

Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers



OUR REGION, OUR GIVING 2014

Giving in the Greater Washington Region

**Featuring a Special Look at
Giving Toward Food-Related Issues**



Contents

- 1 Letter from the President
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Giving in the Greater Washington Region in 2013
 - Local Giving and Assets
 - Types of Funders
 - Giving by Geography
 - Issue Areas
- 8 A Snapshot of the Funding Community
 - Respondents by Asset Base and Giving Level
 - Types of Cash Support
 - Balancing New Investments with Long-Term Commitments
 - Leveraging Financial Resources
 - Philanthropy That Goes “Beyond Dollars”
 - The Biggest Challenges Facing the Nonprofit Sector
- 13 Looking Ahead
 - Changes in the Coming Year
 - Trends in the Sector
- 15 A Special Look at Giving Toward Food-Related Issues
 - Why Focus on Food?
 - WRAG Member Funding Toward Food-Related Issues
 - Areas of Support
 - Funding Toward Specific Populations
 - Food-Related Funding Across the Region
 - How WRAG Members are Supporting Improved Access to Food “Beyond Dollars”
 - What a Reorientation to “Good” Food Can Bring to Health, the Environment, Education, and Community Development
 - Unmet Needs Within the Food System
- 22 Acknowledgements

Letter from the President

This year's edition of *Our Region, Our Giving* once again takes a close look at the members of the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG). We surveyed our membership on their 2013 giving and assets, their perspectives on a number of trends in philanthropy, their plans for the coming year, and more. These funders represent a cross-section of the region's philanthropic community, including independent foundations, family, corporate, community and public foundations, and corporate giving programs.¹

The data we present is reflective of this community's diversity, as well as its underlying common mission. These funders target a variety of issue areas, employ very different grantmaking strategies, and hold a vast range of resources dedicated to philanthropy. What these funders have in common is a dedication to improving the region and the lives of those who call it home.

These funders' giving isn't all about dollars. Throughout the report, we take a close look at some of the other ways our members are leveraging all of the resources at their disposal to better serve their own grantees and to strengthen the region's nonprofit sector. We also explore the community's giving toward food-related issues and the region's food system, a growing priority for a number of local funders.

As always, we hope that this report will provide a timely and informative picture of philanthropy in our region, and offer new insights into the priorities and practices of some of the most committed and engaged funders in the Greater Washington region.



Tamara Lucas Copeland
President
Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers

November 2014



1. The list of funders who completed the 2014 giving survey is included at the end of this report.

Introduction

2013 was a time of change in our community. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, major supporters of affordable housing in our region, ended their philanthropic giving. The Freddie Mac Foundation began winding down its grantmaking in 2013, which included its participation in WRAG, and disbursed its final grants in 2014. As we discovered when examining the giving data provided by our members, a number of members' giving in 2013 was lower than it was in 2012. We also know that two longtime local funders, the MARPAT Foundation and the Summit Fund, are sunseting their grantmaking soon. However, our outlook is by no means bleak. Here's why.

We have known for a long time that these changes were coming, and the community has had time to prepare. Thanks in no small part to the advocacy from philanthropic and other regional leaders, the Freddie Mac Foundation transitioned most of its assets to funds at the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, the Meyer Foundation, and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption to continue to support its grantees through the coming years. We would expect this new funding from the Community Foundation and the Meyer Foundation to begin to be reflected in future editions of this report.

And, while the MARPAT Foundation and the Summit Fund have been leaders on certain issues in our region (specifically, support of the nonprofit community in D.C.'s wards 7 and 8 in the case of MARPAT, and on ending teen pregnancy in D.C. and improving the health of the Anacostia River in the case of Summit) there are conversations happening among local funders about how they can collectively address these issues to mitigate the impact of the loss of funding.

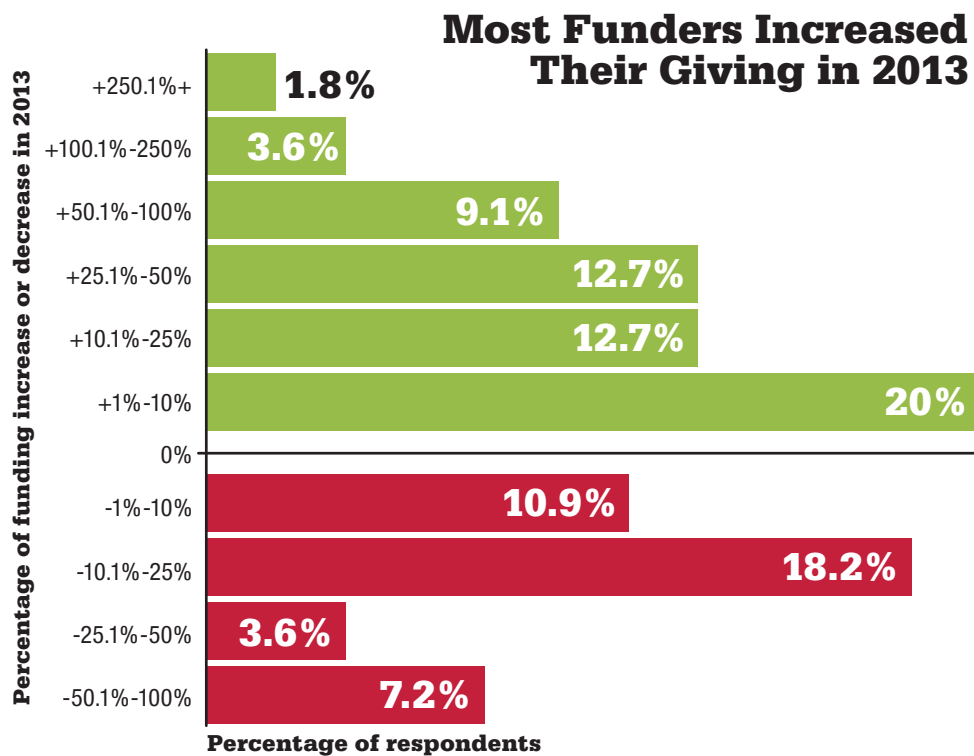
Finally, reduced giving by some members is likely indicative of normal fluctuations in giving from year to year, as multi-year grants end, priorities are reconsidered, or strategic planning is undertaken. We are optimistic that giving will trend upward in the next year, particularly in light of the fact that most WRAG members' assets increased in 2013.

Giving in the Greater Washington Region in 2013

Local Giving and Assets

Total local giving among survey respondents in 2013 was **\$227,878,806**.

There was a fair amount of fluctuation in giving between 2012 and 2013 among survey respondents. Sixty percent reported that their giving in the region increased in 2013 over 2012.



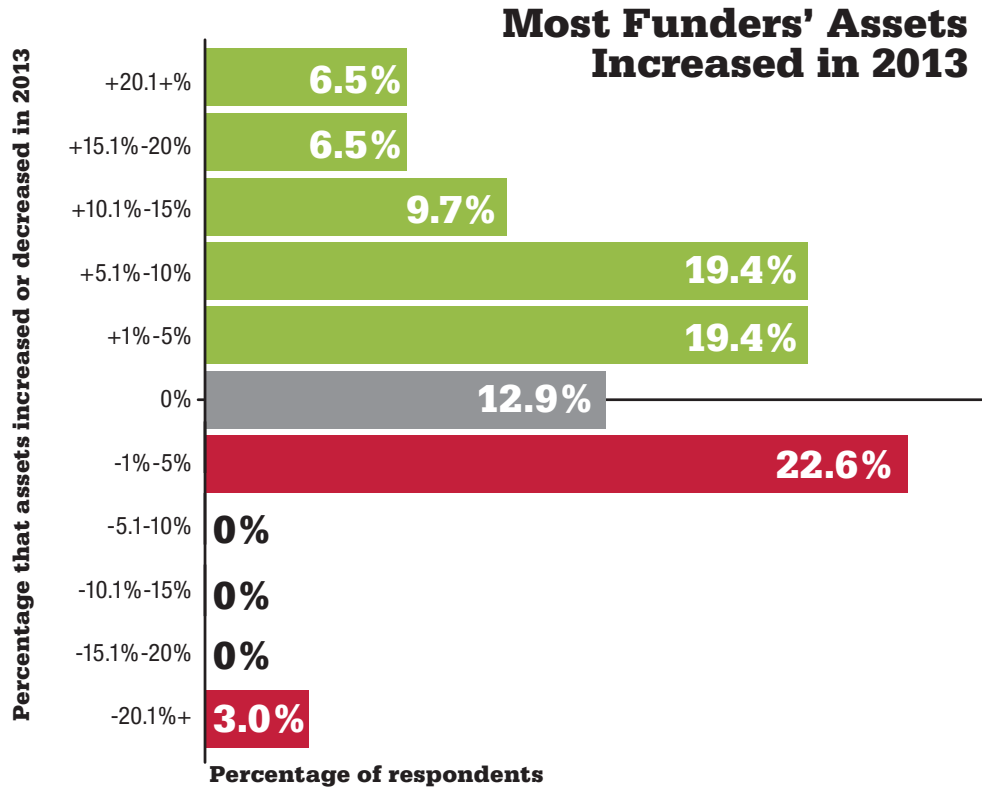
The Greater Washington region consists of the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, and suburban Maryland. See page 5 for a further breakdown of giving in the region by jurisdiction.



