



**FUNDING NONPROFIT ENDOWMENTS:  
Foundation Perspectives and Practices**

**Data Collection Instruments  
March 2024**

This document contains the survey instruments and interview protocols used to collect data for CEP’s “Funding Nonprofit Endowments: Foundation Perspectives and Practices” report.

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## Survey Instrument

This survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.  
Please complete this survey by **November 1, 2023**.

### Introduction

Thank you for your participation in this research study conducted by the Center for Effective Philanthropy. In this survey, we will ask you to share your perspectives on a funder's role in strengthening the long-term sustainability of nonprofit organizations. We will also ask about your foundation's current practices. 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 study are shared through a publicly available research report:

- 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.
- If we quote part of your responses 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 Emily Yang, analyst, at (415) 645-5354 or at [emilyy@cep.org](mailto:emilyy@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.

## GRANTS FOR NONPROFIT ENDOWMENTS & RESERVES

The following section will ask about your foundation's practices regarding funding nonprofit endowments and reserves. We define endowments as funds to be kept permanently and invested to provide continued support to the nonprofit organization or support for a designated purpose. We define reserves as funds that the nonprofit organization's board may spend down under certain circumstances.

1. Does your foundation fund nonprofit endowments?  
 Yes  
 No
  
2. Does your foundation fund nonprofit reserves?  
 Yes  
 No
  
3. Does your foundation have an official policy regarding funding nonprofit endowments?  
 We have a policy **permitting** funding nonprofit endowments  
 We have a policy **prohibiting** funding nonprofit endowments  
 We don't have a policy about funding nonprofit endowments
  
4. *(Display only if "Yes" was selected three question prior AND "We have a policy prohibiting funding nonprofit endowments" was selected in the previous question.)* What prompted your foundation to make exception(s) to its policy prohibiting funding nonprofit endowments?

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### Funders That Make Grants for Endowments

*(Display this section only if the respondent indicates that they make grant for endowments.)*

5. Does your foundation fund pre-existing endowments and/or help establish new endowments?  
 We only fund pre-existing endowments at nonprofit organizations  
 We only fund to help establish new endowments at nonprofit organizations  
 We fund pre-existing endowments and help establish new endowments
  
6. Approximately what percentage of your foundation's giving goes to endowments as a **percentage of the total number of grants**?  
 Less than 25%  
 25%-49%  
 50%-74%  
 75%-99%  
 100%  
 Don't know/not sure

7. Approximately what percentage of your foundation's giving goes to endowments as a **percentage of your annual grantmaking dollars?**
- Less than 25%
  - 25%-49%
  - 50%-74%
  - 75%-99%
  - 100%
  - Don't know/not sure
8. What criteria do you use when deciding whether to fund an endowment? *(Select all that apply.)*
- The type of nonprofit organization
  - The size of the nonprofit organization (e.g., expenses, staff size)
  - The age of the nonprofit organization
  - The financial history of the nonprofit organization
  - The nonprofit organization's mission/goals
  - An existing relationship with the nonprofit organization
  - The strengths and potential of the nonprofit organization's leadership
  - The demographics of the nonprofit organization's staff/leadership
  - The nonprofit organization's strategy for advancing equity
  - Other *(please specify)*: \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of the above *(Mutually exclusive)*
9. For which of the following type(s) of organizations does your foundation fund endowments? *(Select all that apply.)*
- Advocacy organizations
  - Colleges or universities
  - Direct service organizations
  - Educational organizations (excluding colleges/universities)
  - Grassroots organizations
  - Healthcare organizations (including hospitals)
  - Intermediary organizations/regrantors
  - Museums and performing arts organizations
  - Philanthropy serving organizations
  - Religious organizations
  - Research organizations
  - Social finance institutions
  - Other *(please specify)*: \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of the above *(Mutually exclusive)*
10. *(Display only if "Colleges or universities" was selected in the previous question)* Is the majority of your foundation's endowment funding received by colleges or universities?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't know/not sure

We define equity as the fair distribution of opportunities, resources, and power, with consideration of current and historical contexts.

11. Was advancing equity a **primary** consideration in your foundation’s decision to fund endowments?
- Yes
  - No
12. *(Display only if “Yes” was selected in the previous question.)* Which of the following aspects of equity does your foundation consider when funding endowments? *(Select all that apply.)*
- Racial equity
  - Gender equity
  - Health equity (including disability)
  - LGBTQ+ status
  - Other *(please specify)*: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Has your foundation encountered any barriers in its efforts to fund endowments?
- Yes
  - No
14. *(Display only if “Yes” was selected in the previous question.)* What barriers has your foundation encountered in its efforts to fund endowments?
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### Funders Who Do Not Make Grants for Endowments

15. Has your foundation ever considered funding nonprofit endowments?
- Yes, we funded nonprofit endowments in the past, but no longer fund them currently
  - Yes, we have considered funding nonprofit endowments in the past, but decided against it
  - Yes, we are currently considering funding nonprofit endowments
  - No, we have never considered funding nonprofit endowments
  - Don’t know/not sure
16. *(Display only if “Yes, we funded nonprofit endowments in the past, but no longer fund them currently” or “Yes, we have considered funding nonprofit endowments in the past, and we decided against it” was selected in the previous question.)* Please describe the reasons your foundation decided against funding nonprofit endowments.
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17. *(Display only if “Yes, we are currently considering funding nonprofit endowments” was selected two questions prior.)* Please describe what is influencing your foundation’s decision-making process as you consider funding nonprofit endowments.

