



Current Issues in Foundation Philanthropy

This survey should take approximately 15-25 minutes to complete.
Please complete this survey by **Wednesday, September 24**.

Introduction

Thank you for your participation in this research study conducted by the Center for Effective Philanthropy. In this survey, we will be asking you about your experiences leading a foundation and working with grantees in today's context. Please answer the questions in the survey to the best of your ability; there are no right or wrong answers.

CEP takes the confidentiality of data very seriously. Your responses to this survey will be kept **completely confidential**. Although CEP will know the identity of survey respondents, when results of this survey are shared:

- CEP will not reveal the identity of organizations that did or did not participate in this survey.
- All numeric rating responses to this survey will be reported in aggregate (e.g., as averages and percentages), and no individual responses will be reported.
- If we quote part of your response to an open-ended question, we will mask all identifying information in the quote to thoroughly protect your anonymity.

If you have any questions about this survey or research project, please contact Caroline Gasparini, coordinator, at carolineg@cep.org.

Instructions

- **Please do not use the forward and back buttons on your browser's navigation bar** to move forward and back in the survey. Instead, use the directional buttons at the bottom of each screen.
- **To stop and continue the survey at a future time**, close your browser and use the survey link found in your email to resume the survey.

ABOUT YOUR FOUNDATION

1. Which of the following best describes what type of funder your organization is?
 - Community foundation
 - Private foundation
 - Other (*please specify*): _____

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

2. In what program area(s) does your foundation provide funding? *(Please select all that apply)*
- Arts, culture, and humanities
 - Education
 - Environment and animals
 - Health
 - Human services
 - International/foreign affairs
 - Mutual/membership benefit
 - Public, societal benefit
 - Religion
 - Social justice
 - Other *(please specify)*: _____
3. What is the geographic focus of your foundation’s grantmaking? *(Please select all that apply)*
- Local
 - State
 - Regional
 - National
 - Global

TERMS IN THIS SURVEY

In 2025, many legislative actions, executive orders, and budget decisions from the U.S. federal government have gone into effect with the potential for wide-ranging effects on philanthropy and nonprofits. In the remainder of this survey, we refer to this set of events as the “current context.”

FOUNDATIONS AND THE CURRENT CONTEXT

4. As a result of changes in the current context in 2025, has your foundation experienced any of the following?

	We experienced this in 2025	We have not experienced this, but anticipate that we will	We have not experienced this, and do not anticipate that we will	Don't know	Not applicable
Legal challenges related to our grantee organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Backlash or opposition to our foundation’s mission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pressure to meaningfully reframe how we publicly describe our work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns about our staff’s or board’s well-being and safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

Increased demand for our foundation's funding	<input type="checkbox"/>				
---	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

5. (If respondent selects “We experienced this in 2025” in the previous question in response to “Pressure to meaningfully reframe how we publicly describe our work”) From which of the following sources have you experienced pressure, directly or indirectly, to reframe how you describe your work? (Please select all that apply)
- Internal discussions/staff concerns
 - Legal advice from your attorneys
 - Board of directors
 - Major donors
 - Federal government
 - Public/community reactions
 - Other (please specify): _____
6. (If “Community foundation” selected in Q1) How would you describe the state of giving from donors to your community foundation in 2025 relative to the same period a year ago?
- Giving from donors has **significantly decreased**
 - Giving from donors has **slightly decreased**
 - Giving from donors has **stayed the same**
 - Giving from donors **has slightly increased**
 - Giving from donors has **significantly increased**
7. What type of impact has the current context had on your foundation’s ability to make progress toward its goals?
- Positive
 - No impact
 - Negative
 - Don’t know
8. How much risk does the current context pose for your foundation to continue to operate freely?
- No risk
 - Slight risk
 - Moderate risk
 - Significant risk
 - Don’t know/not sure
9. Which of the following types of risk, if any, is your foundation most concerned about in the current context? (Please select all that apply)
- Digital/data security risks
 - Financial risks (e.g., losses to investments)
 - Personal safety risks for staff and/or board
 - Risk of staff burnout/turnover
 - Legal risks (e.g., hiring lawyers, being sued)
 - Reputational risks (e.g., losing credibility with partners or community members)

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

- Risk that government action could force your foundation to close
- Risk of your foundation being unable to support basic needs for those your grantee organizations serve
- Other (*please specify*): _____
- None of the above (*Mutually exclusive*)

10. Which of the following actions, if any, has your foundation taken to mitigate risks posed by the current context? (*Please select all that apply*)

