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**Rogers Family Foundation
Grantee Comments from September 2017 Grantee Perception Report
Conducted by the Center for Effective Philanthropy**

Please note that comments have been edited or deleted to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

Please comment on the quality of the Foundation's processes, interactions, and communications.	
	Grantee Comment
1	...Funding from the Rogers Foundation over the years has played a seminal role in enabling [our organization's] success. The Foundation is responsive, involved, thoughtful, critical when necessary and consistently supportive.
2	...We do not know the process of decision-making or how we were determined to be eligible although, of course, we are pleased to receive the funding. I believe the Foundation's guidelines are too narrowly restrictive/too focused on Oakland boundaries to support the broad range of nonprofits serving the region which has many contiguous communities. Population is dispersed and address is not everything. Like many foundations today, Rogers FF seems to be inventing new initiatives in response to current events, which can be great, or can inadvertently create new programs and spawn new organizations which do not have the necessary leadership, experience or sustainability to have real and lasting impact. Why not look around at who is already doing great work in the community and give them direction and support to meet current/evolving needs?
3	All the Foundation team members we have interacted with are smart, thoughtful, knowledgeable and kind. It's a pleasure to interact with them as partners working towards shared goals, not just as a funder.
4	Every staff member I have communicated with has been extremely helpful and nice. My organization's situation is particularly unique... mostly outside of any formal process the Foundation may have.
5	Good process, but seems to be the same process for a grant for \$6k as a grant for \$100k.
6	[Our primary contact] was a lifesaver throughout the process.
7	I'm not sure that I understand the Roger's Foundation's mission in general, but the expectations for the grant we got was completely clear.
8	In general, I find RFF to be appropriately communicative, not invasive, thoughtful and engaged. They hold us accountable but are not onerous.
9	It is clear that the Foundation has been thinking critically about their impact and goals in the community. Having an informed discussion about the best ways to reach their goals has been invaluable and has helped us evaluate our own programs and processes. We value the feedback from the Foundation, and find their communications very helpful.
10	It is very easy to communicate with the Rogers Family Foundation, including asking questions and sharing exciting updates on our programming. They have been consistently supportive of our organization and we use reporting back to them as an opportunity to reflect on our internal outcomes and indicators.
11	It's straightforward and easy to communicate and work with the Foundation. Staff members are supportive and ready to make time to answer questions.
12	Just wonderful people; involved, smart, curious, eager to learn from us to better adapt their grantmaking; non-judgmental; open to help and make connections.
13	Our relationship has always been exceedingly positive. We are not a perfect fit (I wish we were), but the foundation clearly respects our work so continues to support at a low level (but it all helps). I/we have a ton of respect for the foundation. They are typically gracious and respectful (not always the case in this work). We do wish the foundation would broaden its [schools program]. We know there is a great need and we have the platform to do more. But, we recognize our self-interest.
14	Our relationship with the Foundation is not at the "program officer" level but rather with the family/family office and an external advisor. Lines of communication are open and straightforward. Helpful opportunities to process ideas, challenges and next steps have made interactions productive. Clarity of intention and respectful sharing of expectations have led to a valued working relationship with the Foundation.
15	Rogers Family Foundation's processes are well streamlined and easy for grantees to use and to access. Staff are also highly available to discuss questions about proposals and reports and are open to making adaptations to the process where appropriate. Staff members are deeply involved and committed to their work and very accessible for conversations, meetings, questions, etc.
16	Rogers is a best in class foundation that makes themselves available to community, as modeled... from the top. We greatly appreciate how accessible and committed Rogers is to the community and the top quality staff that are hired.

