



COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER
SUCCESS STRATEGIES FOR COLORADO NONPROFITS

BEHAVIOR CHANGE IMPACT STUDY

RURAL PHILANTHROPY DAYS

Intermediate Outcomes of the 2017 and 2018 Conferences



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"For rural nonprofits, it's invaluable to put an organizational face with a name AND to put a foundation face with a name. The relationships kindled at RPD are critical to the sustainability of rural nonprofits throughout Colorado. And, these relationships help funders fulfill their missions."

Community Resource Center (CRC) was humbled by the responses received to the survey sent to Rural Philanthropy Days (RPD) conference participants. Humbled by both the overwhelming love and support of the program, and by the depth of great ideas from rural leaders of ways we can improve it. We learned a great deal from the feedback received, some of the most notable findings included:

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING VALUED FOUR TIMES MORE THAN SKILL BUILDING

With the goal of increasing grant dollars awarded to rural communities, RPD seeks to cultivate relationships, and build nonprofit capacity through skill-building. While all are critical goals of the program, this data demonstrates that respondents value the relationship building aspect both regionally and with the funding community significantly more than the skill building offered. CRC will bring this insight to our rural committees to consider as we plan programming, including virtually, in 2021 and beyond.

MIXED FEEDBACK ON THE EFFICACY OF FUNDER ROUNDTABLES

Respondents overwhelmingly enjoyed engaging face-to-face with funders and were also eager to share ways funder roundtables specifically could be improved. Difficulties accessing funders due to a competitive roundtable atmosphere was cited by some as running counter to the goals of RPD. Others called the roundtables a fantastic conference offering, representing a mixed range of responses. In 2021, CRC will work with our rural stakeholders and funding partners to explore ways to make the funder roundtable sessions more accessible and impactful for all.

DESIRE FOR NEW WAYS TO CONNECT WITH FUNDERS

Respondents emphasized their desire to have more informal networking opportunities with funders outside of the roundtables. With this considered, CRC is committed to prioritizing relationship building in future RPD programming through more thoughtful networking and collaboration opportunities between nonprofit professionals and funders.

STREAMLINED STEERING COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION SOUGHT

Steering Committee feedback indicated a strong value to participation, but a heavy time burden from rural community leaders which negatively impacted their organizations. CRC is actively seeking ways to reduce this time burden and maximize the network strengthening, relationship building benefits of Steering Committee participation.

To measure immediate outcomes and sustained impact of the Rural Philanthropy Days (RPD) program, Community Resource Center (CRC) staff administered a survey to rural grantseekers in February of 2020. This survey was sent to participants that attended the four RPD conferences in 2017 and 2018 including events in Moffat (Northwest), Montrose (San Juan), Cortez (Southwest), and Lamar (Southeast).

The survey attempts to analyze key intermediate behavior changes and opportunities that were created through participation in RPD conferences. It also attempts to measure if the goals of the RPD program were met after organizations had time to leverage the connections and resources provided.

WHAT ARE THE KEY OUTCOMES OF RURAL PHILANTHROPY DAYS?

1. RPD INCREASES RESOURCES TO RURAL NONPROFITS

Respondents demonstrated this in several ways, including reporting better skills for telling the story of their organization, more efficient use of grantwriting tools and strategies, and a better understanding of available resources.



2. RPD SERVES AS A PLATFORM TO INCREASE REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The majority of respondents made new relationships that they maintained after RPD. Attendees were able to form cross-sector collaborations and use those relationships to better serve their communities.



3. RPD FACILITATES CONNECTIONS WITH LOCAL NONPROFITS AND STATEWIDE GRANTMAKERS

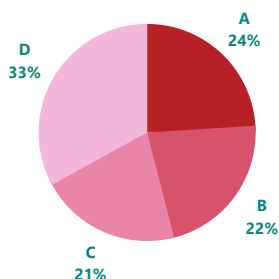
Nonprofits made new relationships with funders, and many of these relationships resulted in increased grant funding for the nonprofit.



Due to the diversity of nonprofit professionals served, there is no one size fits all in RPD programming. As such, a key goal of the Behavior Change Impact Study was to gain insight on the universal draw of RPD.

The survey was sent to all grantseeking participants of the 2017 (Northwest and San Juan) and 2018 (Southwest and Southeast) Rural Philanthropy Days Conferences (RPD).

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING RPD CONFERENCES DID YOU ATTEND?



A total of 96 participants responded to the survey, corresponding to a response rate of 8%.

