the arts program area initiative. That experiment provided helpful information and experience, which informed full implementation across the organization. Using design thinking, the Endowments also focused on making thoughtful and often small changes or experiments to its culture or inclusion work that were then assessed and reflected on quickly. This encouraged a nimbleness and responsiveness to address challenges and opportunities swiftly and not be bogged down by overly long planning and decision-making processes.

The Heinz Endowments' shift toward greater grantee and community engagement is still in process.

Working Well With Grantees

To inform how foundations can work more effectively with their grantees, the Center for Effective Philanthropy developed a resource document that distilled insights from multiple, previous publications. This case study illustrates the new publication's journey from creation and distribution to use.

Background

The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) helps staffed grantmaking foundations maximize their effectiveness by producing research publications, hosting conferences and other programs, providing advisory services, and helping funders obtain feedback from key constituents such as grantees, donors, and staff. CEP's *Grantee Perception Report* (GPR) has become a trusted tool for many foundations to learn more about their relationships with grantees. The GPR collects a mix of quantitative and qualitative data via an online survey and benchmarks an individual funder's results with other funders. The GPR dataset includes responses from tens of thousands of nonprofit grantees affiliated with almost 300 foundations across the United States and internationally.

From 2007 to 2011, CEP created several research publications primarily based on data from the GPR. The reports addressed topics such as providing operating support, supporting grantees beyond funding, forming strong relationships with grantees, and making the reporting and evaluation process helpful to grantees. Each report included practical advice and recommendations based on the data.

Creation Process

After producing this series of reports, CEP decided to take a different approach. The CEP team realized that their core constituents—grantmakers working at foundations—were often too busy to read more than the first few pages of most publications they received. The team believed that foundation staff would benefit from an easier to read synthesis of vital research findings and focused advice. In addition, multiple foundation leaders encouraged CEP to create a summary of its research so they could access it in one place. As a result of those reflections and suggestions, CEP decided to synthesize six research publications into a single report, *Working Well With Grantees*.

CEP wanted *Working Well With Grantees* to provide a mix of data and advice to help foundation staff make informed decisions about how to work more effectively with their grantees. With program staff at foundations across the United States as the primary audience, CEP wanted the report to encourage them to reflect on how they could improve their relationship with their individual grantees. CEP also sought to influence foundation leaders—a core audience for all CEP publications. CEP's Vice President of Research Ellie Buteau shared, "*We recognized that program staff don't always have control over whether or not they're giving operating support . . . Everything is not under the program officer's control. Therefore, reaching CEOs was relevant as well.*"

Led by Buteau and CEP President Phil Buchanan, the CEP team began the process of creating this new report by reviewing the previous publications and then carefully considering the most prioritized information within each and across all of them. The team then updated the analyses with its most current and larger GPR dataset, and also considered new information from its Declined Applicant Perception Report dataset. The process was iterative and involved numerous discussions between Buteau and Buchanan and close work with CEP's data analysts. At each turn, the team reviewed new analysis and revisited what information to include in the summary. The CEP team prioritized what information to include by carefully considering the data analysis results (i.e., statistical significance, effect size, and sample size) as well as what information would be most helpful for the target audiences. The team focused on narrowing the information so that the report could be concise enough to be useful to foundation staff.

The CEP team purposely organized the report to follow the lifecycle of working with grantees—from forming to preserving relationships. Each section included quotes and examples from program staff that were highly rated in the GPR and a summary of specific tactics to consider. For example, the report suggested that, to help form relationships with grantees, foundation staff should get out of the office more often and attend grantee events. The team structured the report in this manner to help make the information directly applicable to the target audiences' work. In addition, on the final pages of the report, CEP included links to additional online resources about each topic covered in the report. The resources included specific CEP reports and related information and blog posts from foundations. In close collaboration with Buteau and Buchanan, CEP's Art Director Sara Dubois played a key role in the report's visual design and formatting. The report went through several design iterations before being finalized.

Sharing the Publication

CEP published *Working Well With Grantees* in summer 2013 and distributed it in multiple ways. CEP sent the report to its email and media lists. The team mailed paper copies to a targeted group of foundation CEOs and senior program staff. CEP invited foundation staff to write guest blogs about the report. CEP also hosted a webinar about the report. Two of the program officers highlighted in the report were part of the webinar presentation.

CEP also developed and led workshops across the nation that built on the contents of the report. Since 2013, CEP staff have presented at multiple conferences, including those sponsored by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, the Grant Managers Network, and the Council on Foundations. In addition, the CEP team conducted workshops at several regional and state associations (e.g., Associated Grant Makers and the Northern California Grantmakers), and affinity groups (e.g., Grantmakers in Health and Animal Grantmakers). The Ford Foundation also invited CEP to present insights from the report at two of its new grantmaker orientations. During these various sessions, CEP staff presented key findings from the report and led participants through a discussion and reflection process. Nicolette described CEP's approach: "*It's a very interactive format so it can be anywhere from 45 minutes to half a day. We bring the reports. There are worksheets . . . We not only bring the content of the report, but we also marry it to the very practical examples and experience that we've had on the client side working with hundreds of foundations.*"

Use by Foundations

Since 2013, *Working Well With Grantees* has been downloaded from CEP's website thousands of times. The following two examples illustrate how different foundations used the report.

Confirming existing practice. The Rogers Family Foundation focuses on positively transforming the educational experience of Oakland public school students furthest from opportunity. Its Executive Director, Rhonnel Sotelo, read and applied insights from multiple CEP reports over his years working in philanthropy. Upon joining the Foundation, he suggested engaging CEP to complete a *Grantee Perception Report* to provide information about how the foundation engages with grantees. *Working Well With Grantees* helped Sotelo better identify the Foundation's existing strong practices and reinforced to all staff how to continue to have effective relationships with grantees.

Sotelo highlighted, "*[In* Working Well With Grantees*] there are elements that you can pick and choose as learning moments for a staff that's relatively young and motivated to continuously improve, but may not have the long arm's length of experience. Seeing the experience of others, seeing ideas that are being proffered and considered as best practice makes it a useful reference tool . . . I don't think it's meant as a how-to guide . . . It's certainly a learning tool and gives a summary of examples of other practitioners who are at the top of their field . . . The best thing you can do is just read and listen to what's being said in there and try to put as much of it into the culture and practice.*"

Supporting discussion and practice change. The Kresge Foundation focuses on expanding opportunities in United States cities through social investing and grantmaking in education, environment, arts and culture, health, human services, and community development. In 2014, the Kresge Foundation conducted the GPR for the third time. According to the Foundation's Deputy Director of the Education Program, Caroline Altman Smith, the Foundation's ratings decreased since its previous, very positive GPR results several years earlier. Altman Smith and other Foundation staff attributed this decline partly to a large increase in the number of grantees each program managed.

The Foundation took this grantee feedback very seriously and sought to improve its work and relationships with grantees. Altman Smith and Chris Kabel, Deputy Director of the Health Program, led an internal committee to reflect on the GPR results and to identify recommendations for improving relationships and communication with grantees. Altman Smith had previously used *Working Well With Grantees* as required reading and to support discussion in her Advanced Proposal Analysis course at Grand Valley State University's Dorothy A. Johnson Center on Philanthropy. Therefore, when convening staff across the Foundation, the co-chairs used *Working Well With Grantees* as a resource document and to inform discussion and potential recommendations. Specifically, Altman Smith shared, "*We used the guide during that process to help do some level-setting and to work on creating some new shared cultural norms at Kresge about the values of providing great customer service to grantees, being more responsive, being more proactive in reaching out to grantees . . . How does the culture of each program team differ? What were Kresge staff already doing well? What were we not doing? What did our results tell us we needed to be doing more of?*"

The Foundation is now in the process of implementing specific practice changes. For example, one specific recommended change is that program staff will read grant reports and follow up with the grantee to approve the report within three months of submission. To monitor progress, and to adjust as needed before its next GPR, the Foundation will be conducting more frequent and shorter "pulse" surveys with a sample of grantees.

