



Listening to our Community: The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation through the Eyes of Grantees

Final Report
August 2011

Prepared for
The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation

Acknowledgements

The work of any Foundation, no matter how thoughtful, is always enhanced by considering the perspective of those people and organizations it serves. We are grateful to the nearly 300 individuals (and the organizations they represent) who took the time to respond to the Grantee Survey. Your candor allowed The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation to better understand our strengths and challenges from your perspective and ensure that our grantmaking processes remain truly responsive.

We are grateful to the following individuals who provided feedback about the survey design, findings and contributed to the final report: Mary Christian, Jinhee Kim, Jennifer Letscher, Allan Parachini, and Denis Prager. A special thanks to Crystal Coker and Anna Cruz from Harder+Company Community Research for their adept analytic support and to Joelle Greene for her project leadership.

We hope you learn as much about the Foundation from reading this report as we did from the process of creating it.

Sincerely,

Wendy Garen
President and CEO

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Executive Summary

The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation (RMPF) has engaged in more than 30 years of responsive grantmaking and currently is one of only a handful of funders providing general operating support in Los Angeles. In 2010 alone, the Foundation granted over \$20 million to Los Angeles area nonprofit organizations. In April 2011, the Foundation contracted Harder+Company Community Research to gather feedback from grantees for the purpose of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Foundation's grantmaking program. The survey followed an internal strategic review process conducted in 2011 in which the Foundation board reaffirmed its commitment to responsive grantmaking in Los Angeles County.



Harder+Company designed a custom survey for The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation based on a scan of the existing literature focused around areas of specific interest to the Foundation. The survey was finalized incorporating input of RMPF staff and consultants highly familiar with the Foundation's day-to-day operations, priority areas and strategic focus. The final survey was comprised of 31 items across six thematic component areas: Reputation and Perceptions, Grantmaking Priorities, Foundation Staff, Processes and Procedures, Foundation Website, and Other Support. The survey included both closed- and open-ended questions and also captured respondent and organization demographics. Nearly 400 current and former grantees representing all four of the Foundation's priority areas were invited to participate in the survey; 79% of invitees completed a survey.

Key Strengths:

- + **General operating support is rare to come by and grantees appreciate the Foundation's commitment to providing it.**
- + **The Foundation's funding priorities are well-understood and seen as appropriate to the issues and challenges in Los Angeles.**
- + **Foundation staff provide high levels of customer service and are seen as adding value to grantee organizations.**
- + **Pre- and post-award processes are seen as streamlined and easy to implement by *most* grantees.**
- + **Grantees who received Foundation feedback on their final report found it useful.**
- + **The Foundation's website is being used regularly by grantees and the information there is seen as clear, easy to access and helpful.**

Key Challenges

- + The time interval between proposal submission and a final decision was frustrating to many grantees.**
- + Only 24% of respondents received feedback of any kind related to their final report but more than 80% of respondents who did not receive feedback desire it.**

Grantee Requests:

- + Grantees desire more interaction with the Foundation during their grant year. They would like to host more site visits and to have Foundation staff attend their events.**
- + Grantees would like to be connected to other grantees and see the Foundation play the role of convener.**

INTRODUCTION

“We exist to help these [nonprofit] organizations do their very best work. To us, success is measured in the human achievements of the people our grantees help. We celebrate the astounding accomplishments of these nonprofits through our grantmaking. This support, in turn, enriches the fabric of Los Angeles by investing in the very best human services, health care, education and cultural organizations.”

~Ralph M. Parsons Foundation Website

Background

Founded in 1961 (and beginning active grantmaking in 1978) The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation (RMPF, the Foundation), granted over \$20 million dollars in 2010 to Los Angeles area non-profit organizations. RMPF grantmaking is currently focused in four priority areas: Social Impact, Civic and Cultural Programs, Health and Higher Education.

As RMPF is one of only a handful of funders in the Los Angeles area who make grants for general operating support (and one of the largest), the Foundation’s funding is viewed as critical to the sustainability of local non-profits, a theme that is more fully explored later in this report.

The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation contracted with Harder+Company Community Research in February 2011 to conduct a survey of nearly 400 grantees who had received awards over the last three years. The purpose of the grantee survey was to gather feedback from grantees about Foundation grantmaking policies, procedures, and interactions with foundation staff, with a focus on improving and effectiveness and efficiency of the Foundation’s grantmaking program. The survey followed a strategic review process conducted in 2011 in which the Foundation board reaffirmed its commitment to responsive grantmaking in Los Angeles County.

Following the strategic review, the Board and Staff agreed that soliciting the direct input of grantees was important, to ensure that the Foundation’s processes and procedures were efficient, effective and appropriate. As RMPF was considering making changes to its website, application process and other operational matters, they were eager to solicit grantee feedback. The survey was also used to gather input on ways in which RMPF could be supportive to grantees. Questions used to guide the evaluation are listed in Table 1.

Survey Development

Harder+Company designed a custom survey for The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation based on a scan of the existing literature focused on areas of specific interest to the Foundation. The survey was finalized



Table 1. Key Evaluation Questions

- + What is grantees’ experience of working with the Foundation staff?
- + Are the Foundation’s policies and procedures efficient and effective?
- + In what other ways could the Foundation be supportive of grantees?

incorporating input of RMPF staff and consultants highly familiar with the Foundation’s day-to-day operations, priority areas and strategic focus. The final survey was comprised of 31 items¹ across six thematic component areas and included both closed- and open-ended questions. The survey also captured respondent and organization demographics for comparison purposes. Table 2 provides an overview of the survey components and representative items; a copy of the full survey can be found in Appendix A.