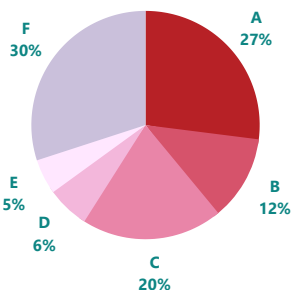
LEGEND:

- A - 2017 Northwest RPD (24%)
- B - 2017 San Juan RPD (22%)
- C - 2018 Southeast RPD (21%)
- D - 2018 Southwest RPD (33%)

53% of respondents stated this was their first time attending RPD. 47% of respondents were RPD veterans, meaning they have attended two or more conferences.

54% of respondents stated they had more than 10 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector, indicating that the majority of those served were seasoned nonprofit staff.

WHAT IS THE BUDGET SIZE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?

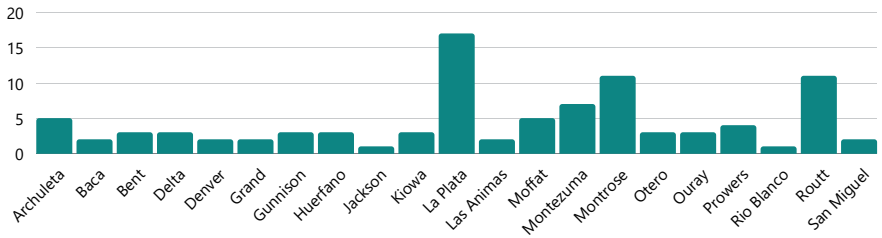


RPD attracts diverse participating organizations, representing a range of nonprofit sizes.

LEGEND:

- A - Less than \$100K (27%)
- B - \$100K to \$250K (12%)
- C - \$250K to \$500K (20%)
- D - \$500K to \$750K (6%)
- E - \$750K to \$1 Million (5%)
- F - More than \$1 Million (30%)

WHERE IS YOUR ORGANIZATION BASED?



WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS?

Although the response rate to the Behavior Change Impact Survey was 8%, this sample is representative given the spread of organizational county and even representation of budget size. Half of respondents had more than 10 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector, and around a quarter had 5 years or less. Additionally, around half of respondents were RPD newcomers, while the majority of RPD veterans had attended three previous conferences. From this respondent data, we know there is no one size fits all in conference programming.

CRC acknowledges that the Behavior Change Impact Study was not structured to collect information using a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. This will be prioritized as a key goal in future study iterations.

2017/2018 RURAL PHILANTHROPY DAYS RECAP



Respondents were asked to reflect on their most positive memory from RPD. The responses were then scored based on relevancy to the following themes:

Theme (# of mentions)

- Relationship Building with Funders (x57)
- Relationship Building with Nonprofits Professionals (x42)
- Knowledge Sharing, Funding Opportunities (x22)
- Skill Building, General Nonprofit (x21)
- Knowledge Sharing, Regional Nonprofit Context (x15)
- Skill Implementation, Funding Strategies (x11)
- Regional Collaboration (x10)
- Relationship Sustainability with Nonprofit Professionals (x4)
- Skill Building, Organizational Narrative (x4)
- Skill Implementation, General Nonprofit (x2)
- Skill Implementation, Fulfilling Mission-based Goals (x1)

4:1
Ratio of mentions for
Relationship Building
vs. Skill Building

WHAT WAS THE GENERAL EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS?

For the majority of respondents, the most positive memories came from relationship building with funders and other nonprofit professionals. This was reflected in the data, where relationship building themes were mentioned four times more than those relating to skill building. The success of these experiences was attributed to knowledge sharing in regard to funding opportunities and the regional nonprofit context.

NETWORKING WITH OTHER NONPROFIT PROFESSIONALS



"Meeting [my mentors] and all they each taught me throughout the years. How much they loved their work, and how much they each cared about rural Colorado and believed in their missions I met many others who guided me through the third sector, but [these mentors] knew me by name and were so genuine."

Through RPD, attendees gained a richer understanding of the regional nonprofit context, resulting in "great conversations and brainstorming on how some organizations can combine forces to meet our missions." Respondents also deeply felt "the commitment of other attendees to their own organization and collaboration." This quality nurtured "conversations that happened unexpectedly, but held such value."

NETWORKING WITH FUNDERS

"The opportunity to tell our story, to network with those interested in nonprofits, and to speak with grant representatives face-to-face in order to learn about their mission and how they match our own."



