

WEAVER FOUNDATION SURVEY REPORT

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Overview

As part of an effort to learn more about the Weaver Foundation’s reputation in its community, the North Carolina Network of Grantmakers (NCNG) conducted a survey of 205 nonprofits in the Greensboro area in August, 2010. Surveys were disseminated to all using Survey Monkey, an online survey resource, on August, 9, 2010. Responses were collected over a four-week period. At the close of the survey, 92 nonprofits completed the survey, giving a response rate of close to 50%.

Generally, the Weaver Foundation is well-regarded in the Greensboro community. On its own and compared to other Greensboro area foundations, the Weaver Foundation is highly rated by grantees on performance and relationship measures.

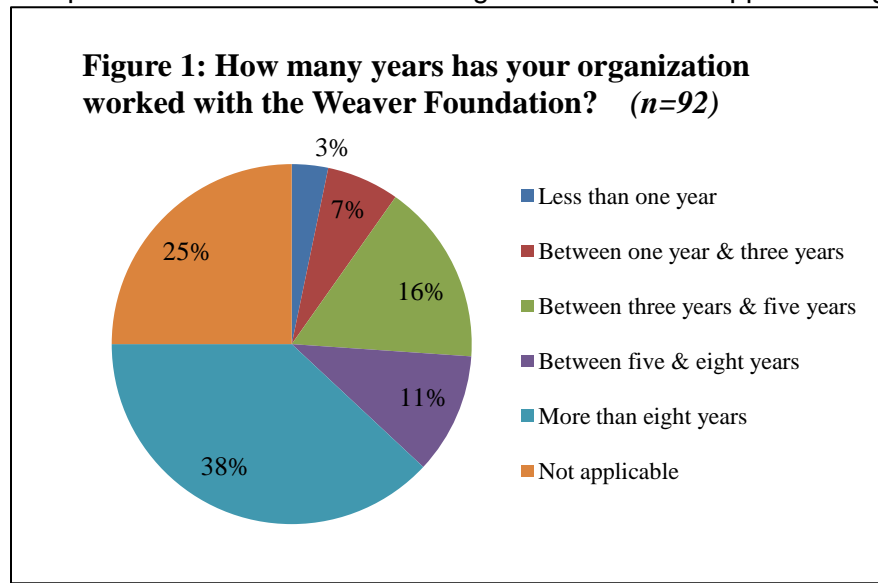
Weaver Foundation strengths lie in communication and building relationships. Staff accessibility and approachability are primary reasons for strong feedback regarding the Weaver Foundation effectiveness with potential and approved grantees. Survey responses also indicate that the Weaver Foundation excels in learning about its grantees and that the enhanced understanding of the grantee organization that results benefits the grantor-grantee relationship. Additionally, the Weaver Foundation enjoys a strong reputation and is perceived as attuned to the needs of the community. Some responses, however, did suggest that the Weaver Foundation may consider raising its profile among newer or smaller budget non-profits and increase its knowledge about area program offerings through program and site visits.

Overall, survey responses regarding the Weaver Foundation were favorable in all areas queried, and mostly consistent across demographic lines. Budget size or years that the individual respondent has been working with the Weaver Foundation did not have significant affect on overall findings. More focused discussion of specific areas follows.

