

# Key Findings from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation 2019 Grantee Perception Report

Prepared by The Center for Effective Philanthropy

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*The memo below outlines The Center for Effective Philanthropy's (CEP) summary of key strengths and opportunities for the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation ("Moore" or "the foundation"). Grantee perceptions should be interpreted in light of Moore's goals, funding strategies, and differences in approaches across programs and portfolios. The Grantee Perception Report (GPR) is based on a perceptual survey used across foundations, where not all questions may apply to every area of Moore's funding.*

*This summary focuses on Moore's foundation-wide findings and accompanies the comprehensive survey results found in the foundation's interactive online report at <https://cep.surveymresults.org> and in the downloadable online materials, which also contain ratings grouped by program and portfolio.*

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## Overview and Methodology

- ▶ In May and June 2019, CEP conducted a survey of 671 Moore grantees, receiving 421 completed responses for a 63% response rate. This survey marks the sixth grantee survey that CEP has conducted for the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.
- ▶ Responses for each of the foundation's program areas include: 17 Bay Area respondents, 129 Environmental Conversation respondents, 51 Patient Care respondents, 180 Science respondents, and 25 respondents grouped under an Other category.
- ▶ Throughout this summary, Moore's grantee ratings are defined as higher than typical when the foundation is rated above the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile in CEP's overall dataset, lower than typical when Moore is rated below the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile, and typical when ratings fall in between those thresholds.
- ▶ Grantee ratings described as "significantly" higher or lower throughout this summary reflect statistically significant differences at a P-value less than or equal to .1.
- ▶ For most measures in the report, grantee perceptions of the foundation trend higher compared to 2016 and are frequently at or above their highest point across all past surveys. Compared to Moore's 2016 grantee survey, perceptions of the foundation in 2019 have improved at a statistically significant level on just under a dozen measures, including:
  - Impact on and advancement of knowledge in grantees' fields.
  - Overall strength of relationships with grantees, fairness, comfort, and responsiveness of staff.
  - Clarity of communication about Moore's goals and strategy.
  - Moore's overall transparency and openness to ideas from grantees.
  - Agreement that the foundation's online grantee portal is easy to use and makes interactions with grantees' program officer more efficient and effective.

## Continued Leadership in and Impact on Grantees' Fields

- ▶ Moore grantees continue to recognize the foundation's strong impact on their fields, rating significantly higher than in 2016 and placing the foundation near the top 10 percent of CEP's dataset and at the top of its custom cohort.
  - Grantee ratings are now the highest that Moore has ever received for its impact on and understanding of their fields.
- ▶ Compared to 2016, grantees also continue to view the foundation as having a strong effect on public policy, and provide significantly more positive ratings – now in the top 5 percent of the dataset – for the foundation's advancement of knowledge in their fields.
- ▶ When asked in a custom question about the extent to which they believe the foundation's funding in their field, sector, or specialization is directly leading to significant outcomes beyond their grants, the majority of grantees – 79 percent – reported at least some difference over time clearly caused by the foundation's funding, with over half of grantees selecting “a significant difference” over time.
- ▶ In their open-ended responses, several grantees describe Moore as an “undisputed philanthropic leader” that has “fundamentally transformed the field at a national and international level” through its “ambitious...revolutionary goals.”
  - In particular, grantees continue to emphasize Moore's willingness to “work on ideas that may be a bit beyond the cutting edge,” explaining how its leadership is “helping the [grantee's] field itself get started.”
  - Additionally, grantees also express their appreciation and enthusiasm for the future impact of the knowledge bases, systems, and tools that have been funded by Moore in the past. One grantee, for example, shares “The Moore Foundation...has funded a number of initiatives in health IT (e.g., predictive analytics) that are just starting to take root in integrated health care delivery systems. Their full impact will not be apparent for a few years, but I suspect it will be huge.”

