

Assessing the Need for a Nationwide Community Foundation CEO Network



CF INSIGHTS

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FOREWORD

Community Foundation CEOs have wonderful, but complex, jobs. We act as key connectors between donors, our local communities, foundation staff, board members, and volunteers. The set of challenges we face is unique. We must stay abreast of local issues, needs, and trends; as well as national best practices. Some of us have a strong network of local peers, while others among us are the only community foundation CEO within hundreds of miles.

CEO-specific peer learning opportunities do present themselves at conferences throughout the year, and some CEOs maintain their own personal networks they can turn to for advice, support and counsel. There is, however, no formalized and centralized resource for CEO-specific professional development and networking services, unlike those that are available to some of our staff; including AdNet for advancement/development staff, ProNet for program staff, FAOG for financial and administrative officers and COMMA for communications professionals.

This need has been in our field since at least the 1990's when an informal network of community foundation leaders, CEO-Net, was founded. After several years of holding CEO-specific retreats and events, this group became dormant.

In October of 2017, the Kansas Association of Community Foundation's National Conference for Growing Community Foundations sponsored a CEO-only pre-session. During this event, a strong desire was expressed for more CEO-specific programming and networking opportunities. This desire is not at all uncommon in our field, and is in fact one shared by many of the nonprofits that community foundations fund each year. These nonprofits have several opportunities to meet this need in ways that can benefit their work, and while community foundation CEOs do have access to support, it is not currently driven by a centralized network.

To gain broader input into the demand for a community foundation CEO network, the volunteers listed below partnered with CF Insights to survey our colleagues, nationwide. They have issued this report summarizing

the survey key findings. We greatly appreciate CF Insights assisting with this important query. Their expertise added tremendous value to the efficiency and effectiveness of this process. If you have any questions about the survey parameters or results specifically, please **email David Rosado**, Member Services Manager for CF Insights.

We hope these survey results will be used as a resource to inform a response to this desire for greater connectivity within the field of community foundation CEOs, something that is considered commonplace in other nonprofit and professional fields.

We believe the survey results in this report and other conversations that have occurred over the last year confirm that there is a consensus among community foundation CEOs that potential membership interest is high. What we need now is to grow dedicated leadership and funding to move our own network forward. We invite those of you interested in investing financial support or personal time to help lead this effort to contact one of us on the CEO Network Exploratory Committee directly.

Sincerely,
CEO Network Exploratory Committee:

Mike Batchelor
President
Erie Community Foundation

Judy Sjostedt
Executive Director
Parkersburg Area Community Foundation

Dan Templin
Executive Director
DeKalb County Community Foundation (IL)

Steve Joul
President/CEO
Community Giving

Molly Kunkel
Executive Director
Centre Foundation

Community foundation CEOs serve several functions, both within their own organizations as well as within the communities they serve. The challenges they face as they balance these functions are many, and while several community foundation CEOs maintain strong personal networks to whom they can turn for support when needed, a question emerged when a group of community foundation leaders met to discuss some of these challenges in the fall of 2017:

Can this group benefit from a centralized network devoted to community foundation CEOs? That initial conversation was followed by a CF Insights-led field-wide survey, conducted during the spring of 2018, the purpose of which was to determine whether there is a demand for such a network within the field, and the willingness and ability among those in the field to support such a network. What follows is a summary of the responses to that survey.

Who responded and how representative are they of the field?

RESPONDENT ASSET SIZE



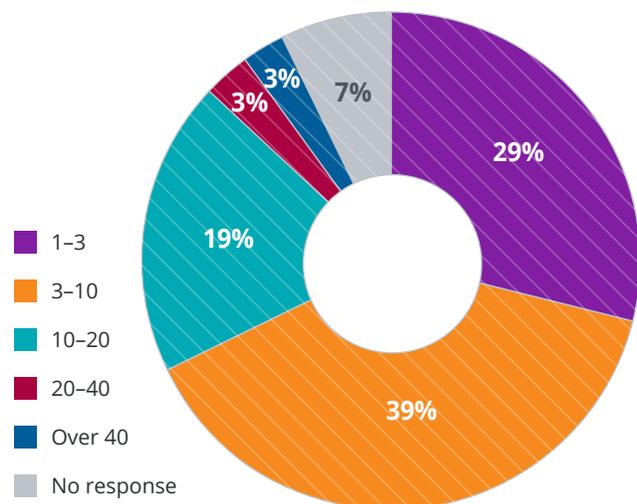
ASSET SIZE OF ALL CFS (PER FOUNDATION CENTER DATABASE)*



*Based on the most current available fiscal year data, which varies by foundation.

