

2014

GRANTEE & PARTNER SURVEY REPORT

A key aspect of how we improve as a foundation is to collect feedback from our employees and partners. In 2013, we implemented an Organizational Health survey with staff, the Center for Effective Philanthropy's Grantee Perception Report (GPR) survey with grantees, and interviews with key partners. We learned a great deal from the comprehensive surveys last year, which resulted in our setting two foundation-wide goals of increasing collaboration and reducing complexity. In 2014, the foundation asked ORS Impact, an independent consulting firm,

to implement a streamlined version of the GPR survey with grantees to assess our progress toward these goals, as well as our continued efforts to uphold the grantee commitment. This more targeted survey is meant to provide focused, actionable feedback to inform decision making and prioritize actions that will most effectively help us achieve our goals. This report provides results of this survey, which we will conduct annually. Results from the 2014 survey are displayed alongside 2013 GPR results for questions that had previous data.

HIGH-LEVEL FOUNDATION-WIDE THEMES



Our STRENGTHS

Consistently High Quality of Interaction Ratings

Two results with the highest favorability ratings included treating grantees and partners with respect, and comfort approaching the foundation if a problem arises. Overall, quality interactions were among the most highly rated items.

Streamlined Investment-Making Process Begins to Show Promise

Those who participated in the streamlined investment-making process reported having experienced a significant reduction in the complexity of their interactions with the foundation.

Collaboration and Flexibility around Grant Outcomes Rated Highly

Among the highest favorability ratings were questions related to how well the foundation collaborated with grantees in defining grant outcomes, and subsequent flexibility making adjustments to those outcomes over the life of the grant.



OPPORTUNITIES *for Improvement*

Continued Challenges in Clarity and Consistency of Communication

The lowest favorable ratings were related to communication and included transparency of foundation processes; staff engagement levels; decision making; and contribution to, and understanding of, foundation strategy.

Changes in Primary Foundation Contact Significantly Affects Grantees

Favorability ratings significantly decreased for almost all survey questions when grantees had experienced a change in their primary foundation contact within the last six months.

Limited Understanding of Grantees' Strategies and Goals

Responses continued to reflect unfavorable grantee perceptions regarding the foundation's understanding of their organizations' strategies and goals.

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1. NOTABLE THEMES & KEY FINDINGS

Overall Response Rates¹

The overall survey response rate in 2014 was 76%, compared to 62% in 2013.

foundation processes, staff engagement levels, decision-making processes, consistency of communication, and a grantee's contribution to and/or understanding of the foundation strategy. Grantee comments relating to the need to improve communication were also frequent, accounting for over 15% of those submitted.

Grantee Commitment

1. Quality Interactions

The foundation staff's ability to engage grantees in quality interactions is a clear strength.

Questions related to quality interactions were among the most favorably rated in the survey. Two survey questions with the highest favorability ratings were related to treating grantees and partners with respect, and comfort approaching the foundation if a problem arises. Two other survey questions that were related to quality interactions also showed high favorability ratings, including the extent to which the foundation engages in candid dialogue with grantees, and the responsiveness of foundation staff.

2. Clarity of Communication

Clarity and consistency of communication continues to be a challenge.

The survey's lowest favorable ratings were related to communication, specifically communication with respect to the transparency of

Improving Collaboration

A majority of grantees did not experience a change in the quality of their collaboration with the foundation in the last year.

While just over 70% of respondents did not report any change in collaboration over the last year, a few groups of grantees did indicate having a significantly different collaboration experience with the foundation.

Foundation wide, collaboration index ratings did not change notably from 2013. The favorability rating for the collaboration index across the foundation was 61%, below the target of 65%. There was a positive correlation between high favorability ratings in the index and whether or not a grantee had experienced a noticeable improvement in collaboration in the last year. This means that those who experienced an improvement in the quality of collaboration also rated questions within the collaboration index more highly.

Grantees rated the foundation highly on collaboration and flexibility around grant outcomes.