Table 2. Components of Grantee Survey²	
Component	Representative Questions
Reputation and Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In your opinion, what three words or phrases best describe The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation? ■ How does your experience working with RMPF staff compare with other foundations/funders?
Grantmaking Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To what degree do you feel RMPF’s funding priorities are appropriate to the problems facing the greater Los Angeles area? ■ How important is general operating support to organizations such as yours?
Foundation Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are there ways in which RMPF Staff added value to your work beyond the grant dollars you received? ■ Overall, how would you characterize your working relationship with RMPF?
Processes and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How would you rate RMPF’s pre-approval process? ■ How can reporting processes be improved?
Foundation Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have you ever visited the Foundation’s website? ■ How useful was the information on the website?
Other Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In what other ways could RMPF be helpful to grantees? ■ Was writing a final report to RMPF on your grant helpful or beneficial to your organization/program? If yes, how so?
Organization and Respondent Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Position of person completing survey. ■ Annual budget of organization. ■ Year of first award from Parsons.

¹ Not all grantees were asked all questions. Skip logic was used to filter irrelevant questions based on previous responses.

² A copy of the complete survey can be found in Appendix A

Survey Methodology

RMPF provided Harder+Company email contact information for all its grantees from 2008, 2009 and 2010. In April 2011, grantees received an email outlining the purpose of the survey and a link to an online version of the survey. Of the initial 387 addresses provided, 9 were returned as invalid, narrowing the possible universe of respondents to 378. Primary contacts were asked to either complete the survey themselves or to forward the survey to the member of their organization who had the most recent interaction with the Foundation.

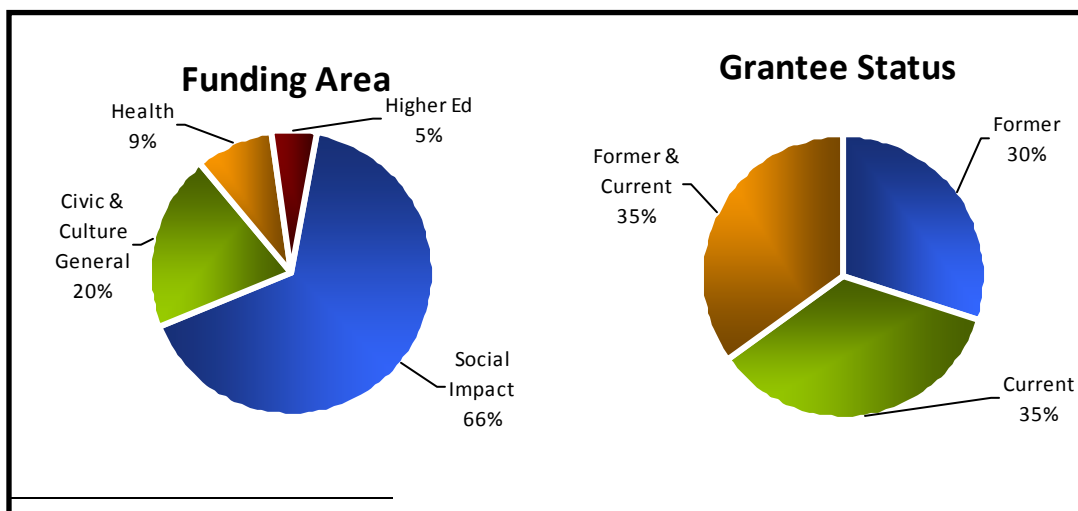
The survey remained open online for a period of three weeks and all grantees chose to complete an electronic version of the survey. At the end of the data collection period, a total of 329 surveys were started and 299 were completed for a final response rate of 79%. This is a very high response rate in comparison to an average 30% response rate to online surveys in general³.

The feedback offered here from grantees is based on a long history of interaction with the Foundation – in many cases, decades of interaction.

Respondent Characteristics

The high response rate ensured a representative mix of grantees and some of the key characteristics of respondents and their organizations are described here. Individuals completing the survey held a variety of roles within their nonprofit institutions. Most (40%) identified themselves as CEOs, 26% were development staff and 34% held other positions. As illustrated in Figure 1, respondents from all four priority areas participated in the survey. Most respondents received funding in the Social Impact Priority Area (66%); Foundation staff noted that survey participation rates were equivalent to overall funding distribution.⁴ There was also good representation of former and current grantees as well as grantees that were *both* former and current grantees.

