

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grantee Experience Standards Analysis

Prepared with
The David and Lucile
Packard Foundation

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GRANTEE EXPERIENCE STANDARDS¹

The Packard Foundation is committed to establishing and maintaining effective relationships with our grantees. We strive to deliver on the following Grantee Experience Standards (GES) and continually monitor our efforts to meet them.

1. **RESPECT.** Grantees feel Foundation staff value grantee expertise and time, and approach funder-grantee power dynamics with humility and openness.
2. **PROCESS.** Grantees feel they understand the Foundation's grant requirements and processes.
3. **STRATEGY.** Grantees feel they understand how their work connects to the Foundation's strategy, how strategies evolve over time, and how to share input on those strategies.²
4. **INFORMATION.** Grantees feel Foundation staff are thoughtful about asking for and sharing information, data, and feedback, and are transparent about how and why it is used.
5. **RESPONSIVENESS.** Grantees feel Foundation staff provide timely responses to grantee questions.
6. **ENGAGEMENT.** Grantees feel they have opportunities to meaningfully engage in two-way dialogue with Foundation staff about our shared work.

1. Grantees provided feedback to previous iterations of these Standards through Phase 1 and 2 surveys and in interviews. These Standards represent the Foundation's final version of the Grantee Experience Standards.

2. In Phase 2, CEP piloted two versions of the Strategy Standard. One version, which is shown here, contained the additional clause "how to share input on those strategies," while the other concluded with "how those strategies evolve over time."

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Background

Originally drafted in 2007, the GES were developed in response to feedback from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation grantees that suggested the Foundation could do more to create a consistently excellent level of partnership with grantees. To address that feedback, the original GES laid out criteria designed specifically to guide staff's communication and interactions with grantees. Since then, the Foundation have been collecting data on these Standards in the biannual Grantee Perception Report.

In 2018, the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) conducted analyses on the GES data from the past decade. CEP found that ratings for several Standards have improved compared to their first, baseline ratings, and three Standards — clear expectations regarding the review process, staff responsiveness, and grantees' understanding of how their organizations fit into the overall strategy of their program — emerged as strong predictors of the quality of Packard's relationships with grantees.

Over a decade after the original Standards were introduced, the Packard Foundation believes changes in its work, its organization, and the world make it important to revisit these Standards to ensure they continue to guide and improve its work. Thus, the Packard Foundation engaged CEP to gather feedback as part of efforts to deepen its understanding of grantees' perspectives on refreshed Grantee Experiences Standards and explore ways to measure how well the Foundation is living up to the GES.

Description of data collection

This project took place in two sequential phases. In both, Packard Foundation staff played key design, analysis, and interpretation roles. The first phase consisted of a survey that focused on the clarity of the refreshed Standards, and the second phase consisted of a survey focused on measurement. This second phase also included the option for respondents to self-select into an interview.

In August 2019, the Foundation launched the (CEP-hosted) Phase 1 survey to a sample of its partners through an anonymous link. CEP received 548 responses.

In September 2019, CEP fielded the Phase 2 survey with a different sample of the Foundation's partners. The Phase 2 survey consisted of two versions — one included language related to opportunities for grantees to provide input on the Foundation's strategy and one did not. CEP received a total of 219 responses, a 25% response rate. Of those responses, 159 were from unique organizations. Thirty-eight percent (N=84) of respondents agreed to participate in an interview.

