

# THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

## *Plan to Strengthen Grantee Relations: Response to 2006 Grantee Perception Survey*

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In 2006, the Center for Effective Philanthropy surveyed more than 450 recent grantees about The McKnight Foundation's performance in key areas such as grantmaking process, communications, and overall impact. Survey responses were analyzed with respect to parallel input gathered from grantees of other U.S. foundations. In the survey results, McKnight's staff recognized a need for improvements around two goals, for the Foundation to effectively attend, unite, and empower the communities it serves in a manner befitting values central to the Foundation's legacy.

**GOAL 1** We communicate with current and prospective grantees in a manner that is *understandable, transparent, consistent, and timely*.

**OBJECTIVES** in reaching this goal:

- To express our institutional goals, strategies, processes, and points of view clearly and consistently.
- To respond to all inquiries and needs guided by one standard framework of timeliness, content, and tone.

**ACTION STEPS** to meet the above objectives:

- Streamline operations to respond most helpfully and promptly to all inquiries. Add transparency around staff responsibilities within specific program areas.
- Undertake a full communications audit to examine message clarity and consistency, and develop a formal communications plan responsive both to the communications audit and to specific grantee needs.
- Review and standardize protocols among program and grants management teams regarding grant review processes and formal communications with grantees.

**GOAL 2** We are approachable and engage in high-quality interactions with grantees that are *mutually flexible, responsive, and respectful*.

**OBJECTIVES** in reaching this goal:

- To solicit grantee reports congruent with our needs.
- To understand ways electronic technology could serve our ongoing relationships with grantees, from initial letters of inquiry to final reports.
- To make grants using processes and practices that are clear, internally and externally.
- To develop a staff with uniformly appropriate skills.
- To operate within an established standard of customer service.

**ACTION STEPS** to meet the above objectives:

- Explore new technology options to increase efficiencies and streamline the grantmaking process for grantees.
- Review our reporting requirements to create a reporting system that is useful both for McKnight's staff and for our grantees.
- Pursue professional development opportunities that assist staff in building the full range of competencies necessary for our work.