Lessons Learned

Several lessons were learned from *Working Well With Grantees.*

- **Conduct ongoing analysis:** CEP adds new data to the GPR dataset each time foundations complete a GPR. To develop *Working Well With Grantees,* CEP staff replicated previous reports' analyses with this updated dataset to ensure that the published findings were the most up-to-date available. It also allowed CEP to confirm that the majority of its previous reports' findings remained consistent several years later. This process helped CEP feel confident that they were sharing with foundations the most current and relevant findings available.

- **Create a concise and user-friendly format:** CEP summarized the key research findings and presented them in a short document with numerous examples and tips. Buteau noted, "*It was very much in response to feedback that we've received on other reports. People wanted to know about a few takeaways to consider and advice.*" Both foundations highlighted above noted how the structure made it usable for them and their colleagues. Sotelo found the format "*very digestible, very readable, very scanable . . . That's why I think the content is really strong and usable, because there's a scanability to find how you can apply it to your actual practice.*" Synthesizing previous publications and creating a brief summary report was a new approach for CEP. As a result, the team took more time to create it than originally expected.

- **Incorporate peer-to-peer connection opportunities:** The report was based on survey data from thousands of foundation grantees. To help bring the data-driven insights to life, CEP incorporated examples from highly rated program staff who embodied what it means to work effectively with grantees. By showing real people with photos and examples of how they approach their work, the report helped the reader connect to the information. It also left the door open for foundation staff reading the report to follow up with those individuals on their own. Sotelo shared, "*[I liked] that they reference somebody. I could ask 'Cathy, can I go a little deeper with you on your results on why you guys are so great at Working Well and understanding your grantee community? What can I learn from what you're doing that can be applied here in Oakland?'*"

- **Plan for interactive sharing:** While CEP planned to do a webinar and at least one conference session, they did not anticipate the number of training requests they received from different associations and foundations. Buteau shared, "*That was a little bit surprising in a good way. It ended up being a useful resource for workshops for beginning program officers, grant managers, or other staff. I think that the document has continued to live on through those workshops.*" CEP's advisory team also uses *Working Well With Grantees* as a key resource document when a foundation receives their GPR results. It acted as immediate and important information for foundations to consider when planning how to work more effectively with their grantees. As Nicolette shared, "*When [our client team] goes out to deliver [GPR] assessment results,* Working With Grantees *is one of the most common reports they bring. They bring copies of it and leave it with folks, particularly if the foundation wrestles with quality of relationships with grantees. This is the first thing that the foundations get afterward.*"

CEP plans to update *Working Well With Grantees* to reflect new and evolving results from the GPR. The anticipated publication date will be in one to two years.

Growing Smarter

The James Irvine Foundation partnered with FSG and Williams Group to develop a publication to inform how emerging community foundations can approach sustainable growth. This case study illustrates its journey from creation and distribution to use.

Background

Founded in 1937, The James Irvine Foundation is an independent foundation focused on benefiting the people of California. From 1995 to 2011, the Irvine Foundation provided grants and technical assistance to several cohorts of small and mid-sized community foundations across California. Coined the Community Foundations Initiative (CFI), its purpose was to foster and sustain a stronger network of community foundations that could assume greater local leadership, expand donor support, and serve as catalysts for positive change in their communities.

Before launching the second iteration of CFI in 2005, the Irvine Foundation sought out FSG to serve as a technical assistance provider to grantees and, later, as the initiative's evaluator. FSG is a consulting firm that works with leaders in search of large-scale and sustainable social change. The Irvine Foundation was interested in partnering with FSG because, as the CFI lead staff person Anne Vally shared, "*[FSG's 2003* Strengthening Community Foundations*] study challenged conventional thinking in the community foundation world. . . . What [the study] found was that certain types of funds were more costly to administer than others and . . . it teed up the question, 'Does your community foundation exist to subsidize the administrative cost of wealthy donors or to make grants in the community?' It was ground breaking and shaped [the Irvine Foundation's] work with small community foundations.*"

At the same juncture, Irvine engaged Williams Group to serve as a technical assistance provider to the grantees and to advise on the initiative's communications. Williams Group helps people and organizations do better through communication, and it has had a long history of working with the Irvine Foundation and the philanthropic field overall.

Creation Process

From the beginning, the Irvine Foundation built sharing learning into the initiative's planning, budget, and partner contracts. Because FSG's 2003 study focused on large community foundations, CFI provided an opportunity to refine those insights for newer and smaller community foundations (emerging community foundations). FSG's Managing Director Becca Graves observed, "*Most of the community foundations in the field were in this more emerging mode. They hadn't been around for 100 years. How do we help these nine [CFI] community foundations grow in a healthy and sustainable way? And how do we share that with all these community foundations in California? The field as a whole also had this question. That's where the publication came from.*"

With that in mind, FSG led the creation of a new resource, *Growing Smarter: Achieving Sustainability in Emerging Community Foundations,* to benefit CFI grantees, other emerging community foundations, and any community foundations that had growth in assets and/or the scale of their operations. According to the 2007 dissemination plan, the publication was intended to help community foundations "*be better able to pursue sustainable growth, tailor their sustainability strategies to their communities and philosophies, and increase their ongoing philanthropic impact.*"

The process of creating *Growing Smarter* began with FSG collecting and analyzing data from the CFI grantees. FSG also conducted interviews with representatives of emerging community foundations across the country to provide additional context and perspective. FSG shared and discussed the preliminary findings with the CFI grantees during one of their regular convenings. In addition, throughout the process, Irvine Foundation and Williams Group staff provided ongoing input. Anne Vally shared, "*It was like a prism and we all had different corners of it and we were working to put it all together. What was this picture, what was it telling us?[The process of creating the publication] was so very collaborative with the majority of the horse power from FSG.*"

After FSG finalized a white paper version of the insights (i.e., an in-depth narrative), Williams Group worked collaboratively with FSG and the Irvine Foundation to create a visually engaging and concise public version. Anne Vally described the experience working with Bob Tobin of Williams Group: "*It was not like handing it off to somebody to translate or to rewrite . . . He knew the stories and he suggested some of the side bars in the report . . . He was able to say, 'Hey, I think this point would be really well illustrated by this specific community foundation.'*"

To encourage active use of the publication, the partners (Irvine Foundation, FSG, and Williams Group) also created a PowerPoint presentation for board members and a discussion guide. Bob Tobin shared, "*Together, we put the emphasis on getting the information into use and informing action. . . . The content was inherently technical and we didn't presume that we could drop a white paper on community foundation boards and expect them to read it because we all know the fallacy of that. We wanted to help boards internalize the topic, help them think about the relevance of the topic, and help them come to their own conclusions . . . so that led our team to think about things like providing an intro presentation and discussion questions. We were really just working from an understanding of the audience actions we wanted to inform and thinking about what that audience needs and how we might help.*"

Sharing the Publication

Growing Smarter was one of several CFI publications and was distributed at two different time points: (1) Fall 2007 after its publication and (2) Winter 2011–2012 at the conclusion of CFI. The intent was to share the report with staff and board members from community foundations as well as those that supported community foundations.

The three partners created and implemented a dissemination plan. They distributed the publication to FSG's database of 900 community foundations, state community foundation networks, regional associations of grantmakers, knowledge portals (i.e., Foundation Center and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations), bloggers, and select consultants and influencers. The partners also released the report to philanthropy trade media such as the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* and conducted specialized outreach to funders with an interest in developing the community foundation field (i.e., the Mott Foundation, Knight Foundation, and Packard Foundation).

In addition to those targets, the partners determined that a very important distribution channel would be the Council on Foundations' (COF) Community Foundation Conference. Therefore, they timed the publication date to coincide with COF's 2007 Community Foundation Conference. They wrote a conference session request several months before the publication was complete in anticipation of sharing the report at the conference. As Anne Vally shared, "*We had the benefit of the publication being ready right at the moment when the people we want to impact are all getting together to talk about how to make our community foundations better. The presentation was very well attended, and after the conference, we had a huge number of downloads of both the report itself and accompanying tools.*" In 2011–2012, the partners re-released *Growing Smarter* as part of the completion of CFI. As part of that distribution, the partners did a presentation at COF's 2012 Community Foundation Conference as well as a series of webinars with COF and regional grantmaking associations. The interactive sessions included the main partners and several CFI grantees.