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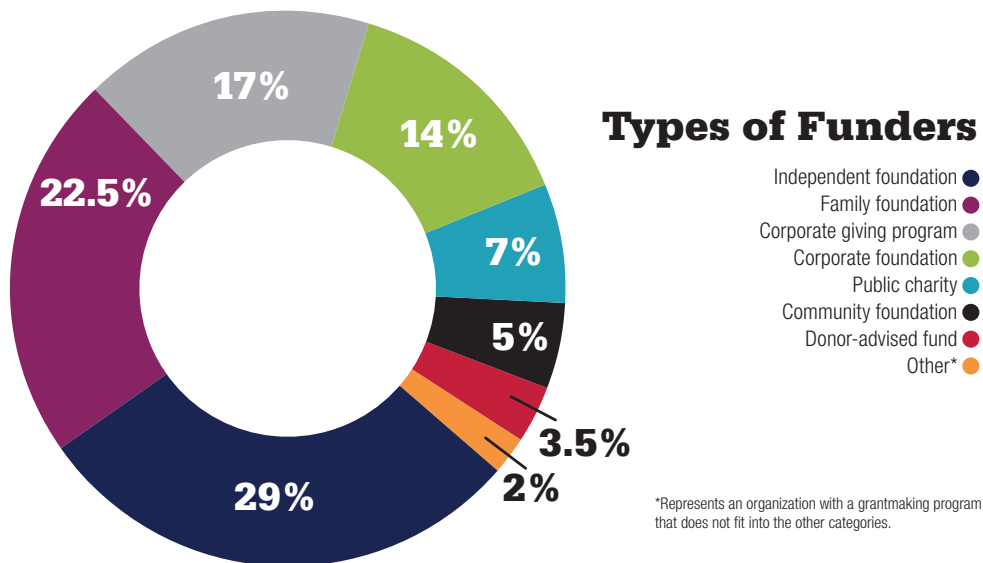
Survey respondents reported a total of **\$4,199,426,211** in assets in 2013. For the community overall, it was a good year for asset growth, with 61 percent of respondents reporting that their assets grew in 2013 over the previous year.¹

1. Some respondents declined to provide information on their assets. This graph also excludes corporate giving programs and other entities that don't have traditional endowments



Types of Funders

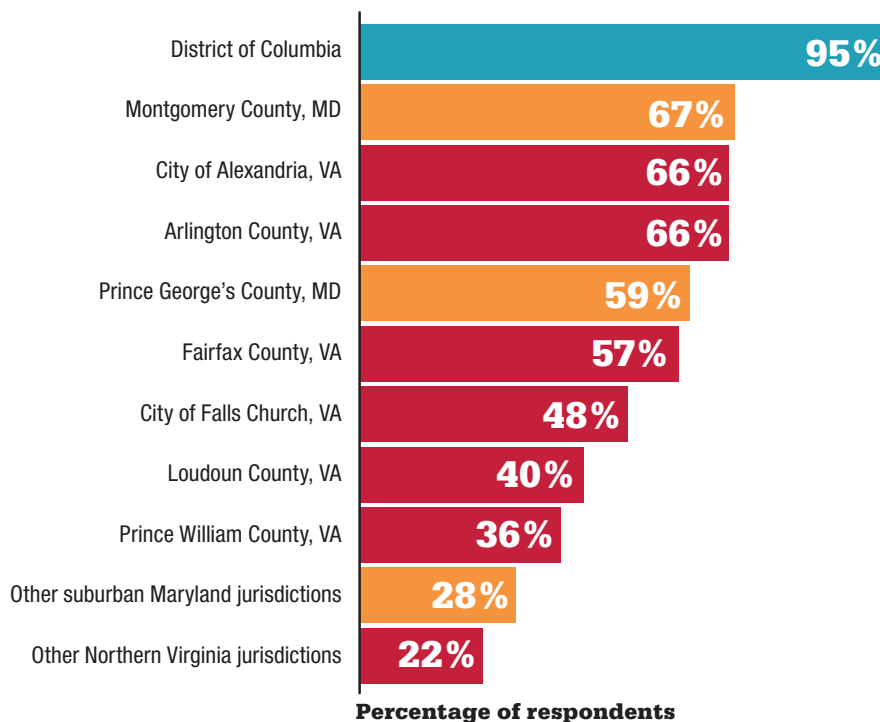
The Greater Washington region's philanthropic community is comprised of a diverse range of grantmaking entities. This year's survey respondents came from the following categories:



Giving by Geography

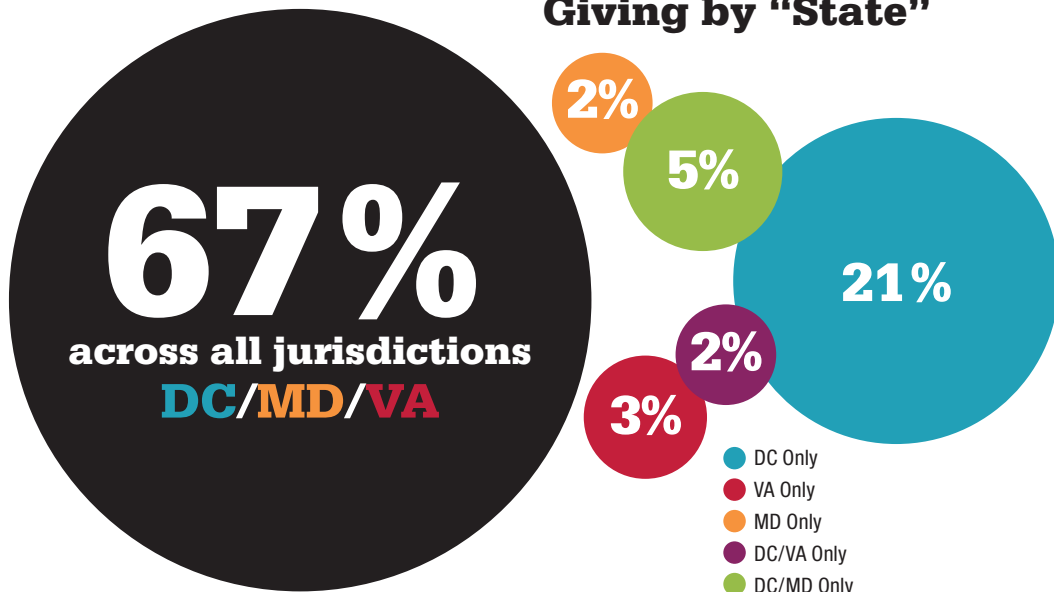
WRAG's membership supports nonprofit organizations throughout the Greater Washington region. Perhaps not surprisingly, nearly all survey respondents make grants to organizations based in the District of Columbia, though it should be noted that some of these organizations may be headquartered in D.C. but serve residents in other jurisdictions as well. The jurisdiction that attracts the second highest number of funders is Montgomery County, MD, with Alexandria and Arlington County in Virginia close behind. Fewer funders are supporting groups in Prince George's County, MD, or in jurisdictions farther out in Northern Virginia.

