

Key Findings and Recommendations from the C&A Foundation 2016 Grantee Perception Report

Prepared by The Center For Effective Philanthropy

In September and October of 2016, The Center for Effective Philanthropy conducted a survey of the C&A Foundation's (the Foundation) grantees, achieving a 76% response rate. The memo below outlines the key findings and recommendations from the Foundation's Grantee Perception Report (GPR). The C&A Foundation's grantee perceptions should be interpreted in light of the Foundation's particular goals, strategies, and context.

Overview

- C&A Foundation grantees describe the Foundation as a thought leader in the field, and provide ratings that are similar to grantees of the typical funder for its understanding of and the extent to which the Foundation has advanced knowledge in grantees' fields.
- However, the Foundation is rated lower than the typical funder for its perceived impact on grantees' fields and communities, as well as its perceived impact on and understanding of grantees' organizations.
- The Foundation has a higher than typical frequency of contact with grantees, yet receives lower than typical ratings for the overall quality of relationships with grantees.
- Grantees rate the helpfulness of both the selection and reporting/evaluation process similarly to the typical funder in CEP's dataset.
 - Grantees experience a higher than typical amount of pressure to modify their organization's priorities in order to create a grant proposal that is likely to receive funding.

Strong Understanding of Grantees' Fields

- When asked to elaborate on the Foundation's impact, grantees describe the C&A Foundation as leaders in the field, "key drivers of change" and "leaders in pursuing transformative change."
- The C&A Foundation receives typical ratings for its understanding of and the extent to which it has advanced the state of knowledge in grantees' fields.
- However, when asked to rate the impact that the Foundation has had on their fields and communities, grantees rate the C&A Foundation lower than the typical funder in CEP's dataset.
 - Grantees that collaborated with the C&A business rate the Foundation significantly more positively for its perceived impact on and understanding of grantees' fields, as well as its impact on grantees' organizations.
 - A possible factor in these ratings, albeit not the most important explanation, is how long grantees have worked with the Foundation. Seventy percent of C&A Foundation's grantees are first time grant recipients, compared to just 29 percent at the typical foundation. Grantees' comments reflect this, remarking how the Foundation is relatively new and that C&A Foundation's strategy has been evolving.



“The Foundation... has established itself as a very credible actor in a very short period of time.”



“The Foundation is one of the key drivers of change in the organic cotton sector.”

Valuable Non-Monetary Assistance, but Less Positive Perceptions of Organizational Impact

- A higher than typical proportion of grantees, over one in four, report receiving intensive patterns of non-monetary assistance, defined as either 3 or more field-related or 7 or more total forms of assistance.
 - Grantees receiving this level of assistance rate the Foundation significantly higher on many measures throughout the survey, including its perceived impact on grantees’ fields, communities, organizations, as well as its understanding of grantees’ local communities, organizations, challenges, the Foundation’s helpfulness addressing these challenges, and grantees’ ability to continue the funded work.
 - When asked what specific types of non-monetary assistance they would most like to receive more of, grantees most frequently request more assistance securing funding from other sources and more introductions to leaders in the field.
- Nevertheless, grantees provide lower than typical ratings for the Foundation’s impact on their organizations as well as for the degree to which the Foundation has improved grantees’ ability to sustain the work funded by the grant.
- C&A Foundation grantees provide lower than typical ratings for how well the Foundation understands their organizations’ goals and strategies, as well as for the extent to which the Foundation understands the social, cultural, and socioeconomic factors affecting their work.
 - CEP’s research shows that understanding of grantees organizations’ goals and strategies is one of the strongest predictors of perceived impact on grantees’ organizations, as well as funder-grantee relationships.

CEP Recommendations

- *Focus on improving staff understanding of grantees’ goals and strategies, challenges, communities and contexts affecting their work by listening to and proactively asking about grantees’ goals, contexts and challenges in ongoing conversations.*
- *Clearly communicate staff understanding back to grantees.*

Opportunity to Improve Relationships with Grantees

- CEP’s research also finds that strong funder-grantee relationships – defined by high quality interactions and clear, consistent communications – are the single strongest predictor of grantees’ perceived impact on their organizations, and are also a driver of higher perceived impact on grantees’ fields and local communities.
- The C&A Foundation receives lower than typical ratings for the overall quality of its relationships with grantees.

- However, C&A grantees report interacting with the Foundation more frequently than grantees of the typical funder. Fifty-two percent of the Foundation’s grantees indicate having contact with their program officer a few times a month or more frequently, compared to 14 percent of grantees of the typical funder.
- When asked to provide suggestions for how the Foundation can be a more effective funder, more than a quarter of grantees cite communications as an area for improvement, the most frequent theme.
 - Seven grantees specifically cite the clarity of communications as an area they’d like to see the foundation improve, suggesting that expectations should be more clearly defined up front, and that more information could be provided on the grantmaking process and the Foundation’s strategy, goals and funding areas.
 - These perceptions are also reflected in the quantitative ratings, with grantees rating the Foundation lower than typical on the clarity and consistency of its communications.
- Grantees rate the Foundation lower than typical for its overall transparency, particularly for its transparency regarding changes that may affect future funding.
- C&A Foundation grantees also provide lower than typical ratings for how fairly they perceive they were treated by the Foundation, the Foundation’s responsiveness, and their comfort approaching the Foundation if a problem arises.



“Both parties’ expectations from the contract implementation should be more clearly articulated and agreed from the start.”



“I think it is important for funders to communicate expectations up front very clearly. There was a tendency to drift from originally agreed upon expectations and add new demands throughout the grantmaking process.”

CEP Recommendations

- *Explore opportunities for Foundation staff to treat grantees with trust and as equal partners, not as ‘service providers’ or by being ‘overly directive’ as some grantees described their relationship with the Foundation.*
- *Improve transparency and clarity of communication on grantmaking processes, implementation and future changes to funding by setting clear expectations upfront and refraining from re-scoping deliverables, changing, or adding requirements at later stages.*

Helpful Processes, Yet High Pressure to Modify Organizational Priorities

- Overall, grantees rate the helpfulness of the C&A Foundation’s selection and reporting/evaluation processes similarly to grantees of the typical funder.
 - The C&A Foundation falls in the top 20 percent of CEP’s dataset for the median hours spent by grantees on funder requirements over the grant lifetime, with the reporting/evaluation process in particular requiring a higher than typical amount of hours.

- Grantees report experiencing a higher than typical level of involvement by C&A Foundation’s staff during the selection process, with grantees rating the Foundation in the top 10 percent of CEP’s dataset for the level of staff involvement during the development of the proposal.
- However, grantees also report experiencing more pressure than grantees of the typical funder to modify their organizational priorities in order to create a grant proposal that is likely to receive funding.
 - Grantees who experienced moderate or high pressure from the Foundation during the selection process provide significantly lower ratings for the overall quality of their relationships with the Foundation, their overall satisfaction with the Foundation, and perceptions of the Foundation’s understanding of their fields and organizational goals and strategies.



“The process was relatively straight forward and helpful. The staff are very smart but tended to be very directive at times.”

CEP Recommendation

- *Taking the Foundation’s current strategy, goals and priorities into account, consider ways to decrease the high amount of pressure being felt by grantees to modify their organizational priorities during the selection process.*

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