Note: Analyses in the Notable Themes and Key Findings only considers those respondents for whom the questions were applicable. Graphs throughout the report do include N/A responses. In the few cases where there were large numbers of N/A responses to a question there may be differences between values in the Notable Themes and Key Findings and the graphs.

¹ The overall response rate includes grantees, direct charitable expenses, partners, and program related investments. For a breakdown of response rates by group, please see the Participant Characteristics & Methodology section on page 12.

Among the highest favorability ratings in the survey were questions related to how well the foundation collaborated with grantees in defining grant outcomes and subsequent flexibility making adjustments to expectations about progress toward those outcomes over the life of the grant.

Grantees appreciate the foundation acting as a “thought partner.”

Many grantees submitted comments related to their appreciation of, and desire to continue, thought partnership activities with the foundation. Thought partnership for grantees included activities such as feedback on progress reports or joint progress reviews; various kinds of technical assistance, including evaluation and monitoring; and candid informal discussions in which foundation staff provided advice and constructive criticism.

Reducing Complexity

Streamlined investment-making process shows promise.

While the overall level of complexity experienced by most grantees did not change in the past year, those who had participated in the streamlined investment-making process reported a significant reduction in complexity compared to respondents who had not.

There were many grantee suggestions addressing how to reduce complexity.

Over 10% of the comments submitted by grantees related to reducing complexity. Common elements were suggestions about simplifying instructions for foundation processes, including budget and financial templates, grant proposals, and reporting. Grantees also recognized the reality of necessary changes, but suggested improved change management practices as a way to mitigate negative impact on grantees.

Emergent Findings

Changes in primary foundation contacts significantly affect grantees.

Favorability ratings significantly decreased for almost all core survey questions (18) when grantees had experienced a change in their primary foundation contact in the past six months. Among all of the survey segmentation variables, this was by far the factor with the most consistent effect on favorability ratings.

Grantees submitted a number of suggestions and comments related to helping mitigate the effects of foundation staff movement. Tactical suggestions included: requiring new staff to review project histories and plans, introducing new opportunity owners to grantees, and providing instructions to grantees about how to proceed when their main contact changes.

Grantees perceive foundation staff as having a limited understanding of their strategies and goals.

Similar to communicated findings from the 2013 survey, favorable ratings for the foundation’s understanding of grantee organizations were consistently among the lowest of all areas surveyed. Favorable ratings by grantees in this area were not only low in 2014, but decreased from 2013.

Grantees appreciate and want more of the foundation’s assistance in making connections.

Connecting grantees with other groups in their portfolio or those doing similar work and championing grantees to other entities (such as media, policymakers and other funders) accounted for over 20% of all of the comments submitted in the survey.

2. MAKING SENSE OF THE GRAPHS

1 FAVORABLE OPINIONS

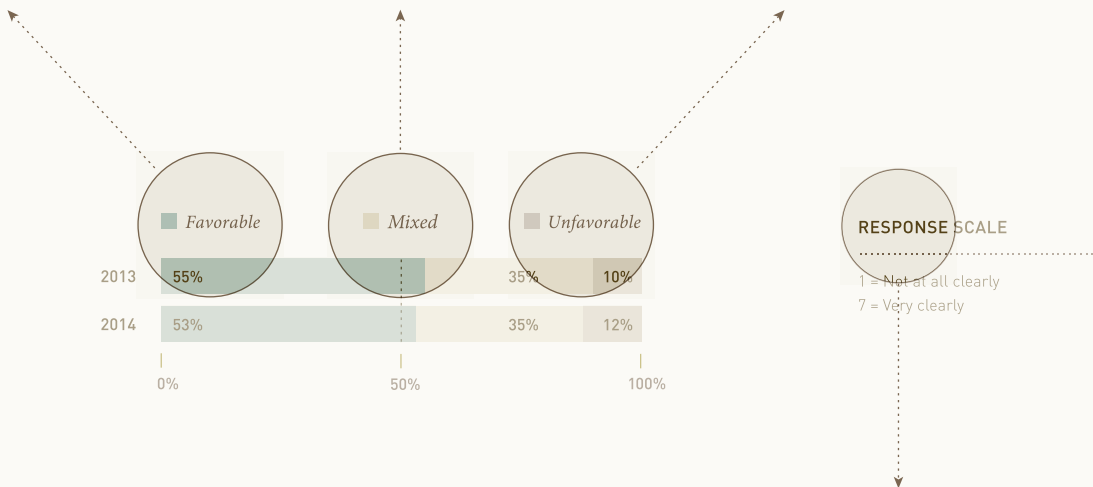
These are responses in the 6-7 range and are the highest on the scale.