Survey Respondents

Demographics

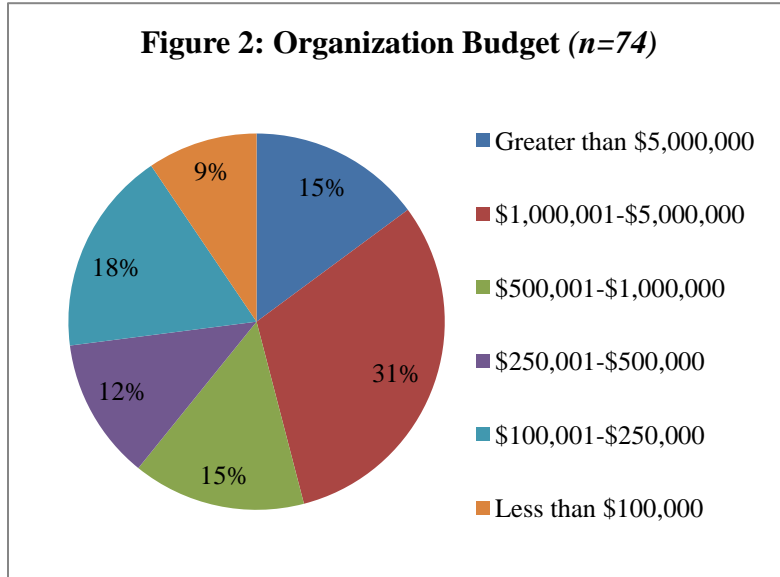
The majority of survey respondents were executives with over ten years of experience¹ in the non-profit sector whose current organizations have applied for grants from² and have long-



standing relationships with the Weaver Foundation.³ The overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) have worked with the Weaver Foundation for more than three years (see Figure 1).

More than half of the respondents represent organizations that serve Guilford County and Greensboro primarily; about one-fifth of respondents serve

Guilford and surrounding counties; 17% of respondents serve the entire state; and 11% serve populations only within the Greensboro city limits.⁴ Additionally, nearly half of the respondents represent organizations with more than ten full-time staff members, and almost half of the respondents represent organizations with ten or more part-time employees. Thus on average the majority of respondents represent larger organizations with only thirty-nine percent of respondents⁵ representing organizations with three or fewer part-time employees.



The majority of respondents (61%) reported organizational budgets of greater than \$500,000;⁶ about one-third of respondents reported an organizational budget between one and five million dollars; 15% reported budgets over five million dollars; 15% have budgets between \$500,000 and one million (see Figure 2).⁷ Most respondents receive up to 25% of their funding from foundations generally⁸ and up to 25% of their funding from Greensboro area foundations specifically.⁹ Nearly a third of respondents reported that the majority of their revenue

comes from government sources; 12% identified private foundations as their major source of funding.¹⁰

Responses from seventy-three survey respondents indicated their subject areas of interest; in order from greatest to least interest these are:

- Education (39 respondents)
- Children and youth programs (37 respondents)
- Community and economic development (26 respondents)
- Poverty reduction and increased employment (24 respondents)
- Advancement of civil rights, racial tolerance, and diversity (19 respondents)
- Enhancement of parks and recreation (9 respondents)
- Environmental protection (8 respondents)

Performing arts and health related issues were also noted as other areas of interest.

Grantee desires, expectations, and perceptions

Survey respondents were asked for their impressions of grantmakers generally. Regarding the ideal working relationship between non-profit organizations and foundations,¹¹ several primary themes emerged:

- Communication between non-profits and foundations should be clear and direct; foundation staff should be accessible to non-profits and lines of communication open at all times.
- Foundations should be willing to engage in early conversation about proposed projects and foundations should give honest feedback when those proposals are not funded.
- Foundations should be clear about their grant priorities.

- Non-profits want to work collaboratively with foundations to meet community needs.

Regarding the biggest challenge working with foundations, two primary themes were:

- Matching grantmaker funding priorities with potential grantee needs.
- Grantmakers' interest in funding new projects vs. grantees' needs to find funding for continuation of core programs and operational expenses.

Asked whether Greensboro foundations collaborate, the majority of respondents answered affirmatively.¹² Those respondents rated that collaboration at 5.6 on a seven-point scale.¹³ A number of respondents offered suggestions for improving collaboration among funders, including holding annual joint meetings, roundtable discussions, or grant workshops attended by multiple funders to which non-profits are invited.

