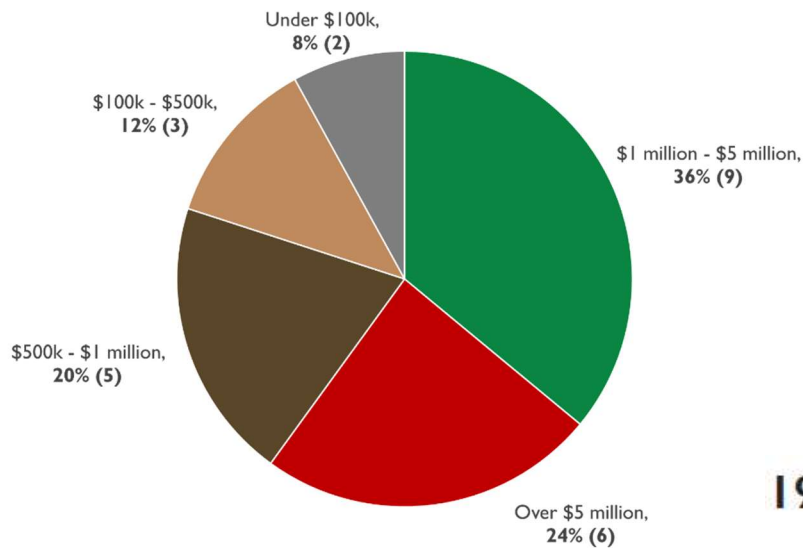




## Nonprofit Feedback Survey Findings and Responses

### Respondent Demographics – 27 nonprofit organizations

#### Annual Budget

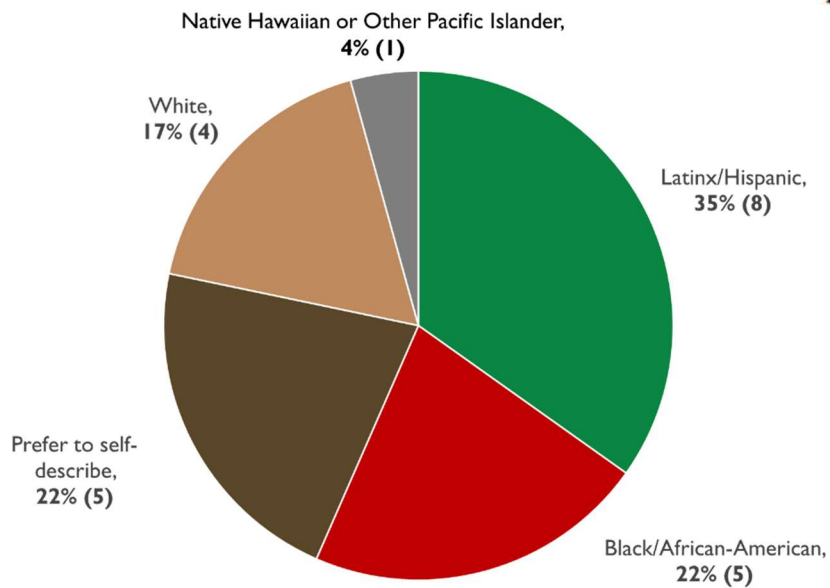


**19 CEOs/Executive Directors**

**1 Director**

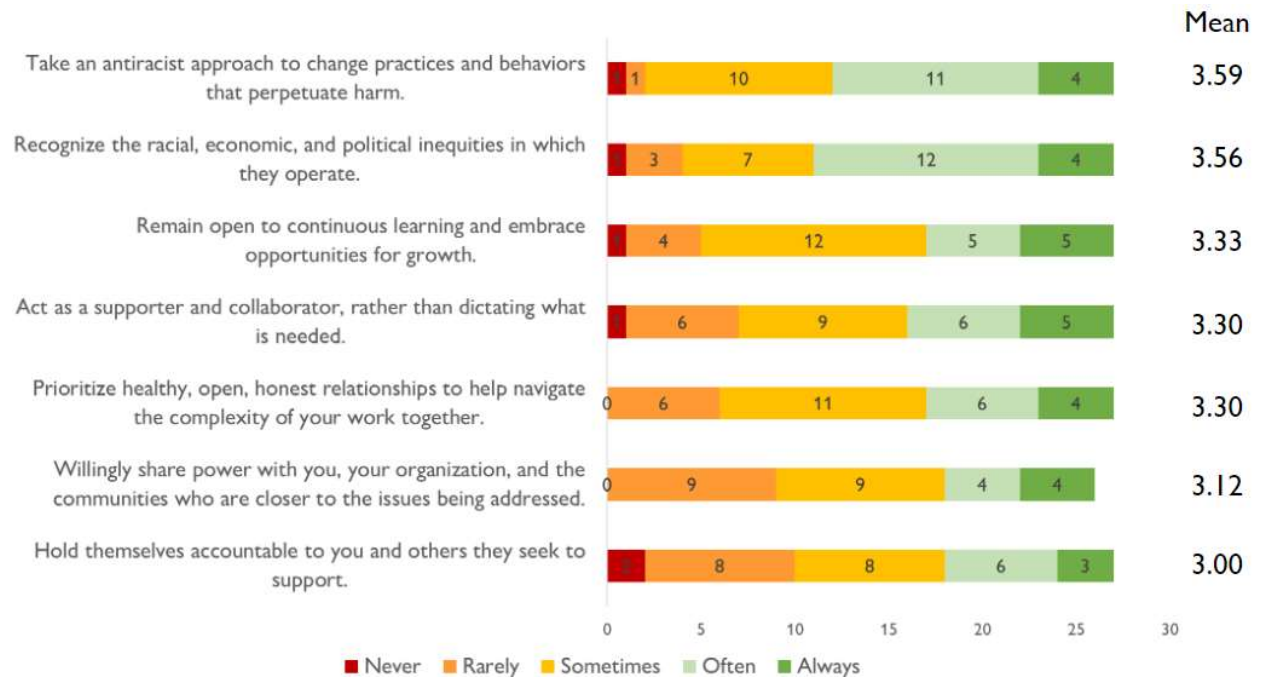
**7 Development Staff**

#### Race





In your interactions with funders overall, to what extent have you experienced them demonstrating behaviors that enact the values of trust-based philanthropy?



How would you describe your experiences with funders and the degree of safety or trust you felt during those experiences?





What is a specific time when you felt a funder did something to erode the safety or trust you felt in the situation? What specifically did the funder do to contribute to this outcome?

### **Communication and Engagement**

- A funder changed their tracking and reporting requirements several times during the project with little to no communication of the change until they do an audit using the revised requirements. The funding was tied to the goals and it was a reimbursement grant. It caused us to spend money to do the work and then learn that we would not be reimbursed because we were not tracking based on the revised requirements. This approach doesn't cause trust or a sense of collaboration. We ultimately stopped the project and were not reimbursed for a significant amount of money.
- When I look at who a funder has previously funded, their funding priorities, and see that there is program/focus alignment, but then cannot make contact with a funder, it erodes trust. Or when a funder encourages an application but it gets denied almost immediately without any conversation about why it wasn't funded. Both of those erode trust.

### **Funding Practices**

- Specific Funders have been and continue to be very heavy handed in supporting favorite organizations that make their work more simple but that systematically exclude others who are just as capable of doing the work.
- Government funders focus more on paperwork and punitive approaches instead of actually serving people and understanding the human experience. It is hard to trust funders who require so much and are stringent in policies, who think black and white with no gray when you are working in social services.
- I felt some funders were not sensitive to the challenges we ran into during COVID. We had a couple of programs we were not able to complete, and although we explained the reasons, we still felt like the funders held the fact that we were unable to complete them, or complete them as originally planned against us.
- Most often, the funder does not care about what you have to say, they simply just want to keep working with the same groups over and over again, with no real interest in learning and hearing about how a collaboration could work between the orgs.