2 MIXED OPINIONS

This middle section—the space between—represents ratings between 4-5.

3 UNFAVORABLE OPINIONS

This includes the percentage of participants who answered with a response of 1-3.



4 RESPONSE SCALE

This is the scale participants used to rate the foundation on a particular question. It is located in the margin on the right side of every graph.

3. GRANTEE RESULTS



Collaboration Index

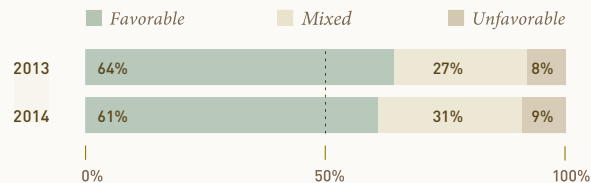
The Collaboration Index was created to provide a quick check of how we are progressing against our goal of improving collaboration and our grantee commitment. It is similar to the Relationship Index used in the 2013 GPR, but has been modified

to better reflect progress toward the foundation's goals. It is made up of the five questions listed below. Responses to these questions also appear individually throughout the survey and are designated with the **Collaboration Index icon**.



COLLABORATION INDEX

1. How well does the foundation understand your organization's strategies and goals?
2. Please rate your level of agreement to the following statement: Our working relationship with the foundation strengthens our organization's ability to achieve results.
3. How comfortable do you feel approaching the foundation if a problem arises?
4. How clearly has the foundation communicated its goals and strategy to you?
5. How consistent was the information provided by different communication resources, both personal and written, that you used to learn about the foundation?





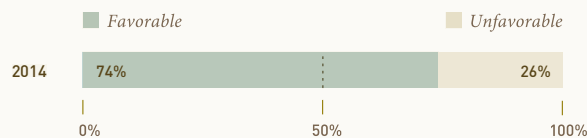
Grantee Commitment

Four years ago, the foundation made a commitment to grantees to improve the quality of their interactions with foundation staff, the clarity and consistency of the foundation's communication,

and to make two-way feedback channels available. This section contains responses related to our grantee commitment.

AWARENESS OF GRANTEE COMMITMENT

Are you aware of the foundation's commitment to grantees and partners?



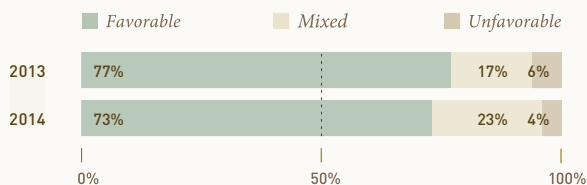
RESPONSE SCALE

Yes (Favorable)
No (Unfavorable)

1. Quality Interactions Section

RESPONSIVENESS

Overall, how responsive was foundation staff?

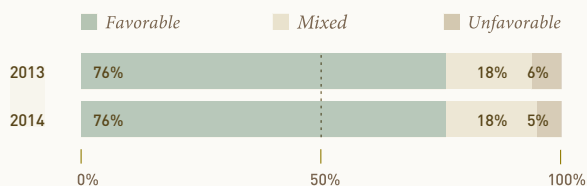


RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Not at all responsive
7 = Extremely responsive

APPROACHABILITY

How comfortable do you feel approaching the foundation if a problem arises?