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17	Rogers released a new strategic plan in the relatively recent past, but seems to still be working to interpret its application vis-a-vis existing and potential grantees. We await clarity on our fit, and expect to receive it soon. In regards to measurement and evaluation, we are troubled by the more quantitative bent taken as of late. We are committed to measurement and transparency, but we fear that Rogers may be falling victim to the same fallacy hindering so many of its peers: that grantees can and should be able to provide Randomized Control Trial level insight into programming. This is simply not feasible for most small and medium-sized organizations, and certainly not at the funding levels generally provided. But while organizations may not be able to replicate large, controlled studies, we can replicate the inputs of the programs studied. That, in fact, is the whole point of doing these large studies in the first place, so that others have a guiding light in what works! We hope Rogers remains aware of both the constraints and the possibilities here.
18	Staff at the Foundation have been supportive and consistent. We are very grateful for all of the open and approachable communication throughout our grant cycle.
19	The Foundation does an excellent job communicating to its grantees. The monthly newsletters are very informative, the new team member updates are helpful, and whenever the Foundation sends information such as your new Oakland Education Strategy 2020 it is shared with relevant staff in the organization.
20	The Foundation has provided consistent financial support and provided tremendous guidance and programmatic support over the... years of our existence. We feel that we have an excellent relationship and often seek consultations with our program officer to discuss ideas and progress made. The Foundation has sponsored numerous community assemblies that promote communication, information sharing and collaboration among a vast cross section of organizations that support literacy and education. This networking opportunity continues to provide a platform for community to learn from each other, align their work with other organization doing similar work and understanding the big picture that guides our work. The Foundation is extremely responsive, accessible and an important part of the community, as well as an important source of funding for our organization.
21	The foundation was easy to work with and adjusted to challenges well, at times the goals and outcomes were not as nuanced or focused on the critical areas, but staff were east to work with
22	The foundation was very helpful in blueprint development process. We had two consultants and the program director who helped us.
23	The Rogers Family Foundation has been a critical and important player bringing attention, resources and alignment to the early literacy field in Oakland. They are an important community voice for Oakland's children.
24	The Rogers Family Foundation has been so involved in our literacy programming. [Our primary contact] has come to talk with us multiple times to really get to know our programs and our staff, and has come for site visits. We've so appreciated [his/her] perspectives on best practices in the... field, and overviews of how literacy is being supported throughout our community, including by different organizations. And, it's been great to hear more about tools like the Literator. I think that our relationship with the Rogers Family Foundation has been one of deepest and most helpful of all our partnerships.
25	The Rogers Family Foundation walks the talk of deeply partnering with its grantees to enact positive change in our community. The Foundation has clearly articulated a vision for the impact it seeks to make in Oakland education and has demonstrated a willingness to learn, innovate, and adapt along the way, and holds space for its grantee partners to do the same. The Foundation's practice of offering accessible, frequent, and transparent communication have helped to build trust and position it as a respected leader in the community.
26	The Rogers Foundation is one of our most preferred funders. The Foundation and staff deeply understand Oakland, in all it's possibility and complexity. They respect our need to navigate that complexity thoughtfully while also working towards clear outcomes. We consider them to be one of our most consistent and reliable supporters. Their processes align to that felt experience.
27	The workings of the Foundation remain a bit of a mystery to me in terms of who makes decisions and how they are made.
28	There seems to be a bit of a moving target when it comes to what the Foundation's interests are, though some of it has to be about the changing leadership in Oakland.

Please comment on the quality of the Foundation's processes, interactions, and communications.