Giving by Local Jurisdiction



Although WRAG has not previously surveyed our members about the specific jurisdictions in which they fund, we do know that several funders have begun supporting work in Prince George's County since 2008, when the Community Foundation for Prince George's County launched the Partnership for Prince George's County, with WRAG's support. The Partnership is focused on strengthening relationships between funders, the county administration, and nonprofit organizations. As that work continues, we anticipate that funding in the county will increase. Likewise, there is a growing awareness among funders of the suburbanization of poverty across our region. This attention could translate into increased giving farther afield from D.C. – if there is the willingness and the leadership necessary to pursue it.

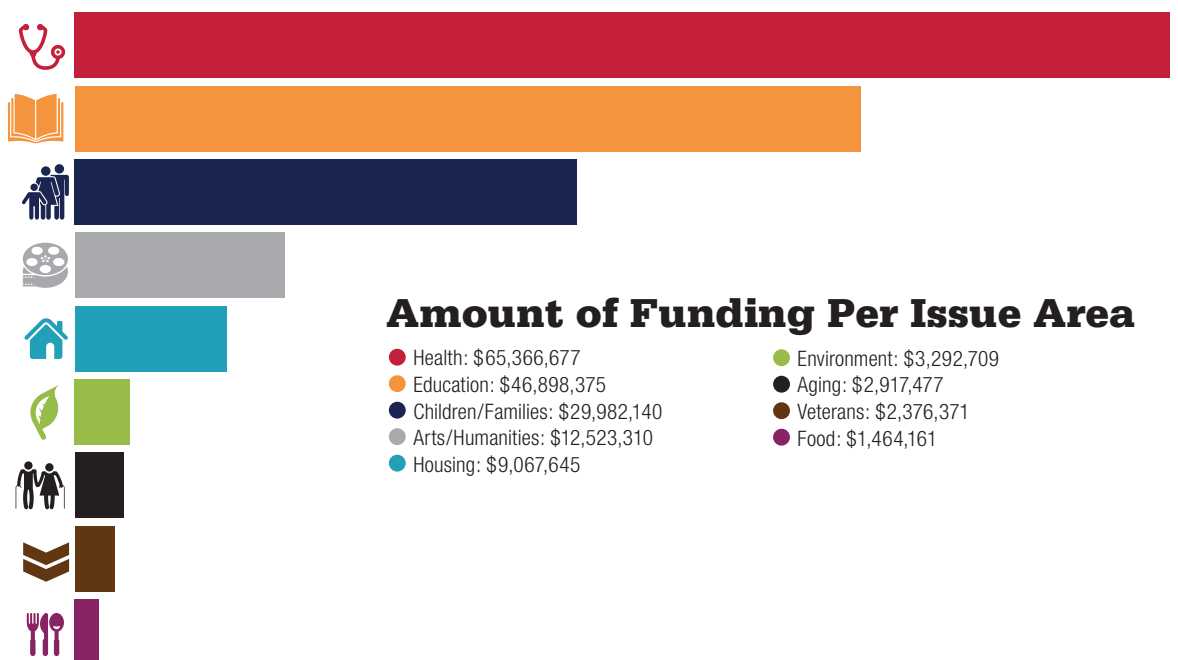
Although the vast majority of survey respondents fund in D.C., WRAG members do, by and large, embrace the notion that problems – and solutions – aren't found in just one part of the region. Over two-thirds of respondents reported that they fund in all three of the "states" in our region, and 74 percent reported funding in more than one state.



Issue Areas

WRAG members give across a wide variety of issue areas. Specific grants don't always fit easily into categories, and no two funders break down their grantmaking the same way. Nonetheless, some topic areas have long been, and continue to be, a major focus among a majority of the philanthropic community in our region. Among them, health and education remain the two issue areas that attract the highest amount of funding.

About 76 percent (\$174 million) of the total giving reported by survey respondents can be broken down into the following categories:





A Closer Look at Housing Funding



The affordable housing crisis in our region came to the forefront even more this year when D.C. experienced a 13 percent increase in homelessness¹ and a 25 percent spike in family homelessness² that it was unprepared to address. This is not a situation unique to the District. According to the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region's (CFNCR) 2014 report, *Housing Security in the Washington Region*, every jurisdiction in this region has an inadequate supply of rental housing affordable to extremely low-income residents, and nearly half of the region's renter households are cost burdened. Likewise, across the region prices of for-sale homes are out of reach for many households.³

The lack of affordable housing is an issue with serious long-term implications for the prosperity of our region. According to a December 2013 report from the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University, our region is poised to create 857,334 net new jobs between 2012 and 2032, requiring the creation of 548,298 new housing units.⁴ Because a major segment of these new jobs will be in lower wage sectors, demand for affordable housing – particularly affordable housing close to transit and to the activity centers where these jobs will likely be located – is only going to increase. Meeting this demand is critical for our region's economic viability.

Last year's edition of this publication featured a look at giving toward affordable housing. Since then, the philanthropic landscape has changed. In 2013 Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac ended their housing funding, and the Freddie Mac Foundation disbursed their final grants in 2014. According to the CFNCR study, these three entities contributed nearly half of the approximately \$33.4 million that went to housing-related nonprofits in our region in 2012. This year, survey respondents, which did not include any of these three entities, reported just over \$9 million in housing funding in 2013. These numbers should be cause for concern.

WRAG, through our Affordable Housing Action Team, is working to educate funders about how they can support the preservation and creation of affordable housing in our region, and is leading the effort to engage cross-sector stakeholders in addressing this issue.

This work is beginning to bear fruit. Seven percent of survey takers indicated that they plan to either begin funding in the area of housing, or plan to significantly increase their giving toward housing in the next three years. Another nearly 30 percent indicated that they are considering similar changes.

The philanthropic community is increasingly aware of how a family's access to a safe and affordable home affects their health, economic security, and even their children's academic achievement. Sixty-three percent of survey respondents who don't currently fund housing indicated that they better understand how affordable housing impacts the other social and economic outcomes that their funding supports. This is a step, albeit small, in the right direction.

1. Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, *Results and Analysis from the 2014 Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons in the Metropolitan Washington Region*, 2014

2. DC Fiscal Policy Institute, "Family Homelessness Is on the Rise in DC: FY 2015 Investments Can Help," May 2014

3. Urban Institute and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, *Housing Security in the Washington Region*, 2014

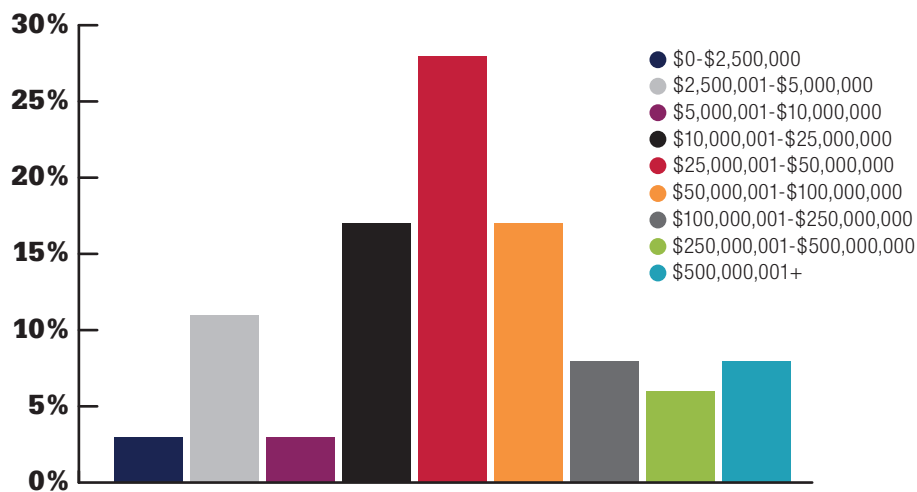
4. Center for Regional Analysis, *Housing the Region's Future Workforce*, 2012 – 2013, 2013