### SUSTAINED PROVISION OF VALUABLE NON-MONETARY SUPPORT

- ▶ A typical proportion of Moore grantees – 20 percent – report receiving intensive assistance beyond the grant.
  - Similar to 2016, these grantees continue to rate significantly higher across the majority of measures in the report.
- ▶ Specifically, the foundation provides a higher than typical proportion of grantees with nearly all field-related forms of non-monetary support, such as facilitation of collaboration, introductions to leaders in the field, and insight and advice on grantees' fields.
  - Unsurprisingly, these forms of non-monetary support are often referenced in grantees' comments about the foundation's impact, where grantees highlight Moore's ability to “[bring] together research teams from around the world [that] greatly stimulated...sharing...through the support of conferences and workshops” and to “help us connect with other funders and decision-makers to help us succeed.”
- ▶ In their suggestions for improvement, 30 grantees (the second-largest proportion) mention the opportunity to continue to build on this valuable non-monetary support. Grantees primarily asked

for increased opportunities to collaborate and convene with other grantees, more support to build capacity at their organizations, and assistance securing additional funding.



*“Our field and our work are undoubtedly better and more strategic because of the involvement of Moore and its staff. The foundation is strategic with its investments and staff are willing to use dollars to help forge collaborations -- and willing to adjust when those collaborations prove unfruitful. The foundation's investments in key conferences and meetings in our field is also essential.”*



*“The impact...on our organization has been tremendous. We have been able to scale our programs more efficiently and effectively because of their support, benefitting populations in the Bay Area and in communities around the world. We have also made several advancements in our field that are the direct result of Moore Foundation grants.”*

## Consistent Organizational Impact

- ▶ As in past surveys, Moore grantees provide ratings that are similar to grantees at the typical funder for the foundation’s impact on their organizations.
  - Grantee ratings for the foundation’s understanding are mixed, with Moore receiving higher than typical ratings for its understanding of grantees’ goals and strategy but typical ratings for its awareness of their organizational challenges.
- ▶ Over time, Moore grants have consistently remained much larger and longer than is typical – placing Moore in the top 5 percent and top 20 percent of CEP’s dataset, respectively.
  - Moore is now funding much larger organizations than it has in the past, with a median budget of \$20M in 2019 compared to \$7M in 2016.

## Even Stronger Relationships with Grantees

- ▶ CEP’s research finds that strong funder-grantee relationships – defined by high quality interactions and clear, consistent communications – are a key predictor of grantees’ perceived impact on their organizations, fields, and local communities.
- ▶ Moore grantee ratings for the overall quality of their relationships with the foundation have significantly improved since 2016, and are now at their highest-ever point on this summary measure. These ratings place Moore in the top quarter of CEP’s dataset and at the top of its cohort of peer funders.
  - In particular, grantees provide significantly higher ratings than in 2016 for how fairly they feel treated, their comfort approaching the foundation, and staff responsiveness. For all three measures regarding interactions with staff, ratings are now more positive than those at the typical funder and place the foundation at or near the top of its custom cohort.

- Grantees also rate the foundation significantly higher than in 2016 for its openness to ideas about its strategy and its overall transparency.
- ▶ These higher than typical ratings and the improvement since 2016 are at least in part a product of how Moore engages with its grantees.
  - Compared to 2016, a significantly smaller proportion of Moore grantees report experiencing a contact change in the six months prior to the survey, and Moore grantee ratings do not vary based on whether they experienced a contact change.
  - A larger than typical proportion of Moore grantees continue to report interacting with their program officer at least once every few months – 91 percent compared to 82 percent at the typical funder.
- ▶ Still, the proportion of Moore grantees who report receiving a site visit has consistently trended lower since 2008, with less than half of grantees in 2019 receiving a site visit.
  - Grantee who receive site visits rate the foundation significantly higher across all impact measures, for its overall understanding and quality of relationships, and clarity of its communications.
- ▶ In addition to these interactions, foundation and staff communications are another key component of Moore’s strong funder-grantee relationships.
  - Ratings for the clarity of the foundation’s communications about its goals and strategy have significantly increased and are now near the top of Moore’s cohort of peer funders.
  - Moore grantees also provide their highest-ever rating for the consistency of the foundation’s communications.
- ▶ These stronger relationships are also reflected in grantees’ open-ended responses. When asked to comment on the quality of the foundation's processes, interactions, and communications, 80 percent of Moore grantees in 2019, compared to 70 percent of grantees at the median cohort funder, provided positive comments versus comments with at least one constructive theme.