Effectiveness Reputation

The Weaver Foundation is generally well-regarded in the Greensboro community. More than half the respondents rated their overall working relationship with the Weaver Foundation as excellent.¹⁴ Most respondents reported feeling fairly comfortable approaching the Weaver Foundation for funding. In fact, on a comfort scale from one to seven, with seven denoting the highest level of comfort, 55% of respondents indicated the highest level of comfort, with another 24% indicating favorable levels of comfort (5 or 6).¹⁵

The majority characterized the Weaver Foundation as a source of financial support and partner in working to address issues in the community.¹⁶ Narrative comments were overwhelmingly positive; for example:

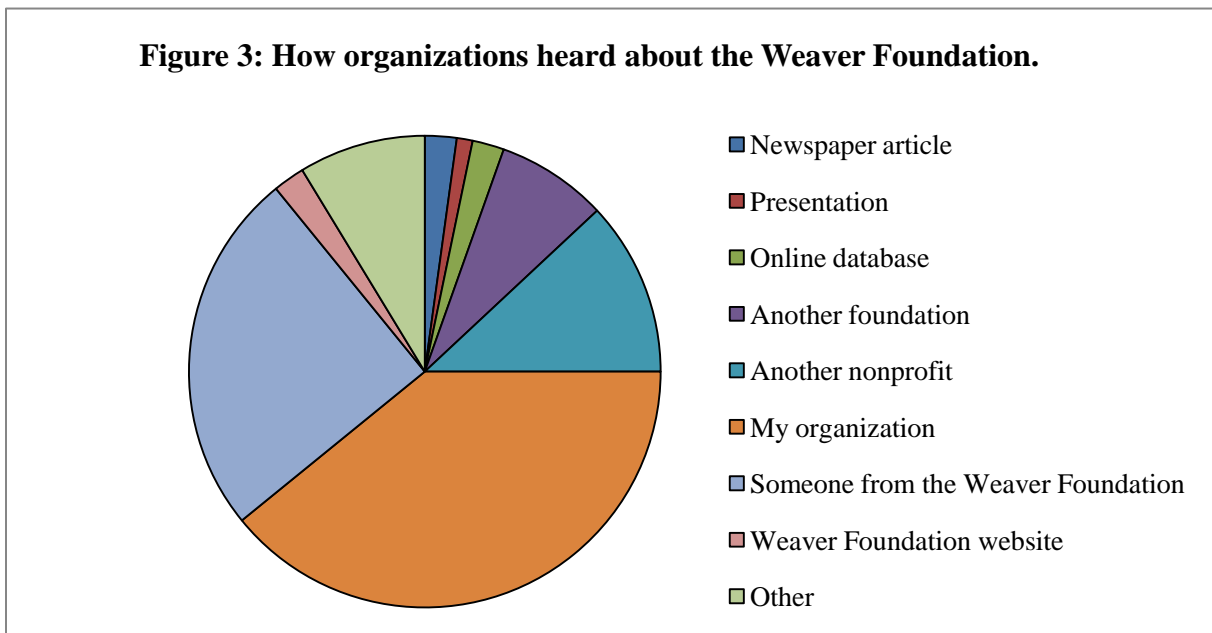
- "The Weaver Foundation is among the very best family foundations we work with in all of our region."
- "Excellent organization; well respected; emits an "air of sophistication."
- "One of the most impressive things I find working with the Weaver Foundation is that they are up front and honest."
- "I have found the Foundation to be approachable, honest with their feedback, and a source of encouragement."
- "Weaver Foundation is a cornerstone of our community. The community is much better for the investment that the foundation makes in great non-profits."

Fewer than half of all respondents responded to the survey question exploring areas in which the Weaver Foundation might improve,¹⁷ and nearly a third of those responses indicated no area needing improvement. However, two areas for potential improvement did emerge. Comments such as the following suggest that the Weaver Foundation may consider helping non-profits move from generating ideas to implementing them.

- "[The Weaver Foundation should] help [non-profits develop funding streams...establish a "school" to help non profits help themselves...."
- "[The Weaver Foundation should] [h]elp the non-profit move from advice and consultation to funding from the foundation."
- "[The Weaver Foundation should help] organizations like ours transition from helpful meetings to funding for a project."

- “Though the Foundation does a great job at generating new ideas, and gathering folks around the table to discuss, I haven't seen the follow-through efforts that are required to generate change.”
- “[The Weaver Foundation should help] organizations like ours transition from positive dialogue, ideas and strategizing to receiving funding for projects that the foundation has an interest in and [can help] us develop.”