A Snapshot of the Funding Community

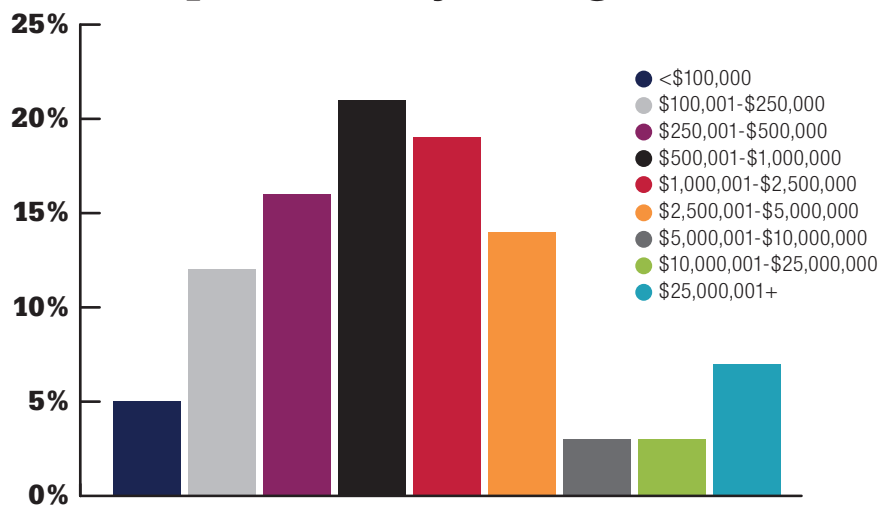
Our region's philanthropic community is diverse in terms of the size of its resources and the levels of its giving. Though WRAG's membership includes some of the biggest funders in the region, only two locally-focused foundations are among the top 100 largest foundations in the country. According to the Foundation Center's most recent data, The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation is the 99th largest foundation in the country by asset size, and the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region is the 62nd largest foundation in the country by total giving.¹

Respondents by Asset Base*



* Some respondents declined to provide information on their assets. This graph also excludes corporate giving programs and other entities that don't have traditional endowments.

Respondents by Giving Level

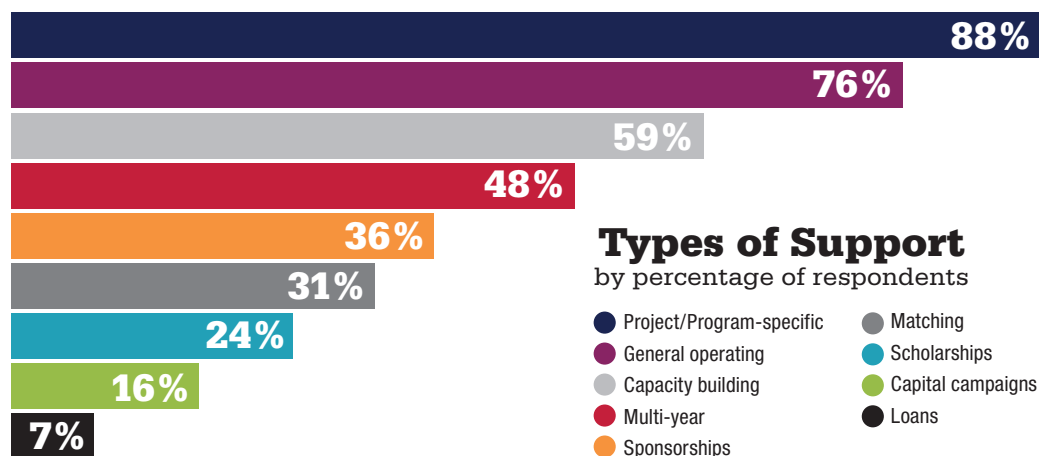


Giving and assets only tell part of the story, however. As we will explore in the following pages, WRAG's membership is deeply engaged on issues affecting our region, and most supplement their grantmaking by leveraging other resources at their disposal.

1. Foundation Center, "Top 100 U.S. Foundations by Asset Size," September 2014 and Foundation Center, "Top 100 U.S. Foundations by Total Giving," September 2014

Types of Cash Support

Over three-quarters of survey respondents reported providing general operating support grants in 2013. Nearly half reported providing multi-year support – an especially impressive statistic, given that a 2011 National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy study of over 1,000 foundations across the country found that only 10 percent provided multi-year grants.¹ This reflects the commitment within this region's philanthropic community to providing flexible and long-term support to their grantees to enable them to do their work more effectively and efficiently.



Balancing New Investments with Long-Term Commitments

Many WRAG members have funded certain organizations for many years, remaining deeply committed to these groups' long-term success. But, that doesn't mean that funders' interests are stagnant:

72 percent of survey respondents reported that they had funded at least one organization for the first time in 2013. Of this 72 percent, the median number of new grantees per funder was 6.

About 40 percent of survey respondents indicated that they accept unsolicited grant applications (a rate that, according to the head of the Foundation Center, matches foundations nationally²). These trends reflect funders' deep knowledge of the issues they care about. They are engaged, learning about work that is happening in our communities, making connections, and proactively seeking new opportunities to invest in the region.

While many survey respondents have taken on new grantee organizations, their overall issue focus and priorities have remained relatively stable over the last three years. Fewer than a third of respondents indicated that they began funding in a new issue area during that time period, and only 16 percent indicated that they had stopped funding in a particular issue area.

29%

of funders said they started funding in a new issue area

16%

said they stopped funding in a particular issue area

1. National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, *The State of Multi-Year Funding 2011, 2013*

2. Bradford Smith, president, Foundation Center, in a 2011 blog post on PhilanTopic, "Don't Call Us, We'll Call You." Figure based on an internal query of Foundation Center data.

Leveraging Financial Resources

Across the country, impact investing is taking off as funders increasingly look to further the social impact of their financial resources. Impact investments allow funders to go beyond the traditional five percent annual payout required by the IRS by using more of their assets to make loans and other types of investments that further their social mission. WRAG members are getting on board with this movement in growing numbers.

Mission-related investments (MRIs)

Market-rate investments made from a foundation's endowment that support the foundation's mission by generating a positive social or environmental impact, as well as a financial return.¹

In last year's edition of this publication, we reported that 19 percent of survey respondents had participated in mission-related investing in 2012. This year, fully a third of respondents reported making MRIs in 2013, and another seven percent plan to begin in the coming year.

Program-related investments (PRIs)

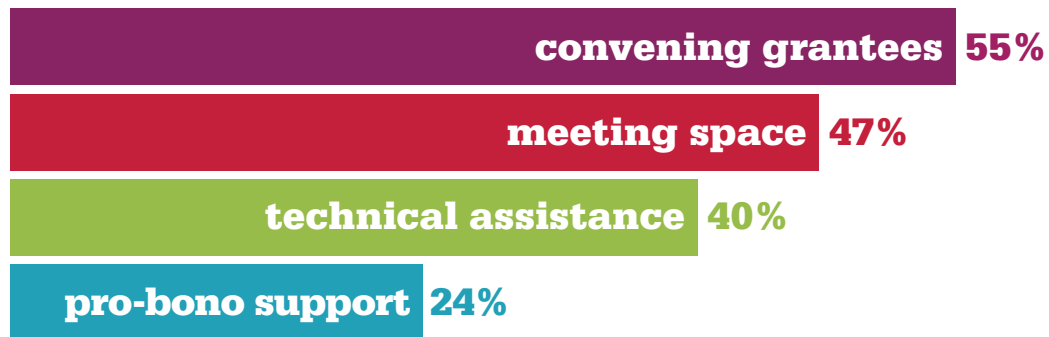
Below-market loans and equity investments made to achieve specific program or mission objectives.

Twenty-eight percent of survey takers reported making program-related investments in 2013. While we do not have data on the number of WRAG members who made PRIs in 2012, last year we reported that 6.5 percent of survey respondents planned to begin program-related investing for the first time in 2014. Another five percent indicated this year that they plan to begin making PRIs in 2015.

