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My Experiences with the Community Foundation

by

Jennifer L. Yest

Senior Project

Jepson School of Leadership Studies

University of Richmond

Richmond, VA

April 1994

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SENIOR PROJECT

MY EXPERIENCES WITH THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**PRESENTED BY:
JENNIFER L. VEST**

APRIL 20, 1994

**THE JEPSON SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND**

REFLECTIONS ON MY SENIOR PROJECT

In beginning to think about what I wanted to do for my Senior Project at the end of last semester, I was initially unsure what direction to take. At first I thought that it might be interesting to explore a leadership theory in further detail or even attempt some type of "scholarly contribution" of my own to the field of leadership literature. I also thought that it might be interesting to pursue a project linking my Leadership Studies major to my other academic major (German) or minor (Women's Studies). However, I really did not have a coherent focus in any of these topics and had great difficulty actually conceptualizing the type of project I wanted to work on. In beginning to explore other alternatives, I then tried to think back over my past two years in the Jepson School to reflect upon those experiences I truly enjoyed and grew from or possibly wanted to develop further before graduation. Although numerous projects, courses, and experiences stood out in my mind, I kept coming back to the "experiential" components of the Jepson School curriculum in which I had the opportunity for involvement in the Richmond community: working with adult students learning to read at the Literacy Council of Metro Richmond, my summer internship in the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, a service project my junior year with the Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In looking back over past courses as well as other aspects of my experiences at the Jepson School that I might want to develop further through the Senior Project, I felt that these experiences had been among the most valuable in contributing to my education not only as a student of Leadership Studies but also as a "whole" person.

In returning to the University at the beginning of the Spring semester, I still was not exactly sure what type of Senior Project I wanted to pursue or what my main focus would be, although I knew that I wanted some type of "hands-on," applied leadership experience. When

I learned that one of the basic tenets of the Senior Project was to "provide students an opportunity to reflect upon, synthesize, and develop both class work and experiential learning already completed in the Leadership Studies curriculum," some of my past experiences in organizations in the non-profit and community sector almost immediately came to mind, and I thought that a project in this area would be interesting and rewarding as well. On the first day of the Senior Seminar, Dr. Couto suggested that I contact Ms. Darcy Oman, President of The Community Foundation, regarding a special project she had previously told him about. On January 21, 1994, I had the opportunity to meet with Darcy concerning this project, and seeing that this opportunity seemed to meet our mutual goals, I decided to pursue it as my Senior Project.

Over the next couple of weeks, I had the opportunity to meet with the two other Community Foundation staff members, Hunter Applewhite (Program Officer) and Cynthia Moore (Program Assistant), to learn more about what exactly a philanthropic "foundation" was as well as the workings of the organization. Darcy, Hunter, and Cynthia also gave me numerous Foundation documents and publications to read such as the 1992 Annual Report, Information For Donors And Their Advisors, "Proposal Guidelines," and "Guidelines For Grant Applicants." Because I really did not anything at all about the organization beforehand, I felt that it was extremely important to learn more about the context and gain a deeper insight into The Community Foundation itself before working on my own project -- evaluating the Foundation's grant-making process through input from recent grant applicants. During this time, I also had the opportunity to accompany Hunter and a Foundation board member on a site visit to a community organization in Richmond's Gilpin Court neighborhood that had recently applied for funding. This was an amazing experience for me and really put my work for the Foundation into perspective -- for the first time I was able to come to a better understanding

of the organizations the Foundation works with and the actual lives they impact.

In looking at any obstacles I might encounter in completing my Senior Project, the only possible stumbling block I saw in my way was that of time, as I would be depending on outside organizations for survey results, and I knew that I needed to finish at least a significant amount of my work for the Foundation by the middle of April. Because I would be involved in every aspect of the project, including refining/adapting the survey instrument and then creating a new document, working with the data base, creating a comprehensive mailing list, drafting a cover letter, mailing out all of the materials, monitoring returns, and finally compiling the results into a substantial report, I knew that time would definitely be a critical factor in my work. The following is a time line I constructed at the beginning of the semester for my work on the Senior Project:

**TIME LINE: SENIOR PROJECT
THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

Friday, January 21:	Initial visit with Darcy Oman, President of The Community Foundation
January 21 - February 2:	Learn more about the Foundation and what they do (read policies, documents, annual reports, newspaper articles, etc.)
Wednesday, February 2:	Meet with Darcy and other Foundation staff members to begin the survey process; receive "orientation" to the organization
February 2 - February 16:	Refine/adapt survey instrument into final draft; compile organizational mailing list; draft cover letter
Wednesday, February 16:	Mail out surveys
February 16 - March 11:	Monitor survey returns; decide on definitive format for reporting survey results; accompany staff members on site visits to grant applicants around the Richmond area

Friday, March 11:

Postmark date of return for the survey

March 11 - April 20:

Compile/analyze survey results; prepare written report for the Foundation

In working with The Community Foundation this semester, I not only had the opportunity participate in a project that was meaningful and significant to the organization, but I also learned quite a bit about foundation work and non-profit organizations as well. Founded in 1968, the Foundation is a philanthropic endowment serving the Greater Richmond and Central Virginia community. In stating their purpose in the Foundation's 1992 Annual Report, they write, "We exist to help individuals, corporations, and other foundations achieve their own unique ideas about community philanthropy. We provide permanent stewardship, efficient administration, and the opportunity for our benefactors to remain active in their giving." I found it amazing that over 400 localities across the nation have created similar foundations that cumulatively manage \$8 billion in assets. Each year, The Community Foundation receives gifts of all sizes from citizens, other foundations, and businesses and corporations to support charitable causes. In 1992, The Community Foundation made grant commitments totalling \$1,352,232 to 193 agencies in Greater Richmond and Central Virginia and has approximately \$15 million in total assets. The Community Foundation currently supports three program initiatives which encompass a majority of their giving: Strengthening Families - Strengthening Communities, Richmond AIDS Partnership, and the R.E.B. Teaching Awards For Excellence.

My specific project with The Community Foundation involved assessing their grant-making policies and procedures through input from recent grant applicants. It was amazing to see how very involved the Foundation's entire grant application process actually was -- including letters of intent, formal proposals, evaluations, and site visits. In response to a series of significant changes in grant-making practices and procedures over the past couple of years,

the Foundation decided to initiate an evaluation process through input from recent applicants, including their overall perceptions of the Foundation as well as specific information about their experiences with the grant application process. It was decided that an evaluative grant applicant survey would serve the best means to this end, and the Foundation staff obtained a copy of a similar survey from The Chicago Community Trust to refine and adapt to their specific needs. Through questions covering the pre-application, application, and post-application periods as well as overall perceptions of the Foundation, it was felt that the Foundation could not only gain a more realistic view of their perceived effectiveness and responsiveness in the Greater Richmond and Central Virginia community, but also take the information gained from this inquiry for future policy formulation and strategic planning purposes.