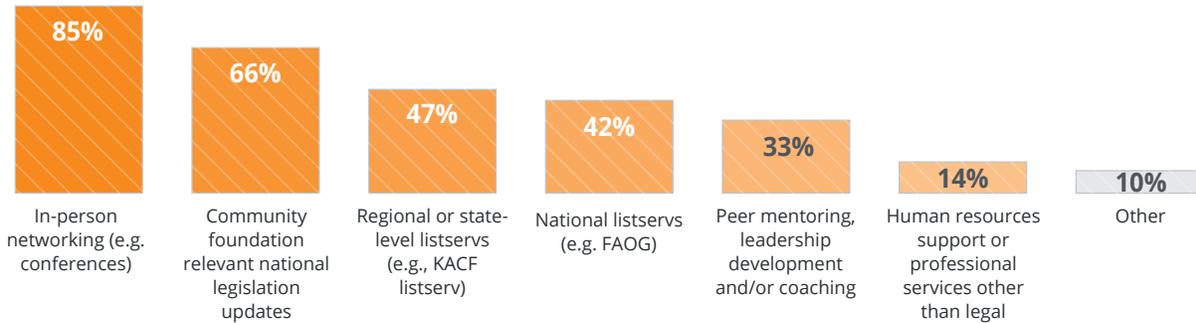
Almost every community foundation CEO in the country was invited to participate in the survey, and 188 responded. The findings are slightly skewed in the direction of larger foundations. In the general population two-thirds (68 percent) of all community foundations have assets of less than \$50 million. Among survey respondents, this percentage was about 50 percent.

NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS AT YOUR FOUNDATION



What professional development opportunities do those PSOs provide? What needs are not being met?

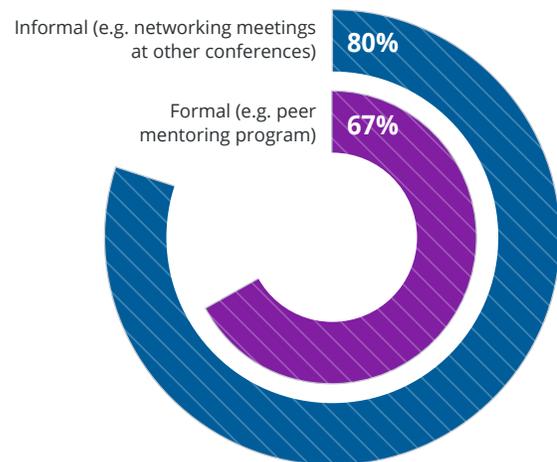
WHAT TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DO YOU CURRENTLY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FROM PSOS/ OTHER RESOURCES (FORMAL OR INFORMAL)?



CEOs tend to take advantage of multiple vehicles for professional development: 96 percent of respondents said they make use of two or more mechanisms for professional development and 74 percent said they take advantage of three or more. Most popular was “in-person networking” at conferences (85 percent), followed by keeping up with “community foundation relevant national legislation updates” (66 percent). About half of respondents said they use either regional, state, or national-level listservs to stay current on issues in the field. One-third (33 percent) take advantage of peer mentoring, leadership development and/or coaching opportunities.

Although a majority of CEOs currently take advantage of in-person networking opportunities to further their professional development, more than half (57 percent) say they are seeking even more opportunities for in-person networking than they currently have available to them. More than half also

HOW SHOULD IN-PERSON NETWORKING BE DELIVERED?