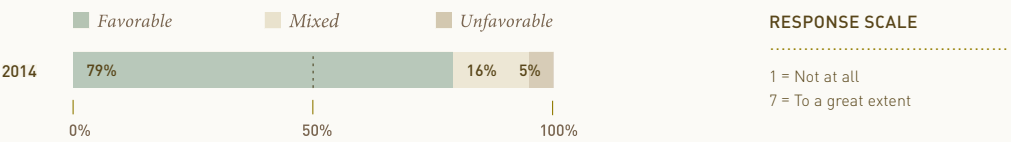


RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Not at all comfortable
7 = Extremely comfortable

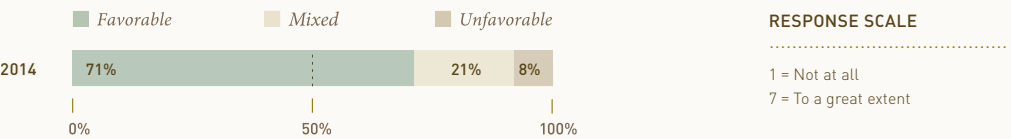
RESPECTFULNESS

To what extent is the foundation delivering on its commitment to treat grantees and partners with respect?



CANDOR

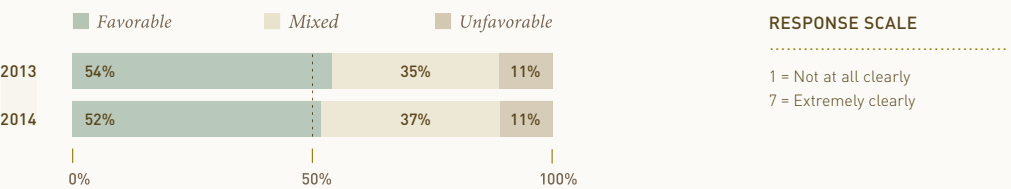
To what extent is the foundation delivering on its commitment to engage in candid dialogue with grantees and partners?



2. Clear and Consistent Communications Section

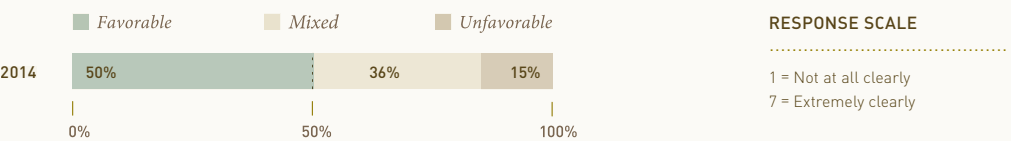
CLEAR COMMUNICATION

How clearly has the foundation communicated its goals and strategy to you?



CONTRIBUTION TO FOUNDATION STRATEGY

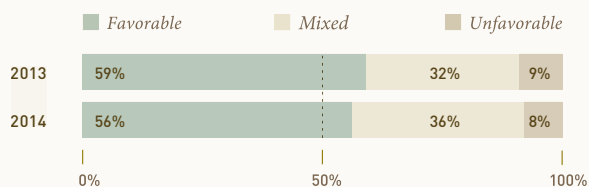
How clearly did foundation staff explain to you how your grant contributed to the larger goals of the foundation strategy?



CONSISTENCY OF COMMUNICATION



How consistent was the information provided by different communication resources, both personal and written, that you used to learn about the foundation?

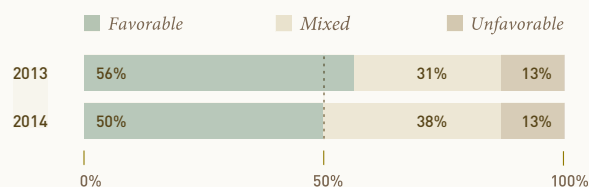


RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Not at all consistent
7 = Completely consistent

ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

How clearly did foundation staff explain how involved the foundation would be once the grant was awarded?