The survey instrument adapted from The Chicago Community Trust's 1992 Grant Applicant Survey was kept in its original form for the most part. Several words and phrases were changed to make the survey specific to The Community Foundation and questions were then either added or deleted as deemed appropriate. Having gained input from the Foundation staff about the changes that needed to be made, I re-created the survey instrument and compiled all of this information into a document. As a finished product, The Community Foundation's 1994 Grant Applicant Survey was ten pages in length and contained both statistical and narrative elements. In deciding which community and non-profit organizations the survey would ultimately be administered to, Darcy chose 166 groups that she felt would be responsive to this type of inquiry and provide valuable insights into the issues at hand. These organizations were not chosen with respect to their relationship to or past history with the Foundation nor was there a deliberate attempt to target certain types of organizations. Because the survey was administered for evaluative purposes only, all responses were held

confidential, although each survey was coded with a number (1 - 166) to keep track of which organizations had responded by the March 11 deadline. In addition, several organizations opted for totally anonymous responses by choosing to cover their coded numbers.

From a total of 166 survey instruments mailed out on February 16, 1994, I received responses from 82 of these organizations, a 49.4% rate of return. All of a sudden, however, I found myself inundated by 800+ pages of information that I somehow needed to organize, compile, and analyze for the Foundation. Because the Foundation wanted to assess their grant-making practices and processes for future policy formulation and strategic planning purposes, I somehow had to transform this information into a comprehensive yet "user-friendly" format for the Foundation staff and board members. Feeling somewhat overwhelmed at first, I met with Darcy and Hunter to see how they wanted the information compiled and to explore my options in tackling the task. Because of the sheer amount of information contained in the survey as well as the diversity in topics and types of questions, Darcy and Hunter wanted to give me as much autonomy as possible in deciding on the format, yet we decided that a report with both statistical and narrative components would be most useful for the Foundation's purposes. Feeling more confident about the task that lay ahead of me, I began to move ahead in "full force" -- figuring out how to best organize the information, tallying responses to questions, figuring and re-figuring percentages. Although this was a part of the project that I really had not been looking forward to because it was very administrative and mechanical in nature, I found that I enjoyed it a lot more than I had originally anticipated, as I liked the autonomy to work at my own pace and to explore different options and alternatives in organizing and presenting the information.

Earlier this week, I handed over the survey results in "draft" form to the Foundation staff for their comments, suggestions, and critical evaluation. Within the next couple of weeks, I will be meeting with Darcy and Hunter to work towards finalizing the document into a report that will be presented to the Foundation's board, something I will hopefully have the opportunity to take part in. Although I feel that I did the very best job I possibly could given the vast amount of information involved and time constraints, I know that there are still several areas in the report that will require further work, especially in the area of analysis. Overall, I am amazed by the overwhelmingly positive reactions the Foundation received in almost every area of evaluation. In addition to the statistical results, I feel that the narrative and more "open-ended" aspects of the survey will also be especially beneficial to the Foundation in assessing their strengths and weaknesses and relationships with grant applicants. (I have appended my report -- "1994 Grant Applicant Survey Results" -- for a detailed discussion of the rationale, methodology, demographics of participating organizations, and survey results within the scope of this project.)

In reflecting on my experiences with The Community Foundation this semester, at first I tended to view my Senior Project more or less as an internship -- I went into the office once or twice a week or did independent work for the organization which I reported back to them. I really did not make much of a connection or application between my Senior Project and course work within the Leadership Studies curriculum or other experiences in the Jepson School. Looking back, however, I am amazed by how much I have learned, grown, and contributed through my Senior Project experience. I feel that I have learned so much about the non-profit and community sector that I never knew about before -- the grant application process, differences between public and private foundations, the role of donors in philanthropic activities, the relationship between staff and board members in non-profit

organizations. In addition to the specific project I was involved in, I found that I learned so much just by virtue of being in such close contact with different aspects of the organization, which gave me incredible insight into leadership issues and organizational dynamics within the community, voluntary, and non-profit contexts.

Throughout the course of the semester, I feel that my Senior Project has given me the opportunity to learn a lot about my own personal values and ideas on leadership that I had never really thought about before. Through past experience, I know that I have always been a very "results-driven" individual -- I like to see tangible results from things I invest my time and efforts into. Although this can be seen as a very positive quality, I feel that unfortunately I often value "product" over "process" without truly stopping to reflect on how far I have come or the amount of work I have put into something. However, for some reason I found my own personal experiences with this particular project to be extremely different -- I cannot separate the "process" from the "product" in my work. When I look at the final report I have handed over to the Foundation, I know that I have had a hand in every single aspect of it. At the same time, however, I know that the product of my efforts was not in fact for my own personal gain, but for someone else allied with values and a purpose that I strongly believe in. I feel that this sense of a "larger purpose" and "higher ideals" behind my work pushed me even harder to succeed, and for one of the first times in my life, I felt "guided" to act by something beyond myself.

In looking back over the Leadership Studies curriculum to see what I have found applicable to my work on the Senior Project this semester, I feel that I have been able to integrate and build upon several interesting components of the context courses in particular. I found all three context course I have taken (or am currently taking) to be particularly valuable:

Leadership In Community And Voluntary Organizations, Leadership In Formal Organizations, and Leadership In Social Movements. It was an extremely interesting experience to work in an organization where I have had the opportunity to see practical elements from all three of these courses, as I am working in a formal organization that works with local neighborhood, community, and non-profit organizations. At the same time, although The Community Foundation works primarily in the Greater Richmond and Central Virginia area, they are also working for social change on an even larger scale, as they are one of hundreds of community foundations and trusts around the nation. Besides having the opportunity to gain an interesting perspective into the organization itself and grant-making foundations in general, it was also exciting to actually go out and see firsthand the types of organizations the Foundation serves. Similar to many of the other "direct-contact" projects I have worked on in the past, it was really exciting to learn more about leadership in the community context and to serve the organization at the same time through meaningful work. In addition to practical applications from the context courses, I have also been able to make several meaningful applications to my work this semester from one of the competency courses -- Leader As A Change Agent. In working with the organization, one of the very first things that struck me was that The Community Foundation is directly involved with change efforts in the lives of both individuals and organizations around the Richmond area. In administering a survey to assess the organization's grant-making policies and practices, I have also had the opportunity to become involved in the effort as an agent of change in helping The Community Foundation serve its clients and the Richmond community as effectively as possible.