In line with the collaborative process, the report also lived in three different online locations. The Irvine Foundation's website had a dedicated space for CFI and a link to *Growing Smarter*, FSG posted it on its website, and the website CF Insights had a section for the report and its resource documents.[33]

Use by Foundations

Since 2007, hundreds of individuals from foundations have downloaded *Growing Smarter*. As one example of the knowledge's influence, the Athens Area Community Foundation located in Athens, Georgia used it to discuss and then adjust its approach to growth and sustainability.

Importance of Timing and Readiness

In 2008, the Athens Area Community Foundation's first Executive Director, Delene Porter, received a copy of *Growing Smarter* from a mentor at the North Georgia Community Foundation. Porter noted, "*We were at the very beginning of creating the foundation and, it wasn't that the report fell on deaf ears exactly, we were just drinking from a fire hose of best practices with a very basic understanding of our role . . . It was not until 2011, after we had gained a little experience with donor advised funds, grantmaking, and community leadership, that we understood the questions we needed to be asking ourselves to really thrive.*"

In 2011, Porter received emails from both the Council on Foundations and its regional grantmaker association about a *Growing Smarter* webinar. At the time, Porter noted, "*We were struggling to develop a truly sustainable economic model. . . . We clearly weren't keeping our doors open based on the fees that we were taking on our donor advised funds. . . . The questions that* Growing Smarter *raised reflected my own questions of what exactly does sustainability mean for the Athens Area Community Foundation? How do I get my board thinking about what it means so that I'm not the only one thinking about what it means?'*"

Discussion with the Board

Porter invited the Foundation's board of directors to participate in the Council on Foundations and Irvine Foundation webinar on *Growing Smarter*. She shared, "*It was the first time I pushed my board to use [perspectives from] other community foundations. The questions we were formulating were questions that were being answered by other community foundations.*" After the webinar, they discussed the

[33] In 2006, CF Insights was created by the community foundation field as a partnership between the Council on Foundations and FSG. The Foundation Center became a core partner in 2015.

information presented and what it meant for their foundation. Porter and the board members incorporated the report and its discussion questions into their board retreat several months later. Porter noted, "*The idea that community foundations are self-sustaining through fees just didn't fit our reality, and I needed another voice other than my own talking to [the Board] about what was right for Athens . . . the report was a way for me to get access to expertise I couldn't afford otherwise.*"

Impact on growth

Growing Smarter helped the Athens Area Community Foundation refine its approach to growth and redefine sustainability for its philanthropic landscape. It also set a precedent for looking beyond Georgia for knowledge from other community foundations and consultants. As Porter noted, "*In 2011 we had 11 donor-advised funds with about $400,000 in them. Today we have 68 donor-advised funds totaling $5.6 million, we've made over $1.45 million in grants into our community, and donors support the technical assistance and community leadership work we do through fees, donations to operations, and an operating endowment.*"

Lessons Learned

Several lessons were learned from *Growing Smarter*.

- **Prioritize sharing knowledge from the beginning:** The Irvine Foundation prioritized sharing information from CFI from the start of the initiative. This commitment helped all partners allocate their overall time and resources effectively. In addition, the partners allocated sufficient time and budget for the thoughtful and professional creation and distribution of *Growing Smarter*. As Anne Vally shared, "*Our grantees were a microcosm of the fastest growing segment of community foundations. We knew we would probably learn something really important for the field. We wanted to share what we learned and so the initiative could ripple impact beyond our group of nine community foundations.*"

- **Establish a collaborative process:** While FSG led the creation of *Growing Smarter*, they worked closely with the Irvine Foundation, Williams Group, and CFI grantees. This helped the report be the most accurate, relevant, and useful to community foundations it could be. The core partners also did the dissemination collaboratively along with close coordination with COF and regional grantmaking associations.

- **Create a digestible format:** The partners purposely shared *Growing Smarter* in an accessible and engaging format. They emphasized the use of visuals, quotes, and examples. The language was clear and simple in order to be engaging to staff and board members who represented a variety of backgrounds and comfort levels with the topic. In addition, the partners created a discussion guide and PowerPoint presentation to help increase usability.

- **Conduct ongoing & interactive distribution:** The partners disseminated *Growing Smarter* using a variety of methods at two different time points. The partners highlighted the COF conference and regional grantmaking associations as the most successful mechanism to connect the report to community foundations. The publication was purposely shared at two COF conferences. The second phase of outreach was focused on active discussion about the report and on sharings by CFI grantees.

- **Include multiple solutions:** *Growing Smarter* did not advocate a "one size fits all" solution. It recognized that emerging foundations have different values, approaches, contexts, readiness, and needs. As Becca Graves shared, "*They appreciated that it wasn't telling them one approach or one way to do things. It had these different approaches and different considerations.*"

Growing Smarter remains a relevant and useful knowledge source for emerging community foundations.

Appendix C: Methods and Protocols

This appendix provides information about the characteristics of field scan respondents and the methods used in this research. The research team designed, implemented, and interpreted each method in close partnership with the Hewlett team and the advisory group, who shared comments and questions through email correspondence and in four meetings over the course of the field scan time period (June 2015 through August 2016).

This appendix describes the following:

- **Section I: Overview of Field Scan Respondents**
- **Section II: Interviews**
- **Section III: Survey**
- **Section IV: Case studies**
- **Section V: Protocols**

Section I: Overview of Field Scan Respondents

Prior to beginning data collection, the research team secured from the Foundation Center a list of all staffed United States foundations (*n*=4,200).[34] The research team used that dataset to create the interview sample and to append survey responses with information about their foundation's characteristic. The Foundation Center dataset included foundation staff size; annual giving amount; type (i.e., community, family); and location, among other information.

The field scan included a range of survey and interview respondents by foundation and individual characteristics. There were many characteristic similarities across both methods, with some noted variations. For example, the interview respondents included more community foundations and larger staff and annual giving foundations than the survey respondents. Exhibits C1 through C8 illustrate the characteristics of the survey respondents in **turquoise** and the interview participants in **blue**. The chart titles include information about the number of respondents for each data source using the following labels: *N*=survey respondents and *n*=interview respondents.[35]

[34] The dataset excluded operating foundations.

[35] Two foundations had two people participate in the interview. Individual characteristics are based on the primary/targeted interviewee. Three individuals completed both an interview and a survey. Thirty-eight foundations had someone from that foundation complete an interview and a survey. For example, the research team interviewed one person and one or more other people from that foundation completed the survey. There were some missing characteristics information (i.e., foundation type and staff size) for some foundations. Some respondents' foundations did not appear in the Foundation Center dataset although they were confirmed to be a staffed US foundation. This affects the *n* for foundation characteristics charts and any finding tables that disaggregate data by foundation characteristic. The Foundation Center dataset was used for foundation characteristics information when available. In addition, when this issue arose some foundation characteristics

Foundation Characteristics

In total, respondents affiliated with **565 different foundations** participated in the field scan. The 738 survey respondents were affiliated with 528 different foundations. The 75 interviewees were affiliated with 75 different foundations; people from 38 of those foundations also responded to the survey. Across both data sources, the respondents included people affiliated with 63 of the 100 largest asset grantmaking foundations in the United States.[36]

Exhibit C1: Type of Foundation (N=376; n=75)

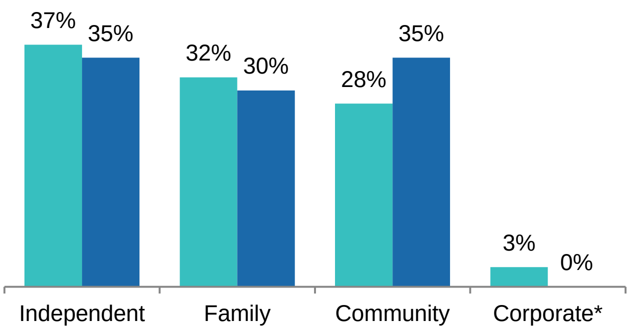
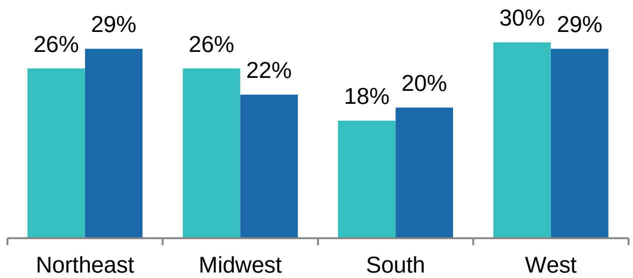