- Consulted with legal counsel
- Engaged consultants (excluding legal counsel) for risk mitigation
- Developed or revised a document retention policy
- Changed language describing your foundation’s work on public-facing materials (e.g., website, social media, etc.)
- Changed language describing your foundation’s work internally
- Created or revised a crisis communications plan
- Reduced public-facing communications generally
- Shifted communications from written to verbal forms
- Shifted programmatic work away from certain areas
- Planned scenarios for perceived risks
- Other (*please specify*): _____
- None of the above (*Mutually exclusive*)

11. Which of the following statements best describes your relationship to your foundation’s board with respect to risk?

- The board is less risk averse than I am
- The board and I are aligned with respect to risk
- The board is more risk averse than I am

12. Which of the following statements best describes your relationship to your foundation’s staff with respect to risk?

- The staff are less risk averse than I am
- The staff and I are aligned with respect to risk
- The staff are more risk averse than I am

13. What is the greatest challenge, if any, that you have faced as the leader of your foundation in 2025?

FOUNDATION SUPPORT OF NONPROFITS AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

14. As a result of changes in the current context in 2025, have your foundation’s grantees experienced any of the following?

	Most or all of our grantees experienced this in 2025	Some of our grantees experienced this in 2025	Our grantees have not experienced this, but we anticipate that they will	Our grantees have not experienced this, and we do not anticipate that they will	Don't know	Not applicable
Cuts or cancellations in government funding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns about the well-being and safety of those that grantee organizations are seeking to help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal challenges related to the people or issues affected by grantee organizations' work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Backlash or opposition to grantee organizations' missions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pressure to meaningfully reframe how grantee organizations publicly describe their work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns about grantee organizations' staff's or board's well-being and safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased demand for grantee organizations' programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. (If respondent selects "Global" in Q3) Please describe the most significant effect, if any, that you believe the current context is having, or will have, on the organizations and communities outside the US that your foundation serves.

16. What is the most significant change, if any, the foundation has made to its work in 2025?

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

17. How effective do you feel your foundation has been in each of the following areas in relation to your grantees in 2025?

	Not at all effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Very effective	Don't know	This is not currently a priority for our foundation
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Responsiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Willingness to take risks	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Understanding challenges that our grantees face	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Providing unrestricted support	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Providing multiyear support	<input type="checkbox"/>					

18. What is the one thing your foundation's board of directors could do to be most helpful to the foundation in the current context?

CHANGING GRANTMAKING BUDGETS AND PRIORITIES

19. In response to the current context, has your foundation increased its payout rate in 2025 beyond what was originally planned?

- Yes
- No, but we are considering doing so
- No, and we are not considering doing so
- Don't know/information not readily available

20. (If respondent selects "Yes" in previous question) By what percent did your foundation increase its payout rate in 2025 beyond what was originally planned in response to the current context?

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

(For example, an increase in payout rate from 4% to 6% would result in a 2% increase. Please enter whole numbers only.)

_____ percent

21. In response to the current context, has your foundation modified, or is it planning to modify, any of its programmatic goals?

- Yes, the foundation has modified, or is planning to modify, all of its programmatic goals
- Yes, the foundation has modified, or is planning to modify, some of its programmatic goals
- No, the foundation has not modified, and is not planning to modify, any of its programmatic goals
- Not sure/too soon to tell
- Don't know/information not readily available

22. How is the foundation modifying, or planning to modify, its programmatic goals? *(Only shown to those who select a "Yes" option in the previous question)*

23. In response to the current context, which of the following changes, if any, has your foundation made to its programmatic strategies? *(Please select all that apply)*

- No changes *(Mutually exclusive)*
- Added new initiatives/programs
- Ended existing initiatives/programs
- Joined a funder collaborative(s) or pooled funding effort(s)
- Reallocated funding across initiatives/programs
- Modified the strategy for at least one initiative/program
- Changed the geographic focus for at least one initiative/program
- Changed the communities being served for at least one initiative/program
- Other *(please specify)*: _____

24. In response to the current context, has your foundation provided emergency or rapid response grants to help nonprofits respond to the current context?

- Yes
- No, but we are considering doing so
- No, and we are not considering doing so
- Don't know/information not readily available

MAKING UNRESTRICTED AND MULTIYEAR GRANTS

25. In response to the current context, is the foundation now providing a larger number of **unrestricted grants** than it had been prior to 2025?

- Yes

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

- No, but we are considering doing so
- No, and we are not considering doing so
- Don't know/information not readily available

26. Did you discuss with the foundation's board of directors whether the foundation should increase its provision of unrestricted grants?