In addition, I feel that I have been able to make several meaningful connections between my work on the Senior Project and the core courses, especially Critical Thinking and Leadership And Ethics. I feel that Critical Thinking prepared me more than anything else to look at the

survey results more carefully and to examine my own logical "process" in the methodological as well as the written stages of the project. What exactly are these participating organizations trying to convey? What types of trends do I see? Are there any obvious (or latent) factors that may possibly alter the survey results? As for Leadership And Ethics, I feel that this course in many ways may have indirectly contributed to my understanding of *philanthropy and perceptions on the "third sector."* What are the moral obligations of the Foundation to both donors and grant applicants? What motivates some people with money to donate to those less fortunate than themselves -- charity? concern for reputation? political reasons? How are decisions made about which funds to accept and which to decline as well as which organizations to fund and which to turn away? I feel that Leadership And Ethics really placed a moral focus on the work I did this semester for The Community Foundation and made me think about philanthropy in a much larger context. Perhaps more than anything else, however, I feel that the more "experiential" components of the Leadership Studies curriculum, such as internships, service learning opportunities, and semester-long projects with local organizations, did so much to effectively prepare me for this Senior Project experience. Although I was an "outsider" to the Foundation when I first began my work there this semester, at the same time I felt confident in my abilities and past experiences. Had I not had many of these previous experiences, I feel that this situation would have been much more difficult to adjust to.

In seeing how my Senior Project relates to the curricular goals of the Jepson School in a more general sense, I also feel that I have been able to make several meaningful applications. In the context of "helping others exercise leadership and holding other leaders accountable," I feel that the product of my Senior Project will help The Community Foundation assess their current responsiveness to their grant applicants and make significant changes in policies and

practices in areas that warrant improvement. At the same time, I also realize that this entire assessment process would have been difficult for the Foundation without an "outside" person administering the survey -- few if any of these organizations would have been likely to voice criticism and concern if a Foundation staff member had conducted the survey because they are all in fact competing with one another for funding. In this respect, organizational accountability is extremely important -- Is the Foundation actually doing what they claim to be doing? A second Jepson School curricular goal I feel has been applicable to my work this semester is "combining knowledge with judgement and imagination to creatively solve problems with others." It has been an extremely interesting experience to look at all of the data I have accumulated to try to figure out its significance for the Foundation in their inquiry. Along with this, I have had the opportunity to experience firsthand "imagining worthwhile visions of the future and inspiring others to join in bringing about change when desirable or necessary." It is not always easy to bring about change, especially in organizations such as the Foundation that are complex, entrenched in tradition, and have so many different constituents and issues to simultaneously consider. What may be seen as the "easiest" or most efficient way of doing something in an organization may not necessarily be the "right" thing for the organization's other constituents -- in the case of the Foundation the donors, grant applicants, and funding recipients. Over the past couple of years there have been substantial changes in policies and procedures for grant applicants, all of which have been considered "steps forward" from the Foundation's perspective. One of the purposes for administering this survey was to track these changes and developments to ensure that they in fact have been beneficial for the organizations affected by these changes.

Finally, I feel that perhaps more than anything else, my Senior Project experience has given me a deeper insight into what being a leader and living a life in service to others means to me

personally. I was absolutely amazed by the level of personal commitment and purpose that each person I met seemed to have behind their work, and this is something I hold in very high esteem. I feel that exposure to this context has helped me to re-evaluate my priorities and goals in looking toward the future. Exploring other questions and issues in the Senior Seminar this semester have also been extremely beneficial to me in examining my values and the course I want to take with my life: What does it truly mean to live a life of consequence? What are the elements of leadership in a diverse and changing world? What are my moral obligations to society? In beginning to look at issues such as these and seeking practical applications for leadership and service in my own life, I feel that I have opened my eyes toward new possibilities this semester and grown in more ways than I ever thought imaginable.

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

1994 GRANT APPLICANT SURVEY RESULTS

APRIL 1994

**ADMINISTERED AND COMPILED BY
JENNIFER L. VEST, UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND**

INTRODUCTION

As a second semester senior at the University of Richmond, I am currently enrolled in a Senior Seminar for my Leadership Studies major. The purpose of this course is to provide students an opportunity to reflect upon, synthesize, and develop both class work and experiential learning already completed in the Leadership Studies curriculum. An integral part of the Senior Seminar is the Senior Project, the purpose of which is to involve students in efforts to make a difference in an organization, program, or issue with which they are concerned. Because I was extremely interested in pursuing a project in the community or non-profit sector, Dr. Richard Couto, Professor of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond, suggested I speak with Ms. Darcy Oman, President of The Community Foundation, regarding a special project she had previously told him about. On January 21, 1994, I had the opportunity to meet with Darcy concerning this project, and seeing that the opportunity met our mutual goals, I decided to pursue it. Over the next few weeks, I had the opportunity to meet with Hunter and Cynthia to learn more about the workings of the organization, and I also read Foundation publications such as the 1992 Annual Report, Information For Donors And Their Advisors, "Proposal Guidelines," and "Guidelines For Grant Applicants." Having gained a deeper insight into The Community Foundation itself as an organization, I then began working on my own project -- evaluating the Foundation's grant-making processes through input from recent grant applicants.

RATIONALE

Recently, The Community Foundation decided to initiate an evaluation process through input from recent grant applicants, including their overall perceptions of the Foundation as well as specific information about their experiences with the grant application process. In response to a series of significant changes in grant-making practices and procedures over the past couple of years, the Foundation felt that feedback from the community and non-profit organizations themselves was integral. It was decided that an evaluative grant applicant survey would serve the best means to this end, and an instrument was adapted from The Chicago Community Trust to meet the specific needs of the Foundation. Through questions covering the pre-application, application, and post-application periods as well as overall perceptions of the Foundation, it was felt that the Foundation could not only gain a more realistic view of their perceived effectiveness and responsiveness in the Greater Richmond and Central Virginia community, but also take the information gained from this inquiry for future policy formulation and strategic planning purposes.

METHODOLOGY

The instrument adapted from The Chicago Community Trust's 1992 Grant Applicant Survey was kept in its original form for the most part. Several words and phrases were changed to make the survey specific to The Community Foundation and questions were either *added or deleted as deemed appropriate*. As a finished product, the Foundation's 1994 Grant Applicant Survey was ten pages in length and contained both statistical and narrative elements. In deciding which community and non-profit organizations the survey would be administered to, Darcy chose 166 groups that she felt would be responsive to this type of inquiry and provide valuable insights into the issues at hand. However, it must be made perfectly clear that these 166 organizations were not chosen with respect to their relationship to or past history with the Foundation nor was there a deliberate attempt to target certain types of organizations (arts, civic, education, health, social service, etc.). Because the instrument was administered for evaluative purposes only, all responses were held confidential, although each survey was coded with a number (1 - 166) to keep track of which organizations had responded by the March 11 deadline. In addition, several organizations opted for totally anonymous responses by choosing to cover their coded numbers.