Exhibit C2: Region in the US (N=377; n=75)



**Corporate foundations were purposely excluded from the interview sample.*

Exhibit C3: Number of Staff (N=384; n=75)

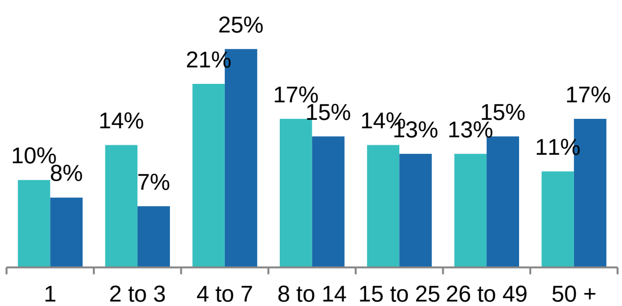
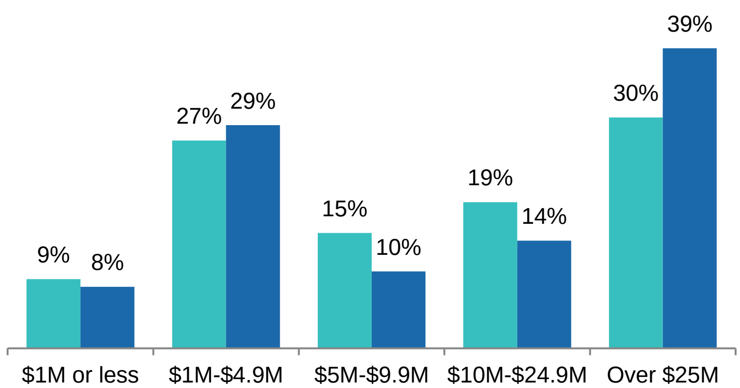


Exhibit C4: Annual Giving (N=354; n=72)**



***Three of the foundations that were interviewed as part of piloting the interview protocol were not on the Foundation Center staffed foundations list. Therefore, annual giving information was not available. The other characteristics for those foundation were determined by website review.*

Survey Respondents   Interview Respondents

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questions were added to the survey. That information was used when Foundation Center information was not available.

[36] Sixty-one of the 63 foundations were represented in the survey data; 21 of the 63 foundations were represented in the interview data. All except for two foundations of the 63 foundation were represented in both data sources. See foundation names and Foundation Center analysis notes at the Foundation Center's "Top 100 Assets," http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/topfunders/top100assets.html

Individual Characteristics

The majority of the field scan participants across both sources were from **CEOs and program staff**.[37] Respondents tended to be older, as we would expect in this field, and nearly two-thirds were women.

Exhibit C5: Role at the Foundation
N=738; n=75

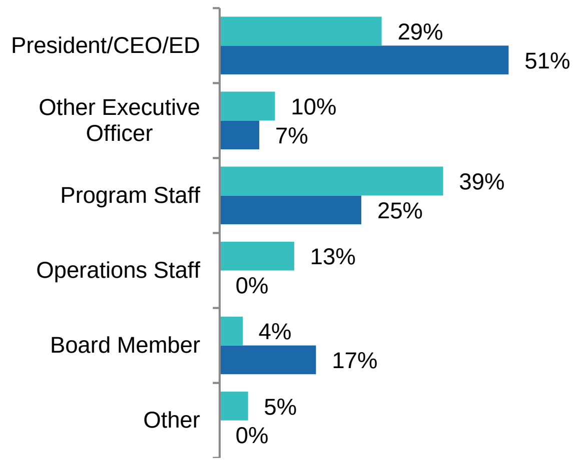


Exhibit C6: Time in Philanthropy
(N=738; n=75)

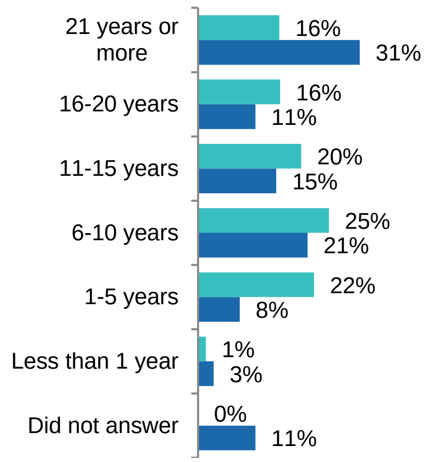


Exhibit C7: Age
(N=738; n=75)

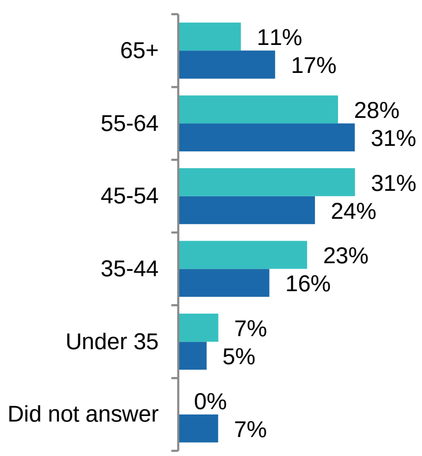
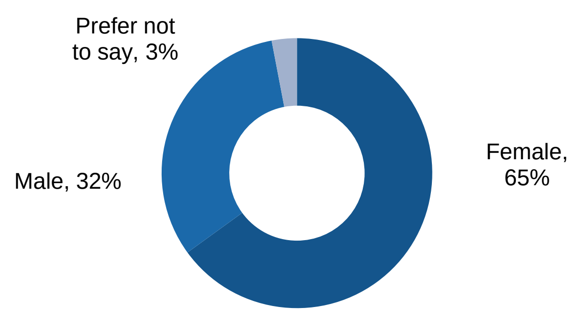


Exhibit C8: Gender (N=738)



Survey Respondents   Interview Respondents

[37] For survey respondents roles varied by the foundations' annual giving amount. Most President/CEO/ED respondents were from foundations with less than $10 million annual giving, while most program and operations staff respondents were from foundations with more than $10 million annual giving

Section II: Interviews

Approach

As noted in the exhibits, the research team conducted interviews with staff and board members from 75 United States-based staffed foundations.[38] The interviews were conducted by phone, lasting between 30 minutes to 60 minutes. Interviews were conducted from September 2015 through February 2016.

The targeted foundations were identified from the Foundation Center dataset. Based on the characteristics of the foundations in the full dataset, the research team created a stratified sample by foundation type and staff size and then randomly selected foundations that met the identified characteristics. Informed by discussions with the Hewlett team, the advisors, and the field scan's priorities, the research team targeted a range of foundation types and proportionately more larger staffed foundations than representative of the field. The sample frame was:

Exhibit C9. Interview Sample Characteristics

Foundation Type[39]	8 to 50+ staff [40]	4 to 7 staff	2 to 3 staff	1 staff	Total
Independent Foundations	11%	11%	7%	7%	**36%**
Family Foundations	9%	11%	7%	7%	**34%**
Community Foundations[41]	9%	9%	6%	5%	**30%**
Total	**30%**	**31%**	**20%**	**19%**	**100%**

Within those identified foundations, the research team targeted 50 percent of the interviews to be with executive staff, 25 percent with program staff, and 25 percent with board members.

