

CF INSIGHTS LISTENING TOUR TAKEAWAYS

IN 2015, CF INSIGHTS CONDUCTED A LISTENING TOUR OF THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FIELD, WHICH INCLUDED CONVERSATIONS AT CONFERENCES, ONE-ON-ONE PHONE CALLS, AND A SERIES OF IN-PERSON ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS. THESE TALKS ALL COVERED EVOLVING DATA NEEDS AT COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS, AS WELL AS THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE FIELD. FIVE HIGH-LEVEL QUESTIONS HELPED ALL CONSIDER HOW THE FIELD CAN BEST BE SERVED BY A PLATFORM FOR SHARED KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH, AND HOW CF INSIGHTS CAN EVOLVE IN ORDER TO PROVIDE IMPORTANT, RELEVANT, AND TIMELY INFORMATION.

HOW CAN CF INSIGHTS GET BETTER AT WHAT IT CURRENTLY DOES?

- While many find the three business model analysis tools available through CF Insights (ABC/ISM/ESP) very useful and look to them for paradigm-shifting insight, there's a hope that the processes involved might be more streamlined.
- Thoughts on the database:
 - The blue question marks  adjacent to all data fields contain useful glossary information but users often don't realize their purpose.
 - Many users would like to see a field that confirms/verifies/matches total assets with entry in individual fields – this is something a finance person would intuitively look for.
 - It was suggested that Census information be used as opposed to self-reported population information, which could be inaccurate and out-of-date.
- Several were highly interested in CF Insights being the “one stop shop” for community foundation data collection.
- The one question asked most often was “How can we measure the impact of our grantmaking?”

HOW WILL CF INSIGHTS LOOK TO ADDRESS NEEDS IN THIS AREA?

- *Rebuilding the CF Insights database and integrating it with Foundation Center's systems is our highest priority in 2016-2017. Not only will this address many of the issues users might have experienced while using the current database, but it will allow us to continue to iterate the new system to meet the evolving informational needs of the field. The possibility of adding new data fields and creating new ways for users to more quickly share their data will give us the flexibility we need to focus more data analysis.*

Knowledge to build on.

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- *A related goal to the one listed above is to incorporate the other types of data Foundation Center currently houses into CF Insights reporting. This includes our repository of grants data which allows Foundation Center to report on where funding is going and to support which causes. This won't fully answer the question on grantmaking impact, but it will help better understand how far grant dollars are going.*
- *We'll be hosting a series of three monthly webinars explaining the processes behind the ABC, ISM, and ESP to make them more accessible to those unfamiliar and provide the groundwork for foundations to begin utilizing any of them.*

WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON IN THE FIELD?

- Some foundations have been looking toward their regional associations for additional services to those they already provide.
- Some participants theorized that the field will see rapid growth, with foundation assets rising precipitously in the next five years.
 - The challenge will be determining how to manage the growth and larger individual funds.
- Visibility among high net worth individuals is a challenge for some community foundations.
- There are challenges around the adoption of new technology, most notably accounting and grants management software, to which the transition are difficult and expensive.
- Increasing competition from private DAF providers like Fidelity, et al.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANIZATIONS?

- Community foundations are seeking more from regional associations, such as conference organization and lobbying.
- Other organizations that provide services to community foundation include:
 - Council on Foundations – legal services and salary survey
 - Monitor Institute – research/data briefs
 - Vanguard – reporting on returns, white papers on investing that they produce
 - UBS – flash report, a one-page summary of indexes
 - CF Leads – programmatic areas and community investment info
 - FAOG – Financial information/investment survey
 - CF Insights – financial/operational analysis and benchmarking

HOW WILL CF INSIGHTS LOOK TO ADDRESS NEEDS IN THIS AREA?

- *One of the goals of 2016 is to enhance the CF Insights website with a feed of materials hosted through our sister property, IssueLab, which works to more effectively gather, index, and share the collective intelligence of the social sector. They provide free access to thousands of case studies, evaluations, white papers, and issue briefs addressing some of the world's most pressing social problems. Many publications related to community foundations are produced by the organizations listed above, and this feed will provide an avenue to access these in a convenient location.*

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WHAT OTHER SERVICES SHOULD CF INSIGHTS OFFER?

- There are specific types of data that users are interested in CF Insights presenting, including but not limited to more information of operating costs associated with fundraising, endowed vs. non-endowed funds, and information on spending policies.
- Increased access to raw data.
- Staff other than in finance should utilize CF Insights, and some resources can be tailored to them.
- CF Insights should be proactive in tailoring data capture to better reflect changes in the field.

HOW WILL CF INSIGHTS LOOK TO ADDRESS NEEDS IN THIS AREA?

- *The aforementioned database redesign will allow for the easier creation of new data fields. Many of the ones listed will be taken into consideration during internal discussions.*
- *Incorporating other services provided by Foundation Center, which are tailored to wider audience than operational and financial data, will give those outside of finance a chance to gain insights.*

HOW SHOULD WE DELIVER THOSE SERVICES?

- There is a high level of interest among users to be able to reach out directly to their peers. This can take the form of a listserv or a message board.
- More field-wide research pieces, including such topics as revenue streams and the development of new ones, impact investing, and “bite-sized” data briefs released on a quarterly basis.
- The ability to create one’s own dashboards.

HOW WILL CF INSIGHTS LOOK TO ADDRESS NEEDS IN THIS AREA?

- *As part of our web site redesign, CF Insights is exploring different ways to allow users to more directly contact their peers, including the potential development of a listserv.*
- *Part of the larger database redesign will be an exploration into ways community foundations can have greater access to the data itself.*

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