

Philanthropic Capital for Communities: A Comparative Analysis of Community Foundation and United Way Grantmaking¹



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Key Findings

This analysis of grants made by 1,650 community foundations and local United Ways and accounting for over \$20 billion between 2012 and 2016 yields the following insights:

- A substantial share of the grant dollars disbursed by United Ways supported organizations working in human services (62 percent), whereas community foundations distributed their funds more evenly across organizations working in education (24 percent), human services (20 percent), the arts (13 percent), and health (12 percent).
- The vast majority of grant funding was directed to organizations located in the same community as the grantmaking institution both for United Ways (91 percent) and, to a lesser extent, community foundations (71 percent).
- After adjusting for the size of the region, the typical community foundation and United Way distributed comparable levels of local grant dollars per resident, at \$2.31 and \$2.81, respectively. For those organizations distributing the highest levels of grant dollars per capita, however, community foundations provided a greater level of local support than did United Ways.
- The typical grantmaking institution in our sample directed over one-third (35.4 percent) of its grant volume toward local organizations involved in community and economic development as defined in this report. The median value for United Ways (55.4 percent) was more than three times that for community foundations (16.3 percent).

¹ The views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Reserve Banks of Philadelphia or Atlanta or the Federal Reserve System.

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Background

Community philanthropic organizations (CPOs) are public charities, registered as 501(c)(3) organizations, that engage in ongoing fundraising from the general public in order to make grants to other organizations. In contrast with private foundations, which are funded by a single source of revenue, such as an individual, family, or corporation, public charities are supported by ongoing contributions and grants from many individual or corporate donors, and even government or other philanthropic institutions. Unlike other public grantmaking organizations, CPOs are distinguished by fundraising and grantmaking that generally occur in a defined geographic place, often a single county or multiple contiguous counties. CPOs support the work of a broad range of community interests to improve the quality of life in a place, rather than supporting the work of a single organization or the interests of a particular racial, cultural, or religious identity group.

In the U.S., there are two dominant forms of CPOs — local United Way affiliates (United Ways) and community foundations. Traditionally, United Ways have focused on funding local human services nonprofits (Barman 2006, 2008), while community foundations fund organizations in a wider range of activity areas (Carman 2001). United Ways and community foundations also typically have different revenue structures, with United Ways more reliant on ongoing fundraising through workplace campaigns and community foundations using endowment resources for grantmaking. These two institutions dominate the landscape of community-based philanthropy because of their historical legacy, scope, financial size, and role in local public service delivery systems.

- **Historical legacy:** Both organizational forms emerged more than 100 years ago as unique philanthropic responses to local needs (United Way Worldwide 2020b; Cleveland Foundation 2019). The United Way system is known for leading combined campaigns, which were started to efficiently mobilize and distribute charitable resources and coordinate relief efforts in growing urban communities (United Way Worldwide 2020b). The community foundation movement began in 1914 in Cleveland (Cleveland Foundation 2019), offering elite donors an opportunity to leave permanent, unrestricted gifts. The endowments built through the pooling of these gifts enable community foundations to remain responsive as community needs change over time. Since their early establishment, local United Ways and community

foundations have evolved complex and increasingly diverse revenue structures and embraced a variety of roles in their local communities.

- **Scope and size:** According to the United Way Worldwide (2020a), United Ways serve 95 percent of communities in the U.S., and the system has, until recently, raised more private contributions than any other public charity in the U.S. (Lindsay, Olsen-Phillips, and Stiffman 2016). Community foundations have spread quickly across the U.S. (and the globe), and in 2012, 16 of the 100 largest foundations in the nation were community foundations (Sacks 2014). In the same year, U.S. community foundations held 9 percent of total foundation assets and accounted for 10 percent of grant dollars distributed (Foundation Center 2014). United Ways and community foundations are important sources of philanthropic funding in many local communities (Gronbjerg et al. 1996; Carman 2001).
- **Leadership roles:** While much of the attention on CPOs focuses on their fundraising and grantmaking efforts, United Ways and community foundations play leadership roles in local service delivery systems. As secular nongovernmental actors, they have increasingly played key roles in convening and facilitating community conversations to identify needs and priorities and design and coordinate collaborative, cross-sectoral responses on a variety of issues, including economic development, health, and education (Bartczak 2014; Bernholz, Fulton, and Kasper 2005; Barman 2006; Brilliant and Young 2004; United Way Worldwide 2020a; Wu 2021; Mazany and Perry 2014). Community foundations and United Ways complement and supplement each other's efforts on a variety of community issues (Paarlberg, LePere-Schloop, and Horning 2021).