Potential interviewees were emailed a request to participate in the field scan. The research team secured email addresses by reviewing each targeted foundation's website and other available online information. Some contact information was not available. In those situations, the team called the foundation and requested individual email addresses. If the foundation was non-responsive to a phone call or their phone number was not available, they were removed from the interviewee pool. The research team sent potential interviewees one initial request email, two email reminders, and one follow-up phone call before they were considered non-responsive and removed from the interview target list. In total the research team

[38] This included six people who helped test the interview protocol.
[39] As previously noted, corporate and operating foundations were not included in the interview sample.
[40] The proportion of foundations with staff eight to 50 or more is higher than representative of the full field of staffed foundations. Based on analysis of the Foundation Center dataset, foundations with these staff sizes make up 10 percent of all staffed foundations. In contrast, foundations with one to three staff represent 73 percent of all staffed foundations. This decision to include more large staffed foundations in the interview sample was based on discussions with the Hewlett team and the advisor group. In general, foundations with larger staff sizes also had higher annual giving amounts.
[41] The total proportion of community foundations in the interview is higher than representative of all staffed foundations. Based on the Foundation Center dataset, community foundations are 14 percent of all staffed foundations. This decision to include more community foundation was made in order for the field scan to learn from all types of foundations relatively equally.

requested interviews with 171 people and 75 interviews were conducted for a 44 percent response rate.[42]

Analysis

With the interviewee's permission, the team recorded each interview. The interviews were confidential. The research team promised to not attribute any comments to that individual or their foundation. The team sent the audio recording to a transcription service. The transcription was imported into a standard qualitative analytic platform (ATLAS.ti).

Interview coding and analysis followed a three phase process. First, the research team created a code book based on the broad, a priori themes from the research questions and interview protocol. The code book informed the second phase of structural coding, using the ATLAS.ti software to code data by labeling or chunking data pertaining to the topic of inquiry from the larger data set.[43] To ensure reliability, two analysts coded the same source (e.g., a set of three interview transcripts), compared initial coding, revised the codebook as needed, and then continued by splitting the remaining data sources. Finally, the third phase included identification and verification of key interview themes by reviewing the coded data and developing summary interpretations of the key themes with the full interview team (interviewers and coders). The full interview team met periodically throughout the process to discuss how the interviews were progressing, to identify any emerging themes to be incorporated into existing or new codes, and to verify emerging themes and findings.

Section III: Survey

Approach

Informed by initial findings from the interviews, an online survey was designed to complement interviews by adding more breadth of information to the depth of the interview data. In order to manage survey fatigue, the survey was purposely short enough to be completed in approximately 10 minutes. In addition, before distributing the survey, the research team conducted two rounds of field testing with foundation staff, one test with three people and another with two people. After both testing phases, the team refined and vetted the survey with the Hewlett team and the advisors.

The survey was emailed to a convenience sample of people in email lists from eleven knowledge grantees who agreed to share their foundation email list with the research team. [44] The survey was distributed in January 2016. Recipients received two email reminders before the survey was closed in February 2016. Of the total 13,957 emails send, 738 eligible individuals responded to the survey (a 5 percent

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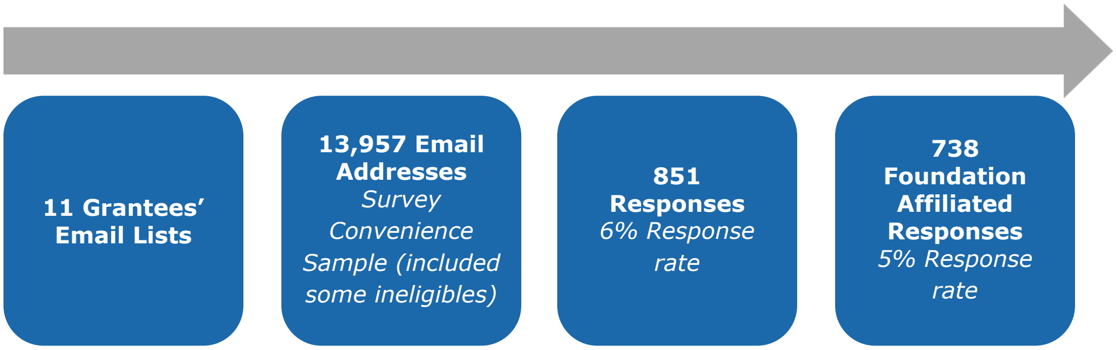
[42] Board members had a substantially lower response rate than other targeted interviewees (25). Board member interviews were particularly challenging to secure since the staff often acted as gatekeepers to the board.

[43] The codebook expanded as multiple layers of meaning emerged and needed to be excavated and explicated in order to better support the writing and analytic process.

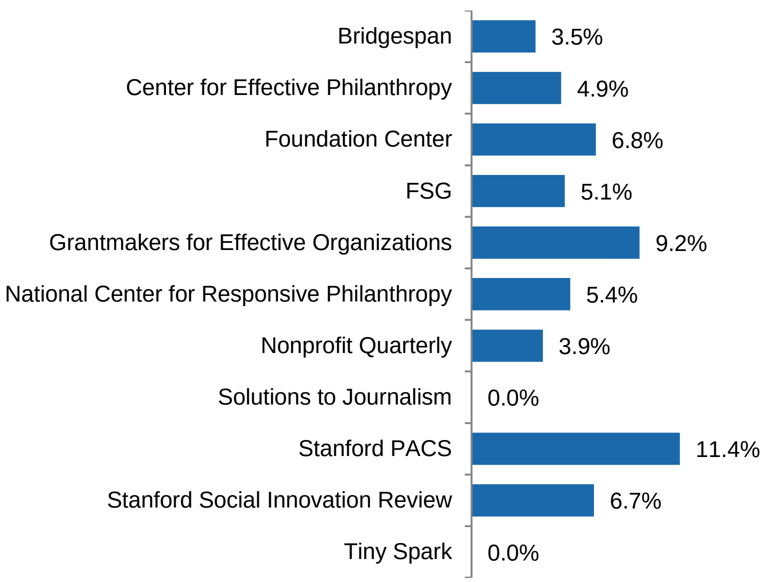
[44] The research team received email lists from Bridgespan, the Center for Effective Philanthropy, FSG, Foundation Center, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, National Center for Responsive Philanthropy, Nonprofit Quarterly, Solutions Journalism, Stanford PACS, Stanford Social Innovation Review, and Tiny Spark. While the email list request was the same to all grantees, the lists shared varied by how the grantee tracked its foundation contacts, what the grantee was willing to share, and/or their interpretation of the request. Some grantees shared emails for all people with whom they had emails and they believed were connected with a foundation. Other grantees shared a narrower list. For example, one contact per foundation or people signed up to receive updates from one of their knowledge distribution mechanisms.

response rate).[45] Eligible respondents were defined as those affiliated with a staffed US-based grantmaking foundation. Some of the 13,957 emails were not affiliated with foundations. Therefore, the eligible response rate may be higher than five percent.



The survey response rate varied across the different grantee sources. Grantee email list sizes ranged from six emails to over 5,500 emails with an average of 1,568 emails:

Exhibit C10: Respondent Rate by Grantee Source



There was some overlap of the grantees' lists: 12.5 percent of emails in the full sample were on two grantees' lists, 3.4 percent on three grantees' lists, 1.2 percent on four or more grantees' lists. Duplicate email addresses were removed before emailing the survey.

The research team appended survey responses with descriptive information about

[45] Some of the grantees' email lists included contacts not affiliated with foundations. As a result, some of the people that were emailed the survey (13,957) were not eligible for participation in the study. To ensure the survey results reflected only eligible respondents (i.e., people affiliated with a staffed US foundation), foundations that could not be linked to the Foundation Center dataset were manually screened by the research team. Due to different naming standards on each of the grantees lists, how many non-foundations were on the original survey email list was not determined as part of the scope of this study. Therefore, the survey response rate for eligible respondents may be higher than reported.

the respondent foundations based on Foundation Center data (e.g., foundation type, annual giving level). During the survey fielding, it became apparent that (1) the convenience sample had numerous non-foundations and (2) some eligible foundations were not included in the Foundation Center dataset. Therefore, the team added several foundation characteristics questions to the survey when it was in the field. The Foundation Center dataset was given priority for the respondents' foundation characteristic information over any other data source. There were some foundations that did not answer the foundation characteristics questions and were not on the Foundation Center dataset. The research team conducted an online search to determine if those foundation met the study criteria of staffed, US-based grantmaking foundations.