When have you felt safe and trusting in an experience with a funder? What contributed to you feeling this way?

### **Communication and Engagement**

- Requesting feedback and allowing for suggestions and flexibility to make the program more relevant to the local context.
- Open communication on challenges of grants and on the planning and development of proposals.
- I feel safe as I believe the openness in communications and my ability to express concerns, issues, challenges without feeling stigmatized.
- Some of our funders come to our programs on a regular basis. These funders get to see firsthand what we are doing and how we are doing it. So when we create our final reports there are no misunderstandings. The trust is there, and the funder has shown interest in how things are working throughout the program
- Supportive funders are open to honest and productive conversations that facilitate an organization's abilities to learn and improve. They understand that "weaknesses" are actually "challenges" that are often a byproduct of overworked, understaffed agencies that are doing their best to service their clients and the community.
- They had a quick initial LOI and quickly got back to us to have a short 15 minute zoom call with their board. We got 5 minutes to talk about how we would spend the grant money, they got 10 minutes to ask questions. They made their decision and got back to us within two weeks. It was very informal and we got to see each other's faces and hear directly about each other's goals
- The best interaction is when a funder truly listens and responds open and honestly about the possibility of getting support.

### **Collaborative Partnership**

- A funder provided the funding and then gave us complete control to accomplish the work. They recognized that we understood the community's culture and how to best provide the service. They didn't question our out-of-the-box thinking and acted upon our suggestions. That often meant they advocated for us with their internal departments. They let us know that we were the lead and they were there to support us and remove barriers. They treated us as trusted messengers for the communities we serve. They have now funded our work for multiple years and our relationship of collaboration has grown.
- When the funder takes time to understand and get to know the nonprofit, the relationship can be a very good one. I personally like forming a bit of a social relationship if I can, understanding and respecting our different professional roles naturally, but when both the funder and nonprofit can open up and share some personal



experiences over a coffee, lunch or glass of wine, the professional relationship can be strengthened.