Implications and Questions for Local Communities

Public policy increasingly relies upon private philanthropy and nonprofit organizations to coordinate, fund, and deliver a broad array of public services (Agranoff and McGuire 2003; Jung and Harrow 2015; Reckhow and Snyder 2014), including community development (Carman 2001). Place-based organizations, such as community foundations and United Ways, often play critical roles in not only raising funds to regrant to local service providers but also leading collaborative efforts to assess local needs and set policy agendas (Gronbjerg et al. 1996; Graddy and Morgan 2006). However, key questions emerge about their capacity and issues of equity.

First, although both types of organizations are ostensibly expected to respond to the needs of diverse community constituents, there are long-standing critiques that these systems represent middle-class and elite interests and that their grantmaking is not equitably distributed across place or identity communities (Ashley 2014; Dorsey et al. 2020; Dorsey, Bradach, and Kim 2020; Reich 2006). Specifically, there are concerns that grantmaking by both United Ways and community foundations has favored larger, more well-established organizations over smaller, grassroots organizations serving communities of color and other marginalized groups (Paarlberg, McGinnis Johnson, and Hannibal 2020).

These concerns are exacerbated by the growth in donor-advised funds and donor designation. Donor-advised funds are funds established by community foundations that allow donors to advise foundation decisions on grant distributions, while donor designation allows contributors to a United Way campaign to designate donations rather than leaving this decision to the United Way. Both donor-advised funds and donor designations take discretion over grantmaking away from CPOs (Barman 2008; Daniels, Lindsay, and Hatch 2016), leaving them less flexibility to respond to community priorities as identified by their boards and program officers. Finally, although both types of organizations engage in ongoing fundraising, many community foundations focus on building endowments, raising concerns that, in the process of doing so, they fail to maximize timely investments in current community needs.

Responding to both their increased significance in local service delivery systems and the historical critiques of their limitations as tools of public policy, this report breaks new ground by providing a baseline description of local grantmaking by United Ways and community

foundations. Prior research providing an overview of grantmaking and operational activity for community foundations, in particular, is available, but it is limited to a small sample of organizations and does not consider the complementary and supplementary role that United Ways and community foundations play in local communities.³ By focusing on both types of organizational CPOs and paying particular attention to grantmaking that supports community and economic development as defined in this report, we can describe the similarities and differences in their grantmaking and the implications for local service delivery systems.

Research Questions and Approach

In this report, we organize our findings around the answers to the following questions:

- 1. What kinds of organizations receive the greatest level of financial support from the CPOs in our sample?** In this analysis, we are concerned with understanding which types of organizations receive the most funding, irrespective of their proximity to the CPOs making the grants.
- 2. How much CPO grant funding remains in the community?** In this analysis, we focus on the geographic relationship between the CPO and the organization receiving the grant without regard to the mission of the recipient organization.
- 3. Do certain types of CPOs provide greater support for local community and economic development organizations than others?** This analysis represents the intersection of the first two by examining not only the types of organizations supported but also the spatial relationship between the grantmaking institution and the organizations receiving its grants.

In answering the first and third questions, we highlight grants received by community and economic development (CED) organizations, broadly defined. We do this not to suggest that this type of grantmaking is superior or preferable to giving to other worthy causes but as a partial response to the equity concerns raised previously, as low- and moderate-income communities represent the clientele of CED organizations as we have defined them. As described in the next section, our data

³ See, for example, the results of the latest CF Insights' Columbus Survey, published by Candid and available at annualsurvey.cfinsights.org.

set tells us little about the organizations receiving the grants analyzed in this analysis and nothing about the characteristics of the communities directly benefiting from the funds. Our focus on CED organizations allows us to differentiate support for the opera from grants to a homeless shelter, for example, but as we cover in the Discussion section, it does not allow for the full exploration of equity that could be possible with an updated and expanded data set.

Our answers to these research questions are contingent on the sample of CPOs included in our analysis. Nevertheless, the grantmaking patterns documented here represent new contributions to the philanthropic and nonprofit fields and provide solid ground for future conversations about the role of place-based philanthropy in community development finance.