Philanthropy That Goes "Beyond Dollars"

The majority of WRAG members exemplify the principle of going "beyond dollars" in their grantmaking to increase their impact on the issues of concern to them. There are many ways funders do this in our community. Perhaps the simplest way is through support that doesn't involve a cash transaction:

Types of Non-cash Support by percentage of respondents



Additional non-cash support to local nonprofits included board service by philanthropic staff and trustees, in-kind donations, and, particularly among corporate funders, employee volunteer programs. Over all, **74 percent of respondents provided some kind of non-cash support in 2013.**

1. Definitions derived from Mission Investors Exchange. See: www.missioninvestors.org/mission-investing

There are other ways that funders work to increase their impact on the issues they care about:

57 percent contribute to funding collaboratives

such as the Washington AIDS Partnership at WRAG, the Greater Washington Workforce Development Collaborative at the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, and the Early Care & Education Funders Collaborative at the Washington Area Women's Foundation

40 percent align their giving with other grantmakers

38 percent fund advocacy

28 percent participate in advocacy efforts themselves

Another way that funders seek to increase their impact is by reducing the administrative burden of applying for funding. Inspired by the Grants Managers Network's Project Streamline initiative, beginning in 2010 a number of WRAG members started to consider ways they could streamline their own grant guidelines and other processes to reduce the amount of staff time required to apply for funding. One way funders ease the burden of applying for funding is by allowing applicants to submit WRAG's Common Grant Application, Common Letter of Inquiry, and/or the Common Grant Report.

About one third of respondents accept at least one of WRAG's common grant forms

The Biggest Challenges Facing the Nonprofit Sector

We surveyed members on what they saw as the most pressing challenges facing our region's nonprofit sector. Far and away the most common response was lack of sufficient funding.

The limited number of philanthropic dollars that flow to locally-focused nonprofits in our region is well-documented, and it's an issue that could be exacerbated in the coming years as the loss of funding from Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, as well as from the local foundations that are sunseting or making other changes to their grantmaking, is more widely felt. That only a third of respondents thought that the loss of funding from these groups is a major concern is likely indicative of how well the community has prepared for these changes.

The fact remains that, in the long-term, the region needs to attract more investment in locally-focused organizations. In a forthcoming report, George Mason University's Alan Abramson and Stefan Toepler describe the region's "net philanthropic deficit."¹ By virtue of being the nation's capital, Washington and the immediate surrounding area is home to many nationally- and internationally-focused nonprofits that attract a majority of funding from local, national, and international foundations. Likewise, many national foundations find it useful to be based in D.C., though their funding is largely directed outside the region.

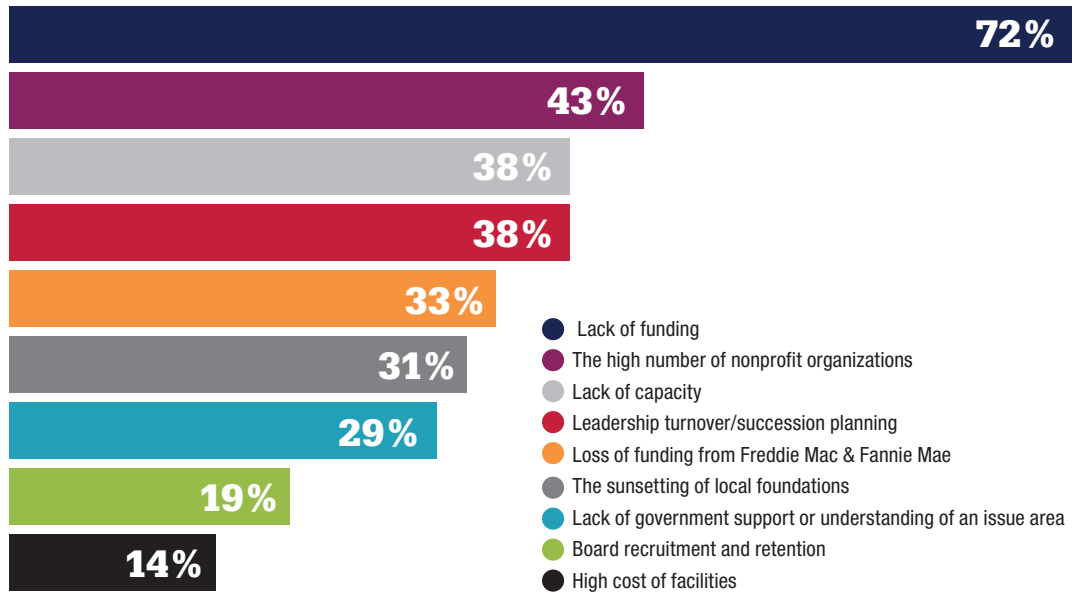
Keeping philanthropic capital in the region – and attracting capital from outside the region – is an ongoing challenge. Though many funders – particularly WRAG members – are deeply invested in the region, there's no question that local needs significantly outweigh the total number of philanthropic dollars dedicated to those needs by local and national foundations. This is an issue of concern to WRAG and one that the region's philanthropic community should continue to address. Strategies such as promoting impact investing, educating young potential donors and other high net worth individuals about issues affecting the region, and positioning the region as an attractive pilot site for national initiatives are growing priorities for those interested in promoting locally-focused philanthropy in our region.

1. Alan Abramson and Stefan Toepler, *Foundations in the Washington, D.C. Region: The Puzzle of a Modest-Size Foundation Sector in a Wealthy Area*, Unpublished

Survey respondents also identified other challenges they see among their grantees – issues that are largely related to funding. These included the lack of diversification in funding, limited levels of unrestricted funding, and capacity issues, such as a lack of resources for evaluation and professional development for non-executive level staff.

What Funders See as Pressing Challenges Facing Nonprofits

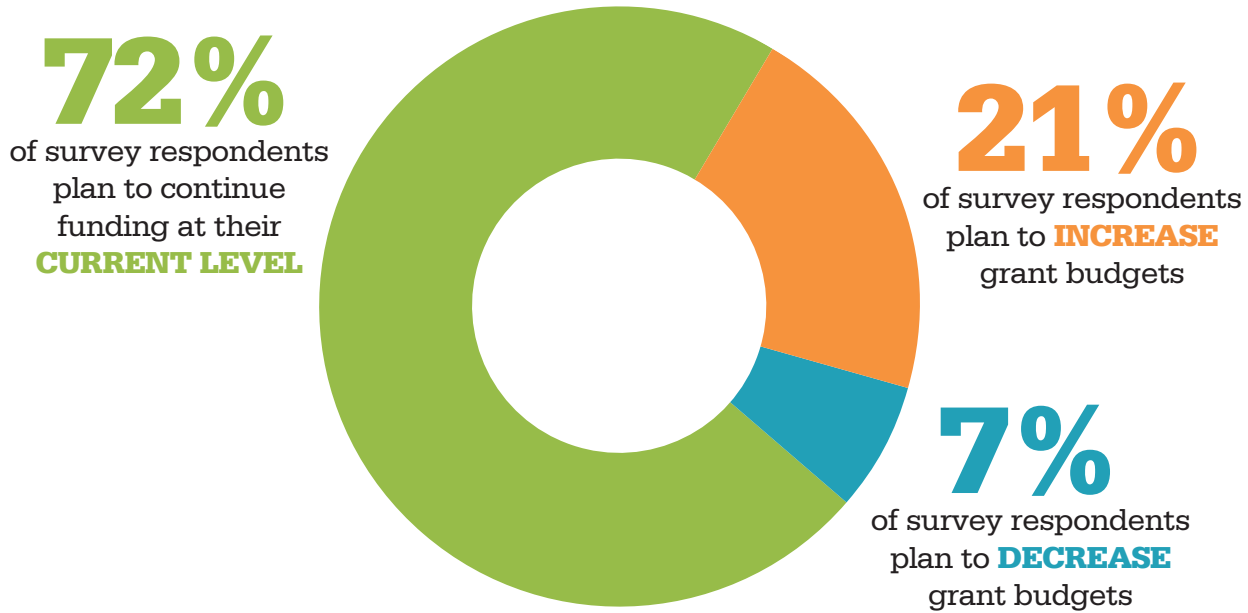
by percentage of respondents



Looking Ahead

Changes in the Coming Year

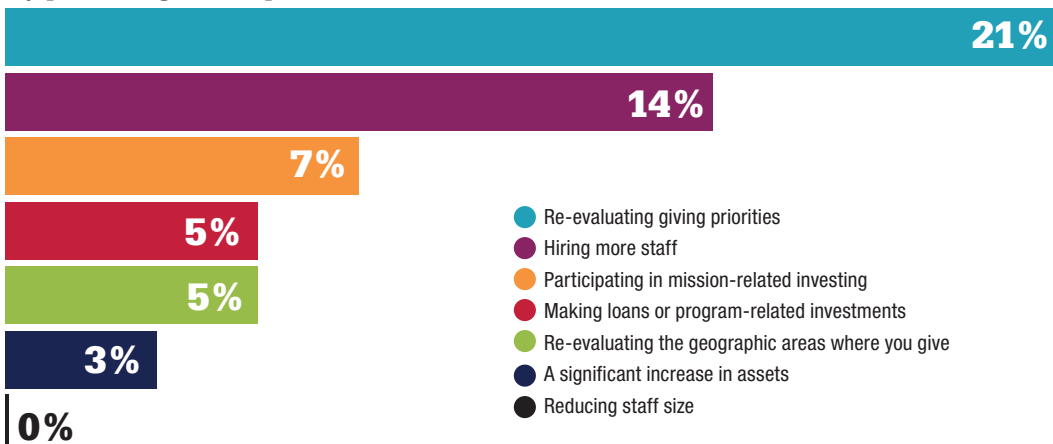
We surveyed our members about their plans for 2015. Based on their responses, we anticipate that grantmaking will remain steady. Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents plan to give at the same level in 2015, and only a few indicated that they plan to decrease their grant budget.



