

# McCormick Foundation Civics Program: Voice of the Grantees



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Earlier this year, the McCormick Foundation Civics Program worked with an external evaluator to administer a confidential survey to organizations that applied for or received a grant from our program between 2010 and 2013.

The goal of the survey was to assess our performance in key grant-making areas and to solicit ideas on how we can enhance our relationship with grantees. The assessment questions focused on the clarity of our funding guidelines, deadlines and grant processes, our responsiveness to inquiries and requests for feedback, and our ongoing communication and contact with grantees. Further questions asked for input on the value of creating online application and reporting systems, on formulating a social media strategy, and on what we could be doing, in addition to funding, to support the organizations with which we work.

While the survey results revealed that we are doing well in some of these areas, we also received valuable feedback on where we can improve. Respondents appear satisfied with our grant application process and deadlines, the flexibility of our funding timelines, as well as the overall experience working with Civics Program staff. However, we also learned that our funding guidelines can be ambiguous, that our response to inquiries is not always timely and that grantees would appreciate more frequent and different types of communication over the course of a grant period.

In the next year, we will begin implementing changes based on the survey. Our initial set of priorities for the upcoming year includes the following:

- Clarify our letter of inquiry, proposal and grant reporting requirements and deadlines.
- Alleviate confusion about our program's funding guidelines by clarifying our definitions of quality service learning, civic education and civic engagement on our website and grant application forms.
- Begin implementing an online grant application and reporting process.
- Improve response time when declining a request for funding.
- Initiate more contact with grantees during the grant period—either through face-to-face meetings, regular phone check-ins, site visits, or attending g events.
- Spend more time visiting the communities in which our grantees work.

- Begin developing a social media strategy that positions us as a resource for organizations in the field.
- Facilitate convenings and conversations across organizations in the field.

In 2015, we will administer another survey to see if we have made progress in these areas and identify ways in which we can continue to improve our relationship with the organizations we support.

We welcome your comments or questions. Please don't hesitate to contact me at any time to continue the discussion.

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