

Funder Member Survey 2021

INTRODUCTION

In October 2021, Philanthropy Massachusetts conducted a Funder Member Survey. As the philanthropic community continues to adapt and work to address the impacts of COVID-19 and ongoing racial disparities and injustices, we sought to learn more about how funders have responded and evolved. In the survey we asked funders to 1) reflect on current behavior and practices, 2) consider their equity and inclusion work and 3) look ahead to 2022, particularly their interests and needs. We recognize that this survey represents a moment in time, as the sector tries to adapt and be responsive as the needs and impacts of COVID-19 evolve as well.

METHODOLOGY

We conducted the survey October 7-29, 2021. Responses are confidential, and all numeric rating responses to this survey are reported in aggregate. If any quotes are shared, we have masked all identifying information to protect anonymity.

We sent the survey to 915 individuals representing our more than 130 Funder Members; 174 individuals across our membership responded with 107 unique individuals *fully completing* the survey, representing a 19% response rate and a 61% survey completion rate.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

- 36% of respondents represented family foundations (nearly half of all respondents comprised private philanthropy)
- 22% represented Community Foundations (a high percentage given the number of community foundations in the State)
- Nearly 60% of the respondents serve at the senior level, with more than 20% serving as CEO, ED or equivalent, followed by other program staff and trustees at roughly 12% each
- 72% of respondents have been Members of Philanthropy MA for 5 or more years
- 39% of respondents fund in Greater Boston, 33% fund throughout the Commonwealth
- 27% of respondents fund nationally
- Western MA, Merrimack Valley, Cape & Islands and Southeast MA were 4 of the regions across the Commonwealth that were well represented (between 11-13%)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Pandemic and Funder Behavior

- The top two types of support beyond grants were **funders helping NPOs connect with other funders** (70%) and **learning opportunities such as convenings, skill-building, etc.** (55%)
- When asked, “how, if at all, has your relationship with your grantees changed over the past two years as a result of the health, economic and racial crises faced by our communities?”, open-ended responses included, “**more connected**”, “**increased two-way communication**”, and “**deeper relationships**”; this aligns with last year’s survey in that 81% of funders predicted that relationships with nonprofits would remain in place beyond 2020

- 20% indicated that they were **planning to increase their 2022 payout rate beyond the legal minimum 5% distribution** (whereas 56% reported in 2020 they were planning to increase payout beyond 5% in 2021)

Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI)

Respondents were asked how much their charitable giving organization is centering REDI work

- 42% reported that **the work was front and center**
- 46% reported that **it was a growing priority**
- only 2% of respondents said that it wasn't on the table

Challenges to “advancing your REDI work” included:

- Keeping the work and need front and center
- Board buy-in – resistance to change
- Time and resources
- Challenges connecting with the community
- Really incorporating REDI into all of their work (building it into processes/practices that are more than performative)

Looking Ahead

When asked what types of convenings are the most important, the following three ranked the highest:

- Current trends in philanthropy (for ex. participatory grantmaking)
- Funder Network meetings and programs
- Dialogues on public-policy issues (for ex. tax reform)

In response to the question of anticipating where funders will make changes in their work in 2022, the top areas included:

- Adding or enhancing a focus on racial equity (hiring, vendor selection, and grantmaking)
- Conversations with Board and/or Staff about racial equity, including Board and/or Staff composition

We see this reflected across the nearly dozen Funder Networks Philanthropy MA supports.

When asked about interests moving forward, top responses included:

- Operationalizing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Relationship building and networking with peers
- Trust-based philanthropy
- Evaluation, learning and impact

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has opened many of our eyes (and reminded some) to glaring disparities within our society. Many would argue that a return to 'normal' is insufficient. We agree. Over the past two years, nonprofits, and the individuals and families whose lives they impact, have been devastatingly impacted by these crises and have had to adapt quickly. Now that we as a funder community continue to see the impact of these crises, and have responded quickly, it's impossible to no longer see it.

We have experienced how our institutions (and their respective thinking and practices) can adapt in dire circumstances. Funders can continue to:

- Support nonprofits beyond a grant check, by connecting them to additional resources (namely people and money) and offer learning opportunities for their Staff
- Strengthen the relationships and connections to their grantees and nonprofit partners in their transparency and frequency of communications
- Increase payout rates and provide more unrestricted support
- Consider what they are asking of grant applicants/recipients, both in their application and reporting processes and reduce barriers to both
- Add/enhance a focus on racial equity in their grantmaking
- Engage in conversations *and actions* pertaining to racial equity, including the composition of their Boards/Staff

At Philanthropy Massachusetts, we will continue to elevate the funder behavior and practices that help increase the overall effectiveness and positive impact of the sector.

ABOUT PHILANTHROPY MASSACHUSETTS

Founded in 1969, Philanthropy Massachusetts is a diverse and vibrant membership association of highly engaged philanthropic organizations and individuals with interests in Massachusetts. We connect new and established donors, their trustees and staff to each other, to their communities and to emerging and relevant issues in the field. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Philanthropy MA delivers excellent opportunities in learning, networking, access to resources and tools, skill-building, and community-building and serves as a bridge between funders and fund applicants for better understanding, efficiency and impact. As a leading and influential voice and advocate for effective philanthropy, Philanthropy MA provides access to knowledge and cooperative action that enables our members to create extraordinary value for each other, their grantees and to collectively shape the future of a healthy and vital region.

Mission Statement: Philanthropy Massachusetts promotes the practice and expansion of effective and responsible philanthropy to improve the health and vitality of its region.

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Have questions or want to learn more?

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