



Our Blog

Category: Barr News

The Value of Constructive Feedback

Why we seek and share candid input from grantees on what it's like to work with us.

At the Barr Foundation, we often speak to our commitment to collaboration and partnership. We have also articulated a set of core values and approaches that guide how we aim to work. Yet, how can we really know whether we are fully embodying these principles? We may emphasize relationships and authentic partnership, but with the inherent power dynamic that exists for foundations and grantees, it can be difficult to fully ascertain how well we are doing and what we could be doing better.



Roger Nozaki

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This is why, every few years since 2003, Barr has participated in the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP)'s Grantee Perception Report (GPR). Simply put, the GPR is a way for nonprofits to share honest feedback about what it's like to work with their funders. Honed through implementation with thousands of nonprofits and hundreds of foundations, we have found the GPR to be enormously helpful. It has enabled us to look critically at our practice, and to find concrete ways to be better partners. This fall, CEP will conduct this survey with our grantees.

To encourage candid feedback, CEP maintains complete confidentiality of all responses. CEP will aggregate the feedback for Barr, and, usefully for us, provide comparisons of that data with results for a peer group of foundations. This comparative data helps us to understand the data in both absolute and relative terms. Survey questions probe grantee perceptions of a foundation's transparency, communications, interactions, strategies, and impact. We have also asked CEP to include a small number of custom questions focused on Barr's values and approaches.

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We take the survey results seriously. As we have in the past, we will discuss the results as a staff and with our trustees, working to identify opportunities to build on what's working and to identify ways for ongoing improvement. We also post the results publicly on our [GPR page](#), including a summary of the steps we intend to take as a result of the feedback.

For the Barr Foundation, how we do our work is just as important as what we do. Surveys can never take the place of honest, open, ongoing dialogue that occur when relationships are rooted in trust and respect. It is always our aim to cultivate those kinds of relationships. Nonetheless, we believe the GPR is a valuable source of data to inform how we do our work. We are grateful to all who will dedicate the time to completing the CEP survey, and we look forward to sharing the feedback we receive.

Published 09.06.2017