- Yes
- No

27. (If "yes" selected in previous question) How would you describe the board's attitudes toward increasing the foundation's provision of unrestricted grants, in comparison to your own?

- The board and I were both in support
- The board was generally not in support, but I was in support
- The board was generally in support, but I was not in support
- The board and I were both not in support

28. In response to the current context, is the foundation now providing a larger number of **multiyear grants** than it had been prior to 2025?

- Yes
- No, but we are considering doing so
- No, and we are not considering doing so
- Don't know/information not readily available

CHANGING APPLICATION AND REPORTING PROCESSES

29. In response to the current context, has the foundation made changes to streamline its application process?

- Yes
- No, but we are considering doing so
- No, and we are not considering doing so
- Don't know/information not readily available

30. In response to the current context, has the foundation made changes to streamline its reporting requirements?

- Yes
- No, but we are considering doing so
- No, and we are not considering doing so
- Don't know/information not readily available

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE BEYOND THE GRANT

31. In response to the current context, has your foundation begun providing any new forms of assistance beyond the grant (including but not limited to legal support, cybersecurity assistance, resources for staff well-being, etc.)?

- Yes

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

- No, but we are considering doing so
- No, and we are not considering doing so
- Don't know/information not readily available

32. (If “Yes” selected in the previous question) Which of the following new forms of assistance beyond the grant is your foundation providing? (Please select all that apply)

- Assistance with advocacy efforts (including through 501(c)(4)s)
- Assistance with mutual aid efforts outside the 501(c)(3) model
- Cybersecurity assistance
- Fiscal sponsorships
- Assistance with legal support
- New collaborations/partnerships with grantees
- New collaborations/partnerships with members of the community
- New collaborations/partnerships with other funders
- Resources for staff well-being
- Other (please specify): _____

LOOKING AHEAD

33. Beyond granting additional funds to grantees, what do you believe is the most important way that leaders of foundations can help their grantees navigate the changing context in 2026?

34. Given the opportunity, what is one thing that you would change about your foundation’s board that would enable your foundation to achieve greater impact?

35. One year from now, how do you hope that foundation funders will have changed, if at all, in response to the current context?

MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR FOUNDATION

The following section asks some demographic questions about you (the person who completed most of the survey) and questions about your foundation. This information will be used to describe the survey population in aggregate and to compare the experiences of different groups. **As with all the questions in this survey, this section is optional and responses will remain confidential.**

36. What is your current role?

- CEO/Executive Director or equivalent
- Vice President of Programs or equivalent
- Director of Strategy or equivalent
- Other (*please specify*): _____

37. How many years have you been in your current role at your organization?

- Less than 1 year
- At least 1 year but fewer than 3 years
- At least 3 years but fewer than 6 years
- At least 6 years but fewer than 10 years
- 10 years or longer

38. How many years have you worked at a grantmaking institution (i.e. your current role and any other roles)?

- Less than 1 year
- At least 1 year but fewer than 3 years
- At least 3 years but fewer than 6 years
- At least 6 years but fewer than 10 years
- 10 years or longer

39. Do you have prior experience working for a grant-seeking nonprofit?

- No
- Yes

40. Do you identify as a person of color?

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

41. How would you describe your race and/or ethnicity? (*Please select all that apply*)

- African American or Black
- American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous
- Asian or Asian American
- Latina, Latino, Latinx or Hispanic
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Multiracial and/or Multi-ethnic
- Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian
- White
- Race and/or ethnicity not included above (*optional, please describe*): _____
- Prefer not to say (*Mutually exclusive*)

42. How do you describe yourself? (*Please select all that apply*)

- Gender non-conforming or non-binary
- Man
- Woman

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

- Prefer to self-describe/identify (*optional, please describe*): _____
- Prefer not to say (*Mutually exclusive*)

43. Are you transgender?

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

44. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) community?

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

45. Do you have a disability?

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

46. Which of the following best describes the composition of your foundation's board?

	No board members (0%)	1-24% of board members	25-49% of board members	50-99% of board members	All board members (100%)	Don't know/ Prefer not to say
People from the LGBTQ+ community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
People of color	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
People with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

47. Would you be open to being contacted in the future to share more about the topics covered in this survey? If so, please provide your name and email address below. If not, please feel free to leave the fields below blank.

Name _____

Email _____ (*Valid email addresses only.*)

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

48. This is the last question in the survey. By clicking “Submit”, you will submit your responses.

Do you have any comments, questions, or feedback that you would like to share with CEP?

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

©The Center for Effective Philanthropy

**CONFIDENTIAL & NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**