### **Funding Practices**

- Unsolicited opportunities extended, which demonstrated trust and confidence in my organization.
- The safest funders are those that don't ask for race, sexuality and/or politics in their applications. Also, those who offer to support behind-the-scene activities such as grant research, writing, and reporting, those who process the paperwork, those who keep the program running that are not the direct service part of the program.
- I have had the pleasure of working with funders that truly seemed to care, not only for the agency they were funding but the clientele the funding was being used for. Particular funding was received by a federal agency. The FPO went above and beyond to help our agency work out kinks and train us to use the funding in the most effective ways.
- I feel trusted when funders interrogate ways in which they can be more supportive or more creative in supporting our work. When a foundation is not just interested in funding what neatly fits into their agenda but finding ways to address what we believe to be important, that lets me know that they trust us to deliver as is needed.
- A particular example from a number of years ago was in an application to a funder who recognized that we had not prioritized building operating reserves and designated a large grant as restricted to an operating reserve fund for a number of years. That action transformed our agency over the ensuing period to a point where we have made building up our reserve fund a priority and are now in a financially strong period to withstand unexpected adverse financial situations (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic).
- Allow agencies to do the work that they are entrusted to do without highly stringent forms and requirements.

### **Consistency and Predictability**

- When funding is renewed and programs and services are expanded to sustainable growth outcomes.
- Honesty builds trust. When a funder is honest and direct it builds trust - it doesn't always result in funding, but honest communication followed by predictable behavior builds integrity and trust.



What can funders do to build a safe space for you to be honest about the things that you need and the challenges you face?

### **Communication and Engagement**

- Listen and act upon what they hear. Don't assume they know what is needed in the community or in the CBO they are funding. Genuinely ask questions without judgment.
- We would welcome more interaction with program officers to maintain relationships which are vital to trust.
- Open dialogue...not just in groups, but individually.
- Listen, Hear the real front line challenges providers, stakeholders face in getting this accomplished. Be open to change that they are not familiar with or may not be in their expertise realm.
- More dialogue sessions and more funder forums where program officers can spell out details on their grant processes.
- I really think more communication and check-ins, especially on-site check-ins help the most. I know those can be hard as everyone has limited staff but it's VERY helpful.
- Perhaps the most useful action a funder could take would be to make themselves more available to the nonprofit community and facilitate interaction that would enable them to learn more about the many worthwhile organizations that serve vulnerable populations in our community.
- Be honest, transparent and have open communication with non-profits who are seeking funding.

### **Change Funding Practices**

- Recognize that small grassroots CBOs do not have the infrastructure that large established CBOs have. Give the funding to the CBOs who are actually doing the work even if they are very small. Allow input about the potential funding before it is finalized and offered. Input should include the need for funding related to cultural nuances that are required to reach BIPOC populations. (e.g. food, music, incentives, etc.)
- Provide clear orientations at the beginning of being awarded funding and clear communication throughout the life of the funding. Streamline the reporting requirements and frequency.
- I believe funders should stop focusing on race, sexual identity, and politics and focus on the needs of the community at large. All people can have disabilities or be "economically disadvantaged" and need help, so please stop focusing on color, sex & politics.
- Not be so rigid and rely on local knowledge. Also, provide feedback on how organizations can improve on their chances of funding. Feedback on denied applications would help, even if general.



- Unfortunately, many of our ground level organizations lack the capacity or infrastructure to receive funding for the work that they are already doing. Providing trainings and capacity building opportunities is key in building bridges to understanding why our region is disproportionately underfunded.

### **Opportunities for Connection**

- More opportunities for informal listening sessions, hosted by a nonprofit. Small more intimate conversation with same sector orgs.
- Small group sessions for listening and problem solving over a regular and routine period of time.
- Convene organizations in an area where they intend to make an investment to define the relationships of power and exclusion in that area and what investments can help build equity and inclusion as a means of deciding who should be engaged and what priorities to invest in.
- Most organizations lack high powered, highly resourced board members, or even highly experienced development officers that command high salaries. This puts organizations at an extreme disadvantage in securing support. Understandably, funders often work under similar constraints as community-based service providers and do not have the time to respond to every contact requesting a meeting or conference to establish relationships. Periodic forums that enable in-person contacts would be very helpful, particularly in facilitating not only funding opportunities but relationship-building opportunities that could help in board member recruitment.
- Create a space for smaller organizations to share their experiences.