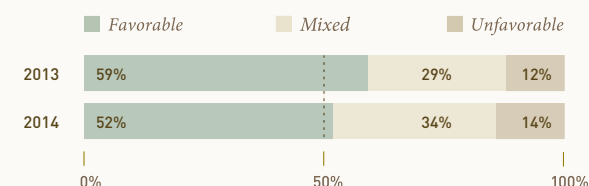


RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Not at all clearly
7 = Very clearly

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

How clearly did foundation staff explain to you the decision-making process on your grant?



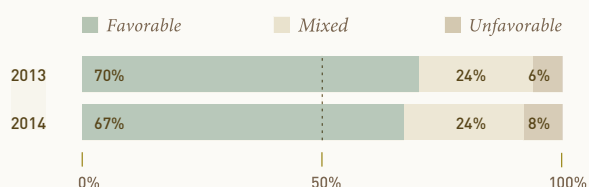
RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Not at all clearly
7 = Very clearly

3. Two-way Feedback Section

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEEDBACK

To what extent is the foundation delivering on its commitment to give grantees and partners opportunities to provide feedback?



RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Not at all
7 = To a great extent



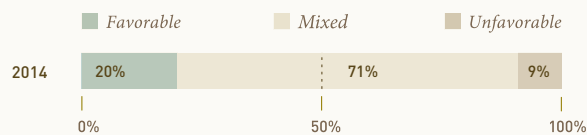
Improving Collaboration

Based on data from the 2013 Grantee Perception Report and organizational health surveys, two foundation-wide goals were developed: improving collaboration and reducing complexity.

This section contains responses to questions about improving collaboration along with success measures established by the foundation to gauge our progress.

QUALITY OF COLLABORATION

Thinking about your interactions with foundation staff over the past year, please rate to what extent you have experienced a change in the quality of collaboration.

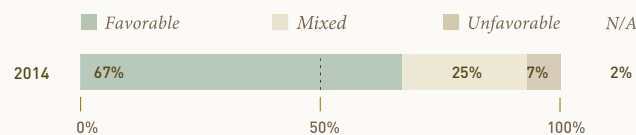


RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Very noticeable decline
4 = No change
7 = Very noticeable improvement

OUTCOME INVESTING: *Clarity of Success*

Before your grant was made, how clear were foundation staff on the key outcomes that would indicate success for your grant?

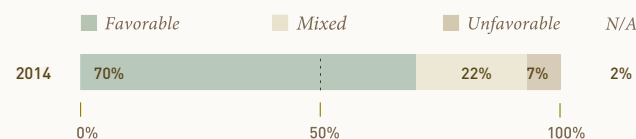


RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Not at all clear
7 = Very clear
N/A = Outcomes not established

OUTCOME INVESTING: *Collaboration*

How well did foundation staff collaborate with you to define the outcomes and outputs for your grant?

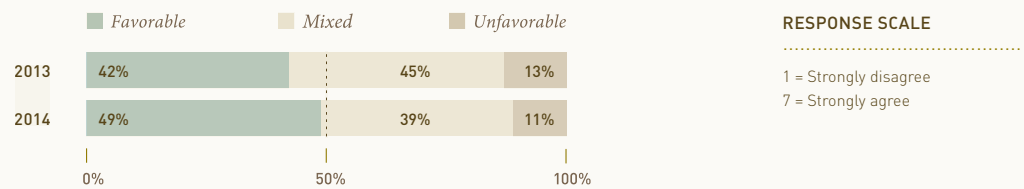


RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Not at all
7 = Very well
N/A = Outcomes not established

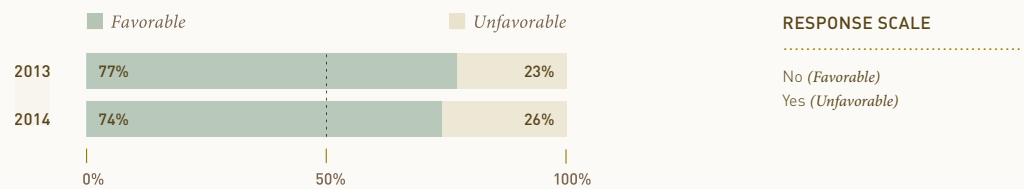
TRANSPARENCY

From your experience, how much do you agree or disagree that the foundation and its staff provide accessible and relevant information about organizational procedures, structures, and processes that affect your work?