Data

At the core of this analysis is a data set of grants made by a sample of community foundations and United Ways during tax years 2012 through 2016. We constructed this *grants* data set using three discrete files. Two reflect publicly available data from IRS Form 990 tax returns filed electronically by nonprofit organizations and retrieved from the Registry of Open Data on AWS in February 2020.⁴ One file consists of a variable indicating whether the nonprofit organization filing the tax return made any grants in a given tax year. Another file includes grant-level data from tax form Schedule I for all grantmaking organizations. This file includes information on the name, address, and the unique Employer Identification Number (EIN) of the recipient organizations, the dollar amount of the grant, and a generally vague description of the grant's purpose. Importantly, however, this file has no information that allows us to distinguish between grants made from donor-advised funds or donor designations and grants made from CPOs' unrestricted funds. These two files are joined using a unique ID assigned to each tax return.

Because community foundations and United Ways are not the only nonprofit organizations that make grants, we remove other grantmaking nonprofits from the grants data set. Using their respective EIN fields, we merge the grants data set with a third file: an extensive list of community foundations and United Ways compiled

from various sources, including Candid, the Community Foundation Research and Training Institute, and United Way Worldwide, as well as a keyword search of nonprofits coded as public foundations in the Core Files published by the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics.⁵



Data extracted from tax returns are inherently messy, and we use a number of processes to transform the information filed by these CPOs into a usable data set. We also gather supplemental information from several additional files because our grants data set tells us little about the CPOs themselves or the organizations receiving their grants. Data cleaning strategies and supplemental data are described in [Appendix 1](#).

In addition to the imperfections inherent in cleaning grant-level data from thousands of tax returns, there are three primary limitations of our data set and the subsequent findings. First, the CPOs in our sample may not be representative of the broader field. CPOs that did not file their taxes electronically or that were not required to file a full Form 990⁶ may engage in grantmaking activities inconsistent with those described in this analysis. A second and related limitation is that because our data set is not comprehensive, we cannot generate community-wide assessments of grantmaking. For example, we cannot compare grantmaking levels or patterns in one region with another because one or more large CPOs might be missing from the sample. Finally, the grantmaking patterns observed during the study period, covering tax years 2012 through 2016, may not be reflective of community philanthropic trends in more recent years. We explore and address this issue more fully in the Discussion section.

⁴ The IRS 990 Filings data set is available via the Registry of Open Data on AWS at registry.opendata.aws/irs990/.

⁵ More information on these sources can be found at candid.org, www.cftri.com, www.unitedway.org, and nccs-data.urban.org.

⁶ Smaller CPOs have the option of filing a Form 990-EZ or Form 990-N return, neither of which includes a schedule detailing their activities at the grant level.

As described in [Table 1](#), our data set captures \$20.6 billion in grant volume⁷ captured on over 6,000 tax returns filed by 1,650 CPOs.⁸ The median tax return for community foundations and United Ways looks quite similar, accounting for roughly 20 grants and \$500,000 distributed; the average tax return looks quite different, however, with community foundations making a greater number of grants (125 versus 37) that, together, represent substantially more volume per tax return (\$4.6 million versus \$2.3 million) when compared with United Ways. Overall, community foundations account for 76 percent of the total number of grants and 65 percent of the total grant volume in our sample.

Because our sample is limited to United Ways and community foundations that filed tax returns electronically during the study period — and because there is no definitive list of community foundations in the U.S. — it is impossible to know the precise share of grantmaking activity our sample captures. However, by comparing the assets of CPOs in the sample with those in our extensive list, we estimate our sample includes roughly 59 percent of the assets held by these organizations nationally, with slightly greater coverage for United Ways (69 percent) than for community foundations (58 percent).⁹

Table 1

Grantmaking Activity Captured in Analysis

	Community Foundations	United Ways	Total
Number of CPOs	799	851	1,650
Tax returns			
Number	2,925	3,214	6,139
Tax returns per CPO			
Average	3.7	3.8	3.7
Median	4.0	4.0	4.0
Grants			
Number	364,916	117,690	482,606
Grants per tax return			
Average	125	37	79
Median	23	19	20
Grant size (2016 dollars)			
Average	\$36,585	\$61,606	\$42,687
Median	\$10,000	\$20,762	\$10,412
Grant volume (2016 dollars)			
Total (billions)	\$13.4	\$7.3	\$20.6
Volume per tax return (millions)			
Average	\$4.6	\$2.3	\$3.4
Median	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5

Source: Authors' analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016)

⁷ Throughout the report, *grant volume* refers to the total dollar amount represented by the grants in question. These values are inflation-adjusted to 2016 using the Bureau of Economic Analysis's Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) Price Index by applying the calendar-year inflation adjustment factor associated with the tax year of the return.