Other comments suggest that the Weaver Foundation could raise its profile in the Greensboro community. The majority of respondents reported first learning about the Weaver Foundation either from sources internal to their own organization or through a Weaver Foundation representative.¹⁸ Few reported learning about the Weaver Foundation through its website¹⁹ (see Figure 3).



A handful of comments suggest that at least a few non-profits either do not know much about the Weaver Foundation or feel that the Weaver Foundation is inaccessible.

- “Weaver Foundation could be more visible.”
- “Based on my experience, or lack thereof, I would say it's kind of a well-kept secret.”
- “[The Weaver Foundation should be] more visible in the community. Support... younger organizations.”
- “I wish they would give more access to the little guy,”
- “I feel only the privileged few are asked/allowed to apply.”
- “We have always been under the impression that we cannot seek funding from them unless they ask us to send in a proposal, so we just stay away.”
- “We have understood that unless invited by the Weaver Foundation, an organization could not apply for funds.”

Compared to other foundations, the Weaver Foundation does well in building relationships. Asked about the foundation from which they have received grants that is most effective at creating relationships, forty-one respondents offered up a number of foundations, though the Community Foundation of Greensboro and the Weaver Foundation were clear frontrunners.

Responses suggested that the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro may hold a slight edge over the Weaver Foundation because of higher visibility in the community; however, comments about the Weaver Foundation reflected a caring approach:

- “Weaver Foundation is more relationship-oriented in that they are looking towards these relationships for long-term planning and changes for the city of Greensboro far more than funding single solutions or projects.”
- “[With the] Weaver Foundation, you never feel like just a grantee they make you feel like a partner in making change. They care and it shows.”

Responsiveness to community needs

Survey responses suggest that Weaver Foundation funding strategies are meeting community needs. Survey respondents rated the Weaver Foundation at 5.8 on a 7-point scale for employing strategies that match the needs of the community.²⁰ The Weaver Foundation was also highly rated for community leadership in the respondents’ subject areas.²¹ Regarding the current most pressing issue that Greensboro citizens face, survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated that economic development, followed closely by improving public education are the primary concerns. On a 7-point scale, respondents rated the Weaver Foundation at 4.7 for addressing these current community issues.²²

Notwithstanding high marks for community responsiveness, one theme that emerged from responses to a question inviting advice for the Weaver Foundation was the suggestion that the Weaver Foundation broaden its range of interests and be open to issues that are not part of the current funding strategy. Several comments suggested that the Weaver Foundation more actively reach out to non-profit organizations in the community through site and program visits as a way of becoming more knowledgeable about projects that need funding. One response to a question asking for general impressions about the Weaver Foundation noted that “since applicants must be invited to submit a proposal, an increase in knowledge of agencies’ new initiatives and subsequent outreach to these agencies would improve community relations and support of these new programs.”

Communication

Generally, respondents rate the Weaver Foundation very favorably in terms of overall communication.²³ In fact, the Weaver Foundation is considered the most effective communicator among foundations from whom survey respondents have received grants, followed by the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro.²⁴ Half of respondents think the Weaver Foundation responds very quickly with an appropriate amount of information.²⁵ But accessibility to Weaver Foundation staff was oft-cited as the factor defining the Weaver Foundation’s effectiveness in communication. Respondents also find Weaver Foundation staff very accessible during a grant cycle,²⁶ and that contact with staff during a grant cycle occurs with appropriate frequency.²⁷

The most helpful way of learning about the Weaver Foundation appears to be one-on-one communication with Weaver Foundation staff. The Weaver Foundation website appears to be fairly useful as a source of information about the Weaver Foundation by those who use it; a significant number of respondents appear not to use the website²⁸.