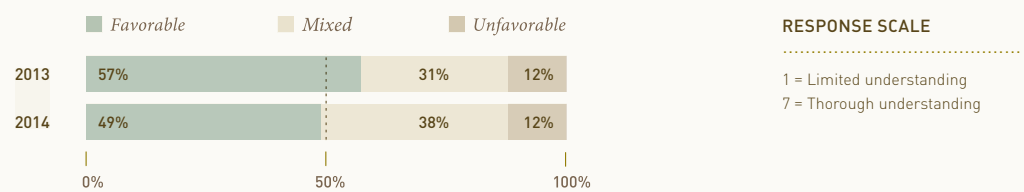
CHANGE IN PRIMARY CONTACT

In the past six months, have you experienced a change in your primary contact at the foundation?



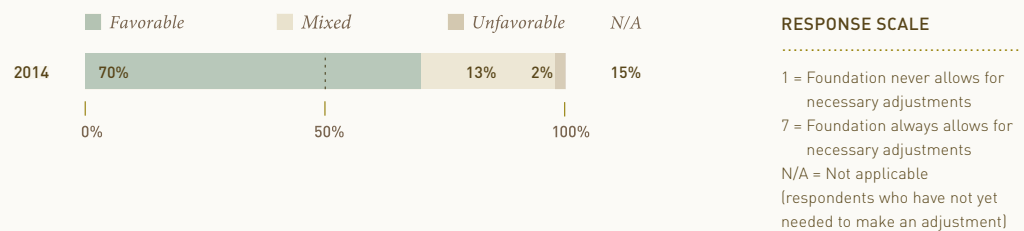
UNDERSTANDING OF GRANTEE STRATEGY

How well does the foundation understand your organization’s strategies and goals?



FLEXIBILITY IN GRANT MANAGEMENT

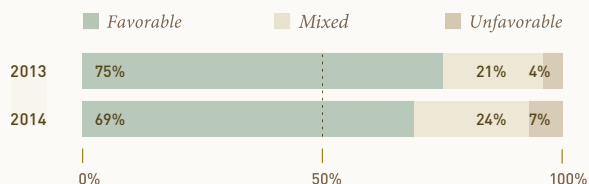
During the life of your grant, to what extent has the foundation allowed for adjustments regarding expected progress toward outcomes?



RELATIONSHIP STRENGTHENS RESULTS



Please rate your level of agreement to the following statement: Our working relationship with the foundation strengthens our organization's ability to achieve results.



RESPONSE SCALE

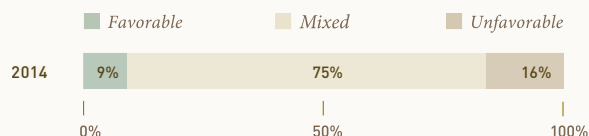
1 = Strongly disagree
7 = Strongly agree



Reducing Complexity

LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY

Thinking about your interactions with staff and the foundation's processes and procedures over the past year, please rate to what extent you have experienced a change in the overall level of complexity.