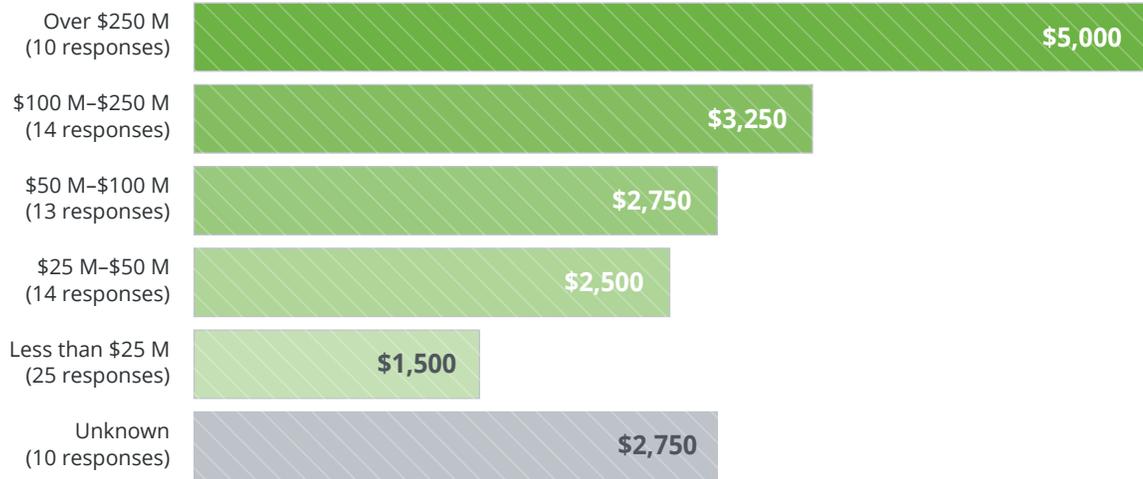
say they need more support in the areas of leadership development and coaching (61 percent), peer mentoring (52 percent), and national listservs. And a near-majority (48 percent) are looking for greater support with respect to legal services.

AS A CEO, ARE THERE ANY AREAS IN WHICH YOU NEED MORE SUPPORT?



What resources for professional development do CEOs have available?

MEDIAN TRAVEL BUDGET BY FOUNDATION ASSET SIZE



CEO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BUDGET (FUNDS ALLOCATED FOR THE CEO ONLY)



CEO travel budgets are not large. More than half (57 percent) have annual travel budgets of less than \$4,000. Even at larger foundations (with assets of at least \$250 million), only 10 reported having travel budgets of \$6,000 or more, and the median travel budget was just \$5,000.

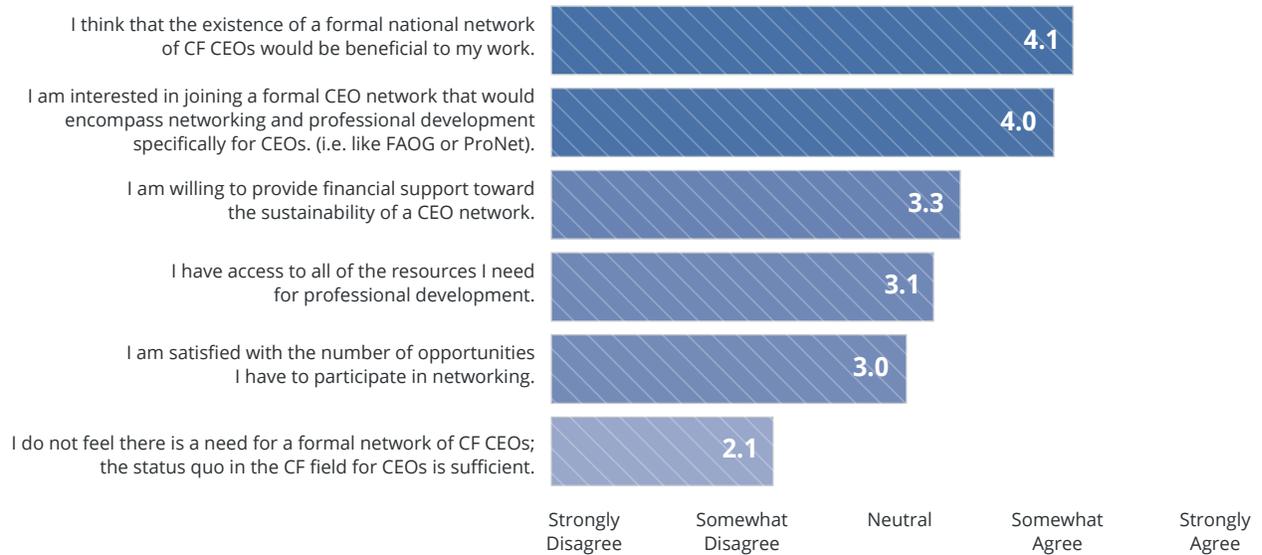
Budgets specifically for CEO professional development are even skimpier. The majority (about 60 percent) have professional development budgets of between \$1,000 and \$5,000. Just 12 percent have budgets of more than \$5,000. One in nine CEOs (11 percent) has no budget at all for professional development.