Figure 1. Respondent characteristics



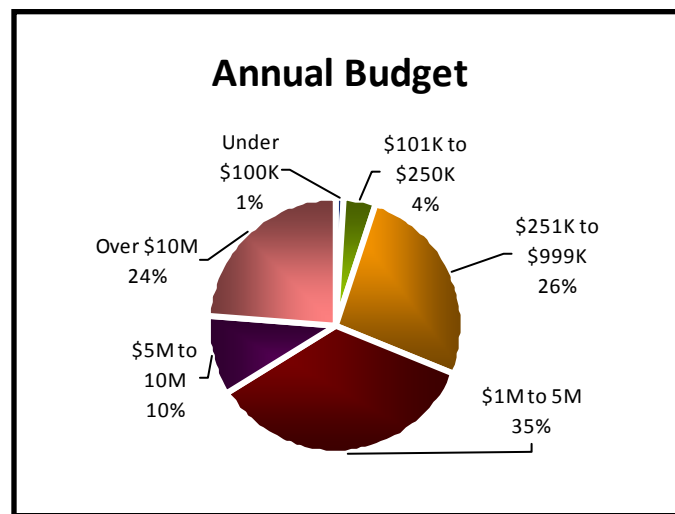
³ Retrieved on August 20, 2011 from

<http://www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/assessment/iar/teaching/gather/method/survey-Response.php>

⁴ Personal communication from RMPF Staff, May 2011

The findings of this survey represent the experiences of a diverse set of respondents in terms of size of award received and organization operating budget. Respondents' organizations received awards from the Foundation ranging from \$7,000 to \$1,500,000⁵; the median award size was \$50,000 and organizations varied widely in terms of their annual operating budgets (see Figure 2) ranging from under \$100,000 to over \$10,000,000. Most organizations have a long history with RMPF. In fact one respondent's organization had received a first award in 1971 and at least half of the respondents received a first award *before* 2002. This suggests that much of the feedback provided by grantees is based on a long history of interaction with the Foundation, in many cases, *decades* of interaction.

Figure 2. Respondent organization annual operating budgets



Findings

Here we highlight some of the key themes and findings of the survey. Findings are organized around the key focus areas of the survey and guiding evaluation questions. Number of responses and frequency distributions by individual survey question may be found in Appendix A.

Perceptions and Reputation: A “Cornerstone Organization” in Los Angeles

The survey provided robust evidence that the Foundation is well-regarded by grantees. Respondents were asked to list three words or phrases that best describe the Foundation. This question generated almost 900 responses, which were then grouped into 31 thematic categories⁶. The most frequent categories of responses were: generous, responsive, supportive, committed, and professional. The following word cloud includes all responses received to the questions; the size of the word indicates the relative frequency of that response.

⁵ This reflects the size of the most recent award received from RMPF.

⁶ See Appendix B for a table listing the relative frequency of each thematic category.

Working with Foundation Staff: “Genuinely Interested” in Grantees

Table 3. Grantee interactions with RMPF during the Grant Period

How?	How Frequently?
+ 50% Telephone	+ 18% Once
+ 26% Email	+ 51% 2 to 3 times
+ 23% Face-to-face	+ 20% 4 to 5 times
	+ 8% more than 5 times

Respondents interacted most frequently with their Program Officer (63%), the President/CEO

(29%) or the Grants Manager (8%) over the life of the grant. Methods and frequency of contact with foundation staff varied, but grantees were most likely to interact with the foundation by telephone two to three times over the funding period (see Table 3 above). Grantee experiences with Foundation staff were *strongly positive* as indicated by high levels of agreement across every domain assessed (see Figure 3 below).

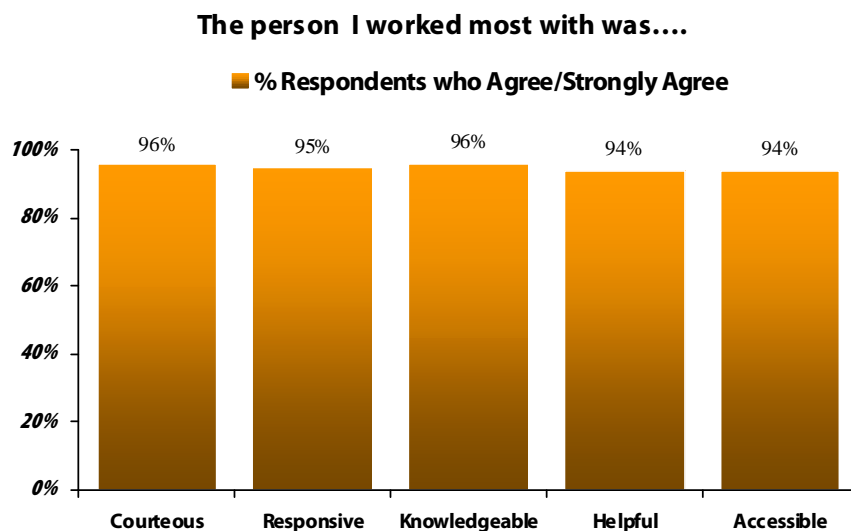
Grantees viewed RMPF staff as knowledgeable, responsive, helpful, accessible and courteous. Seventy percent of respondents reported that the staff *added value to their work above and beyond the grant dollars they received*. This included providing professional development (15%), credibility among other funders (13%) feedback about their organization and programs (9%), and a sense of validation (9%).

“Parsons folks are real – not in an ivory tower. Many have had experience at nonprofits and truly seem to understand the times we face today. Compassionate. Accessible. Kind.”

As one grantee put it, *“In addition to financial support, [Our organization] has been the beneficiary of the wealth of experience and knowledge of the Parsons staff. Their advice over the years has been invaluable, and their*

accessibility is one of the things that makes them a wonderful partner to our organization. It's a model that we would like to see replicated throughout the philanthropic community!”

Figure 3. Quality of interactions with foundation staff



Several grantees mentioned that their work with the Foundation felt like a “partnership” and nearly all grantees reported having a positive working relationship with RMPF – 73% characterized it as “excellent,” 25% as “good” and 2% as “okay.” Only 1 grantee characterized the relationship as difficult. By way of comparison, they rated the experience working with Foundation staff as significantly (42%) or moderately (37%) better than the experiences they have working with the staff of other foundations.