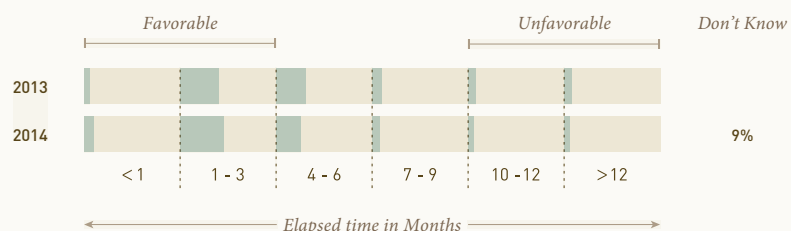


RESPONSE SCALE

1 = Very noticeable increase in complexity
4 = No change
7 = Very noticeable reduction in complexity

PROPOSAL COMMITMENT TIME

How much time do you estimate elapsed from the submission of the grant or contract proposal to clear commitment of funding? **



RESPONSE SCALE

FAVORABLE:

Less than 1 month
1 - 3 months

MIXED:

4 - 6 months
7 - 9 months

UNFAVORABLE:

10 - 12 months
Greater than 12 months

* This measure looks at grantee perception of the time between proposal submission and a clear commitment of funding. It is part of the broader overall cycle time learnings gathered by the foundation starting in 2014. This data was used to define the favorable, mixed, and unfavorable time ranges.

† In 2013, the data set excluded responses of "Don't Know." In 2014, these responses have been included. As a result, direct comparisons between these two data sets cannot be made.

4. PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS & METHODOLOGY

	FOUNDATION	
PARTICIPANT RESPONSE RATE		
GRANTEES	n = 2000 [‡]	76%
DIRECT CHARITABLE EXPENSES	n = 76	72%
PARTNERS	n = 19	83%
GRANTEE CHARACTERISTICS		
Grantees who have experienced a change in their primary contact in the past 6 months	n = 525	25%
Grantees who have gone through streamlined investment-making process	n = 123	6%
GRANT / CONTRACT INFORMATION		
Median year received funding for current grant*	2012	
Range of years received funding for current grant*	2000 - 2013	
Median length of grant received *	3 YEARS	
Range in length of grants received *	1 - 21 YEARS	
Median grant amount *	\$1,247,066	
Range of grant amounts**	\$2K - \$756M	
Median contract amount (DCEs)	\$600,000	
Range of contract amounts* (DCEs)	\$18K - \$12M	

*This includes grantee data only

*Ranges are rounded to be inclusive of minimum and maximum values

‡The n-values in the table equal the number of participants represented by the percentage values displayed, and do not represent the full sample.

METHODOLOGY

ORS Impact was asked to conduct a survey of grantees, partners, and direct charitable expense (DCE) contractors in an effort to gauge how well the foundation is upholding the grantee commitment and how it is progressing toward its goals of improving collaboration and reducing complexity. Several survey questions are the same as those used in the 2013 GPR survey to provide a baseline for assessing progress. Many of the questions are new, designed to hone in on key aspects of processes and goals specific to the foundation. The Collaboration Index is one of the new additions and is made up of five questions used in the Grantee Perception Report. The reliability of this index was tested and found to be high, with a Cronbach's Alpha of .85. This year's responses to these new questions will serve as a baseline for future progress-tracking efforts.

During March 2014, ORS Impact surveyed 2,647 grantees, 23 partners, and 106 DCE contractors. Foundation wide, responses were received from 2000 grantees, 19 partners, and 76 DCE contractors, resulting in the response rates displayed in the table above. ORS Impact implemented the survey for three weeks, from March 4th through March 25th of 2014. The survey included 22 core questions, one of which was open-ended. Results were analyzed by a number of descriptive factors, including those in the table above. Where findings are described as "significant", they are significant to the $p \leq .05$ level. Results are not reported for groups with fewer than five respondents.

5. DIRECT CHARITABLE EXPENSE (DCE) CONTRACTOR RESULTS

Individual teams had the option of surveying direct charitable expense contractors. An example of a direct charitable expense would be a contract to support measurement, learning, and evaluation. Results shown in the table below represent the percent of favorable responses—for scale questions, this means

the percent that responded with either a 6 or 7. For the Change in Primary Contact question, favorable responses reflect the “no” category, and for the Awareness of Grantee Commitment question, the percentage shown is for the “yes” responses.