⁸ As Table 1 illustrates, our data set does not include five tax returns for all of these 1,650 CPOs. In some few cases, this can be explained by a merger or consolidation of CPOs in our sample. Because we have no comprehensive record of these events, we cannot collapse the participating organizations' activities into a single record for the duration of the study period; instead, they are treated as separate CPOs before the merger, and the activity of the consolidated CPO is captured in the post-merger tax returns. In some instances, we observe that the transfer of assets that occurs through consolidation is recorded as a grant to the newly consolidated CPO. This practice will influence our analysis of the transferring CPO's grantmaking activity as described in the remainder of this report. However, the share of grant volume in this sample that was directed to another organization of the same type (community foundation or United Way) in our extensive list was only 2.0 percent, of which asset transfers through consolidation would represent only a subset.

⁹ To arrive at these estimates, we divide the assets held by the CPOs in our sample by the assets held by the CPOs in our extensive list of community foundations and United Ways. For each CPO, the numerator is weighted by the number of returns included in the sample and the denominator is multiplied by five to reflect the maximum number of possible returns during the study period.

Findings

What Kinds of Organizations Receive the Greatest Level of Financial Support from the CPOs in Our Sample?

Because specific information on the intended purpose of a grant is generally lacking from the grants data set, we use the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) classification system reflecting the recipient organizations’ mission or purpose to understand how the CPOs in our sample deployed their grant dollars (see [Appendix 1](#) for more information). As [Figure 1](#) illustrates using 10 broad categories, community foundations supported organizations involved in a variety of activities, with 24 percent of grant volume directed toward organizations involved in education (e.g., colleges, elementary schools), 20 percent to human services organizations (e.g., homeless shelters, neighborhood centers), 13 percent to the arts (e.g., museums, orchestras), and 12 percent to health (e.g., hospitals, community clinics). This stands in contrast with the grantmaking patterns of United Ways, for which 62

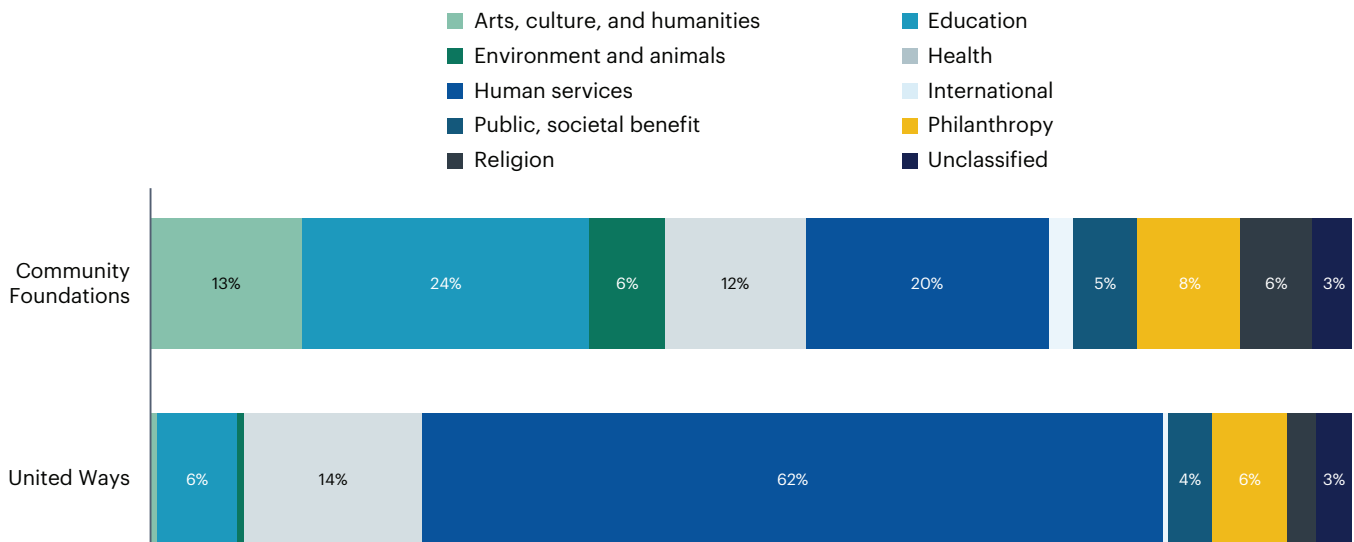
percent of grant volume was distributed to organizations working in human services. Given the overwhelming emphasis on human services, health (14 percent) was the only other category that received greater relative support from United Ways than from community foundations.