42% of grantees rated their experience working with RMPF Staff as “significantly better” than their experiences working with the staff of other funders.

Respondents also identified several areas where relationships between the Foundation and grantees could be strengthened. While infrequent, several grantees noted that it was challenging to form a “deep” relationship with the Foundation over the funding year, that they found program staff turn-over disconcerting, that they sometimes felt disconnected from the Foundation and that they would appreciate if the Foundation took a more “proactive” approach to their working relationship.

Processes and Procedures: “Straight-Forward and Efficient”

Grantees were asked to weigh in about the Foundation’s grantmaking processes and procedures, from application through reporting. The Foundation was specifically interested in knowing the extent to which grantees perceived processes as easy and appropriate. Overall, most grantees did not report encountering major challenges with the Foundation’s processes. When asked how things could be improved, 16% of respondents reported processes were “straightforward and efficient.” However one notable exception emerged; many grantees felt the time between proposal submission and decision was unreasonably long, which is discussed in further detail later in this section.

The Foundation’s application process is currently comprised of three activities:

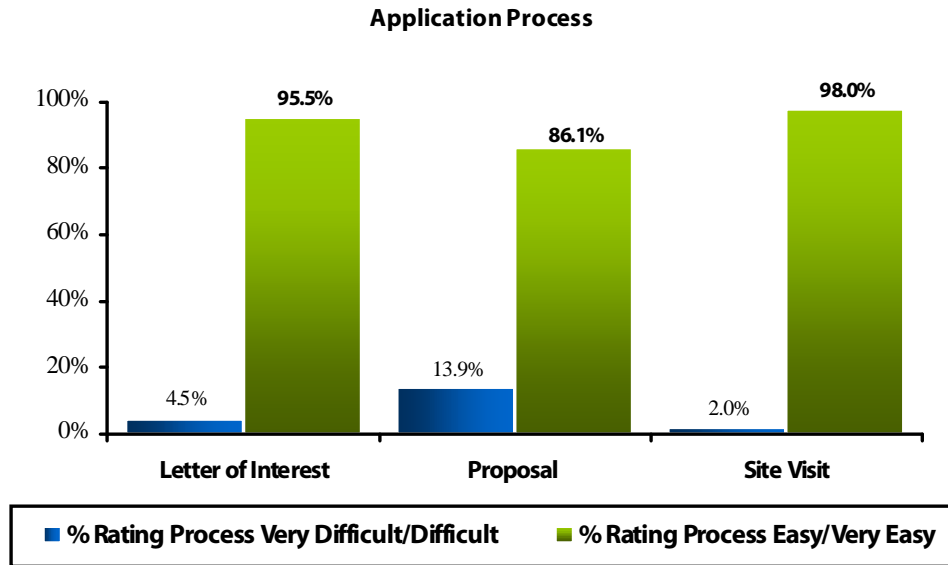
- + Letter of interest (experienced by 92% of respondents)
- + Full proposal (experienced by 98% of respondents)
- + Site visit (experienced by 87% of respondents)

Most respondents found all aspects of the application process *easy or very easy*. In fact one grantee commented that with RMPF, there are “*far fewer hoops than with other foundations.*” However a notable 14% of respondents found proposal preparation *very difficult or difficult* (see Figure 4 below). We examined the data more closely to see if there were any similarities among those grantees who found this process more difficult. There were no relationships between perceived difficulty of application preparation and size of grant amount, organization annual budget, funding area or position of the respondent (CEO, Development Staff, or other). Results of these follow-up analyses suggest that perceived ease of completion is most likely contingent upon the experience level of the applicant organization.

Grantees consistently noted that the time interval between application submission and news of a final decision was significantly longer for RMPF than what they experienced with other funders. Altogether, 38% of respondents (nearly 2 out of every 5) noted this as an area for improvement, as one grantee noted, “*Shorten the grant review process, if possible - ours was 11 months from proposal to grant receipt.*” According to RMPF staff, the average time between submission and decision has

been approximately 12 months over the past few years, compared to six to eight months by most Los Angeles area funders⁸.