The Weaver Foundation communicates its funding goals clearly²⁹ and communicates decisions around the status of pending proposals well.³⁰ Even among those who applied for but have not received funding from the Weaver Foundation in the past, more than half³¹ of the respondents think that the Weaver Foundation communicated that decision adequately. One respondent did suggest, however, that “Normal submission cycles with an initial letter of intent would improve community relations and better knowledge of program offerings.” Furthermore, the Weaver Foundation appears to be highly approachable whenever a problem arises for the grant. The overwhelming majority of respondents reported feeling comfortable contacting Weaver Foundation staff when a problem arises with the grant, the grantee organization, or in the field.³²

Process

The majority of respondents to the survey have applied for Weaver Foundation support.³³ Most respondents who sought Weaver Foundation support completed an application,³⁴ but most respondents did not complete online applications.³⁵ Most respondents who did not complete applications submitted letters at the Weaver Foundation’s request.³⁶ The majority of respondents (89%) met with Weaver Foundation staff before applying.³⁷ Weaver Foundation application guidelines are considered very clear: survey respondents rated the Weaver Foundation application guidelines a near 6 for clarity on a 7-point scale.³⁸ Generally, respondents have found Weaver Foundation staff to be helpful with the grant application process.³⁹ About 25% of respondents thought the application process was less cumbersome than other funders’ application processes; about 20% found it about the same.⁴⁰ More than half thought the amount of effort to apply for a grant was right given the amount of the grant awarded.⁴¹ In fact, one respondent commented:

“I think that the Weaver Foundation is the most practical of all local foundations relative to their grant seeking approach. They seem to understand that nonprofits have limited resources and the time nonprofits spend writing grant requests is time they don’t have to do the real work of their organizations. So, Weaver asks only for the essential information. They are not interested in the busy work and buzz words that some foundations require for grant requests.”

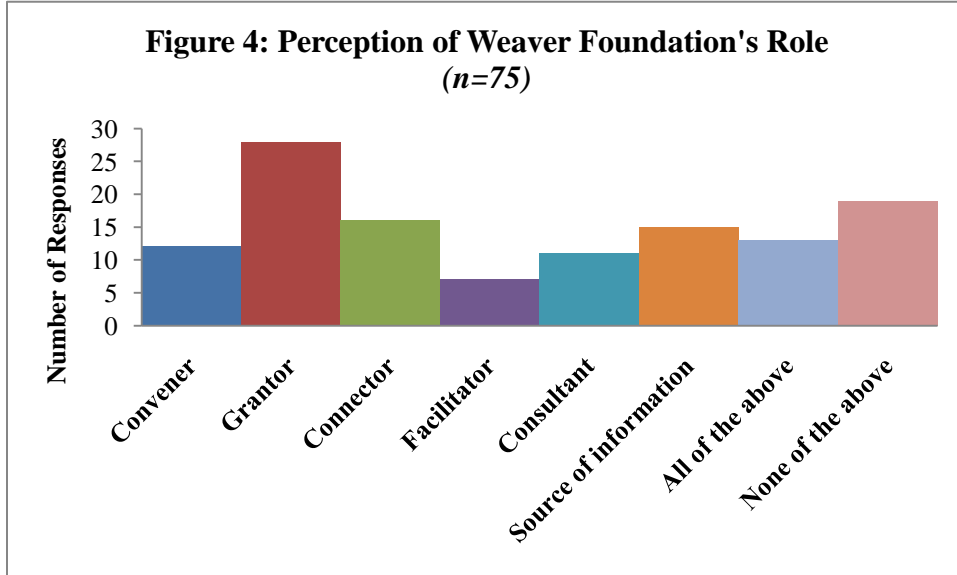
The Weaver Foundation compares favorably to other foundations for effectiveness of grant monitoring.⁴² Survey responses suggest that the Weaver Foundation requires the same or less grant reporting information relative to other foundations providing similarly sized grants.⁴³ Weaver Foundation reporting requirements are considered reasonable.⁴⁴ A more formal progress report structure does not appear to be desired.⁴⁵ One respondent commented that the Weaver Foundation “tends to be much more involved ... [than other foundations] so the reporting really isn’t necessary.” Another commented that the Weaver Foundation’s grant evaluation process “is much more open-ended, and it offers the opportunity to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback.” This respondent noted that other foundations focus on more quantitative feedback which is difficult for non-profit organizations to provide on one-year grants.