RPD provides a variety of networking opportunities to connect grantseekers with funders. Respondents highlighted the value of having informal access to funders, as "networking at dinner events with [funders] led to new organizational partnerships." During the formal networking at funder roundtables, participants had the "opportunity to connect and get guidance on whether to apply ... [the experience] saved me time in applying to a foundation that was a long shot".

These interactions informed organizational funding strategies through direct feedback from funders. Respondents were able to understand what funders are looking for in their parameters and how they view impact.

SKILL BUILDING AND IMPLEMENTATION



"The level of expertise of the presenters: I've been doing fundraising and public relations for decades, but I learned plenty at RPD. Additionally, the presenters and the people who made RPD happen were so very personable - no arrogance nor snootiness."

Although a variety of trainings were offered at RPD, the majority of respondents only mentioned skill building or skill implementation when referring to relationship building. Specifically, fundraising trainings helped respondents make a successful pitch, building the confidence to promote their organizational mission and tell their story.

RPD CONFERENCE ENVIRONMENT

"The sense of empowerment I felt from all attendees, both grantseekers and foundation representatives. The entire experience was uplifting."



The success in relationship building at RPD could not be achieved without RPD's commitment to inclusive collaboration and an "eagerness to provide a voice for all organizations." Overall, the RPD environment was especially inspiring for nonprofits. For one respondent, "the message that there is help available" was particularly moving. For another, RPD showcased "people coming together with common goals."



Southeast RPD Town Hall Graphic Recording, Karina Branson, 2018.

"We have created a program called Project Collaborate where we work with other nonprofits in our area to create public art and teach mindfulness techniques to youth and adults in our community."

WHAT DID RESPONDENTS TAKEAWAY?

79% have a better understanding of the nonprofit sector in their region, including neighboring counties.

93% met new people or strengthened existing relationships with nonprofit professionals.

68% have maintained these relationships since RPD.



WHAT RELATIONSHIPS WERE CREATED OR STRENGTHENED WITH OTHER NONPROFIT PROFESSIONALS?

"A relationship to share ideas, thoughts, and troubleshoot in similar positions in similar towns."

RPD connects Colorado's rural nonprofit sector by providing a space for regional organizations to collaborate and build relationships. A variety of activities, ranging from panels to networking events, encourage attendees to connect with one another. From survey data, the relationship building at RPD led to partnerships that strengthened the regional nonprofit ecosystem. As one respondent highlighted, "being able to put names with faces is really helpful in continuing to build alliances."

RESULTING COMMUNITY INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Formation of the Montelores Nonprofit Association and the Archuleta Nonprofit Coalition
- Sharing of services between the Recovery Center, Montezuma County Public Health, and Axis Integrated Health
- Collaboration between a newly formed, smaller nonprofit and a sister program, resulting in increased efficiency and the possibility of merging
- Partnering with the local food bank to provide resources at an organization's place of business, resulting in partnerships with other area nonprofits

STRENGTHENING THE NONPROFIT ECOSYSTEM THROUGH:

- Encouraging "more frequent and thorough communication with local nonprofits"
- Mutual participation of nonprofits on committees, boards, focus groups, etc.

"I'd love to see RPD more focused on connecting nonprofit leaders with each other and grantmakers. What an incredible opportunity it is to be sitting in the same room as funders. What if instead of one event focused on the 3-minute pitch, and a few days focused on resource building, the focus was flipped?"

WHAT DID RESPONDENTS TAKEAWAY?

77% are more aware of foundations that might support their organization.

69% submitted a grant application after speaking to a funder.

74% were awarded funding from at least one of the funders they connected with.



WHAT WAS THE PHILANTHROPIC IMPACT OF RPD?

RPD increases grant funding, resources, and expertise in rural parts of the state. Bringing Front Range funders into the region allows grantmakers to deepen their understanding of regional needs and build relationships with rural nonprofits. A variety of strategies are implemented to achieve this goal from Meet the Funder panels, intentional networking during meals and receptions, and the cornerstone event of RPD - funder roundtables.

RESPONDENTS SPEAK ON COMMUNITY IMPACT:

- *"Connecting with program and funding partners on a more personal level has helped us to expand our program services to nine other counties in the Northwest."*
- *"Nonprofit child care is nonexistent in Baca County..... and RPD put me in contact with some very beautiful people who helped us serve nearly 700 children and families."*
- *"Thanks to RPD, I've been able to cultivate a relationship with the Kenneth King Foundation who have become active supporters of our performing arts programming."*



Southwest RPD Town Hall Graphic Recording, Karina Branson, 2018.