Grantee Comment	
29	We greatly appreciated the Foundation's clear overall strategy, goals, and activities. This made it easy for grantees to best leverage Rogers' grant opportunities and partnership. Rogers' multi-year grantee cohort approach supported program planning and project cycles especially in light of OUSD's funding crisis.
30	We have an ongoing challenge receiving checks from the Rogers Family Foundation at our administrative offices. Despite regular conversations with Foundation administrative staff and agreements to do otherwise, the Rogers Family Foundation via [a foundation] sends checks directly to grant program managers. This results in delays to receive and acknowledge grants and to make funds available to the benefitting programs.
31	We have found that the Director of grants and evaluations was extremely helpful, and responsive to our inquiries and needs. We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from the Rogers Family Foundation, and we understand our funding profile may fall slightly outside of your normal reporting structure. For this reason, some of our experiences in understanding the guideline requirements, may have been more challenging.
32	We view the Rogers Family Foundation as a leader in literacy. They have a clear mission and vision and we respect their opinions, reflections and process. Working with them helps us stay connected to the broader work in the Bay Area.
33	Working with the Rogers Family Foundation is an ongoing highlight for [our organization's] program staff. RFF staff are encouraging, responsive, generous, practical, and aware of on-the-ground realities that impact our ability to provide services in Oakland and East Bay public schools. The Rogers Family Foundation has developed solid, long-term partnerships with numerous key literacy non-profits, playing a strategic role in helping non-profits maximize their effectiveness in the community. Thank you Rogers Family Foundation!
34	Working with the Rogers Foundation has been transformative because their actions matched their commitment. Our organization received excellent professional development and consultation consistently throughout the entire duration of our grant.
35	Working with the Rogers Team is more like working with a partner than with a funder. They are open to, and solicit, real information about both the success and challenges of our work.

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Please comment on the impact the Foundation is having on your field, community, or organization.	
	Grantee Comment
1	...The Foundation is heavily contributing to [the] field.... This [advancement] would not happen without the Foundation - thank you!
2	Across our community... there are only a small number who are able to make significant philanthropic gifts. Given the cost as well as the decentralized and specialized nature of scientific research, it is useful for like-minded funders to consolidate their resources. Families like the Rogers can leverage our [staff] and business trained project managers as a clearing house for understanding field priorities, capitalizing on new opportunities, tapping expertise, and actively managing a large and dynamic portfolio of global initiatives. Being able to work with a collective of such families streamlines scientific resources and moves the mission faster. It also amplifies the [beneficiary] voice and the shared values of the... community (focus on science urgently focused on unmet... needs, accountability for sharing data and findings with the broader field, and pragmatic problem-solving to tackle the field's most complex and enduring challenges.)
3	Advance blended learning and a focus on talent in Oakland schools.
4	Again, as the primary place-based funder in Oakland education work, the Rogers Family Foundation plays a central role in setting an agenda for improving public education, as well as connecting dots across the many organizations they support in the work. The Foundation also does a really elegant job of appropriately engaging as a Foundation in the space- appropriately discreet publicly, while also very accessible and available to support behind the scenes work- be it knowledge sharing, convening, etc.
5	Despite their contentious and vigorous support for charters, Rogers is generally known as a group more in touch with on-the-ground events in this community than other foundations, and more willing to fund programs that are patently helpful, even if they are small, limited, and without randomized control trials to back them up. I sense that they are appreciated for this more contextual and informed approach.
6	Education is a difficult field to measure impact, however the Foundation is an essential and dramatic support for community organizations, schools and children in the field of literacy.
7	Foundation Program officers and staff are deeply rooted and "in-the-know" about Oakland schools and public education. They are extremely in tune with the needs and priorities of schools, the district and families in the district.
8	I'm unaware of the foundation's impact on the field or local community
9	RFF has been a consistent and thoughtful ally for Oakland education reform - providing resources to strategic organizations, convening thought leaders, and creating opportunities to share best practice.
10	Rogers has done a lot to launch blended and personalized learning in Oakland public schools.
11	Thank you, Rogers! You are an exemplary partner in this work and pillar in the community!
12	The Foundation has a tremendous impact on education innovation, the 21-century learning experience, blended learning, student agency, and personalization.
13	The Foundation has been an important donor and influencer in Oakland public education for many years and I hope that will continue.
14	The foundation has great humility. Their clear focus on Oakland is a positive. They have not advanced the field of summer learning but they are clearly a leader in other areas.
15	The foundation is having limited impact on sustaining museums as core institutions serving a broad community.
16	The Foundation's history, resources, and commitment to the community we serve has supported our organization's work to provide innovative programming to under-resourced families in Oakland. We are grateful for the partnership of Rogers and their commitment to early learning and literacy.