Survey responses suggest that the Weaver Foundation knows its grant-seekers well. The Weaver Foundation was highly rated by survey respondents on understanding of grantee organization priorities,⁴⁶ grantee operational challenges,⁴⁷ and grantee organizational challenges.⁴⁸

- “The Weaver Foundation makes one feel that their organization is both understood, and respected; further, that their role is to assist however possible to strengthen one’s nonprofit (a grant in itself).”

- “I believe [communicating with the grantee] is an area where Weaver Foundation excels, they get to know your organization inside and out. It really helps to make you feel your goals and success matter to them.”

Additionally, while survey respondents view the Weaver Foundation’s role relative to their organizations primarily as that of grantor (47%), the Weaver Foundation is also viewed as a connector (29% of respondents), source of information (30%) and consultant (24%). Figure 4 shows the responses to this question⁴⁹. Keep in mind that respondents were allowed to select more than one role



Conclusions

The Weaver Foundation is well-regarded among most non-profits in the Greensboro/Guilford area. Established non-profits or organizations with experienced leadership seem to have the greatest comfort level with the Weaver Foundation. Areas of strength for the Weaver Foundation are relationship development with grantees and responsiveness to community needs.

Beginning with pre-grant meetings in which potential projects are discussed, Weaver Foundation staff is getting to know potential grantees well. Weaver Foundation staff is reportedly accessible and approachable. Communications regarding funding priorities, application process, and grant monitoring are generally regarded as clear and reasonable.

The non-profit community generally finds the Weaver Foundation to be responsive to community needs. Economic development appears to be the most pressing community need and survey respondents suggest that the Weaver Foundation is attuned to and addressing issues in that regard. Education and programs for children and youth were other identified primary areas of interests. Survey responses suggest that the Weaver Foundation is effective in addressing those areas as well.

While survey responses were generally positive and favorable regarding the Weaver Foundation’s reputation and effectiveness, a thread of survey responses suggested that areas

which the Weaver Foundation may consider further examining its approach to smaller non-profits and its visibility in the general community. However, the Weaver Foundation appears to be meeting non-profits' expectations of foundations generally and is well-respected in the Greensboro/Guilford community.

END NOTES

- ¹ 46 of 73 (63%) respondents have more than 10 years experience in the non-profit sector. 10 of 73 (14%) have 5 or fewer years experience.
- ² 60 of 87 (69%) respondents have applied for Weaver Foundation funds.
- ³ 35 of 69 respondents (51%) have worked with the Weaver Foundation for more than eight years; 51 of 91 respondents (56%) are funded by the Weaver Foundation.
- ⁴ Percentage based on 74 total respondents.
- ⁵ 22 of 67 respondents (39%).
- ⁶ 45 of 74 respondents (61%).
- ⁷ Percentages based on 74 total respondents.
- ⁸ 46 of 65 respondents (71%).
- ⁹ 42 of 63 respondents (67%).
- ¹⁰ For 20 of 74 respondents (27%) government funds are their primary source of funding; for 9 of 74 respondents (12%) private foundations are the major source of funding..
- ¹¹ Based on 47 respondents.
- ¹² 61 of 74 respondents (82%).
- ¹³ Based on 57 respondents.
- ¹⁴ 39 of 68 respondents (57%).
- ¹⁵ 42 of 76 respondents (55%) 18 of 76 respondents gave a 5 (3 respondents) or 6 (13 respondents) rank.
- ¹⁶ 51 of 91 respondents (56%).
- ¹⁷ Only 39 of 92 total survey respondents responded to the question, "Is there anything you feel the Weaver Foundation should improve?" Ten of those respondents comments were to the effect that the Weaver Foundation does not need to improve in any area.
- ¹⁸ 36 of 92 (39%) respondents reported first learning about the Weaver Foundation from their own organization; 23 of 92 (25%) from a Weaver Foundation representative; 11 of 92 (12%) from another non-profit.
- ¹⁹ 2 of 92 respondents (2%).
- ²⁰ 66 respondents.
- ²¹ 69 respondents rated the Weaver Foundation a 5.5 point average on a 7- point scale.
- ²² Of 66 respondents, including 5 who responded "Not applicable."
- ²³ On a 7- point scale, 80 respondents rated the Weaver Foundation an average of 5.4 on strength of the Weaver Foundation's overall communication with the respondent. On a 7-point scale, 75 respondents rated the Weaver Foundation an average of 5.2 on strength of communication compared to other Greensboro foundations.
- ²⁴ Of 45 respondents who responded to a question asking which foundation is the most effective communicator among foundations from whom they have received grants, the Weaver Foundation received the most votes (10), followed by the Community Foundation of Greensboro (8).
- ²⁵ 44 of 87 respondents (51%).
- ²⁶ On an 7-point scale, 43 respondents rated Weaver Foundation staff a 6.4 on staff accessibility during a grant cycle.
- ²⁷ 42 of 52 respondents (81%) responded that there is appropriate frequency of contact between themselves and the Weaver Foundation during the grant cycle.
- ²⁸ Nearly 40% (or 29) of 70 respondents responded "not applicable" to the question, "How useful is the Weaver Foundation's website to you as a source of information?"
- ²⁹ 49 respondents rated the Weaver Foundation a near 6 point average on a 7-point scale for clarity of funding goals.

