The Columbus Foundation Survey of Community Foundations

What is the Columbus Survey?
The Columbus Survey is an annual field-wide survey. Begun in 1988 by the Columbus Foundation, it represents a comprehensive longitudinal view of the community foundation field.

Transitioned to CF Insights in 2008, the Survey is now stored in CF Insights’ centralized online database. The Survey collects basic operating metrics such as assets, gifts, grants, and expenses to develop field-wide trends on operating models.

Field-wide participation in this endeavor allows for trends to be understood at a field-wide level while data is also available for peer benchmarking.

Why should my foundation participate in the Columbus Survey?
Field-wide benchmarks are only as good as the field participation necessary to get them! CF Insights, a resource to the field on peer benchmarking and knowledge sharing, conducts the survey for the field to develop field-wide trends and insights.

In thanks for your participation in the survey, you’ll receive access to the following reporting tools and research:

- **Field-wide trend report** – an annual report on trends in the field, with downloadable data sheets listing the top 100 community foundations

- **Online benchmarking reports** – on-demand reports that highlight your community foundation’s performance compared to a peer aggregate and the field

- **For CF Insights members, peer identified online benchmarking reports** – customizable peer benchmarking reports for CF Insights members that illustrate their community foundation’s performance relative to a selected peer set

How long will it take to complete the Columbus Survey?
Past participation indicates it takes between fifteen minutes to an hour to complete the survey, depending on the complexity of your organization (number of supporting organizations, corporate/trust, etc).

Questions?
Contact Diana Esposito
Diana.Esposito@org
www.cfinsights.org
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How can my foundation participate in the Columbus Survey?
It’s easy! The Survey is online and available to access at any time.

1. **Log-in at** [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org)
   *Your user name and password should have been emailed to you*
   *Contact Diana Esposito (Diana.Esposito@fsg.org) for information*

2. **Enter your unaudited financial information**
   *Most of the data you’ll enter will be common metrics such as total assets, gifts, grants and expenses. There are also some geographic profiling questions*

3. **Access field-wide benchmarking reports**
   *Log-in required to access reports*

4. **Submit your data to Guidestar** to automatically update your unaudited CF Insights information to reflect finalized numbers
   *The survey is always open, you can update information at any time*

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How do you standardize definitions for data collection?
Most community foundations have questions about the standardized definitions we use for data collection. Here are some tips:

- **For any definition**, click on the blue ? icon next to the word to see the definition

- **For asset, gift and grant numbers** – answer these fields as if you were preparing your 990; assets per audit is also collected to eliminate inter-entity transactions

- **Supporting organizations**, if they file a separate 990 from the community foundation, are entered in separate lines to allow for easier updating when each 990 is complete from Guidestar

- **Core operating expenses** include all administrative expenses for your foundation, as you have indicated on your budget; this number does not include any grant dollars. It is total personnel + non-personnel expenses

- **Special initiative expenses** can be separated out if you’d like; this can be beneficial for more detailed benchmarking but is not required; does not include any grant dollars

- **Population of area served** is the aggregate population your community foundation serves – whether it be multiple counties, a region, parts of a state or an entire state

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**Questions?**
*Contact Diana Cook*
*Diana.Cook@fsg.org*