The following are copies of the cover letter (originally printed on Foundation letterhead) and the survey instrument sent out on Wednesday, February 16, 1994:

February 18, 1994

1 ~

Dear 2 ~,

My name is Jennifer Vest, and I am working with The Community Foundation as a student intern this semester. The Foundation is currently in the process of evaluating its grant-making processes and would appreciate input from recent grant applicants. Enclosed is a survey requesting information on your organization's experiences with us, including the grant application process and your overall perception of the Foundation. Because the Foundation is administering this questionnaire strictly for evaluative purposes, we ask that your response be kept anonymous.

I realize that you receive many requests for information so we will be most appreciative of your timely response. It should take you approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. I ask that the survey be returned to The Community Foundation postmarked no later than Friday, March 11, 1994. I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Vest
Student Intern

enclosure

**THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
1994 GRANT APPLICANT SURVEY**

PART ONE

PRE-APPLICATION PERIOD: These questions refer to the period prior to the submission of your latest grant request to the Foundation.

1. How did you hear of the Foundation? (check as many as apply)
 [a] Known of the Foundation for years
 [b] Through another agency
 [c] Through a consultant
 [d] Through a Foundation publication
 [e] Through another foundation
 [g] From a foundation directory
 [z] Other (please specify) _____

2. Before you submitted your most recent request, did you try to discover whether the Foundation would be likely to fund your project?
 [1] Yes
 [0] No--Please skip to number 8.

3. If yes, what methods did you employ in this search? (check as many as apply)
 [a] Contacted Foundation staff directly
 [b] Reviewed Foundation publications
 [c] Contacted Foundation board member
 [d] Contacted another agency or business associate
 [e] Went to a research library
 [z] Other (please specify) _____

IF YOU CHECKED "CONTACTED FOUNDATION STAFF DIRECTLY" IN QUESTION 3, PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS 4 AND 5. IF NOT, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 6.

4. If you contacted the Foundation staff directly before applying, what type of information were you given?
 [a] Written
 [b] Verbal, by telephone
 [c] Verbal, in person
 [d] Both written and verbal
 [z] Other (please specify) _____

5. Did you find the Foundation staff to be accessible at this time? (circle one number)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Very Inaccessible, Very Accessible,
calls and/or letters responded promptly
were not responded to to calls and/or letters

6. Did you receive a copy of the Foundation document "Guidelines For Grant Applicants" which provides grant application guidelines?

_____ [1] Yes
_____ [0] No

7. If yes, how useful did you find the information on grant guidelines?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Useful Very Useful

8. Have you submitted a letter of intent within the past 18 months?

_____ [1] Yes--Please go on to number 9.
_____ [0] No--Please skip to number 29.

9. Were you encouraged to submit a proposal?

_____ [1] Yes--Please go on to number 10.
_____ [0] No--Please skip to number 29.

PART TWO

APPLICATION PERIOD: These questions refer to the period between submission of your grant request and when you were notified of the outcome of the request.

10. Did you receive a copy of the Foundation document "Proposal Guidelines" which provides instructions on how to write grant proposals?

_____ [1] Yes
_____ [0] No

11. If yes, how useful did you find the information on writing grant proposals?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Useful Very Useful

12. Please check the kind(s) of interaction that took place between your organization and the Foundation staff during the application period. (check as many as apply)

[a] No contact--Please skip to number 17.

[b] Visit to your site by Foundation staff

[c] Meeting at Foundation offices

[d] Phone conversation(s)

[e] Exchange of letters

[z] Other (please specify) _____

13. How useful was the interaction that occurred during the application period?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Useful Very Useful

14. Were you treated respectfully during the interactions?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Very Disrespectfully Very Respectfully

15. Did you think all of the relevant issues regarding your grant request were discussed?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
None Discussed All Discussed

16. Was the Foundation's grant decision-making process clear?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Clear Very Clear

17. Do you think Foundation staff reviewed your grant request with an open mind?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Very Close-Minded Very Open-Minded

18. Did the Foundation staff request written information in addition to that which you submitted in your original grant proposal?

[1] Yes

[0] No--Please skip to number 20.

19. If yes, do you feel this information was necessary and valid for the Foundation to evaluate your request?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not At All Valid Very Valid

26. Did you feel the reasons for the decline/deferral were valid?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Completely Invalid Completely Valid

27. Following up on your recent experience with the Foundation, how do you feel about the Foundation generally?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Very Negatively Very Positively

28. What suggestions or comments might you have about the Foundation's grant application process?

PART FOUR

OVERALL PERCEPTIONS

29. What is your overall impression of the Foundation's professional staff you dealt with during the entire application process?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Inaccessible Accessible

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Disrespectful Respectful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Uninformed Informed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Unhelpful Helpful

30. In your dealings with the Foundation and its staff, did you find that:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Calls Were <u>Not</u> Answered Courteously						Calls Were Answered Courteously	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Calls Were <u>Not</u> Returned Promptly						Calls Were Returned Promptly	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Written Inquiries Were <u>Not</u> Responded To Promptly						Written Inquiries Were Responded To Promptly	

31. Compared with other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way, do you believe the Foundation more or less likely to fund the following types of grants:

	Less Likely	Just As Likely			More Likely
Large Grants	1	2	3	4	5
Capital Grants	1	2	3	4	5
General Operating Support	1	2	3	4	5
Technical Assistance	1	2	3	4	5
Multiyear Grants	1	2	3	4	5
Matching Grants	1	2	3	4	5

32. Compared with other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way, do you believe the Foundation more or less likely to fund the following types of organizations:

	Less Likely	Just As Likely			More Likely
	1	2	3	4	5
Neighborhood-Based Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
Major Cultural Institutions	1	2	3	4	5
Change-Oriented Institutions	1	2	3	4	5
Watchdog Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
Issue Advocacy Groups	1	2	3	4	5
Organizations Serving the Disadvantaged	1	2	3	4	5
Groups Focused on Human Relations Efforts	1	2	3	4	5
Community Organizing Groups	1	2	3	4	5
Minority Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
Young or Emerging Organizations	1	2	3	4	5
United Way Agencies	1	2	3	4	5
Educational Institutions	1	2	3	4	5
Government Entities	1	2	3	4	5

33. Compared with other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way, do you believe the Foundation more or less responsive to the needs of organizations in each of the following categories:

	Less Responsive	Just As Responsive			More Responsive
	1	2	3	4	5
Arts	1	2	3	4	5
Civic	1	2	3	4	5
Education	1	2	3	4	5
Health	1	2	3	4	5
Social Service	1	2	3	4	5

40. What would you estimate the median annual family income to be for the population you serve?
 _____ [a] less than \$17,000
 _____ [b] \$17,000 - \$29,999
 _____ [c] \$30,000 - \$44,999
 _____ [d] \$45,000 - \$64,999
 _____ [e] \$65,000 - \$99,999
 _____ [f] \$100,000 or more
41. How long has your organization been in existence? _____ years
42. What was the size of your general operating budget for the fiscal year during which you made your most recent grant request to the Foundation? \$_____
43. Does your organization have a development director?
 _____ [a] Yes, full-time
 _____ [b] Yes, part-time
 _____ [c] No
44. What is the amount of your most recent grant request to the Foundation?
 _____ [a] \$1,000 or less
 _____ [b] \$1,001 - \$5,000
 _____ [c] \$5,001 - \$10,000
 _____ [d] \$10,001 - \$20,000
 _____ [e] \$20,001 - \$30,000
 _____ [f] \$30,001 or more
45. Was the most recent grant request the first your organization has ever made to the Foundation?
 _____ [1] Yes
 _____ [0] No
46. How many grant requests has your organization made to the Foundation in the past five years? _____ (#)
47. How many of these requests have been approved and funded? _____ (#)
48. For what purpose was your most recent grant request intended?
 _____ [a] General operating support
 _____ [b] Support for a specific project
 _____ [c] Capital Development
 _____ [d] Other--Please explain _____

49. Other comments:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT IN FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GREATLY APPRECIATES YOUR INPUT.