Figure 4. Perceived Ease of the Application Process



Reporting: Foundation Feedback Helps Improve Programs

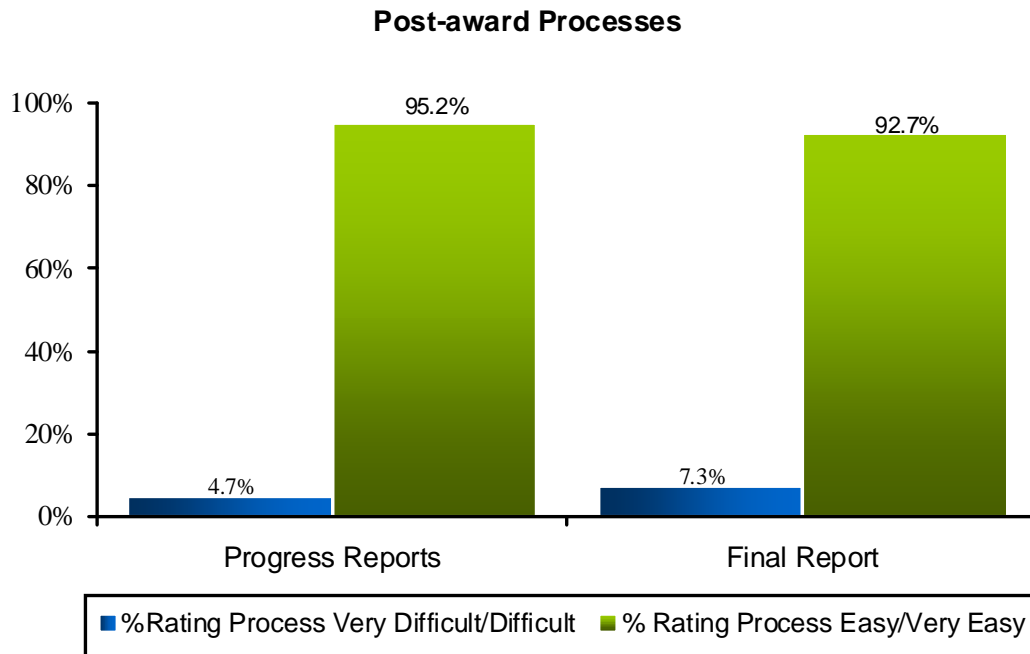
Post-award processes currently include progress reports and final narrative reports. Here again the vast majority of respondents found completion of these reports *easy or very easy* (see Figure 5). In a separate set of questions, 95% of grantees *agreed or strongly agreed* that grant reporting guidelines were useful and easy to understand, and 96% *agreed or strongly agreed* that the reporting requirements were appropriate to the grant size and duration. As one grantee commented, “*the reporting requirements are broad, allowing for flexibility in reporting.*”

More than 84% of respondents found the process of writing a final report for the Foundation of benefit to their organization. While respondents cited many reasons that they valued the report-writing process, some of the most frequent reasons included helping to reflect on lessons learned, helping to identify program impact and creating a vehicle to present accomplishments to the community.

83% of grantees who did not receive feedback about their final reports believe it would be of value to their organizations to do so. Grantees who receive feedback used that information to improve programs.

⁸ Based on informal research conducted by the Foundation, July 2011.

Figure 5. Perceived ease of post-award processes



Twenty-four percent of grantees reported that they had received feedback in relation to their final report. Eighty-three percent (83%) of grantees who indicated they had not received feedback believe it would be beneficial to do so, primarily to know if the grantee’s work was seen as satisfactory or “on-target,” to share best practices from other grantees, and for the purpose of program improvement. A handful of grantees (19) were concerned that this process might be too time-consuming and two grantees said that feedback should be reserved for clarification or to address problems.

Table 4. Grant & Requirement Appropriateness % Agree/Strongly Agree	
+	96% said the grant reflected an “open and trusting relationship” with the Foundation.
+	96% reported the work performed was consistent with grant objectives
+	93% said the grant amount was fair for the amount of work expected
+	87% felt that length of the grant was appropriate to their needs

Responses to questions relating to the appropriateness of the grant and requirements relative to the work performed show that grantees feel, for the most part, that the Foundation has reasonable expectations for grant-related work (see Table 4).

“The Foundation has consistently been there for us, listening to our needs and providing support. We can’t imagine how the Foundation’s programs could be strengthened.”

Foundation Website: A Useful Information Source

Grantees use the Foundation website across the entire funding lifecycle – from seeking information about funding opportunities, to obtaining application instructions and accessing reporting guidelines.

Table 5. Clarity and Usefulness of Website Content

- + 97% felt website provided useful information for preparing grant applications
- + 96% found the information on the website easy to understand
- + 95% said the website was easy to navigate
- + 84% found information useful for completing progress and final reports

Nearly 97% of all respondents visited the Foundation’s website at least once and as illustrated in Table 5. The website is seen as easy to use and found to contain useful information. Interestingly, grantees were of mixed opinion in terms of expanding the Foundation’s use of the website. For example, while a number of grantees suggested that the Foundation consider the use of online applications, nearly as many

cautioned against using online submissions, especially if it made the format “too restrictive.” Grantees appreciate the Foundation’s flexible application and reporting guidelines and see that as a strength compared to other funders.

What Grantees Want from RMPF: Feedback, Interaction and Networking

A number of questions throughout the survey offered grantees an opportunity to articulate types of support (beyond financial) they would like to receive from the Foundation. Three common themes emerged. 1) the desire to receive more feedback; 2) the desire for more interaction; and 3) opportunities to network with other grantees. The issue of feedback has been addressed extensively under the section on reporting so this section will focus on themes around interaction and networking.

Grantee desire for networking and interaction were closely related themes. For example, some grantees would like more interaction between the Foundation and their organization via Foundation staff attendance at their organization’s events and more frequent site visits during the grant period. Grantees also expressed a strong desire for RMPF to convene meetings and gatherings (13% of grantees offered this suggestion among their open-ended responses). Some grantees offered specific topics, such as trends and needs in the community, best practices, pre-funding workshops, and an Executive Directors’ forum.

Many grantees expressed an interest in attending Foundation-sponsored events for the purpose of *networking with other grantees*. It is clear that grantees value their association with the Foundation and are eager to leverage the resources, respect and connections that association with the Foundation brings. As one grantee candidly writes,

“We’ve been honored to be a RMPF grantee. Not only has their support been critical to our programs, but it has helped us to leverage additional funding. RMPF is well-respected in the philanthropic community and their support reflects well on us (as we hope our efforts reflect well on them).”

