



## GEO Member Spotlight

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations believes that social problems can be addressed only when all affected parties come together to identify the problem and seek solutions. Fully engaging grantees and other key stakeholders leads directly to better results. Solutions take hold when their seeds grow from the community where the change is needed. Inclusiveness and effectiveness, it seems, are tightly linked.

The Weingart Foundation has taken stakeholder engagement into practice with a resource that solicits feedback and suggestions for improvement in their grantmaking practices. By connecting with their grantees in this way, the foundation shows how they value their grantees and are committed to their success. “Our goal for this resource was to actively solicit and use feedback from our nonprofit constituents to continuously refine and improve our grant operations,” says Belen Vargas, vice president, grant operations.

To make grantees feel comfortable giving their opinions, the foundation has guaranteed all feedback they receive will be anonymous. Additionally, an independent consulting group, Learning Partnerships, liaises collected feedback to staff to ensure anonymity.

The foundation began implementing this survey program in January and has already completed one survey. The Small Grant Program survey’s answers are currently being collected and will then be put on the foundation’s Web site this month. Posting these evaluation results presents a level of transparency and openness that is critical to effective stakeholder engagement. In this way, the grantee’s voice is heard and shared with others publicly.

Surveys will ask grantees a variety of things, including their perspective on grant guidelines, processing procedures and overall staff responsiveness. Daily tasks like these can sometimes become engrained in routine, making it hard to assess its effectiveness. Reflection will allow staff to step back and make changes to enhance their work, while providing grantees with the support they have requested.

“We are a learning organization,” says Vargas. “Ongoing and anonymous constituent feedback gives us another channel of information that will lead to Weingart Foundation’s performance improvement.”