RETURN ADDRESS:

**THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
9211 FOREST HILL AVENUE, SUITE 109
RICHMOND, VA 23235
(804) 330-7400**

POSTMARK DEADLINE:

MARCH 11, 1994

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

From a total of 166 survey instruments mailed out on February 16, 1994, the Foundation received 82 responses, a 49.4% rate of return. The following are among the organizations that participated in the Foundation's evaluation process:

Adult Development Center
American Red Cross
American Red Cross, Southside Area Chapter
Arts Council of Richmond
ARTSPACE
Bay Adventure for Youth
Benedictine High School
Better People, Inc.
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Boys' Club of Richmond
CARITAS
Central Virginia Educational Telecommunications Corporation
Central Virginia Independent Living Center
Challenge Discovery Projects, Inc.
Church Hill Crime Watch
Commonwealth Girl Scout Council of Virginia, Inc.
Crater Aids Action Council
Cross-Over Health Center
Earth Day Committee
East End Church Coalition
Family and Children's Services
Family and Children's Trust Foundation
Fan Free Clinic - RAIN
Friends Association for Children
Gateway Homes of Greater Richmond
Genesis House
Gillies Creek Park Foundation
Hanover Arts and Activities Center
H.O.M.E.
Infant Intervention Program
Interfaith Housing Corporation
IVNA Health Services
Jackson-Field Episcopal Home
Jewish Community Federation
Jewish Family Services
Learning Disabilities Council
Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens
LIFENET Transplant Services
Literacy Council of Metro Richmond
Mathematics and Science Center
Meals on Wheels of Greater Richmond
Minority Youth Appreciation Society
Museum of the Confederacy
Names Project, Richmond Chapter
National Kidney Foundation
OAR of Richmond
Pi Lambda Theta, Richmond Chapter
Rainbow Games, Inc.

Richmond AIDS Ministry
 Richmond Association for Retarded Citizens
 Richmond CASA Program
 Richmond Community Action Program
 Richmond Community High School
 Richmond Community Senior Center
 Richmond East End Health and Safety Council
 Richmond Symphony
 Riverside School
 Rural Virginia
 Science Museum of Virginia
 Southside Community Development Housing Corporation
 Southside Regional Medical Center
 SPARC
 St. Joseph's Villa
 TheatreVirginia
 Thirty-First Street Nutrition Center
 Transplant Foundation
 United Methodist Family Services of Virginia
 University of Richmond
 Valentine Museum
 VCU/MCV
 VCU School of the Arts
 Virginia Coalition for the Homeless
 Virginia Heros, Inc.
 Virginia Historical Society
 Virginia Home for Boys
 Virginia League for Planned Parenthood
 Virginia Literacy Foundation
 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
 William Byrd Community House
 YMCA

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Before analyzing the survey responses in detail, it is extremely important to examine the general demographics of the participating organizations as self-reported in the survey instrument (Part Five: Agency Characteristics):

Main Focus Of The Organization

37.8%	Social Service
22.0%	Education
14.6%	Health
9.8%	Arts
2.4%	Civic
11.0%	Other (community issues, advocacy, humanitarian issues, museums, youth, housing, rural issues, disabled athletics)
2.4%	No Response

Population Served By The Organization

I. Primary Geographic Area Served

37.8%	Central Virginia
30.5%	One or more Metropolitan Richmond community area(s)
15.9%	City of Richmond
9.8%	One or more Richmond neighborhood(s)
6.0%	No Response

II. Minority Racial and Ethnic Background of Clientele

When asked what portion of the population served by the organization is composed of persons from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds, percentages ranged from 2% to 100%, the average being 57.9%.

III. Median Family Income of Population Served

57.3%	Less than \$17,000
17.1%	\$17,000 - \$29,999
7.3%	\$30,000 - \$44,999
7.3%	\$45,000 - \$64,999
1.2%	\$65,000 - \$99,999
0.0%	\$100,000 or more
9.8%	No Response

Organizational Characteristics

I. History of The Organization

The responding organizations range in age from 1 to 163 years, the average being 38.7 years.

II. General Operating Budget

When asked the size of the general operating budget for the fiscal year during which the organization made its most recent grant to the Foundation, responses ranged from \$2,500 to \$400 million, the average general operating budget being \$938,000.

III. Organizations with Development Directors

41.5%	Full-time development director
12.2%	Part-time development director
42.7%	No development director
3.6%	No Response

Nature Of The Organization's Most Recent Grant Request

I. Amount of Most Recent Grant Request

7.3%	\$1,000 or less
39.0%	\$1,001 - \$5,000
35.4%	\$5,001 - \$10,000
9.8%	\$10,001 - \$20,000
3.7%	\$20,001 - \$30,000
2.4%	\$30,001 or more
2.4%	No Response

II. Grant Request History

For 29.2% of all responding organizations, their most recent grant request was the first and only they had ever made to the Foundation. In contrast, the remaining 70.8% had made previous grant requests to the Foundation prior to their most recent one. The average number of grant requests made by responding organizations over the past five years is 2.4 (responses ranged from 0 - 8 requests). The average number of these requests that have actually been approved and funded is 1.4 (responses ranged from 0 - 8 requests).

III. Purpose of Most Recent Grant Request

81.7%	Support for a specific project
7.3%	General operating support
0.0%	Capital Development
6.1%	Other (education/prevention of AIDS, publicity campaign to recruit additional volunteers, add additional staff position, extend hours of operation)
4.9%	No Response

SURVEY RESULTS

- I. INTRODUCTION**
- II. PRE-APPLICATION PERIOD (PART ONE)**
- III. APPLICATION PERIOD (PART TWO)**
- IV. POST-APPLICATION PERIOD (PART THREE)**
- V. OVERALL PERCEPTIONS (PART FOUR)**
- VI. OTHER COMMENTS**
- VII. CONCLUSION**

I. INTRODUCTION

The 1994 Grant Applicant Survey was divided into five distinct sections, including questions about the Pre-Application Period (Part One), Application Period (Part Two), Post-Application Period (Part Three), Overall Perceptions (Part Four), and Agency Characteristics (Part Five). These five sections contained both statistical and narrative elements as well as other opportunities for free response. Because in several instances participating organizations were asked to skip certain questions due to their responses to previous questions, the actual number of responses to each question will also be reported to more accurately reflect the nature of the results.

