

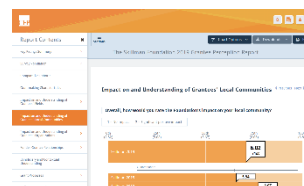
# Key Findings and Recommendations from Interact for Health 2021 Grantee Perception Report

Prepared by The Center for Effective Philanthropy

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*In May and June of 2021, The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) conducted a survey of Interact for Health grantees. The memo below outlines CEP's summary of key strengths, opportunities, and recommendations. Interact for Health's grantee perceptions should be interpreted in light of their goals and strategies.*

*This memo accompanies the comprehensive survey results from 44 respondents (a 57% response rate) found in Interact for Health's interactive online report at <https://cep.surveymresults.org> and in the downloadable online materials. Interact for Health's full report also contains more information about survey analysis and methodology.*



*Throughout this summary, Interact for Health's ratings are defined as higher than typical when it is rated above the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile in CEP's overall dataset, lower than typical when it is rated below the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile, and typical when ratings fall in between those thresholds. Ratings described as "significantly" higher or lower reflect statistically significant differences at a P-value less than or equal to 0.1.*

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## Overview

- ▶ CEP previously surveyed grantees of Interact for Health in 2010 and 2004. The intervening period has been one of substantial change, including a brand and strategy refresh, a revamp of the grants management system, and a shift from a partnership model to accountability-focused relationships with grantees.
- ▶ Given the large number of changes in context, the 2021 results represent a new benchmark for Interact for Health and should be interpreted in light of that context. In general, grantee perceptions in 2021 are less positive than they were in 2010 on nearly every measure.

## Notable Impact on Grantees' Fields and Communities

- ▶ Grantee ratings place Interact for Health in the top 20 percent of CEP's overall dataset, and higher than typical when compared to its cohort of peer funders, for its impact on public policy.
  - Further, Interact for Health grantees provide ratings in the top quarter of funders in CEP's dataset for the advancement of knowledge in grantees' fields.
- ▶ Interact for Health receives typical ratings for its impact on and understanding of grantees' fields.
- ▶ Similar to ratings for field impact, grantees rate Interact for Health in line with the median funder for its impact on and understanding of grantees' local communities.

- ▶ Additionally, grantees view Interact for Health as having a strong understanding of the social, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that affect their work, rating Interact for Health among the top quarter of funders in CEP’s dataset.
  - When asked in a custom question about the extent to which Interact for Health’s funding efforts proactively and intentionally engage the community, grantees provide, on average, a rating of 5.72 on a 1-7 scale.



*“IFH is a major funder of many nonprofits leading change in their communities and more systemically at the policy level. There are very few state funders who invest in health policy work, which makes IFH support even more critical.”*



*“Interact for Health is always focused on the health and well-being of communities whether it be mental or physical health. They are willing to help with funding and/or guidance in our community. They truly care about people, communities, and projects that have a positive influence on communities.”*

## Typical Organizational Impact with Opportunity for Longer Grants

- ▶ Grantees rate Interact for Health in the top quarter of funders in CEP’s dataset for its awareness of the challenges their organizations face. Additionally, grantees provide ratings similar to those of grantees at the typical funder for Interact for Health’s understanding of their organizations’ strategies and goals.
- ▶ Yet, grantees provide lower than typical ratings for Interact for Health’s impact on their organizations.
- ▶ These perceptions may be related to Interact for Health’s grantmaking characteristics. CEP’s broader research has shown that grant characteristics – specifically size, length, and whether the grant was restricted – are often meaningful predictors of perceptions of impact on grantee organizations, with multi-year unrestricted support being a particularly powerful contribution.
  - Interact for Health’s median grant size— \$60K—is typical. Similarly, the proportion of grantees who report receiving unrestricted funding is typical within CEP’s dataset.
  - However, the average grant length— 1.7 years— has significantly decreased since 2010, now placing Interact for Health in the bottom 20 percent of CEP’s dataset.
  - Interestingly, when asked in a custom question, grantees agree strongly that the type, size, and length of Interact for Health grants are appropriate for their intended results.
- ▶ A larger than typical proportion of Interact for Health grantees – 62 percent – report receiving non-monetary support, which is viewed as a major benefit by more than half of the receiving grantees.