	FOUNDATION
	n = 76
QUESTIONS:	2014
COLLABORATION INDEX	
COLLABORATION INDEX	57%
GRANTEE COMMITMENT	
AWARENESS OF GRANTEE COMMITMENT	56%
RESPONSIVENESS	66%
APPROACHABILITY	77%
RESPECTFULNESS	77%
CANDOR	68%
CLEAR COMMUNICATION	49%
CONTRIBUTION TO FOUNDATION STRATEGY	53%
CONSISTENCY OF COMMUNICATION	55%
ENGAGEMENT LEVELS	56%
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS	52%
OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEEDBACK	60%
IMPROVING COLLABORATION	
QUALITY OF COLLABORATION	15%
OUTCOME INVESTING: CLARITY OF SUCCESS	65%
OUTCOME INVESTING: COLLABORATION	67%
TRANSPARENCY	47%
CHANGE IN PRIMARY CONTACT	77%
UNDERSTANDING OF GRANTEE STRATEGY	42%
FLEXIBILITY IN GRANT MANAGEMENT	76%
RELATIONSHIP STRENGTHENS RESULTS	62%
REDUCING COMPLEXITY	
LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY	5%
PROPOSAL COMMITMENT TIME*	77%

*In 2013, the data set excluded responses of “Don’t Know.” In 2014, these responses have been included. As a result, direct comparisons between these two data sets cannot be made.

6. PARTNER RESULTS

Partners, as a group defined in this survey, comprise those that the foundation works with to pursue mutual goals but does not grant funds to. Teams were given the option of providing partner contacts to participate in the survey. Only divisions with five or more partner responses have their results displayed. Results shown in the table below represent the percent of

favorable responses—for scale questions, this means the percent that responded with either a 6 or 7. For the Change in Primary Contact question, favorable responses reflect the “no” category, and for the Awareness of Grantee Commitment question, the percentage shown is for the “yes” responses.

	FOUNDATION
	n = 19
QUESTIONS:	2014
COLLABORATION INDEX	
COLLABORATION INDEX	64%
GRANTEE COMMITMENT	
AWARENESS OF GRANTEE COMMITMENT	68%
RESPONSIVENESS	68%
APPROACHABILITY	74%
RESPECTFULNESS	68%
CANDOR	63%
CLEAR COMMUNICATION	58%
CONSISTENCY OF COMMUNICATION	58%
OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEEDBACK	63%
IMPROVING COLLABORATION	
QUALITY OF COLLABORATION	37%
TRANSPARENCY	32%
CHANGE IN PRIMARY CONTACT	74%
UNDERSTANDING OF GRANTEE STRATEGY	58%
RELATIONSHIP STRENGTHENS RESULTS	74%
REDUCING COMPLEXITY	
LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY	16%

7. TAKING ACTION



Each year when we ask grantees and partners for feedback we learn valuable information to help us continuously improve our processes and how we support our grantees, so together we can achieve greater impact. We are currently in the process of critically reviewing this year's results and will be sharing, as well as incorporating, what we learn into the way we work.

In the meantime, we are already taking action on previous survey feedback. One of the things we heard from grantees is that our processes are more complex than we would like them to be. As a result, we are taking steps to improve our proposal budget template and expect to roll out a simplified version later in 2014. In addition, we have recently implemented a consistent, streamlined investment-making process for both grants and contracts. We were pleased to learn from this year's survey results that grantees who participated in the new investment-making process are experiencing significantly less complexity in their interactions with us.

We are also paying close attention to how we can best collaborate with our grantees. Our new "Rapid Feedback" process—in which direct grantee feedback on short surveys is shared immediately with program officers after a grant payment is made—is intended to facilitate early dialogue about our working relationships and outcomes, promoting better long-term, collaborative partnerships.

At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we are committed to optimizing our grantees' and partners' collective impact and we thank everyone who participated in this survey, helping us achieve this goal.