II. PRE-APPLICATION PERIOD (PART ONE)

These questions refer to the period prior to the submission of the organization's most recent grant request to the Foundation.

1. How did you hear of the Foundation? (check as many as apply)

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 49.7% | [a] Known of the Foundation for years |
| 8.7% | [b] Through another agency |
| 2.9% | [c] Through a consultant |
| 10.7% | [d] Through a Foundation publication |
| 1.0% | [e] Through another foundation |
| 7.8% | [g] From a foundation directory |
| 19.4% | [z] Other (please specify) - have previously received grants from the Foundation; staff member met someone from the Foundation at a community meeting; Rosanne Shalf - Ashland, Virginia; through an agency board member; a member of our board of directors; newspaper; development staff; foundation officer; friend; newspaper article; individuals who had previously worked with the Foundation; VAFRE workshop; through a gift; Hunter Applewhite; contact at the Bank Trust Department; mailing list, word of mouth; Norma Blalock - board member |

2. Before you submitted your most recent request, did you try to discover whether the Foundation would be likely to fund your project?

- | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|
| 85.4% | [1] Yes |
| 11.0% | [0] No--Please skip to number 8. |
| 3.6% | No Response |

3. If yes, what methods did you employ in this search? (check as many as apply)
(Note: Only 89.0% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

50.0%	[a] Contacted Foundation staff directly
32.5%	[b] Reviewed Foundation publications
4.1%	[c] Contacted Foundation board member
4.9%	[d] Contacted another agency or business associate
5.2%	[e] Went to a research library
3.3%	[z] Other (please specify) - submitted letter of intent; looked at state publication for grants for prevention purposes; consulted with development staff; independent research

IF THE ORGANIZATION CHECKED "CONTACTED FOUNDATION STAFF DIRECTLY" IN QUESTION 3, THEY WERE DIRECTED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS 4 AND 5. IF NOT, THEY WERE DIRECTED TO SKIP TO QUESTION 6.

4. If you contacted the Foundation staff directly before applying, what type of information were you given?
(Note: Only 75.6% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

9.3%	[a] Written
52.0%	[b] Verbal, by telephone
8.0%	[c] Verbal, in person
29.3%	[d] Both written and verbal
1.4%	[z] Other (please specify) - visited with Hunter Applewhite personally

5. Did you find the Foundation staff to be accessible at this time? (circle one number)
(Note: Only 73.1% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 X(7.1)	8
Very Inaccessible, calls and/or letters were not responded to						Very Accessible, responded promptly to calls and/or letters	

6. Did you receive a copy of the Foundation document "Guidelines For Grant Applicants" which provides grant application guidelines?
(Note: Only 85.7% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

94.3%	[1] Yes
5.7%	[0] No

7. If yes, how useful did you find the information on grant guidelines?
(Note: Only 81.7% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 **X(6.6)** 7 8
 Not At All Useful Very Useful

8. Have you submitted a letter of intent within the past 18 months?

73.2% [1] Yes--Please go on to number 9.
 23.1% [0] No--Please skip to number 29.
 3.7% No Response

9. Were you encouraged to submit a proposal?
(Note: Only 75.6% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

85.5% [1] Yes--Please go on to number 10.
 14.5% [0] No--Please skip to number 29.

III. APPLICATION PERIOD (PART TWO)

These questions refer to the period between the submission of the organization's grant request and when they were notified of the outcome of the request.

10. Did you receive a copy of the Foundation document "Proposal Guidelines" which provides instructions on how to write grant proposals?
(Note: Only 68.3% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

92.9% [1] Yes
 7.1% [0] No

11. If yes, how useful did you find the information on writing grant proposals?
(Note: Only 61.0% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 **X(6.9)** 7 8
 Not At All Useful Very Useful

12. Please check the kind(s) of interaction that took place between your organization and the Foundation staff during the application period. (check as many as apply)
 (Note: Only 65.9% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

- 10.5% [a] No contact--Please skip to number 17.
- 15.1% [b] Visit to your site by Foundation staff
- 3.9% [c] Meeting at Foundation offices
- 48.8% [d] Phone conversation(s)
- 19.8% [e] Exchange of letters
- 1.9% [z] Other (please specify) - attended workshop; in person delivery of proposals

13. How useful was the interaction that occurred during the application period?
 (Note: Only 54.9% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 X(7.1) 8

Not At All Useful Very Useful

14. Were you treated respectfully during the interactions?
 (Note: Only 57.3% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 X(7.4) 8

Very Disrespectfully Very Respectfully

15. Did you think all of the relevant issues regarding your grant request were discussed?
 (Note: Only 54.9% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 X(7.1) 8

None Discussed All Discussed

16. Was the Foundation's grant decision-making process clear?
 (Note: Only 56.1% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 X(6.4) 7 8

Not At All Clear Very Clear

17. Do you think Foundation staff reviewed your grant request with an open mind?
 (Note: Only 59.8% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 X(6.9) 7 8

Very Close-Minded Very Open-Minded

18. Did the Foundation staff request written information in addition to that which you submitted in your original grant proposal?
(Note: Only 68.3% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

25.0% [1] Yes
75.0% [0] No--Please skip to number 20.

19. If yes, do you feel this information was necessary and valid for the Foundation to evaluate your request?
(Note: Only 15.9% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 X(7.5) 8
Not At All Valid Very Valid

20. At what level do you think a decision was made on your most recent grant request?
(Note: Only 68.3% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

10.7% [a] Board of Governors
48.2% [b] Board-level Grants Committee
5.4% [c] President
3.6% [d] Program Officer
1.9% [e] Staff Associate
0.0% [f] Student Intern
30.4% [g] Unknown

IV. POST-APPLICATION PERIOD (PART THREE)

21. What was the outcome of your most recent grant request?
(Note: Only 61.0% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

66.0% [a] Approved and funded, partially or fully--Please go on to number 22.
34.0% [b] Declined--Please skip to number 24.
0.0% [c] Deferred--Please skip to number 24.
0.0% [d] Withdrawn from consideration--Please skip to number 27.

22. If your grant request was approved, were your responsibilities to the Foundation in accepting the grant made clear?
(Note: Only 39.0% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 X(7.2) 8
Very Unclear Very Clear

IF THE ORGANIZATION'S REQUEST WAS FULLY FUNDED, THEY WERE DIRECTED TO SKIP TO NUMBER 27. IF THEIR REQUEST WAS PARTIALLY FUNDED, THEY WERE DIRECTED TO GO ON TO THE NEXT QUESTION.