*“My highest praises go to the Foundation staff... for their invaluable community efforts and great counsel. Being at all the relevant conferences, interacting with the researchers, keeping them informed and learning about their latest discoveries but also problems makes a big difference. ...they were responsive, supportive, proactive, providing detailed and timely information....”*



*“Moore Foundation is extremely clear and transparent about their priorities and ways of work. They encourage feedback from partners about key issues, even internal decisions of the Foundation as new programs and closure of initiatives. ...we have found that there is an institutional culture and policy of building partnerships with grantees...to make a cooperative effort to achieve outcomes.”*

## Helpful Processes and Opportunity to Review Evaluations

- ▶ Moore grantees continue to receive a higher monetary return than is typical for every hour they spend on foundation processes.
  - The median hours spent by Moore grantees on funder requirements over the grant lifetime has continued to trend lower, and in their open-ended comments, grantees acknowledge Moore’s balance of thoroughness and rigor compared to their other funding sources.
- ▶ As in past surveys, Moore grantees rate higher than grantees of the typical funder for the extent to which the foundation’s selection process is helpful in strengthening their organizations or programs.
  - When asked to comment on how the foundation could improve, 40 grantees (the largest proportion of suggestions) mention some aspect of the proposal and selection process. Most frequently, eight grantees shared concerns about how Moore’s invitation-only process could unintentionally forego “many potential projects that program managers never come across” through “lack of information about what else/who else is out there of interest.”
  - Another grantee inquires about how to bring these people and/or ideas to the foundation, writing, “I know of many younger scientists doing highly innovative work who could have a significant impact in their field if they could receive this level of funding. Is there any way to bring these other researchers to the attention of my program officer, without that being inappropriate?”
- ▶ Similarly, the foundation receives higher than typical ratings for the extent to which the reporting process is straightforward, adaptable, relevant, aligned appropriately to the timing of grantees’ work, and a helpful opportunity to reflect and learn.
  - Grantee ratings for aspects of the online grantee portal trend higher compared to 2016, with significantly higher ratings for their agreement that the portal is easy to use and that it makes interactions with their program officer more efficient and effective.
  - The half of Moore grantees who report using the foundation’s online portal rate significantly higher for perceptions of Moore’s interactions and communications, understanding, transparency, and openness to ideas.
- ▶ In addition to grant reporting, 23 percent of Moore grantees report participating in an evaluation process.
  - Of these grantees, a higher than typical proportion – 79 percent – report receiving at least partial funding for the evaluation’s cost.
  - While grantee ratings are typical for the extent to which the evaluation generated information they believe will be useful for other organizations, Moore grantees rate near the bottom of CEP’s dataset for the extent to which the evaluation resulted in changes to their organizations and for the extent to which their input was incorporated into its design.
    - A larger than typical proportion of grantees reported that the evaluation was conducted by the foundation or by an external evaluator chosen by the foundation – 78 percent compared to 36 percent at the typical funder. These grantees rate Moore significantly lower on all three evaluation measures.



*“I felt both challenged to think strategically about how to maximize impact and submit a quality proposal, as well as systematically supported and well advised.”*



*“The emphasis was and continues to be on understanding the work, its impact and its context. We together arrived at authentic outcomes and outputs, always with give and take in the most respectful and thoughtful manner. Likewise with reporting—our program officer is knowledgeable about the field and our work and her questions reflect that and are oriented to increasing her understanding.”*

## Summary of Key Themes

- ▶ Recognizing the foundation’s sustained strong impact on and non-monetary support for grantees’ fields, consider how Moore’s values and behaviors have culminated in an innovative and catalytic funding approach and reinforce these strengths.
- ▶ Reflect on the changes that have contributed to significant improvements in the quality of relationships with grantees, and focus on institutionalizing those approaches.
- ▶ Given the feedback that underscores their value, facilitate internal discussions to determine whether the foundation has capacity and/or interest to conduct site visits with a larger proportion of grantees.
- ▶ Considering grantees’ concerns that the foundation’s selection process may be overlooking innovative ideas and/or well-aligned grantees, discuss approaches to broaden Moore’s awareness of these potential partners.
- ▶ Review how grantee input is solicited and incorporated into the design of the evaluation and consider how the process might be able to generate information that feels more relevant and useful for grantees.

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