Analysis

For the quantitative survey data, the survey responses were imported into a standard quantitative analytic platform (SPSS). The analysis focused on descriptive statistics. *T*-tests were used to determine significant variation between respondent and foundation characteristics. For the qualitative survey data, the team analyzed it using a bottom-up, content analysis approach in which responses were first categorized and then emergent themes, causal linkages, and interesting divergences were identified from the data. For both types of survey data, the analysis focused on themes across survey responses and variations by foundation and interviewee characteristic.

Section IV: Case Studies

To complement the interview and survey data, the research team created four case studies to provide in-depth examination of how practice knowledge is generated, how it enters foundations, and how it and other factors inform changes in practice. Not focusing on a single respondent, as the survey and interviews do, the case studies provide a more complete description of foundation behavior and learning.

The Hewlett team was closely involved with the case study selection. Final selection took into consideration providing a balance of interviewees and case studies by type and size of foundation as well as a range of knowledge producers when possible. The team conducted the case study data collection and reporting process from February through June 2016.

Practice Change at a Foundation

This case study approach sought to explain how knowledge influenced practice change at a foundation. This approach began with an identifiable organizational change, such as the adoption of a new practice or strategy.

Selection process: The research team began by reviewing coded interview data and discussing potential examples of knowledge use as a team. The team identified one of the selected case study foundations (the McKnight Foundation) from that process. It was more challenging to select a viable option for the second case study since in-depth discussion about a specific practice change was not the focus of the interviews. Therefore, the team contacted several Hewlett Foundation grantees to ask for their help identifying foundations with an identifiable practice change. One of the grantees identified the second case study foundation (the Heinz Endowments). All options were vetted and finalized with the Hewlett Foundation team.

Approach & Analysis: The research team had planning conversations with both foundations to determine the focus of the case study and the people to interview for it. Multiple people were interviewed at each foundation in order to learn about the practice change and use of knowledge from different perspectives. The team conducted 30 minute to one hour phone interviews with each person. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed by a transcription service. One of the foundations also provided background documents such as blog posts discussing the organizational change process. All available information was used to draft the case study. Before sharing it with the Hewlett team and the advisors, the draft case study was vetted with all interviewees to ensure factual accuracy.

Heinz Endowments Interviewees[46]	
Megan Andros	Program Officer, Community & Economic Development
Wayne Jones	Senior Impact Officer
Justin Laing	Senior Program Officer, Arts & Culture
Grant Oliphant	President

McKnight Foundation Interviewees	
Jane Maland Cady	Program Director, International
Bernadette Christiansen	Vice President of Operations
Glenda Eoyang	Executive Director, Human Systems Dynamics Institute; Creator, theory of Adaptive Action
Debby Landesman	Board member
Kate Wolford	President

Knowledge Product Journey

The second pair of case studies followed the creation, distribution, and use of one knowledge product. The intention was to understand how a producer identified and understood the audiences' needs or interests, created the product, and selected the appropriate distribution channels for the product.

Selection process:

- **User first approach:** The research team began by reviewing coded interview data and discussing as a team potential examples of foundations that noted being impacted by specific knowledge. The *Growing Smarter* case study was selected from that process.

- **Product first approach:** The case study selection process began by reviewing recent grant reports from the Hewlett Foundation's knowledge grantees. The team sought knowledge products that (1) were created long enough ago to have had some use and recently enough for people to remember them; (2) were focused on a practice knowledge (versus program area knowledge); and (3) were disseminated using multiple and interactive mechanisms (i.e., webinar, conference, email). From that review the research team and the Hewlett team selected one knowledge

[46] While not interviewed for the case study, Leigh Halverson (Special Projects Advisor to the President) was part of the initial planning and vetted the Heinz Endowments case study.

producer. The selection was based on one of their specific products. However, there was flexibility in the final selected product based on an initial conversation with the producer. *Working Well With Grantees* was selected from this process.

Approach & Analysis: The research team had an initial planning conversation with the knowledge producer (CEP and FSG) to determine if they were interested in participating in a case study and who should be interviewed for it. The foundation that used *Growing Smarter* was already determined using the previously noted process. The research team asked CEP to identify multiple foundations that used *Working Well With Grantees*. The research team selected two of them to interview. To hear a different perspective on the product's creation, distribution, and use, the research team interviewed multiple people for each case study. The team conducted 30 minute to one hour phone interviews with each person. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The research team also received some additional background documents to review (e.g., the *Growing Smarter* dissemination plan). All available information was used to draft the case study. Before sharing with the Hewlett team and the advisors, the draft case studies were vetted with the interviewees to ensure factual accuracy.[47]

***Growing Smarter* Interviewees**	
Rebecca Graves	Managing Director, FSG
Delene Porter	Former Executive Director, Athens Area Community Foundation
Bob Tobin	President & Senior Consultant, Williams Group
Anne Vally	Former Program Officer, James Irvine Foundation

***Working Well With Grantees* Interviewees**	
Caroline Altman-Smith	Deputy Director-Education, Kresge Foundation
Phil Buchanan	President, Center for Effective Philanthropy
Ellie Buteau	Vice President of Research, Center for Effective Philanthropy
Grace Nicolette	Vice President of Programming & External Relations, Center for Effective Philanthropy
Rhonnel Sotelo	Executive Director, Rogers Family Foundation

[47] Since the person interviewed for the Irvine Foundation's perspective was no longer working at the Foundation, the case study was also vetted with the Irvine Foundation's evaluation and communications teams.

Section V: Protocols[48]

Field Scan Survey

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this philanthropic field survey. Your responses will help the Hewlett Foundation, its Effective Philanthropy Group grantees, and the field better understand how United States foundations gather and use knowledge to inform their work. The Hewlett Foundation makes grants to support the creation and dissemination of knowledge to inform, influence, and improve philanthropy. The results of this survey will be used to strengthen that work.

The information you provide is confidential. Harder+Company Community Research and Edge Research are independent researchers conducting this survey on behalf of the Hewlett Foundation and its grantees. Your individual responses will be kept confidential and will NOT be attributed to you or your foundation.

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for completing the survey. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Dropkin at dropkin@edgeresearch.com.

1. What is your position at your foundation? Check only one response.
   1 Board Member
   2 CEO/Executive Director/President
   3 Other Executive Officer (i.e., Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, etc.)
   4 Program Staff (i.e., Vice President of Programs, Program Director, Program Officer, etc.)
   5 Operations Staff (i.e., staff in grants and contracts, research and evaluation, communications, human resources, information technology, etc.)
   6 Other [Please describe: _______________]

2. How long have you been involved with the field of philanthropy?
Enter # of years; please round to the nearest whole number ____

Demand for Practice Knowledge/Evaluation of the State of Practice Knowledge in the Philanthropy Sector

For this survey we are going to ask you about knowledge that impacts your practice of philanthropy. By **practice knowledge** we mean anything about the effective practice of philanthropy. Practice knowledge can be found in blogs, research reports, publications or social media; as well as through conversations, conferences, consulting, and training. It does not refer to knowledge about program or content areas. Any time we use this term, you can roll your mouse over it or tap your finger on it to see the definition again.

3. What are your **most trusted** sources for practice knowledge that inform your work? These can be specific people, organizations, publications, social media, forums, or any place or way that you acquire new knowledge. [*OPEN END WITH 10 ENTRY SPACES AND CHECK BOX FOR "NONE."]*

[48] Case study interview protocols varied by case focus (practice change or knowledge product journey) and the specific interviewee. Due to that variation, they are not included in this appendix.

4. What are the **primary** ways that you seek out practice knowledge? Select all that apply.

   RANDOMIZE

   a. Convening experts/stakeholders at your foundation
   b. External conferences/convenings
   c. Grantee interactions (via email, phone, in-person, etc.)
   d. Peer/colleague interactions (via email, phone, in-person, etc.)
   e. Emails/newsletters from professional associations, membership groups, philanthropy affinity groups, other foundations, etc.
   f. Online discussion boards/listservs/learning communities
   g. Consultant engagements
   h. Social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook)
   i. Other [Please describe: _______________]
   j. None/not applicable [*MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE WITH OTHER CHOICES*]

5. Below are the sources you selected as primary ways of seeking practice knowledge. Which of these are the most helpful to you in finding the practice knowledge you seek? Select all that apply.