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18. *(Display only if “No, we have never considered funding nonprofit endowments” was selected three questions prior.)* Would your foundation consider funding nonprofit endowments in the future?

- Yes  
 No  
 Don’t know/not sure

19. *(Display only if “No” was selected in the previous question.)* Please explain why your foundation would not consider funding nonprofit endowments.

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## OPTIONAL INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

20. Would you be willing to participate in a confidential interview with CEP staff about your attitudes toward nonprofit sustainability? Your responses will help us better understand how funders view and make decisions on the subject of nonprofit sustainability. If so, please provide your name and email address below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

## ABOUT YOUR FOUNDATION

21. Which of the following best describes what type of funder your foundation is?

- Community foundation  
 Corporate foundation  
 Private foundation  
 Other (*please specify*): \_\_\_\_\_

22. *(Display only if “Private foundation” was selected in the previous question.)* Does your foundation's board include a donor or donor’s family?

- Yes  
 No



## ABOUT YOU

The following section asks demographic questions about you (the person who completed the majority of the survey). This information will be used to describe the survey population in aggregate and to compare the experiences of different groups. All questions are optional.

26. What is your current role?
- CEO/Executive Director or equivalent
  - Vice President of Programs or equivalent
  - Director of Strategy or equivalent
  - Other (*please specify*): \_\_\_\_\_
27. How many years have you been in your current role?
- 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
28. Do you have prior experience working for a grant-seeking nonprofit?
- Yes
  - No
29. Do you identify as a person of color?
- Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to say
30. What is your race or ethnicity? (*Select all that apply.*)
- Asian or Asian American
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic or Latina, Latino, or Latinx
  - Middle Eastern or North African
  - Multiracial or Multi-ethnic
  - Native American, Native Alaskan, or Indigenous
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Race or ethnicity not included above (*optional, please describe*): \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to say (*Mutually exclusive*)
31. How do you describe yourself? (*Select all that apply.*)
- Gender non-conforming or non-binary
  - Man
  - Woman
  - Prefer to self-describe/identify (*optional, please describe*): \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to say (*Mutually exclusive*)

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

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

33. This is the last question in this survey. By clicking "Next" you will submit your responses.

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

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## Interview Protocol for Foundations that Fund Endowments

*Thank you again for taking time to talk with us today. Before we get started with the interview, we'd like to take a moment to introduce ourselves and provide some context for this conversation and our project. As I said, I am [NAME], [POSITION] at CEP.*

*Our conversation will be fully confidential. We plan to record this conversation for transcription so that it can be represented accurately. No one will have access to the recording and transcript of our interview except for the CEP staff members working on this research project and the transcriber, who have all signed confidentiality agreements. If we use quotes from this interview transcript in our report, we will anonymize the information included. Do we have your permission to record?*

*This interview will take no more than 60 minutes. We will not go past our allotted time, and you can stop the interview at any point if you so desire. Do you have any questions?*

*Great! Let's get started. We will press record, and you will hear an automated message.*

1. Could you describe how and why your organization initially decided to fund nonprofit endowments?
  - a. How was your board involved, if at all, in this decision-making process?
2. What are the characteristics that would make a grantee organization an ideal candidate or not an ideal candidate for receiving endowment funding from you?
3. Can you give us a high-level overview of your process for funding nonprofit endowments as an example for other funders in the field to consider?
  - a. We are interested in learning about how endowment funding fits within your grantmaking toolkit. For example, how would you compare this process to your other forms of grantmaking? Also, would receiving an endowment grant exclude an organization from receiving other types of grants from you?
4. What impact do you seek to create by funding nonprofit endowments?
  - a. Can you share a story of success related to your funding of nonprofit endowments?
5. Were there any challenges you encountered internally related to funding nonprofit endowments? If so, what are some lessons learned from that experience?

6. Recently, discussions about endowment giving have framed it as a strategy to advance equity, particularly racial equity. Do you see it that way?
  - a. *(If yes)* Do you incorporate equity into your endowment funding approach? If so, how?
  
7. Is there anything else you would like to share that we didn't ask about today?



## **Interview Protocol for Foundations that Do Not Fund Endowments**

*Thank you again for taking time to talk with us today. Before we get started with the interview, we'd like to take a moment to introduce ourselves and provide some context for this conversation and our project. As I said, I am [NAME], [POSITION] at CEP.*

*Our conversation will be fully confidential. We plan to record this conversation for transcription so that it can be represented accurately. No one will have access to the recording and transcript of our interview except for the CEP staff members working on this research project and the transcriber, who have all signed confidentiality agreements. If we use quotes from this interview transcript in our report, we will anonymize the information included. Do we have your permission to record?*

*This interview will take no more than 60 minutes. We will not go past our allotted time, and you can stop the interview at any point if you so desire. Do you have any questions?*

*Great! Let's get started. We will press record, and you will hear an automated message.*

1. Based on your observations, what is your impression of funding nonprofit endowments as a grantmaking strategy?
2. Do you think funding endowments is an approach that is ever likely to move forward at your organization? If not, why not?
3. If you were asked by a grantee to fund a new or existing endowment, what alternative solutions, if any, would you recommend to them?
4. Recently, discussions about endowment giving have framed it as a strategy to advance equity, particularly racial equity. Do you see it that way?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share that we didn't ask about today?