23. Was the partial funding a major handicap for your program or organization's development?
 (Note: Only 31.7% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 X(3.7) 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____
 No Handicap _____ Serious Handicap

IF THE ORGANIZATION ANSWERED THE PREVIOUS QUESTION, THEY WERE DIRECTED TO SKIP TO NUMBER 27.

24. If your request was declined/deferred, were you given the reason(s) by the Foundation staff for the decline/deferral?
 (Note: Only 19.5% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

62.5% [1] Yes
 37.5% [2] No--Please skip to number 27.

25. If yes, how well did you understand the reason(s) provided for the decline/deferral?
 (Note: Only 11.0% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 X(5.1) 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____
 Poorly Understood _____ Clearly Understood

26. Did you feel the reasons for the decline/deferral were valid?
 (Note: Only 14.6% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 X(3.8) 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____
 Completely Invalid _____ Completely Valid

27. Following up on your recent experience with the Foundation, how do you feel about the Foundation generally?
 (Note: Only 64.6% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 X(6.9) 7 _____ 8 _____
 Very Negatively _____ Very Positively

28. What suggestions or comments might you have about the Foundation's grant application process?

- More details on defining the categories.
- You may wish to require a letter of intent when the project exceeds \$15,000.
- Make available the winning proposals.
- The "educational piece" is missing. Providing private education for a diverse student body creates substantial needs. Faculty and student initiatives are turned down for private education most times, but the Foundation provides many opportunities for the public sector.
- Keep in mind that new start community-based programs do not always have a professional grant writer on-board.
- Need more help with the grant process for "ordinary citizens" who complete the applications.
- Staff accessibility is extremely important for questions and guidance through the process.
- Let the organizations know the amount available to grant.
- Inform the organizations about the recipients and their projects with amounts funded.
- More screening should be completed before organizations go through the process of submitting a proposal.
- It would have been helpful to have known earlier that the money awarded would be delayed for five months.
- The Community Foundation does not seem to respond to our requests for funding very necessary and cost-effective community-based programs, even after four years of applying. Could it be that we do not have the "right" people on our board or that we do not have the right connections with the Foundation's board?
- Send out applications and guidelines yearly to any organization that might qualify.
- I've had excellent experiences with The Community Foundation and its staff. My only comment/suggestion is that many of the grant given are small (\$1,000 - \$5,000) and the Foundation requires many hours of preparation and follow-up work in reporting. It takes a lot of staff time from the requesting organization to create an application, pre-application, full proposal, and final report with rigid guidelines for a relatively small grant. Most other foundations which make larger grants do not have such rigid requirements.
- The Foundation staff should continue to stay in close contact with agencies regarding changes in the application process and procedures.

- There seemed to have been a "total turnabout" between the reception given to our original letter of intent and staff reaction and the decision finally made by the board. The explanation afterward was that the Foundation board had made several (incorrect) assumptions - it would have certainly been better if clarification had been sought, if this indeed was the case.
- The Foundation should realize that even successful organizations are still in need of funding. Successful management should be a favorable consideration, not negative.
- We were disappointed that we were not advised after our letter of intent that the Foundation was not interested in supporting supplemental salary assistance. Perhaps that was not known at the time the letter of intent was accepted.
- The process seems very "user-friendly" and fair. The Foundation is a welcome relief from other funding sources we utilize. We have no critical comments whatsoever -- only praise.
- We think that the Foundation is doing a great job of identifying problems and funding solutions.
- The site visits are a great way to see the projects the Foundation supports.
- The information provided by The Community Foundation for grant application is adequate, and staff are generally responsive and helpful.
- Information received was excellent and easy to understand. Support from Foundation staff was cordial and encouraging. Invitation to the reception gave opportunity to know more about the Foundation and to know more recipients. I applaud the process that was clear and concise to us.

V. OVERALL PERCEPTIONS (PART FOUR)

29. What is your overall impression of the Foundation's professional staff you dealt with during the entire application process?
 (Note: Only 96.3% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X(7.1)	8
Inaccessible						Accessible		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X(7.2)	8
Disrespectful						Respectful		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X(7.2)	8
Uninformed						Informed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X(7.2)	8
Unhelpful						Helpful		

30. In your dealings with the Foundation and its staff, did you find that:
(Note: Only 96.3% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X(7.4)	8
Calls Were <u>Not</u> Answered Courteously							Calls Were Answered Courteously	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X(7.2)	8
Calls Were <u>Not</u> Returned Promptly							Calls Were Returned Promptly	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X(7.2)	8
Written Inquiries Were <u>Not</u> Responded To Promptly							Written Inquiries Were Responded To Promptly	

31. Compared with other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way, do you believe the Foundation more or less likely to fund the following types of grants:

- Large Grants
- Capital Grants
- General Operating Support
- Technical Assistance
- Multiyear Grants
- Matching Grants

(Note: Only 89.1% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

In analyzing the responses to this question, it was perceived that the Foundation was just as likely to fund matching grants and grants in the areas of technical assistance in comparison to other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way. However, the Foundation was seen as less likely to fund large grants, capital grants, multiyear grants, and grants in the area of general operating support. In looking at the range of responses to this question, the Foundation was seen as most likely to fund matching grants and least likely to fund large grants. In addition, several organizations indicated categories of their own for this particular question:

The Foundation is more likely to fund start-up and innovative ideas and projects.

I think that the Foundation is more likely to fund popular or appealing organizations. Everyone is willing to fund those types of grants - very few are willing to support unpopular or "unmarketable" programs such as ones working with offenders.

32. Compared with other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way, do you believe the Foundation more or less likely to fund the following types of organizations:

Neighborhood-Based Organizations
Major Cultural Institutions
Change-Oriented Institutions
Watchdog Organizations
Issue Advocacy Groups
Organizations Serving the Disadvantaged
Groups Focused on Human Relations Efforts
Community Organizing Groups
Minority Organizations
Young or Emerging Organizations
United Way Agencies
Educational Institutions
Government Entities

(Note: Only 86.9% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

In analyzing the responses to this question, organizations indicated that the Foundation was more likely to fund neighborhood-based organizations, groups focused on human relations efforts, organizations serving the disadvantaged, community organizing groups, minority organizations, and young and emerging organizations in comparison to other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way. In addition, it was perceived that the Foundation was just as likely to fund major cultural institutions, change-oriented institutions, United Way agencies, and educational institutions. Finally, it was felt that the Foundation would be less likely to fund watchdog organizations, issue advocacy groups, and government entities. In looking at the range of responses to this particular question, the Foundation was seen as most likely to fund neighborhood-based organizations and organizations serving the disadvantaged and least likely to fund government entities.

33. Compared with other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way, do you believe the Foundation more or less responsive to the needs of organizations in each of the following categories:

Arts
Civic
Education
Health
Social Service

(Note: Only 90.2% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

In all five categories, the Foundation was seen as more responsive in comparison to other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way. In looking at the range of responses to this particular question, the Foundation was seen as most responsive to educational organizations and least responsive to social service organizations.