SHOW THE LIST OF ITEM SELECTED ABOVE IN Q4.

PULL THROUGH OTHER AS "Other source you wrote in"

ASK 5B ONLY IF CHOICE H "SOCIAL MEDIA" SELECTED IN Q4

5B. You mentioned you seek practice knowledge from social media sources. Which social media sources do you find most helpful?

OPEN END WITH 5 ENTRY SPACES AND CHECK BOX FOR "CAN'T RECALL"]

RESUME ASKING ALL

6. What are your **primary formats** for consuming practice knowledge? Select all that apply.

RANDOMIZE

   a. In-person discussion (conferences, trainings, etc.)
   b. Virtual discussion (online trainings, webinars, discussion boards)
   c. Traditional (books, reports, articles—both print and online)
   d. New media (blogs, slideshares, videos, podcasts)
   e. Other [Please describe: _______________]
   f. None/not applicable [*MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE WITH OTHER CHOICES*]

7. Below are the formats you selected as primary ways of consuming practice knowledge. Which of these are the most helpful for learning from and using practice knowledge? Select all that apply.

SHOW THE LIST OF ITEMS SELECTED ABOVE IN Q6.

PULL THROUGH OTHER AS "Other source you wrote in"

RESUME ASKING ALL

8. In general, how would you evaluate the practice knowledge that you receive about the philanthropy sector through emails, publications, webinars, conferences, etc.? Would you say the **majority** of it is:
   1 Strongly agree
   2 Agree
   3 Neutral
   4 Disagree
   5 Strongly disagree
   6 Not sure

RANDOMIZE

   a. Relevant to my work at the foundation
   b. Timely
   c. Vetted/It works
   d. Duplicative
   e. Leading the sector's thinking

9. What practice knowledge do you need to inform your philanthropic work? Please list the top three practice knowledge topic areas that you need the most at this time. **Please list up to three if you can.**
   [OPEN-END WITH THREE SLOTS. ALLOW FOR BLANKS/OFFER CHECK BOX FOR "NONE AT THIS TIME"]

Awareness/Familiarity & NPS

10. Which of the following organizations have you heard of?
   1 Yes
   2 No

RANDOMIZE

   a. Bridgespan
   b. Center for Effective Philanthropy
   c. Exponent Philanthropy
   d. Foundation Center
   e. FSG
   f. Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO)
   g. National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP)
   h. Nonprofit Quarterly
   i. Philanthropy Roundtable
   j. Solutions Journalism Network
   k. Stanford University's Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society
   l. Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR)
   m. Tiny Spark
   n. Inside Philanthropy
   o. Chronicle of Philanthropy
   p. Foundation Review
   q. Nonprofit Times
   r. Philanthropy Strategy Network[49]
   s. Council on Foundations
   t. Collective Impact Forum
   u. Harvard Business Review
   v. Independent Sector
   w. My Regional Grantmakers Association

[49] This is a fake organization. It was included to help benchmark responses to this series of questions.

11. Are you familiar with practice knowledge from these organizations?
    Yes, familiar with their practice knowledge content
    No, not familiar with their practice knowledge content

SHOW ONLY THOSE SELECTED AS HEARD OF ABOVE IN Q10 (CODE = YES)

11B. How influential is each organization's practice knowledge on your thinking?

1 Very influential
2 Somewhat influential
3 Not influential
4 Not sure

SHOW ONLY THOSE ORGANIZATIONS SELECTED AS YES IN Q11 (YES, FAMILIAR)

12. *[NPS METRIC]* How likely are you to recommend practice knowledge from each of these organizations to another colleague in the philanthropic sector? *[horizontal scale from 10–0, with 10 "extremely likely to recommend" and 0 "Not at all likely to recommend" headings/anchors on top; "don't know" button on right] DISPLAY SCALE LEFT TO RIGHT GOING FROM LOW TO HIGH. KEEP "DON'T KNOW" ON FAR RIGHT.*

SHOW ONLY THOSE ORGANIZATIONS SELECTED AS YES IN Q11 (YES, FAMILIAR)

Next we are going to ask you to help us understand some of the reasons for the ratings you just gave. For each question please be as specific as you can. Again all your comments are completely confidential.

Q12 FOLLOW-UPS

IF ORG RATED 9/10 IN Q12

12B. What are the main reasons you are likely to recommend [*INSERT ORG NAME*] to another colleague? Please be as specific as possible—tell us what you would say to the colleague about that organization. *[OPEN-END]*

IF 7/8

12C. You indicated that you may or may not recommend [*INSERT ORG NAME*] to another colleague. What makes you feel that way? Please be as specific as possible. *[OPEN-END]*

IF 6 OR LESS LOWER

12D. You indicated that you are less likely to recommend [*INSERT ORG NAME*] to another colleague. What makes you feel that way? Please be as specific as possible. [*OPEN-END*]

Knowledge in Action

RESUME ASKING ALL

13. In the past year, have you used practice knowledge for any of the following purposes at your foundation? Select all that apply.
    1 To affirm current practice
    2 To question or challenge current practice

3 To compare your foundation to the field
4 Other [Please describe: _______________]
5 Not sure/don't know/not applicable

14. Thinking back over the past two years, is there an idea or best practice (from any source) that your foundation adopted or considered adopting—something you were not doing before? In the case where more than one answer might apply, just the select the one that you feel is more important to share.
    1 Yes
    2 No *SKIP TO DEMOGRAPHICS, Q17*
    3 In the process of such a change
    4 Considered but ultimately did not adopt *GO TO Q16*
    5 Not sure/don't know/not applicable *SKIP TO DEMOGRAPHICS, Q17*

ASK Q15 IF Q14 CODE 1 OR 3 (YES OR IN PROCESS). THEN GO TO Q17

15. To the best of your recollection, what practice knowledge contributed to your foundation's decision to make this change? As best you can, please name all the sources of the knowledge (e.g., specific publication, conference, another foundation, conversation with a colleague, etc.). *[OPEN END]*

ASK Q16 IF Q14 CODE 4 (CONSIDERED, DID NOT ADOPT). THEN GO TO Q17

16. To the best of your recollection, why did you ultimately **not** adopt that idea or best practice? *[OPEN END]*

RESUME ASKING ALL

Demographics

Finally, we have a couple of questions about you.

17. Which of the following categories includes your age?
    1 Under 25
    2 25–34
    3 35–44
    4 45–54
    5 55–64
    6 65–74
    7 75 or older

18. Please indicate your gender:
    1 Male
    2 Female
    3 Prefer not to say
    4 Other

On behalf of the Hewlett Foundation and its Effective Philanthropy Group grantees, thank you for completing this survey. The Hewlett Foundation and its grantee plan to publically share key findings from the study that this survey is part of in 2016. If you would like to be notified of the release and receive a copy, please complete the form below. Again your survey response will remain confidential and will not be attributed to you or your foundation.

[CHECK BOX] Yes, I would like to be notified of the release of the philanthropic field study.

FIRST NAME

LAST NAME

EMAIL ADDRESS

Field Scan Interview Protocol

Introduction

My name is _______ and I am with Harder+Company Community Research/Edge Research. (*Edge Interviewers only:* We are working with Harder+Company Community Research to conduct a study for the Hewlett Foundation.) Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in today's interview.

As we shared when scheduling this interview, we were hired by the Hewlett Foundation to conduct a study about how US foundations gather and use practical knowledge to inform their work. As part of the study, we are interviewing foundation staff and board members. From all the interviews we want to learn how foundations find practical knowledge and resources, and how knowledge can inform practice.

We encourage you to be as candid as possible. The information you provide during this interview is confidential. When our research team shares the results with the Hewlett Foundation and its grantees we will not attribute your responses to you or your foundation. Your name will never be attached to your comments.