ANNUAL TRAVEL BUDGET FOR IN-PERSON OPPORTUNITY



What is the appetite for a formal network of CEOs?

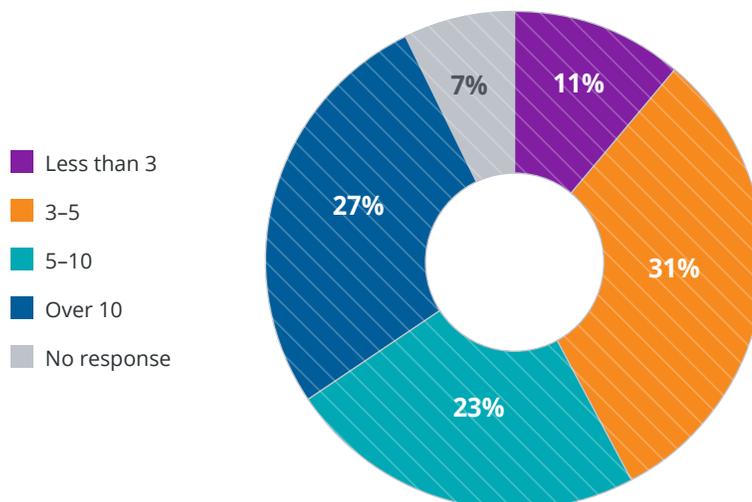
AS A CEO AT A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION...



On the whole, community foundation CEOs seem to endorse the idea of joining a formal CEO network. Interest is slightly greater among smaller foundations, but there is strong interest among larger foundations as well. There is also substantial willingness to financially support its sustainability: 48 percent of respondents are either somewhat or strongly willing to provide funding.

Most community foundation CEOs (65 percent) have personal networks of 10 or fewer CEO colleagues on whom they could call for advice if needed. This suggests that, for most CEOs, a formal national network of CF CEOs would substantially broaden their ability to connect with peers as sources of knowledge and expertise.

HOW MANY OTHER COMMUNITY FOUNDATION CEOs DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE A PART OF YOUR PERSONAL CEO NETWORK OF COLLEAGUES ON WHOM YOU COULD CALL FOR ADVICE IF NEEDED?



Assuming you have identified gaps in the survey, please add any comments on how you think gaps could be covered.

When asked to identify other gaps that could be covered, there were several who pointed out a key difference between the needs of CEOs who are new to the field, versus those who have a few (5+) years of experience (minor edits were made to quotes for clarity):

- “Mentoring for the new CEO is greatly needed.”
- “You’ve touched on the need for new CEO peer mentoring. This is important, as new CEOs need a peer group for mentoring. However, there still needs to be a peer network for CEOs who have been at their post for longer than 3–5 years and perhaps grouped in different peer (asset size) groups.”

- “It appears to me that the field has an issue with turnover. I think it would be beneficial to allow CEOs with numerous years’ experience to meet/network.”

In addition, key differences in the communities served (urban vs. rural) and community foundation asset size were repeatedly noted by survey participants. This may speak to the need for robust, targeted offerings, such as a listserv or a full conference track, rather than the limited time available during a one-day pre-conference retreat.

Please note any other recommendations you have with regard to serving as a community foundation CEO.

When asked to offer other recommendations, participants provided a wide range of options, including but not limited to:

- Online peer learning/interactive webinars
- Regional meetings or meetings in affordable locations
- Piggybacking on other conferences
- The ability to connect with “fresh faces”

By and large, there is a desire for a central network among many in the field. There are, however, groups of folks that see less of a need to join another network. This was mentioned by members of regional associations in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana, and the data show that many large community

foundation CEOs feel that they are served well by their annual meeting during the annual Larger Community Foundation conference, and generally otherwise. Additionally, it was brought up that individual community foundations are having difficulty deciding which groups and memberships to maintain, and another might only add to that challenge. Finally, one respondent brought up the need for a strong “backbone” organization to host the network, as CEO volunteers might not be able to be active enough to serve the needs of running a network.

Overall, the desire for a formal network was expressed by many who feel that there is an opportunity to fill an important set of needs, including, but not limited to, a nationwide gathering and listserv.



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