BETWEEN 2017 AND 2018 THERE WAS A:

12% increase in respondents growing more aware of foundations that might support their organization.

9% increase in respondents who submitted a grant application after speaking to a funder.



WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS AT FUNDER ROUNDTABLES?

"It's useful, but it's also such a weirdly competitive and aggressive setting during the roundtables."

Funder roundtables have been a key RPD strategy in creating and strengthening relationships between rural nonprofits and funders. However, the data demonstrates that the roundtables were not universally found to be helpful.

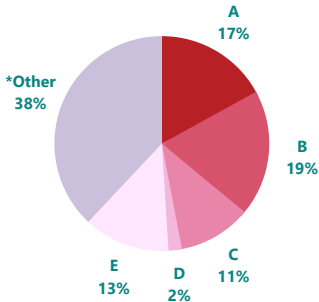
Respondents highly valued the opportunity to build face-to-face connections with funders. As one respondent described, "funder roundtables were a phenomenal opportunity and refreshing experience to have [when] those of us in the [rural] nonprofit sector feel like islands ... [the roundtables] allowed us to see that there are more [nonprofits] in the area than we thought, and that Front Range funders are aware and listening to us." These connections built "the confidence to just call up a potential funder and ask them questions." Funder feedback also informed nonprofit strategic planning. For example, one respondent called the roundtables "a wonderful learning experience," because "even though I was not funded with a grant, a person from the foundation communicated with me and gave pointers for the next application I would submit."

Critical feedback addressed difficulties in accessing funders during the event, as it "was difficult, if not impossible to sit down and present." For those with more experience working in the nonprofit sector or RPD veterans, it was "harder ... to even find roundtables to sit at, since we had previously established relationships with most of the foundations who fund our area of need."

Given the difficulties engaging with funders during roundtables, one respondent appreciated how other RPDs were "a lot more intimate and allowed more opportunity to meet funders during relaxed social times." This nurtured a deeper sense of connectedness and resulted in "much stronger relationships with funders as well as collaborations between area nonprofits."

WHAT PREVENTED RESPONDENTS FROM SUBMITTING A GRANT APPLICATION?

For respondents who did not submit a grant application following RPD, the most commonly cited category was "Other."



LEGEND:

- A - Lack of time or staff resources (17%)
- B - Grant cycle timing was difficult (19%)
- C - Lack of knowledge or skills in grantwriting, evaluation, etc. (11%)
- D - Lack of confidence that application would be successful (2%)
- E - Post-RPD conversation with funder discouraged me from applying (13%)

*Responses in the "Other" category include:

- "The new building we wanted grant funding to move into and develop was delayed by a year!"
- "We were in a capital campaign and had already been funded by several, so it was more of an opportunity to meet [the funders], thank them, and update them."
- "[Our organization] closed ... board leadership did not have the fiscal skills to tend to the business side of the organization."

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM FUNDER ROUNDTABLES?

"I really wish that returning RPD attendees would have the ability to sit down for half a day with funders for Q&A, not about grant requests, but about larger issues happening in the field. There are always an ongoing series of discussions in Denver that rural agencies cannot access. This leads to less thoughtful interaction between cutting edge ideas and rural leadership."

Critical respondent feedback emphasizes the need to foster relationship building with funders outside of the potentially competitive environment of roundtables.

Additional feedback called for funders to follow up with nonprofits after RPD. During the 2017/18 RPDs, only 26% of funders followed up with nonprofits directly. Understanding this, CRC took action in 2019 and started emailing a list of roundtable attendees specific to each funder. These efforts encouraged contact and follow through with grantseekers.

"I very much enjoyed my second experience on a Steering Committee.. however, the Steering Committees challenge the internal capacity of many agencies including mine - participating meant leaving the office unattended."

Number of Respondents:

- 2017 Northwest - 6
- 2017 San Juan - 3
- 2018 Southeast - 3
- 2018 Southwest - 7
- Total - 19

WHAT DID STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS TAKEAWAY?

95% had a positive experience serving on the Steering Committee.

84% felt more connected to the region.

72% felt that they had the opportunity to grow as a leader in their community.



WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE?

"Being on a team of motivated individuals from a five-county region enhances our mutual understanding of what we are doing well, and cross-pollination of best practices is an added value."

From the survey, the majority of Steering Committee members found the experience was a valuable opportunity to connect across the region. Through their participation, respondents grew more aware of the regional nonprofit sector and developed new relationships.