Summary and Recommendations

The 2011 grantee survey included the experiences and opinions of a highly representative and diverse sample of grantees from the past three years, many of whom had decades of experience working with the Foundation. The quantitative findings and themes from open-ended questions identified key strengths, challenges and grantee requests for the Foundation's consideration. A summary of each is included here, along with recommendations for action based on the findings.

Key Strengths:

- + **General operating support is rare and grantees appreciate the Foundation's commitment to providing it.** *Many grantees believe that the Foundation could have an even stronger impact if multi-year funding was available.*
- + **The Foundation's funding priorities are well-understood and seen as appropriate to the issues and challenges in Los Angeles.**
- + **Foundation staff provide high levels of customer service and are seen as adding value to grantee organizations.** *Grantees would welcome more "face time" with Foundation staff such as follow up visits during the grant period and attendance at their organizations' events.*
- + **Pre- and post-award processes are seen as streamlined and easy to implement by most grantees.** *A small minority of grantees found the application process difficult or very difficult, which was surprising. Further analyses did not identify any common characteristics among these grantees, suggesting that experience may play a factor in this assessment.*
- + **Grantees who received Foundation feedback on their final report found it useful.** *As discussed more fully in the Key Challenges section below, only 24% of respondents received feedback on their reports. This is not surprising, as it has not been the practice of the foundation staff to discuss reports after submittal to the foundation, except in the context of new requests.*
- + **The Foundation's website is being used regularly by grantees and the information there is seen as clear, easy to access and helpful.** *Some grantees would like to be able to apply for funding online but others caution against this procedure if it means the application process would become less flexible in the process.*

Key Challenges and Follow-up:

- + **The time interval between proposal submission and a final decision was frustrating to many grantees.** *The Foundation has contacted other local funders to gauge their timelines. Based on this informal research it appears that the Foundation has a significantly longer wait time) than other local funders (six to eight versus 12 months). Staff are currently exploring ways to speed up*

the process and have made significant progress reducing the lag time, which is six to eight months as of the date of this report.

- + **Twenty-four percent of respondents received feedback related to their annual report but more than 80% of respondents who did not receive feedback desire it.** New ways to provide feedback to grantees should be explored. Given the scale of the grantmaking, it may be difficult for *Foundation Staff to offer in-depth feedback to every grantee. Feedback might be reserved, for grantees that experienced unusual challenges, or only upon request. Clearly articulating these priorities would help manage grantee expectations in this area. In the interim, the Foundation is implementing a postcard notification system to confirm receipt of reports.*

Grantee Requests:

- + **Grantees desire more interaction with the Foundation during their grant year. They would like to host more site visits and to have Foundation Staff attend their events.** *Given the large number of grantees this may not be feasible. There would be value in communicating this up front to grantees so they are not disappointed at the amount of “face time” with the Foundation during the grant period.*
- + **Grantees would like to be connected to other grantees and see the Foundation play the role of convener.** *Grantees are very eager to meet one another and to have the opportunity to network. While some interest was expressed in having professional development activities sponsored by the Foundation, there was no clear sense of how this would be unique from efforts of other funders.*

Appendix A

Ralph M. Parsons Foundation Grantee Survey with Response Frequencies

INTRODUCTION

As the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation enters our 33rd year of grantmaking, our Board and staff have been engaged in a process of reflection. We want to assess our work and make improvements. We need your help. Our first ever grantee survey will allow us to see our work through your eyes. Your honest feedback will help us to do better grantmaking. Please have the person who has had the most contact with the Foundation complete the survey.

The information you provide in this survey is completely confidential. This confidentiality is assured because Harder+Company, the independent evaluator who is conducting the survey, will not attribute your responses to you or your organization when they share the aggregated survey results with the Foundation. To be most helpful to the Foundation, we encourage you to be as candid as possible.

Please complete the questionnaire by Friday, April 15th. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Crystal Coker at ccoker@harderco.com or (213) 891-1113.

GENERAL

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. Position of person completing the survey.
 - CEO **40% (n=120)**
 - Development Staff **26% (n=78)**
 - Other **33.7% (n=101)**
3. Approximate annual budget of organization.
 - Under \$100K **1.3% (n=4)**
 - \$101,000 to 250,000 **4.3% (n=13)**
 - \$251 to 999K **26% (n=78)**
 - \$1 to 5 million **34.3% (n=103)**
 - \$5 to 10 **9.7% (n=29)**
 - Over 10 million **24% (n=72)**
13. Is your organization.
 - A current grantee of the Foundation? **30.4% (n=91)**
 - A former grantee? **34.8% (n=104)**
 - Both a current AND former grantee? **34.8% (n=104)**

5. When was your first RMPF grant? (n=270)
Median = 2002 (50% of grants were received prior to 2002 and 50% were after 2002)
Mode = 2009 (Most frequent year of first grant)
Range = 1971 to 2011

OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF RMPF

6. In your opinion, what three words or phrases best describe RMPF?
 a.
 b.
 c.

RMPF GRANTMAKING PRIORITIES

7. RMPF's grantmaking programs on four major areas: social impact, higher education, civic and cultural and health. How well do you feel you understand RMPF's funding priorities?
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Not at all | 0% (n=0) |
| <input type="radio"/> A little | 4.1% (n=12) |
| <input type="radio"/> Moderately well | 43.2% (n=127) |
| <input type="radio"/> Very well | 52.7% (n=155) |
8. To what degree do you feel RMPF's funding priorities are appropriate to the problems facing the greater Los Angeles area.
- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Very inappropriate | 6.8% (n=20) |
| <input type="radio"/> Inappropriate | 0% (n=0) |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither inappropriate or appropriate | 2.3% (n=7) |
| <input type="radio"/> Appropriate | 33.6% (n=99) |
| <input type="radio"/> Very appropriate | 57.3% (n=169) |
9. How important is general operating support to organizations such as yours?
- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> No important | 0% (n=0) |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat important | 1.7% (n=5) |
| <input type="radio"/> Important | 9.5% (n=28) |
| <input type="radio"/> Extremely important | 88.8% (n=262) |
10. In what ways do you think Parsons Foundation programs could be strengthened?