Please comment on the impact the Foundation is having on your field, community, or organization.

Grantee Comment	
17	The generous grants from the Foundation... will enable [our organization] to complete this ambitious expansion.... [This expansion] will offer families and young learners an inspiring [way to guarantee] engagement and learning. School children will benefit from curricula... that are tied to California State education standards and designed, delivered and evaluated by a highly professional team of specialists.... In addition to capital grants... the Foundation's long-term support... allows us to provide our... education programs to over 5,000 low-income Bay Area students each year.
18	the NGLC work is helpful, the foundation would benefit from more community based staff who are reflective of the Oakland community
19	The Rogers Family Foundation has allowed us to have a more sustainable organization. Thanks to the funds from these grants we have created important documents that communicate who we are. This funding enabled us to produce our first... annual report, which has led to our... 3rd annual report. These reports have been the backbone of our donor based communication, and substantive part of our public relations toolkit, as well being vital to all of our grant reporting.
20	The Rogers Family Foundation has done a lot to promote collaboration and growth around literacy in our community, including helping different organizations share information and strategies through convenings and the Literacy Learning Community. THANK YOU!!
21	The Rogers Family Foundation has played a strategic role in bringing non-profit literacy providers together, providing training and support in best practices, promoting collaboration, and addressing systemic obstacles that impede our work. I wish every foundation sought to serve our community as thoughtfully and responsively as RFF. Their work in the East Bay sets a very high standard and is truly exemplary.
22	The Rogers Family Foundation is a game-changer in Oakland, particularly in the field of education. They are pushing for equitable outcomes for all students and believe in the promise and potential of EVERY child. They also support innovative work in education that will disrupt the status quo that has historically perpetuated inequity in our public schools. Their financial support of schools doing this work, as well as trusting our organization to know what is best for our students and families, is allowing us to provide resources and opportunities for students, families, and staff that would otherwise not be possible.
23	The success of [our program], which the Roger's Foundation enabled, in turn triggered enactment of [a specific policy] from the California legislature. [This] provided over \$2 million to each [organization] to help their efforts to create local economic growth and local jobs
24	The work RFF has done impacted our decision to introduce literacy as a primary support for our education programs

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What specific improvements would you suggest that would make the Foundation a better funder?	
	Grantee Comment
1	A shorter and less labor intensive process for smaller grants.
2	Can't think of anything significant. The Foundation has been extremely supportive.
3	Continue to fund organizations doing good and consistent work instead creating new organizations with untried ideas - take those ideas to existing organizations instead. Expand funding to East Bay not just Oakland. Work to elevate awareness of fundees with other foundations, philanthropists and help with sustainability. Consider more multi-year grants.
4	Continuing to invest in research that shows how charter schools are serving all students, particularly our students who are furthest from opportunity — this information will help us know where to focus our energy and resources, what we're doing well and what we need to do better.
5	Get into the field more and spend more time on the ground in schools and the community
6	I wonder about what planning and support looks like after the term of the grant is over.
7	More strategic in what they fund. Invest a lot in a fewer initiatives.
8	More transparency around conversations they are having with local and national funders about investing in Oakland
9	Moving to a three-year grant cycle was a helpful step for us as we enter the tenth year of [our] program. As OUSD data on the effectiveness of [our program] continues to accumulate, it would be helpful to receive introductions from RFF to other funders who might like to support our work.
10	No suggestions
11	None
12	None - RFF is our favorite funder :-)
13	None come to mind easily
14	None.
15	Nothing.
16	Overall, the Foundation is an extraordinary funder.
17	Program staff are dedicated to and knowledgeable about the Foundation's priorities and the outcomes they seek. Back-of-the-house administrative functions and internal processes could be improved. The funding mechanism at the East Bay Community Foundation does not work smoothly to execute grant funding in a clear and comprehensive way. Grant funding checks routinely go to the wrong place, despite regular conversations about the importance of accuracy.
18	Provide smaller, multi-year grants.
19	See previous answer.
20	The Foundation has provided general operating funds which has been essential to supporting the work we do.
21	The Foundation is one of our most thorough and thoughtful funders. We think they are already doing a bang-up job!
22	They're the best.

