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One in Four Foundations Surveyed by Exponent Philanthropy Have Changed Giving Strategies Since 2016

Leanly-staffed foundations report increase in funding of advocacy efforts

Washington, D.C. – A new survey of more than 450 leanly-staffed foundations found that one in four (25 percent) have made changes to their philanthropic giving as a result of the 2016 elections. Of the foundations that reported changes, more than half (54 percent) said they began to fund advocacy-related initiatives or increased their allocations to advocacy.

“While the pace of change is often slow in philanthropy, this survey shows that philanthropy, particularly those who operate with few or no staff, can be nimble in responding to current events and the changing needs of a community,” said Henry L. Berman, Exponent Philanthropy’s chief executive officer.

While foundations are legally not allowed to engage in lobbying, they are in a unique position to convene stakeholders; commission nonpartisan data; fund community coalitions and public awareness campaigns; and perform other important work that is crucial to influencing public policy and addressing the root causes of social issues.

Corey Oser, vice president programs for the [Global Fund for Children](#), said that funding advocacy work is essential to its mission to advance rights and opportunities for children and youth.

“Policy advocacy is critical component of our work to shift systems of poverty, injustice and discrimination that affect the lives of children,” Oser said. “Whether in the U.S. or abroad, funding work that includes a range of advocacy approaches is critical to creating this type of long-term change, particularly in a climate where civil society must remain resilient in the face of efforts to shrink its influence.”

Exponent Philanthropy’s Pulse Check Survey gauges the opinions of its members – foundations with few or no staff, philanthropic families, and individual donors – on important and timely topics. The most recent survey fielded just after the 2018 mid-term elections examined how changes in Washington, D.C., have influenced philanthropic behavior or could affect giving in the year ahead, both in terms of giving practices and investments. Other ways grantmakers said they had changed since 2016 included:

- Changing their allocations to specific funding areas (32 percent).
- Adding a new funding area (30 percent).
- Giving more general operating grants (29 percent).
- Giving more capacity building grants (23 percent).

Respondents were split on whether they expected philanthropy to play a more important role in society moving forward considering the outcome of the 2018 mid-term elections. A little more than 45 percent said they agreed or strongly agreed, while a little more than half (51 percent) said they expected no change. Most respondents (82 percent) said they would not make any changes to philanthropic giving in 2019 as a result of the 2018 midterms.

About the Pulse Check Survey

Exponent Philanthropy's Pulse Check surveys are internal yardsticks used by the organization to gauge membership opinions on important and timely topics. Information is collected anonymously and the full surveys are neither published nor available for dissemination to the public. On occasion, Exponent Philanthropy will publically share findings from its surveys when the topics/findings are deemed relevant and useful to the philanthropy sector at large. Exponent Philanthropy is a non-partisan organization with nearly 2,000 members from across the United States, representing a wide spectrum of ideological and political viewpoints. As such, it was clearly stated in the body of the survey that Exponent "does not ask about or seek to draw conclusions around specific political ideologies."

About Exponent Philanthropy

Exponent Philanthropy is the country's largest association of funders—nearly 2,000 members strong—and the only one dedicated to serving foundations with few or no staff, philanthropic families, and individual donors. Its vibrant network has in common lean operations and a style of philanthropy motivated by personal passion, community needs, and the strong desire for better outcomes. Exponent Philanthropy provides high-quality and cost-effective programs, resources, and connections that maximize members' dollars and time for the benefit of diverse communities and causes.