*“Interact for Health was extremely instrumental in our ability to be flexible...in the new and frightening times. Thanks to the understanding and flexibility of Interact for Health funds we were able to quickly regroup and make certain we could continue [supporting our community's health].”*



*“The annual nature of grants makes it more challenging for planning and execution in a pretty short window.”*

## Positive Interactions with Room to Improve the Clarity of Communications

- ▶ CEP’s research finds that strong funder-grantee relationships— defined by high quality interactions and clear, consistent communications—are a key predictor of grantees’ perceptions of a funder’s impact on their organizations, fields, and local communities.

### POSITIVE, HIGH-TOUCH INTERACTIONS DESPITE HIGH TURNOVER

- ▶ A larger than typical proportion of grantees – 23 percent – indicated a change in their main contact at Interact for Health during the six months prior to the survey.
  - Interact for Health grantees who did not indicate having a contact change in the six months prior to the survey rate higher on many survey measures across themes of impact, understanding, and communications.
- ▶ Despite higher than typical rates of contact change, grantees generally perceive their interactions with Interact for Health positively.
  - Grantees provide typical ratings for their comfort approaching Interact for Health if a problem arises, staff responsiveness, overall transparency, and the extent to which Interact for Health exhibits trust in their organizations’ staff.
  - Grantees rate Interact for Health higher than typical for the extent to which Interact for Health exhibits candor on grantees’ work, respectful interaction, and compassion for those affected by their work.
  - And, grantee ratings place Interact for Health in the top quarter of the dataset for its openness to ideas from grantees about its strategy.
- ▶ Interact for Health is a high-touch funder. Grantees report interacting with their program officer more frequently than grantees at the typical funder, and grantees report initiating contact with their program officer at a rate that is in line with grantees at the typical funder.
  - Grantees who indicate having the most frequent contact and having contact that is initiated by their program officer rate significantly higher on nearly all survey measures.

### OPPORTUNITY FOR CLEARER COMMUNICATIONS

- ▶ Grantees provide significantly lower ratings than in 2010 for the clarity of Interact for Health communications, now placing Interact for Health in the bottom 20 percent of CEP’s dataset and at the bottom of its cohort of peer funders.
  - Ratings for the consistency of Interact for Health’s communications are also lower than typical.
- ▶ In their open-ended suggestions for improvement, two grantees<sup>1</sup> request that Interact for Health provide clearer and more frequent information on its strategy and funding priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Given 22 coded suggestions from grantees, two comments comprise 9 percent of the suggestions.



*“Interact for Health’s program officers are great to work with. They are friendly and care about the work we do. They are always willing to answer questions and give guidance. They are timely in their responses to communications. They show genuine interest in the programs they fund.”*



*“I think that the original vision and mission for IFH has greatly changed, and it is unclear what direction the foundation is heading.”*

## **Thorough Understanding of Beneficiaries but More Demonstrated Commitment to DEI**

- ▶ A majority of Interact for Health grantees — 81 percent — indicate that the efforts funded by their grant are meant to benefit historically disadvantaged groups, compared to 70 percent at the typical funder.
- ▶ In addition to primarily funding work meant to benefit historically disadvantaged groups, Interact for Health receives typical ratings for its understanding of grantees’ beneficiaries needs and for the extent to which its funding priorities align with those needs.
  - One grantee recognizes these efforts in an open-ended comment, stating, “Interact for Health’s staff and contractors are not only culturally competent, but are clearly in touch with the populations they serve.”
- ▶ Still, grantees rate Interact for Health below the median funder in CEP’s dataset for its explicit commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in its work.
  - In their open-ended suggestions for improvement, one grantee, for example, suggests Interact for Health place, “More of an explicit racial equity focus in its funding priorities.”
  - Perhaps unsurprisingly, grantees who do indicate awareness of Interact for Health’s response to the movement for racial justice and greater equity rate significantly higher for their agreement that Interact for Health has communicated what DEI means for its work and that Interact for Health demonstrates an explicit commitment to DEI in its work.