WORKING WITH THE FOUNDATION

11. In your dealings with the Foundation on your most recent grant request, what was the principal form of communication with staff?

- Telephone contact **50.3% (n=149)**
- E-mail contact **26.4% (n=78)**
- Face-to-face contact **23.3% (n=69)**

12. About how many times did you communicate with the Ralph Parsons Foundation?

- 1 **18% (n=54)**
- 2 to 3 **50.7% (n=152)**
- 4 to 5 **19.7% (n=59)**
- 5+ **8% (n=24)**

13. Which staff did you interact with the MOST (Check one only)

- President/CEO **29.4% (n=86)**
- Program officer **62.8% (n=184)**
- Grants manager **7.5% (n=22)**
- Receptionist **.3% (n=1)**
- Finance **0% (n=0)**

14. Think about the person you interacted with most at RMPF during your time as a grantee. Please rate the quality of those interactions for each of the following areas: (check one for each of the following.)

The person on RMPF Staff I worked most with was:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Courteous	3.5% (n=10)	0% (n=0)	.3% (n=1)	11.1% (n=32)	85.1% (n=245)
Responsive	3.5% (n=10)	0% (n=0)	1.4% (n=4)	12.8% (n=37)	82.4% (n=238)
Knowledgeable	3.5% (n=10)	0% (n=0)	.3% (n=1)	10.8% (n=34)	85.4% (n=237)
Helpful	3.5% (n=10)	0% (n=0)	2.4% (n=7)	11.8% (n=34)	82.3% (n=237)
Accessible	3.1% (n=9)	0% (n=0)	2.8% (n=8)	17.7% (n=57)	76.4% (n=220)

15. Are there ways in which RMPF staff added value to your work above and beyond the grant dollars you received?

- No **29.9 % (n=85)**
- Yes **70.1%(n=199)**

If yes, how?

16. Overall, how would you characterize your working relationship with RMPF?
- Excellent **73% (n=211)**
 - Good **24.9% (n=72)**
 - Okay **1.7% (n=5)**
 - Somewhat difficult **0.3% (n=1)**
 - Very difficult **0% (n=0)**
- Please explain.

PROCESSES & PROCEDURES

17. How did you hear about RMPF (Check all that apply.)?

- Referral by another nonprofit organization **10.7% (n=32)**
- Referral by another grantmaker or corporate-giving program **11.0% (n=33)**
- Suggestion from a member of your organization **19.0% (n=57)**
- Visiting RMPFs website **17.3% (n=52)**
- Public presentation from a RMPF staff member
(e.g., “Meet the Grantmaker”) **8.0% (n=8)**
- Personal contact with an RMPF staff person **13.3% (n=40)**
- Previous experience with the Foundation or staff member **41.0% (n=123)**
- The Foundation Center, GuideStar or a nonprofit resource center **10.3% (n=31)**
- I can’t remember/don’t know **13.3% (n=40)**
- Other (Please explain.) **11.3% (n=34)**

18. How would you rate the following aspects of our pre-grant approval process?

	Very Difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very Easy	Don’t Know or Not Applicable
Letter of Interest	0% (n=0)	4.2% (n=12)	58.3% (n=168)	29.9% (n=86)	7.6% (n=22)
Proposal	0.3% (n=1)	13.3% (n=38)	66.8% (n=191)	17.8% (n=51)	1.7% (n=5)
Participating in a Site Visit	0% (n=0)	1.8% (n=5)	51.6% (n=147)	33.7% (n=96)	13% (n=37)

19. How would you rate the following aspects of our post-approval process?

	Very Difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very Easy	Don't Know or Not Applicable
Completing progress reports	0% (n=0)	4.2% (n=12)	63.7% (n=181)	21.1% (n=60)	10.9% (n=31)
Completing final narrative report	0.4% (n=1)	6.3% (n=18)	63.7% (n=181)	19.7% (n=56)	9.9% (n=28)
Other	1.4% (n=1)	2.7% (n=2)	24.7% (n=18)	15.1% (n=11)	56.2% (n=41)

If other, please specify:

20. Was writing a final report to RMPF on your grant helpful or beneficial to your organization/program?

- No **15.7% (n=44)**
 Yes **84.3% (n=236)**

If yes, in what way (i.e. identified strengths and weaknesses of the program, helped redevelop program goals, etc.)?