34. In general, how would you rate the Foundation on its responsiveness to community needs?
(Note: Only 91.5% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 X(6.2) 7 _____ 8 _____
Not Responsive Very Responsive

35. Are there any issues in the community that you feel the Foundation has not been responsive to?

race relations; services to the elderly; rural-urban interdependence; homelessness; crime prevention; the disadvantaged; health issues for the minority population; focus on downtown Richmond; health issues; private education; individuals who have "fallen through the cracks"; violence; services to the disabled

36. Do you believe that if an organization receives a grant from the Foundation, the organization is likely to fare better in applying for grants from other foundations?
(Note: Only 83.0% of participating organizations responded to this question.)

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 X(5.3) 6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____
No Difference Great Difference

In addition, there were also narrative responses to this particular question:

Yes, it makes a great difference because the Foundation is viewed as prestigious.

It is extremely important because if your own Community Foundation does not assist in supporting you, then why should a foundation from another state/locality support you?

VI. OTHER COMMENTS

In my conversation with the Foundation staff member with whom I spoke, I felt very discouraged from even submitting a letter of intent because of the categories of awards stated that are generally considered. I felt that our minority health issue did not warrant consideration.

It would be refreshing to see The Community Foundation fund small agencies rather than long-standing, well-established colleges, private schools, and large agencies that have many years of community support, a strong board, and a huge funding base.

With respect to the grant-making process, it does not seem appropriate to consider the amount of funding that an applicant has received through the donor designated funds when determining how much to grant through the unrestricted funds. Example: An organization has loyal donors that house their trusts with The Community Foundation, and during a one year period that organization received a total of \$15,000 from several donors. Then that organization applies for a grant. It does not seem fair to consider The Community Foundation has already supported that organization for that year, and therefore, is determined to be a lower priority for funding needs for that period. These funds should remain separate and not a criteria in determining need.

The Community Foundation is a valuable community resource. Thank you!

The Community Foundation has made a significant impact on our community. I am so pleased that it is growing and flourishing and, therefore, able to help more and more people. Thanks for all you do. You all do a great job! Kudos to Darcy and Hunter!

We (staff and board) have found the Foundation staff to be open and helpful. The focus is on developing practical solutions to community problems.

Without the help of the Foundation our crime prevention efforts could not have progressed as rapidly and successfully. We will be forever grateful.

Thanks for being a vital and dynamic partner in our community!

I am extremely pleased with all aspects of The Community Foundation - especially the employees.

The Community Foundation offers support to meaningful community projects with the optimum balance of oversight and agency autonomy. As a United Way agency, it is a welcome change to have the support of a funding source rather than its competition. We are proud to be associated with the Foundation!

The Foundation fills a unique need between donor and donor goals.

Bravo for the good work of the Foundation. Innovative and very valuable to community change and improvement.

Virginia Heroes board members and the 600 sixth grade middle school students thank The Community Foundation for your contributions to our program.

The Foundation's grant award was most helpful in attracting other gifts. We are pleased to have a foundation in our community that supports children and families.

The Foundation needs to replace the United Way completely!

The Foundation is identified with certain issues more than others - I feel that this is a necessity rather than a problem, since no one institution can do everything. Grants have to be large enough to make an impact.

VII. CONCLUSION

Demographically speaking, there was a fairly good mix of organizations responding to The Community Foundation's 1994 Grant Applicant Survey. A majority of participants characterized themselves as social service, education, or health organizations. For a majority of these organizations, their most recent grant request was between \$1,000 - \$5,000 and was sought for support for a specific project. Over two-thirds of all responding organizations had made previous grant requests to the Foundation prior to their most recent grant request, while the remaining one-third had not. The average number of grants made by these organizations over the past five years was 2.4 per organization, while the actual number of these requests that have been approved and funded was 1.4. In addition, over 73% of participating organizations have submitted a letter of intent within the past eighteen months, and approximately 85% of these organizations were later encouraged to submit a proposal. As for the outcome of these organizations' most recent grant requests (with 61% of all participating organizations responding), 66% were approved and funded and 34% were declined.

As for responses pertaining to the Pre-Application Period (Part One), almost half of all responding organizations had known of The Community Foundation for years. Almost 85% of these organizations tried to discover whether or not the Foundation would be likely to fund their project before submitting a proposal -- directly contacting Foundation staff members and reviewing Foundation publications were the means most often used. For those organizations that opted to contact Foundation staff members directly before beginning the grant application process, the most common type of interaction they had was over the telephone. Over 90% of all responding organizations also received "Guidelines For Grant Applicants," and they found this publication to be very helpful.

During the Application Period (Part Two), over 90% of organizations received the Foundation document "Proposal Guidelines" and found this information on writing grant proposals to be very valuable. During the application period, the most frequent types of interaction between the organizations and Foundation staff were phone conversation(s), exchange of letters, and site visits by Foundation staff members. For the most part, organizations generally seemed to feel that this interaction was useful, they were treated respectfully by Foundation staff, relevant issues regarding their grant requests were discussed, the grant decision-making process was fairly clear, and Foundation staff viewed their grant requests with an open mind.

The Foundation required written information in addition to what was submitted with the original grant proposal for 25% of all responding organizations, but an overwhelming majority of these groups felt that this information was necessary and valid for the Foundation in evaluating their request. As for what level participating organizations thought that a final decision was made on their grant requests, 48.2% felt that it had occurred at a Board-level Grants Committee, while over 30% were totally unsure.

As for the Post-Application Period (Part Three), participating organizations generally felt that their responsibilities to the Foundation in accepting the grant were made clear. As for those organizations receiving partial funding (31.7% of all participating organizations), this was seen as a handicap to their projects, but not a severe one. For those organizations whose grant requests were declined or deferred, 62.5% were given reasons behind the decision, while 37.5% were not. These organizations seemed to have an only average understanding of the reasons provided by the Foundation for the decline or deferral, but were still fairly positive in their general feelings toward the Foundation.

As for Overall Perceptions (Part Four) of the Foundation, staff members were generally seen as accessible, respectful, informed, and helpful throughout the entire grant application process. As for funding "trends," the Foundation was seen as more likely to fund matching grants and grants in the area of technical assistance and less likely to fund large grants, capital grants, multiyear grants, and grants for general operating support in comparison to other foundations, corporate donors, and cooperative funders such as the United Way. At the same time, the Foundation was seen as more likely to fund neighborhood-based organizations, groups focusing on human-relations efforts, organizations serving the disadvantaged, community organizing groups, minority organizations, and young and emerging organizations. In general, participating organizations rated the Foundation as responsive to community needs and issues yet several offered additional suggestions, including race relations, services to the elderly and disabled, and issues surrounding crime.