## **Rigorous and Valuable Selection, Reporting, and Evaluation Processes**

- ▶ Interact for Health’s full report includes ratings segmented by the grants management system (GMS) that grantees use. On about a quarter of survey measures, ratings from grantees using the recently-instated Foundant GMS trend<sup>2</sup> lower than ratings from grantees using the original GIFTS GMS.
  - Foundant grantee ratings tend to trend lower on survey measures related to relationships, including for Interact for Health’s overall transparency, approachability, openness to their ideas, and understanding of their organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> Ratings described as “trending” higher or lower reflect average results that differ by 0.3 points or more on a 7-point scale, and do not reflect statistical testing.

- Compared to GIFTS grantees, Foundant grantees also have a more limited understanding of how their funded work fits into Interact for Health’s broader efforts and experience more pressure to modify their organizational priorities in order to receive funding. CEP’s broader research has shown that higher pressure is associated with less positive relationships.
  - Still, when asked to share their opinions regarding several aspects of the online grants portal, Foundant grantees agree moderately strongly that it has clear instructions, is easy to use, and saves time compared with a paper-based process, rating, on average, near a 6 on a 1-7 scale.
  - Foundant grantees also report spending significantly less time on funder requirements —21 hours—compared to 35 hours for GIFTS grantees.
- ▶ When it comes to the selection process, grantees provide typical ratings for its helpfulness in strengthening the work funded by the grant.
  - ▶ Grantee perceptions are similarly positive when it comes to Interact for Health’s reporting and evaluation processes.
    - Nearly all grantees report discussing ideas with Interact for Health about how to assess the work funded by the grant, making Interact for Health the top funder in its peer cohort.
    - Grantees provide typical ratings for the straightforwardness, relevance, and helpfulness of Interact for Health’s reporting process. Further, grantees rate the adaptability of Interact for Health’s reporting process in the top 15 percent of funders in CEP’s dataset.
    - A larger than typical proportion of Interact for Health grantees also report participating in an evaluation process. These grantees rate Interact for Health higher than the typical funder in CEP’s dataset for the extent to which the evaluation process resulted in changes to the work the grant was funding and for the extent to which grantees believe that the design of the evaluation incorporated input from their organizations.



*“Processes are clear and straightforward and involve the organization in development of processes.”*



*“The processes are not as clear as they used to be, and the interactions with IFH staff are much less.”*

## Recommendations

Based on its grantee feedback, CEP recommends Interact for Health consider the following in order to build on its strengths and address potential areas for improvement:

- ▶ Recognizing Interact for Health's strong impact on public policy and advancement of knowledge in grantees' fields, consider which values and practices have contributed to these ratings, and continue to build on current approaches.
- ▶ If it is a goal to increase impact on grantees' organizations, determine whether Interact for Health has the capacity to provide a larger proportion of grantees with multi-year grants.
- ▶ Continue to build upon strong relationships with grantees by facilitating smooth transitions during contact changes and mitigating the pressure grantees experience during the development of their grant applications.
- ▶ Considering grantee feedback regarding Interact for Health's communications about its goals and strategy, explore approaches to:
  - Clearly and consistently portray Interact for Health's goals and strategy through personal and written communication resources.
  - Proactively share current approaches to funding with grantees, highlighting areas where Interact for Health's vision has changed since its brand and strategy refresh.
- ▶ Given the disconnect between funding work meant to primarily benefit historically disadvantaged groups and grantee perceptions of Interact for Health's commitment to DEI, consider how to better communicate and demonstrate that commitment across all aspects of Interact for Health's work.
- ▶ Reflect on the measures for which Foundant grantee ratings trend lower than GIFTS grantee ratings, and discuss opportunities to refine aspects that were not as positively received, while maintaining its streamlined nature.

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