³⁰ 46 respondents rated the Weaver Foundation a 5.9 on a 7-point scale on communication regarding the status of pending proposals; 57% (or 26) of 42 respondents think the Weaver Foundation communicates very well (highest rating or 7) about the status of pending proposals.

³¹ 55% (or 26) of 47 respondents. Only 6% (3 respondents) reported that WF did not communicate that decision adequately.

³² 84% (or 46) of 55 respondents reported feeling comfortable contacting WF staff when a problem arises with the grant; 75% (or 41) of 55 respondents reported feeling comfortable contacting WF staff when a problem arises with the grantee organization; and 84% (or 46) of 55 respondents reported feeling comfortable contacting WF staff when a problem arises in the field.

³³ 60 of 87 respondents (69%).

³⁴ 31 of 57 respondents (54%).

³⁵ 17 of 47 respondents completed online applications. Nine reported that the survey took between 3-6 hours to complete.

³⁶ 28 of 57 respondents (49%).

³⁷ 50 of 56 respondents (89.3%).

³⁸ Forty-nine respondents gave the Weaver Foundation an average rating of 5.97 on a 6 point scale for clarity of application guidelines, including 13 respondents who indicated "don't know."

³⁹ Of 44 responses, the average rating on an 7 point scale for staff helpfulness with grant application process was 6.2.

⁴⁰ On a 7-point scale, 44 respondents rated the Weaver Foundation at 2.7 on relative amount of effort for the grant application process compared to other foundations providing similarly sized grants. 11 of 44 respondents found the Weaver Foundation application less cumbersome (lowest rating or 1) while 9 of 44 respondents found the Weaver Foundation application process to be about the same as others in terms of effort (dead middle rating or 4).

⁴¹ 31 of 53 respondents (58.5%).

⁴² On a 7-point scale, 38 respondents rated the Weaver Foundation a 5.6 average in effectiveness of its grant monitoring process compared to other foundations.

⁴³ 49% (or 25) of 51 respondents reported that WF requires the same grant reporting information relative to other foundations providing similarly sized grants; 35% (or 18 of 51) reported that the Weaver Foundation requires less.

⁴⁴ 83% (or 45) of 54 respondents reported that the reporting requirements are reasonable.

⁴⁵ 87% (or 47) of 54 respondents do not want a more formal progress report structure.

⁴⁶ 46 respondents gave the Weaver Foundation a 5.8 average rating on a 7-point scale for the Weaver Foundation's understanding of grantee organization priorities.

⁴⁷ 48 respondents gave the Weaver Foundation a 5.9 average rating on a 7-point scale for the Weaver Foundation's understanding of grantee operational challenges.

⁴⁸ 46 respondents gave the Weaver Foundation a 5.7 average rating on a 7-point scale for the Weaver Foundation's understanding of grantee organizational challenges.

⁴⁹ Based on responses by 75 respondents.