Although only 63% of respondents developed new skills, such as "[mastering] Google Docs," it was clear that the main benefit of Steering Committee participation was in knowledge sharing and relationship building.

Several respondents highlighted how the time and effort needed to participate on the committee were at odds with existing responsibilities at their organization. As such, CRC is committed to identifying how we can build efficiencies within the Steering Committee process to maximize the knowledge sharing and relationship building benefit to rural nonprofit leaders, and reduce the time burden for participation.

"I have a broader picture of the needs and resources in our communities and how we fit in as a piece of that whole."

WHAT DID RESPONDENTS TAKEAWAY?

80% agree that attending RPD has helped them become more effective at fulfilling their organizational mission.

78% brought back skills, tools, ideas, or best practices that strengthened their organization.

77% are better able to tell the story of their organization.



HOW DID ATTENDING RPD HELP RESPONDENTS BETTER FULFILL THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION?

Through a variety of pre-conference trainings and capacity building sessions, RPD equips rural organizations with strategies for success. However, when asked to reflect on these skill building sessions, respondents were eager to share how the RPD programming as a whole gave them the tools to better tell the story of their work to fellow nonprofit professionals and foundations.

"RPD's encouraged us to solidify the needs of [our] program and how we wanted to talk about what we do. By having a stronger direction for the future, we are able to be more specific in our asks and find funders that align with us in their mission."

STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL NARRATIVES

From attending RPD, respondents were more able to effectively state their mission, goals, and needs. This has helped rural organizations "avoid mission drift we do not chase funding, but rather define the work and then look for funding." Through strengthening their own organizational narrative, respondents also gained a better understanding of the regional context of their work. As one respondent highlighted, "I started to look at our mission in a broader sense, which helped create other partnerships with grantors, businesses, and volunteers."

"Connecting with funders personally; moral support from other nonprofit professionals; a greater understanding of the needs in the region; opportunities to identify collaborative possibilities if not also where redundancy may exist."

STRENGTHENING THE NONPROFIT NETWORK

While this section was designed to solicit feedback on the hard skills built through capacity building sessions, most respondents reflected more generally on the collaboration, relationship building, and partnership skills they built.



From attending RPD and preparing their organizational story, nonprofits were able to effectively network with each other and gain an enhanced perspective on the regional nonprofit climate. This aided respondents in building relationships, resulting in "better community collaborations, including across multiple jurisdictions and disciplines."

WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS AT THE CAPACITY BUILDING SESSIONS?

FROM POST-SESSION SURVEY DATA:

95% rated the session as "excellent" or "good."

92% have a better understanding of the topic as a result of the session attended.

81% agree that after attending a session, their organization will be more effective and efficient.



EXAMPLE 2017/2018 RPD SESSIONS INCLUDE:

Annual Maintenance: Board Retreats, Strategic Planning, and Self-Evaluation; Communication Across Generations; Community and Economic Development Strategies in Southeast Colorado; Elevating Leadership and Collaboration Through Inclusivity; Impact Investing in Rural Communities; 2018 Ballot Measures and What They Mean for Your Community; Youth Engagement: The Role of Tomorrow's Generation in Building Today's Communities

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Relationship building is a larger draw for participants than skill building**
 - CRC will work with our regional planning committees to weigh this information in their planning processes and virtual programming
- **We received mixed feedback on the efficacy of funder roundtables**
 - CRC will work with our rural stakeholders and funding partners to explore ways to make the funder roundtable sessions more accessible and impactful for all
- **Desire for new ways to connect with funders**
 - CRC will work with committees to create thoughtful networking and collaboration opportunities between nonprofit professionals and with funders.
- **Streamlined Steering Committee participation sought**
 - CRC will work to streamline Steering Committee participation to reduce the time burden and maximize the network strengthening, relationship building benefits



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a critical time for the evolution of RPD programming and the prioritization of relationship building. CRC remains committed to serving rural communities as their needs are constantly changing, and will experiment to see what can be conducted virtually with a high impact and what requires the magic that happens in person. By seeking out additional feedback from Steering Committee members, CRC will also identify ways to reduce the time burden of participation and respect the capacity of rural community leaders.

In future iterations of the Behavior Change Impact Study, CRC will incorporate a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. The study will also be conducted annually, instead of bi-annually, to increase the survey response rate and better inform RPD strategic planning.

As a community-driven organization, CRC is committed to uplifting the voices of our stakeholders to innovate future conference programming and better meet the regional needs of rural Colorado.