We can anticipate some changes in giving, however, as over 20 percent of respondents said they will be re-evaluating their giving priorities in 2015. A modest number of respondents anticipate moving into the area of impact investing or re-evaluating their geographic priorities.

Changes Being Made in 2015

by percentage of respondents



Trends in the Sector

We asked our members what trends in philanthropy they anticipate participating in or that they expect to impact their work in the next year. Collective impact was far and away the trend most frequently cited, as it was in 2013.

There are already collective impact initiatives underway in this region, collaborative efforts in which stakeholders from philanthropy, the nonprofit community, government, and in some cases, business, align their work on a specific issue, employ data-driven decision-making strategies, and agree to a set of metrics to evaluate their work.

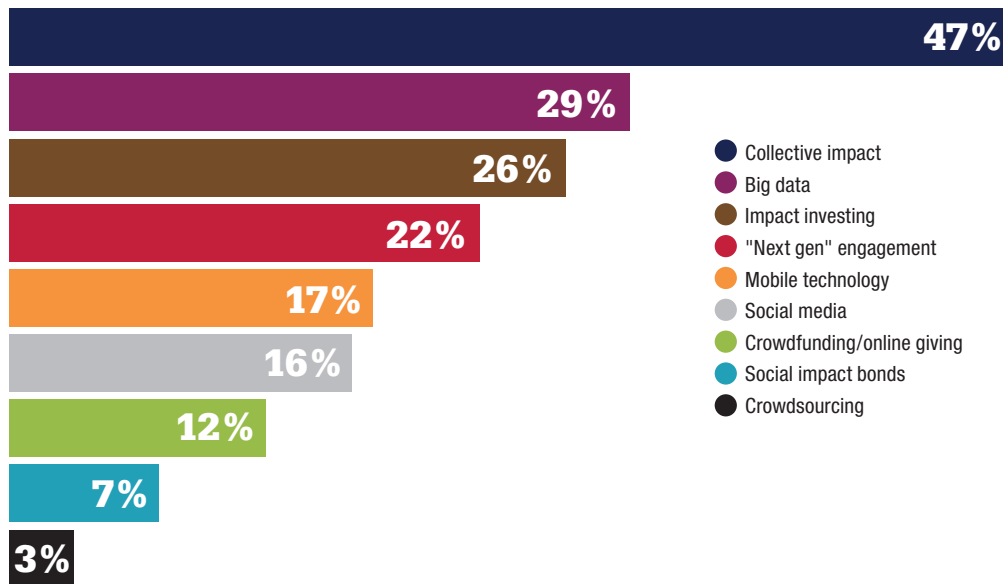
This is a particularly positive trend, given the loss of long-time funders and the general perception among survey respondents that there is insufficient funding available to the region's nonprofit community. Collective impact initiatives around the country have begun to show tangible results in addressing complex and entrenched problems. If local funders – so many of whom are already actively aligning their grantmaking or contributing to pooled funds – stay open to the potential offered by collective impact initiatives, and continue to seek out other opportunities to collaborate with each other and across sectors, the community will be better positioned to respond to the loss of major funders.

Big data (in short, employing massive data sets to inform strategies and decision-making) and impact investing continue to be trends that a significant segment of funders anticipate affecting their grantmaking. Likewise, engaging the next generation in philanthropy is a topic a number of funders – particularly family foundations – are considering.

Far fewer expect to be involved in trends such as crowdfunding or crowdsourcing that are growing in appeal in other sectors. Nor are they focused, in large numbers, on the vehicle of social impact bonds.¹

What Trends Do Funders Expect to Affect Them?

by percentage of respondents



1. Social impact bonds (SIBs), or "pay-for-success bonds," take the form of a contract between nonprofit service providers, the government, and private investors. SIBs raise capital for programs that, if successful, reduce the need for government support for specific expensive safety-net services. Investors are repaid only if certain outcomes are achieved. Definition adapted from Social Finance, *A New Tool for Scaling Impact: How Social Impact Bonds Can Mobilize Private Capital to Advance Social Good*, 2012

A Special Look at Giving Toward Food-Related Issues

Why Focus on Food?

Food is the foundation of health. Lack of access to healthy, nutritious food has near- and long-term consequences. Day-to-day, it affects our ability to concentrate and perform at school or work or productively take on other daily tasks. Having enough healthy, nutritious food is also critical to cognitive development in children, the ability to maintain a healthy weight, and to the prevention of nutrition-related chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and more.

According to the most recent estimates of food insecurity from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an estimated 14.3 percent of American households were “food insecure at least some of the time during the year” in 2013, meaning they lacked access to “enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.”¹ Five years after the recession ended, the number of households who may not have enough to eat, or sufficient amounts of healthy food to eat, remains about the same as when it started.² Feeding America, a nationwide network of food banks, periodically releases state and county level estimates of food insecurity. In the Greater Washington region, rates of food insecurity are generally lower than the national average. However, they are closer to the national average in Washington, D.C. and Prince George’s County, MD.³ Whether above or below the national average, the number of people in our region for whom healthy, nutritious food is out of reach is still too high.

Access to healthy and affordable food is critical to ensuring that everyone in our region can lead a healthy and productive life. But when we talk about food, we’re also talking about more than fruits and vegetables – we’re talking about the entire system of local food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal. “Food system” refers to the food itself, the land and water it comes from, and the farmers, truck drivers, food workers and others who produce, process, and distribute it. Strengthening the region’s food system so that it is both equitable and environmentally sustainable will lead to better health outcomes, better jobs, a cleaner environment, and stronger economic and community development across the region.

1. USDA Economic Research Service, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2013*, 2014

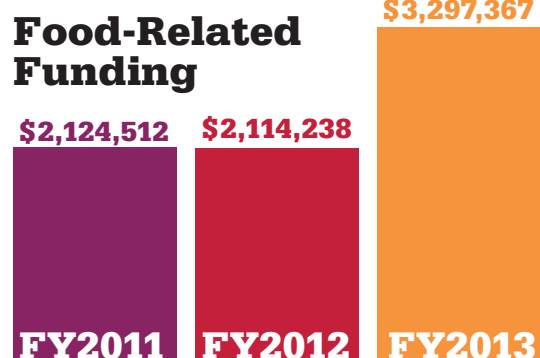
2. USDA Economic Research Service, Key Statistics & Graphs, “Trends in prevalence rates of food insecurity and very low food security in U.S. households, 1995-2013.” See: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx#trends>

3. Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap. Available at <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

We think this is because food insecurity estimates are derived from poverty and income data. Our region as a whole has a lower poverty rate relative to the national average, but poverty rates within the region are higher in parts of D.C. and Prince George’s County. See, for instance, the Census Bureau data presented through the interactive tool, “Mapping Poverty in America,” New York Times, published January 4, 2014. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2014/01/05/poverty-map>.

WRAG Member Funding Toward Food-Related Issues

Food is a growing priority for the region’s philanthropic community, just as it is in the community at large. Turn on the local news today and you are likely to hear about a new “farm-to-table” restaurant or a human interest story about a community or school garden. Entrenched problems like food deserts are attracting attention from people concerned about the health and wellness of low-income communities. In keeping with this trend, funding toward food and related issues increased among survey takers by over \$1 million between 2011 and 2013, to nearly \$3.3 million.