Following the Phase 2 survey, in October 2019, CEP and Packard Foundation conducted 14 and 8 interviews, respectively, for a total of 22 interviews with 25 grantees spanning program areas and U.S.-based and international locations. (Some interviews included multiple staff at one grantee organization.) Interviews were recorded, and notes were taken using a consistent framework.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Grantees **welcomed the two additional Standards** added between Phase 1 and Phase 2 — Respect and Engagement. Survey responses and interview data suggest these are the most important factors in determining their overall perception of the Foundation’s performance against these Standards.
- Grantees provided some of the **highest ratings** in the Phase 2 survey for components related to the **Respect Standard**, and repeatedly emphasized a related Standard — **Responsiveness** — **as a core element of demonstrating respect**.
- While **Process was highlighted as one of the clearest Standards** across both phases, ratings of its importance dropped from the most important Standard to the second least important Standard in Phase 2. Even so, grantees still shared suggestions on how to improve existing pre- and post-award processes and **requested more information on new topics**, like the process for application for future funding.
- Although grantees understand the Foundation’s strategy and its connection to their work, they experience **less clarity about strategy changes**: what the changes are, when they happen, what factors go into the decision-making process and why, and, ultimately, how these changes may affect grantees’ work.
- With regards to information, data, and feedback, grantees **felt clear about what to provide the Foundation**, but they encouraged the Foundation to **close the loop** by sharing how and why collected information is used and its potential value to grantees’ work.
- To build on already positive relationships, grantees offered a two-pronged approach — setting **clear expectations and emphasizing two-way feedback** — to further improve their engagement with staff.
- When it comes to continuous measurement of the Foundation’s efforts to meet these Standards, there is consensus that grantees **preferred a survey that comes from program officers** but is returned to someone else in the Foundation or to a 3rd party. The surveys should be **aligned with the grant lifecycle** and should be fielded far enough apart to allow for multiple interactions with the Foundation in between each assessment point.

AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

CEP worked closely with Packard Foundation to discuss the topics raised in grantees' feedback. Below are our reflections and areas for further consideration, as Packard works to finalize the GES.

- Packard Foundation should **decide and clearly state populations to which these Standards apply** (e.g., primary contact at grantees' organization, all grantees' staff, applicants, etc.).
- Across all Standards, grantees consistently discussed the **prominent role of program officers** in meeting these Standards. The Foundation will need to engage program officers in discussing the **trade-offs associated with grantees' suggested behaviors** to meet these Standards.
- Grantees raised **moments of strategy change as less clear**. Consider the process for reinforcing and using these Standards during moments of change.
- The Foundation should **experiment with different ways to close the loop**, so grantees understand the reasoning behind information sharing and experience its potential impact on their work. For example, grantees propose strategies for reporting back on this project:
 - Program officers sharing out a **written report with visuals and high-level findings** from this project in addition to the final GES
 - Creating opportunity to **engage further with the results** (e.g., debriefing with primary contacts or through a webinar with other grantees)
 - **Continuing and/or recurring conversations** about these Standards so they remain top of mind for both grantees and for staff
 - **Sharing Standards with peer foundations** and encouraging them to create similar sets of Standards
- Given the connections between the "Responsiveness" Standard and the "Respect" and "Process" Standards, the Foundation should discuss the **value of "Responsiveness" as a standalone Standard**, and **consider combining responsiveness into other Standards**.
- Review and potentially modify portions of Standards that were identified by grantees as unclear:
 - Amending the last component of Standard 4 to clearly indicate why and how information is used for the benefit of grantees
 - Further refining language in Standard 6 to more accurately reflect the types of engagement grantees are seeking, taking into account the Foundation's own goals
- Develop an **internal survey mechanism for performance measurement** and establish a process to have that survey originate from program officers with data returned elsewhere.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY (CEP)

MISSION: To provide data and create insight so philanthropic funders can better define, assess, and improve their effectiveness — and, as a result, their intended impact.

VISION: We seek a world in which pressing social needs are more effectively addressed. We believe improved performance of philanthropic funders can have a profoundly positive impact on nonprofit organizations and the people and communities they serve.

Although our work is about measuring results, providing useful data, and improving performance, our ultimate goal is improving lives. We believe this can only be achieved through a powerful combination of dispassionate analysis and passionate commitment to creating a better society.

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ABOUT THE DAVID AND LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

The Packard Foundation is a family foundation guided by the enduring business philosophy and personal values of Lucile and David, who helped found one of the world's leading technology companies. Their approach to business and community participation has guided our philanthropy for over 55 years. We work on the issues our founders cared about most: improving the lives of children, enabling the creative pursuit of science, advancing reproductive health, and conserving and restoring the Earth's natural systems, both in the U.S. and around the world. We invest in effective organizations and leaders, collaborate with them to identify strategic solutions, and support them over time to reach our common goals. For more information, please visit www.packard.org.

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