21. Have you received feedback or discussed your reports with RMPF staff? **(n=292)**

- No **76% (n=38)**
 Yes **24% (n=70)**

22. If yes, how helpful was this?

23. If no, do you feel it would be beneficial to receive feedback or discuss your report with RMPF staff?

- No **17.2% (n=38)**
 Yes **82.8% (n=183)**

24. Why or why not?

25. Are there any ways RMPF can improve these grantmaking and reporting processes?

26. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your grant.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know or Not Applicable
The grant reflected An open and trusting relationship with RMPF.	2.1% (n=6)	0% (n=0)	2.4% (n=7)	26.4% (n=76)	68.4% (n=197)	0.7% (n=2)
The length of the grant was appropriate to our needs.	2.1% (n=6)	2.8% (n=8)	7.6% (n=22)	34.7% (n=100)	51.4% (n=148)	1.4% (n=4)
The grant amount was fair for the amount of work expected.	1.7% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	4.9% (n=14)	34% (n=98)	58.7% (n=169)	0.7% (n=2)
The work performed was consistent with the grant objectives.	1.4% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	2.4% (n=7)	25.8% (n=74)	69.3% (n=199)	1.0% (n=3)
The reporting requirements were appropriate to the grant size and duration.	1.7% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	2.1% (n=6)	33.1% (n=95)	60.6% (n=174)	2.4% (n=7)
The length of time to receive a decision is appropriate.	2.4% (n=7)	15.9% (n=46)	19.4% (n=56)	32.5% (n=94)	28.4% (n=82)	1.4% (n=4)
The grant reporting guidelines were useful and easy to understand.	1.4% (n=7)	15.9% (n=46)	19.4% (n=56)	32.5% (n=94)	28.4% (n=82)	1.4% (n=4)

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

27. Have you ever visited the Foundation's website?

- No **3.5% (n=10)**
- Yes **96.5% (n=278)**

28. Please answer the following questions about your experience with the Foundation's website.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know or Not Applicable
The information provided on the website is easy to understand.	1.4% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	2.5% (n=7)	52.2% (n=145)	43.5% (n=121)	.4% (n=1)
The website is easy to navigate.	1.4% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	3.2% (n=9)	54.2% (n=150)	40.4% (n=112)	.7% (n=2)
The website provides useful information for submitting a grant application.	1.4% (n=4)	0% (n=0)	1.8% (n=5)	50.4% (n=140)	45.7% (n=127)	.7% (n=2)
The website provides useful information for completing reports.	1.5% (n=4)	1.5% (n=4)	11.3% (n=31)	41.8% (n=115)	33.5% (n=92)	10.5% (n=29)

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

29. How does your experience working with RMPF staff compare with other foundations/funders?

- Significantly worse **0% (n=0)**
- Moderately worse **0.3% (n=1)**
- About the same **20.4% (n=59)**
- Moderately better **37.4% (n=108)**
- Significantly better **41.9% (n=121)**

30. In what other ways could RMPF be helpful to grantees (i.e. sponsoring convening's, technical assistance, etc.)?

OTHER

31. Is there anything we haven't asked about which you feel is important to share about your experience as a RMPF grantee?

THANK YOU

Thank you for sharing your feedback with us. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Prepared by Harder+Company for The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation (August 2011)

Appendix B

Response Categories by Frequency of Occurrence

The following table shows the frequency of response categories to the survey question, “What three words or phrases best describe RMPF?” Over 800 responses were received to this question; content analysis was used to create 31 categories of thematically related responses.

Category	Frequency	Example
Generous	79	<i>Substantial California supporter; generous; charitable</i>
Responsive	71	<i>Responsive to community need; very responsive to needs of nonprofits</i>
Supportive	56	<i>Continually supportive; very supportive of the arts; supportive of grantees</i>
Committed	56	<i>Loyal; committed to excellence and impact</i>
Professional	39	<i>Stable; focused; professional</i>
Local	38	<i>Community spirited; helps local causes; Southern California</i>
Efficient	29	<i>Proactive; focused; impactful</i>
Innovative	29	<i>Forward thinking; visionary; innovative leadership</i>
Caring	29	<i>Caring and concerned about non-profits; caring</i>
Accessible	28	<i>Accessible; easy to work with</i>
Understanding	28	<i>Understands the needs of nonprofits</i>
Consistent	27	<i>Established; loyal and consistent</i>
Respected	27	<i>Respected; courageous, well known in the community</i>
Helpful	26	<i>Personal; fair; helpful</i>
Partner	26	<i>Reliable partner; collaborative</i>
Leader	24	<i>Very thoughtful about leadership; philanthropy leader</i>
Thorough	24	<i>Meticulous; thorough</i>
Flexible	21	<i>Flexible and understanding; very accommodating</i>
Strategic	21	<i>Discerning; outcome oriented; relevant</i>
Compassionate	19	<i>Sensitive; compassionate; advocating</i>
Thoughtful	19	<i>Thoughtful philanthropy; thoughtful and efficient</i>
Engaged	16	<i>Involved; engaged; interested in grantees</i>
Knowledgeable	16	<i>Educated; smart; knowledgeable about the community</i>
Organized	14	<i>Clear; well-run; organized</i>
Diverse	12	<i>Inclusive; diverse; grantmaking is wide-ranging</i>
Approachable	11	<i>Thoughtful, respectful and very approachable</i>
Realistic	11	<i>Decision making based in reality; real; fair</i>
Friendly	10	<i>Warm; friendly; user-friendly</i>
Communicative	6	<i>Clear communicators; timely communications with organizations</i>
Slow	6	<i>Long turnaround on grant applications; not so fast; long lead time</i>
Rigorous	4	<i>Selective; competitive to receive a grant; excellence</i>