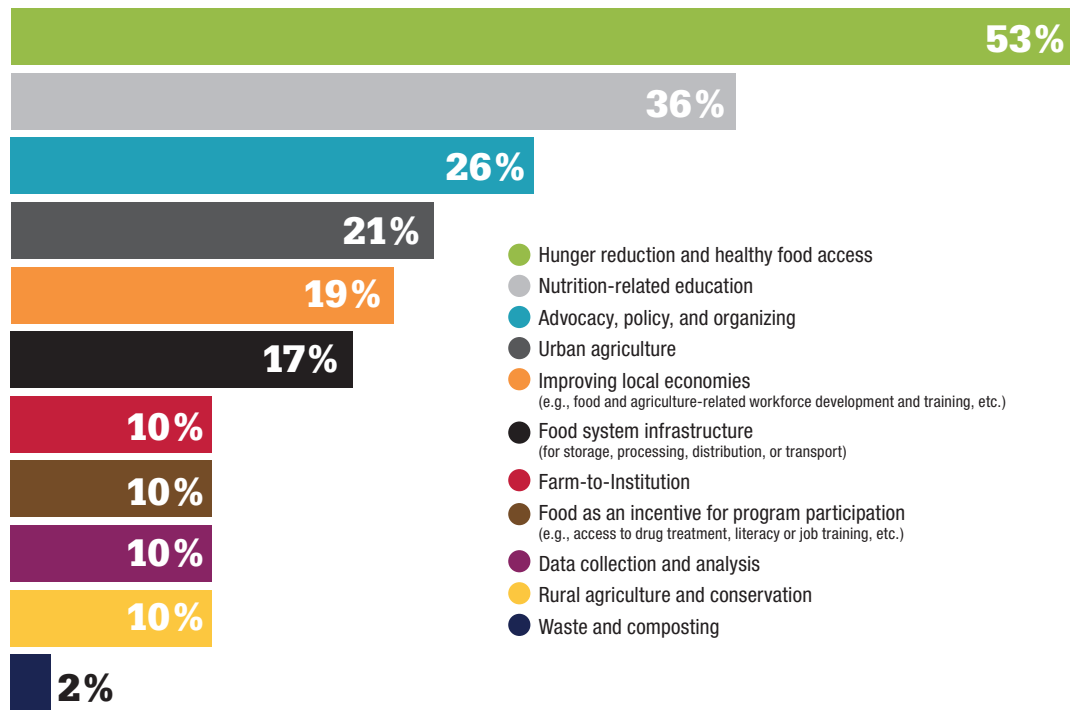
Earlier in this publication we reported a lower figure for FY2013 food funding. This \$3.3 million represents a broader view of food funding. Not all dollars that support food-related issues or services come from funders who identify themselves as “food funders” or who are making grants with the explicit intention of reducing hunger or educating people about healthy eating. Like health and wellness, or children and families, food is a cross-cutting issue. When asked to look more closely at their grants, many funders found that they were supporting food-related work in more ways than they realized, through grants to organizations that they were primarily funding in support of other issues, such as workforce development, education, safety-net services, health, and more. This is both a testament to the importance of flexible, general operating support and to the fact that this kind of funding can be difficult to characterize without a closer look.

Areas of Support

Sixty-seven percent of survey takers reported some kind of food-related funding in 2013. The majority of those funders indicated that their funding went toward organizations working on reducing hunger and improving access to healthy food. Over a third reported funding programs that provide nutrition-related education. Far fewer funders reported support of programs or organizations focused on other aspects of the food system.

Funding Toward Food-Related Issues

by percentage of respondents



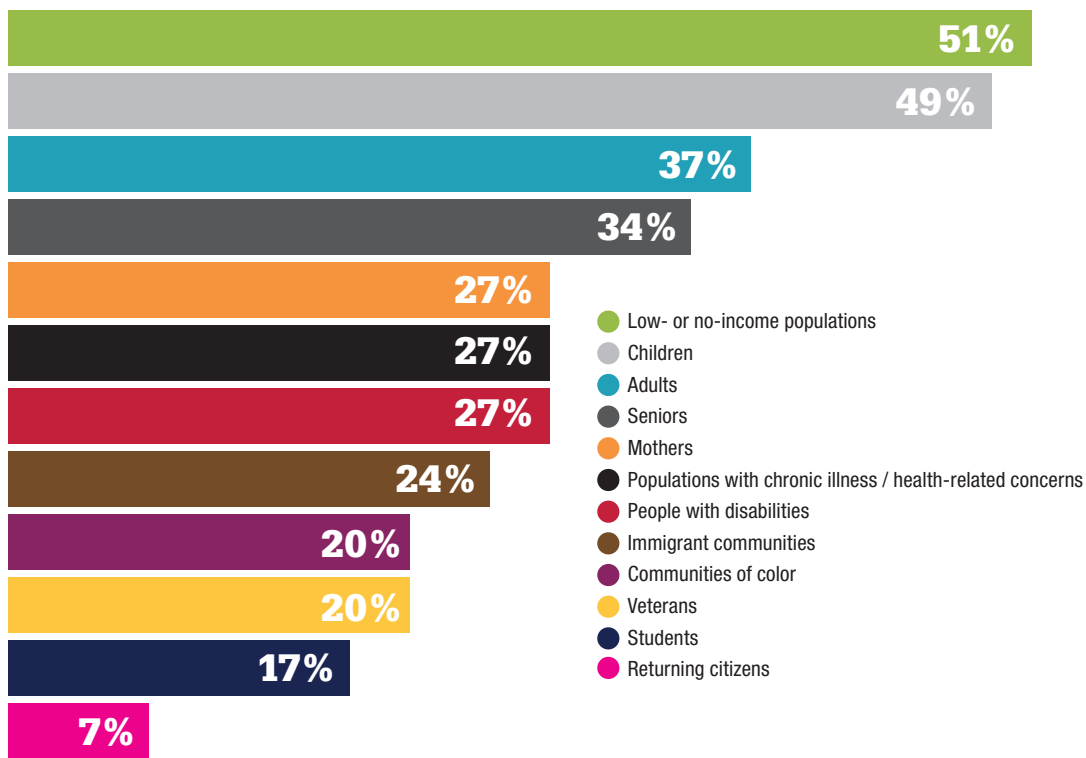
Funding Toward Specific Populations

Survey respondents targeted many different demographic groups through their funding toward food-related work. As most approached the issue through programs aimed at hunger reduction, it is not surprising that low- and no-income populations are those most often explicitly targeted. Children are near the top of this list as well. Children suffer higher rates of food insecurity and are at greater risk for hunger than the overall population. This is true both nationwide and locally according to estimates of food insecurity in our region from Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap online tool.

It should be noted that an individual can belong to any number of demographic categories, and it can be difficult to determine who a single grant supports.

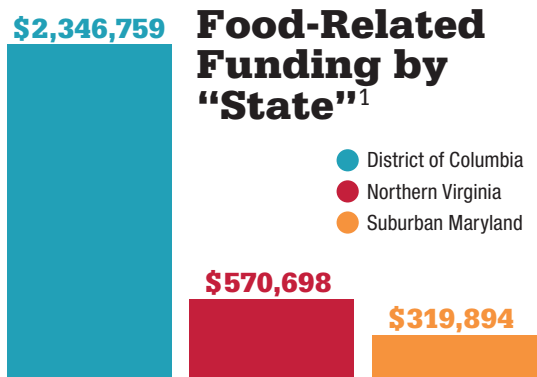
Populations Targeted

by percentage of respondents



Food-Related Funding Across the Region

Food-related funding is overwhelmingly directed toward the District of Columbia. Of those survey respondents who reported supporting food-related issues, 92 percent funded work in D.C. Those grants represented approximately 70 percent of the total dollars directed toward food-related work in the region in FY2013. Although it is possible that some of the D.C.-based nonprofits work regionally, this fact mirrors the broader trends in WRAG members’ geographic priorities.