This interview will take approximately 50 minutes to complete.

To accurately capture our conversation, I would like to record it. Only the Harder+Company and Edge Research team and our transcription service will have access to this recording. We will delete the recording once our research is complete. Do I have your permission to record our conversation?

Yes ☐   No ☐

(If they do not agree to be recorded, we will request to still proceed with the interview and take detailed notes.)

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background & Defining Terms

1. To start, please briefly introduce yourself. Please tell me a little about your expertise and your role at the foundation.
   - *(Listen for and confirm bio found on their website.)*
   - *(For board only—listen for the board title or probe if needed.)*
2. How long have you worked/been on the board of this foundation?
   - *(For board only)* In addition to your work on the board, what are your other professional affiliations? Before this board have you served on any other foundation or nonprofit boards? Please describe. In total, how many years have you been involved with the field of philanthropy?
   - *(For staff only)* In total, how many years have you been working in the field of philanthropy? What field did you work in before joining this foundation (in philanthropy, business, nonprofit sector, etc.)?
3. *(If interviewee is not the CEO)* How long has your CEO been in their role at the foundation? What field did they work in before joining your foundation (in philanthropy, business, nonprofit sector, etc.)?

Decision-making overall

4. Overall, how does your foundation make decisions about its strategies, grant-making, and policies? Please share examples, including who is typically involved and the decision-making process.
   - PROBES:
     - What triggers change at your foundation?
     - Who tends to drive change? What level in the organization are they?
     - Please describe how, if at all, any of this varies when making decisions about "practice improvements" (doing your current job better) versus about "organizational and strategic change" (doing new things or making large-scale change).
5. What are the main barriers to change and learning at your foundation?
   - PROBES:
     - How does the foundation's culture encourage learning and change?
     - What can get in the way or discourage learning and change?

Defining Terms

Our interview topic is how practical knowledge can inform your work in philanthropy.[50] For the purpose of this conversation, *practical knowledge* can be anything from blogs, to research reports, to publications, or social media; as well as in-person meetings, conferences, consulting, and training. *(Interviewer note: refer to this definition throughout the interview as needed.)*

Knowledge use

6. Since your time at the foundation, how, if at all, has practical knowledge been used to inform the decision-making and change process?
   - PROBES:
     - What practical knowledge sources have been used? In what ways were they used? For example, was practical knowledge used to inform possible decisions/directions or to affirm your plan?
     - Why were those specific sources used?
     - How was that practical knowledge brought into the decision-making process? By whom?
     - Was this kind of practical knowledge beneficial or not? Why?
7. Can you give me an example of how practical knowledge in any form contributed to change at your foundation?
   - PROBES:
     - Why did you use that specific knowledge? Why was it relevant to your foundation?
     - What role did timing play in your foundation using that knowledge? For example, timing related to your foundation's readiness or other internal processes or planning timing.

Sources & Content

Now I'd like to ask you a series of questions about where you go for practical knowledge about foundation best practices or emerging models.

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[50] The research team and the Hewlett team refined the exact wording of this term over the course of the field scan. During the interviews it was referred to as *practical knowledge* and in the survey it was called *practice knowledge*. The definition shared with respondents remained the same. In addition, some interviewees mainly shared about program-specific knowledge. The interview team followed up those responses to probe about overall practice knowledge and the types of practice knowledge that Hewlett knowledge grantees create, such as on collaboration, learning and evaluation, strategy development, and leadership development, among others topics.

Seeking knowledge

8. What would you say are your most trusted sources for practical knowledge that inform your work? These can be specific people, organizations, publications, social media, forums, or any place you acquire new knowledge.
   - PROBES:
     - (*Board member only*): Do you purposely seek out practical knowledge to inform your work and role on the board? How much do you rely on the foundation's staff for sharing practical knowledge?
     - Why do you rely on those sources?
     - *(If people are one of the most trusted sources*) Specifically, what do you ask these people about or look toward them to share with you? Why?
     - What gives you confidence that a practice or recommendation should be adopted? What criteria, if any, do you use to decide if the knowledge is credible enough to act on?
     - To what extent do you look for information that is generated from within the philanthropic and non-profit sector? To what extent do you look for knowledge to inform your practice that comes from other sectors—business, government, other disciplines, etc.? Why?
     - Is Twitter a place where you look for practical knowledge? Why or why not? If you use Twitter, how is it helpful to you? What kinds of groups and people do you follow?

9. What are specific content or topics that you look for to inform work?
   - PROBES:
     - Where do you look for that practical knowledge? For example, when looking for knowledge about how to better assess the effectiveness of grantees and strategies, where do you look for knowledge? For example, other foundations, organizations, colleagues internal or external, specific experts, etc.
     - Do you find what you are looking for? If not, what did you not find?

Receiving knowledge

10. As you know, there are many people and organizations that create and distribute practical knowledge to foundations. How often do you receive philanthropy news or knowledge via mail, email, alert, and/or meetings? For example, weekly, monthly, etc.
    - PROBES:
      - Would you like practical knowledge more or less often?
      - Do you ever feel that there is too much practical knowledge to assess and absorb?
      - What do you think about the quality of the content?
      - Is there something you would like more or less of to stay current on best practices?

Format

Now I'd like to talk about how practical knowledge comes to you and how it is presented.

11. Can you think of a recent example where you read, heard, or saw practical knowledge that got your attention? What was it? What about it made you take notice?
    - PROBES:

        - Were you actively seeking practical knowledge in that moment or was it something that came to you?
        - Please share more about how you received it (e.g., email, online, social media, in-person, etc.
        - What was it about the format and presentation that made it more or less impactful and compelling? For example, was it how it came to you (e.g., someone forwarded it to you with a personal note about why they thought the information would be useful to you)
        - Did you share it with others? Why or why not? Was it easy or possible to share? If so what made you want to share it compared to other things you receive?
        - In the end, what impact did it have? On you? On others?

12. Is the example you just shared a typical way that practical knowledge comes to you?
    - PROBES:
        - *IF YES*: Why? How else do you typically get practical knowledge? How do you prefer to get practical knowledge? Why?
        - *IF NO*: Why not? What was unique about the example you shared? How do you typically get practical knowledge? Please share examples. (*Interviewer note: Ask Q11 probes as relevant.*) How do you prefer to get practical knowledge?

Sharing knowledge

13. How does practical knowledge circulate in your foundation?
    - PROBES:
        - Do people share practical knowledge across departments and roles? If yes, how?
        - Do people share over email or through an internal network or chat space—for example, Yammer?
        - Does anyone in your foundation have a formal role of collecting and sharing practical knowledge? If not, who typically shares or curates practical knowledge for other staff members?
        - How is practical knowledge shared with the board? Who typically shares it?
        - In your experience, what is the most impactful way to share practical knowledge in your foundation? Why do you think that is most effective? For example, are you more likely to read something that is generally forwarded to you or forwarded with a personal note? Why? What way of sharing makes you more likely to spend the time to read and consider something?

14. Does your foundation have a staff development or new staff orientation process during which practical knowledge is shared? Please describe.

15. (optional) What specific practical knowledge have you shared with your grantees and/or colleagues? Why?

Emerging Needs

16. As you think about areas where your foundation wants to change and its priorities over the next few years, what topics are most pressing for your foundation?

17. What knowledge does your foundation need to help answer those questions and inform future decision-making?

18. Where would you typically turn for that information? Why?

Conclusion & Demographics

19. Again the purpose of this interview is to help the Hewlett Foundation and its grantees better understand how foundations use practical knowledge to inform their work. Is there anything I have not asked about that you feel is important to share?

20. As you know, we will be interviewing a large number of foundation staff and board members. As part of our research, we are interested in differences across foundation and individuals.
    - Would you mind telling me your age, or the year you were born?

Thank you very much for your taking time to speak with me today. The information you provided is very important to this study and to the Hewlett Foundation. Again all of your responses will remain confidential. We know that the Hewlett Foundation is planning to publically share key findings from this field scan, and according to our timeline this will likely occur in late 2016.

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EDGE research

edgeresearch.com

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