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What advice would you give to the Foundation as it seeks to be as effective as possible in this changing U.S. political landscape?	
	Grantee Comment
1	[Our organization's] goal is to improve health here at home and globally. Healthcare research is insulated more from political swings than most other human endeavors.
2	As a charter operator, this landscape is challenging in MANY ways. Finding ways to support our struggling immigrant families would alleviate the stress they are feeling and facilitate their children having stability so they can focus on learning.
3	California, despite the unfortunate results of many 2016 elections, has managed to create a Democratic supermajority within its government. The state is a symbol of progressive values, and as the 6th largest economy in the world, has the power to influence policy - as well as industry standards. Alameda County, where much of the Foundation's funding goes, is at the center of this progressive way of thinking. How could the Foundation export this culture, specifically within the field of education, at a national scale? Could it amplify the voice of its grantees, exhibiting models of successful and inclusive learning collaboratives?
4	Continue to support Oakland and Bay Area organizations and that impact youth, families and higher education. Consider making fewer, but larger grants to select organizations to amplify impact.
5	Definitely recognizing areas that are impacted by decreases in government funding, both non-profits that rely heavily on federal funding or areas that impact our youth like cruel immigration policies or cuts to healthcare. I think that Foundations like Rogers can play a big role in mitigating the negative impact of policy changes by strategically supporting in areas that are being targeted.
6	Help to more broadly mobilize Oakland to service.
7	I think increased focus on support for family, student, community leadership development and building power to directly impact the intersections of creating excellent equitable education with immigrant rights, access to affordable housing, etc. is critical, especially in the current climate. These issues are intertwined and building the capacity of families, educators and communities to effectively shift policy and practice in their schools and communities is critical to transforming opportunities and outcomes for low-income students of color and other historically under-served students.
8	I think it could pull back a bit from the so-far unbridled support for charters, as this could play into a wave of privatization that not even the Foundation is aligned with. (And this coming from an organization that is generally charter-neutral).
9	I would encourage the Foundation to continue to actively seek out and listen to the voices of those in our community who are most vulnerable to the negative impacts of the changing landscape. Many of the families in our community, particularly those furthest from opportunity, are experiencing multiple challenges (e.g. poverty, racism, trauma) that intersect in significant and specific ways. Our work as community organizations does not exist in a vacuum and while individual programs (or areas of grantmaking) may necessarily be narrow and targeted to achieve a particular impact, I believe that it's important to also build bridges and alliances with others in order to achieve the transformational change we seek for Oakland kids and families.
10	I would not presume to give the Foundation advice; however, one of the challenges to doing deep, long-term community work is that organizations may change directions in a reactive way. Consistent and persistent work is needed in many fields even though there may be other emerging needs. I feel it is important to not abandon work in one community when political landscapes change in another.
11	Maintain or even increase grant-making locally!
12	Providing support for immigrant families in the East Bay of all sorts: educational options, but also housing, food security, healthcare and advocacy

What advice would you give to the Foundation as it seeks to be as effective as possible in this changing U.S. political landscape?

Grantee Comment	
13	The immigration policies and specifically DACA have greatly impacted our community. We have done a lot with other non-profits (Central legal, La Clinica, etc.) If Roger's has resources for this, we'd be happy to have more help.
14	They would benefit from a greater community grounding, and maybe a community advisory board or some other way to better connect with the grassroots directly and not through proxies, sometimes Oakland has an echo chamber of its funders that Rogers gets caught up in
15	Advice to the Foundation would be to be super-transparent about political preferences and expected alignment or to create a non-negotiable firewall between politics and funding practices.
16	We see a growing divide between upper middle class and every other segment below that. Divisions can lead to conflicts as the number of people who sense they have fewer opportunities increases. There are many opportunities to build resilience among all poorer households with carefully evaluated programs.