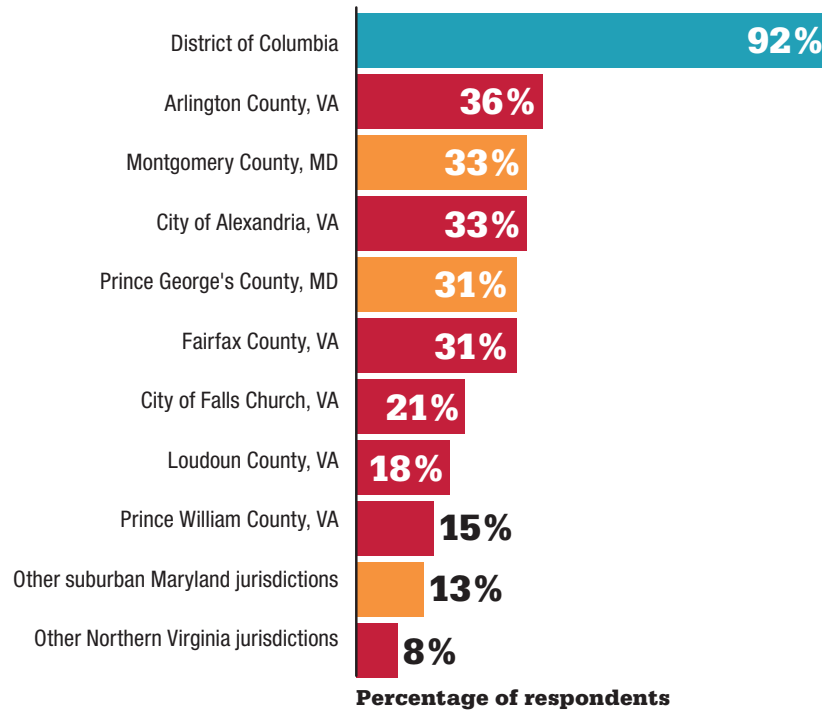


1. These figures fall slightly short of the previously reported total FY2013 food funding as not all survey respondents provided regional data.

This geographic disparity suggests that there are needs in our region that are under-resourced. There is no question that food insecurity exists in every corner of our region, particularly as poverty grows in suburban areas. According to the Brookings Institution, the number of suburban poor in the Washington metropolitan area increased 42 percent between 2000 to 2008-2012.¹

1. Brookings Institution, "The Growth and Spread of Concentrated Poverty, 2000 to 2008-2012," July 2014

Food-Related Funding by Local Jurisdiction



How WRAG Members Are Supporting Improved Access to Food “Beyond Dollars”

A third of those survey respondents who reported that they fund food-related issues also indicated that they supplemented that funding through technical assistance and pro-bono support, organizing grantee convenings, or by providing meeting space for their grantees.

Many of the funders taking their food support “beyond dollars” are members of the Washington Regional Food Funders (WRFF). WRFF is a working group of WRAG focused on increasing philanthropy toward access to healthy, affordable food and identifying the steps needed to remove barriers to good food. Besides directly funding food work, WRFF is also working to educate other funders about the importance of good food by providing opportunities for learning and networking around issues related to building a stronger and more equitable regional food system. WRFF is also leveraging its position as a funder group by raising the visibility of food system issues with elected officials to urge greater engagement, investment, and regional approaches to addressing key issues.

What a Reorientation to “Good” Food Can Bring to Health, the Environment, Education, and Community Development

WRFF uses an adapted version of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s definition of “good food” in its work to support the development of an agenda for an equitable regional food system in the Greater Washington region. This definition highlights the connection between food and a number of other issues of concern to funders in our region.

Good food is: affordable to and accessible by everyone; healthy and provides nourishment that enables people to thrive; fair with no one exploited involved in its creation; and environmentally sustainable.¹

Focusing on good food can improve:



Health

At the most basic level, healthy, nutritious food and water form the basis of a healthy life. At least one study has shown that because of the impact of obesity on health, today’s children may live shorter lives than their parents.² A 2012 study by the Trust for America’s Health found that reducing average body mass index by five percent in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia could result in health care savings of \$364 million, \$5 billion, and \$6 billion, in these respective jurisdictions by 2020.³



Environment

More food that is produced and consumed locally, and in an environmentally sustainable way, can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support goals for farmland conservation, and improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Just 29 percent of the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal rivers met overall conditions for healthy waters in 2012.⁴



Education

Healthy food is critical to nutrition, development, and an ability to grow, thrive, and learn. A number of studies have shown that students with better nutrition attain a higher level of academic achievement, and participation in school breakfast programs is correlated with better class attendance.⁵



Community Development

More locally produced good food, coupled with improvements to working conditions and wages in our food system, has the potential to impact our region’s economy and workforce in many positive ways. If each household in Virginia spent \$10 a week on locally grown agricultural products, an additional \$1.65 billion would be invested back into the local economy every year. A similar estimate in Maryland shows that if all households purchased \$12 worth of local farm products for eight weeks, revenue to farmers would increase by more than \$200 million.⁶ Food service and restaurant work as a share of the District of Columbia’s total employment is growing, but studies have shown that many workers do not make a living wage. Furthermore, workers of color are overrepresented in lower-paying positions and segments of the restaurant industry.⁷

1. Adapted from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. See: www.wkcf.org/what-we-do/healthy-kids/food-and-community

2. New England Journal of Medicine, “A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century,” 2005

3. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Trust for America’s Health, *Bending the Obesity Cost Curve* series of issue briefs, 2012

4. Chesapeake Bay Program, *Bay Barometer 2012-2013: Health and Restoration in the Chesapeake Watershed*, 2013

5. Center for Ecoliteracy, *Making the Case for Healthy, Freshly Prepared School Meals*, 2014

6. Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. See: www.vdacs.virginia.gov/news/releases-a/041614farmsmkt.shtml and Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission’s Buy Local Challenge. See: www.buy-local-challenge.com/why.html

7. Restaurant Opportunities Center of Washington, DC, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, and the Washington, D.C. Restaurant Industry Coalition, *Behind the Kitchen Door: Inequality & Opportunity in Washington, DC’s Thriving Restaurant Industry*, 2011

Unmet Needs Within the Food System

It is encouraging that funding toward food-related issues has increased in the past year. This is likely due in part to the Washington Regional Food Funders' (WRFF) focus on the issues and their outreach and education of other funders. Many nonprofit organizations are doing impressive work around the region to reduce food insecurity, improve health and well-being, and build capacity, in service delivery, advocacy, and education. However, increased investment, both public and private, is needed to scale success in order to build our regional food system in an equitable, coordinated way.

Specifically, the philanthropic community can address some of these needs by supporting work that:

Connects marginalized communities to food system work

WRFF has found that few of the people “working on the front lines” to tackle food insecurity are members of marginalized communities. Many people who desire to be more involved in the business of the regional food system don't have experience getting startup loans, writing grant proposals, or networking with funders. More needs to be done to empower the low-income and socially-disadvantaged communities most impacted by food insecurity to be part of the solution.

Rebalances giving across the region

As we found through this survey, there is a significant geographic imbalance in philanthropic support of food-related work across the region. There is a clear need for additional funding in every jurisdiction outside of D.C. while still supporting work in the city.

Supports the supply-side of the food system

More support is needed to build the supply side of our region's food system. This includes, for instance, support for new farmer training programs, farmland preservation, stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay, efforts toward building regional infrastructure for food processing and distribution, and more.

WRFF welcomes other WRAG members to join them in building a regional coalition of public and private funders to support this work. Particularly with respect to building regional infrastructure, there are roles for private enterprise, government, and nonprofits to play. There is a tremendous opportunity to collaborate with a range of funders and investors committed to building a more equitable regional food system.



Photos: Lindsay Smith

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About the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers

The Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG) is a membership association composed of grantmakers in the Greater Washington region – the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, and suburban Maryland. Our members represent a vibrant cross-section of philanthropy, including family, community, corporate, and independent foundations, as well as corporate giving programs, governmental grantmakers, grantmaking public charities, and individual philanthropists. We provide a variety of services to our members to facilitate more effective, strategic, and efficient grantmaking, thereby making the Greater Washington region a better place to live and work.

About Our Region, Our Giving

The data presented in this report was collected via an online survey of WRAG members administered between June and August, 2014. The lead author of the report was Rebekah Seder. “A Special Look at Giving Toward Food-Related Issues” was written by Lindsay Smith. The report was designed by Beth Ponticello, cedc.org.



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