The broad categories depicted in [Figure 1](#) are useful for measuring grantmaking at a high level, but they mask the granularity inherent in the NTEE system. Nested within these 10 broad categories are 26 major groups — a level of detail that can be exploited to develop a working definition of community and economic development. With a working definition in place, it is possible to gauge the extent to which community foundations and United Ways support CED organizations.

[Figure 2](#) lists the seven major groups, falling within three broad categories, that we use to identify CED organizations for the purposes of this report; additional information on all 26 major groups, each group’s contribution to total grant volume, and a random sample of recipient organizations are available in [Appendix 2](#).¹⁰ Others might select a different set of major groups to

Figure 1

Share of Grant Volume by Recipient Organization Mission



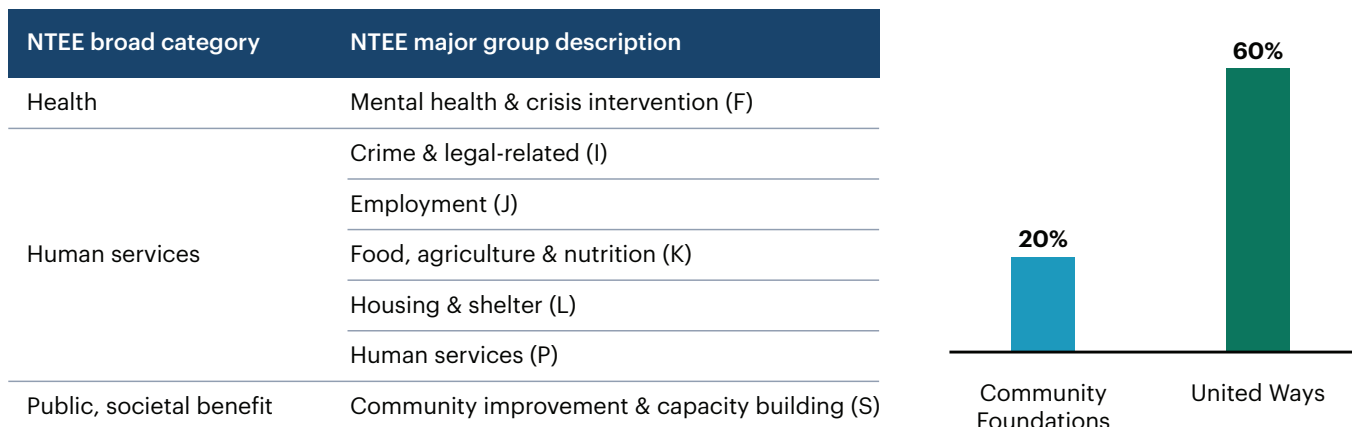
Note: Recipient mission reflects the organization’s NTEE classification into one of 10 broad categories, with two exceptions: The “mutual and membership benefit” category is excluded from the figure because it represents less than 0.1 percent of giving by both community foundations and United Ways; philanthropy belongs to the “public, societal benefit” category but is shown separately in the figure.

Sources: Authors’ analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from [registry.opendata.aws/irs990](#) (tax years 2012–2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Current Master NTEE Lookup file (accessed May 2021)

¹⁰ Because the grants data set generally lacks specific information on the intended purpose of the grants themselves, we must define CED grantmaking activity by the classification of the recipients, as described in Appendices 1 and 2. This approach will necessarily exclude grants that advance community and economic development efforts if they are made to an organization falling outside of our definition (e.g., a capital grant to construct a performing arts facility).

Figure 2

Share of Grant Volume Distributed to Community and Economic Development Organizations



Note: The alphabetic character associated with each NTEE major group is shown in parentheses. This figure ignores the roughly 4 percent of community foundations’ grant volume and 9 percent of United Ways’ grant volume that cannot be classified using available data.

Sources: Authors’ analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Current Master NTEE Lookup file (accessed May 2021)

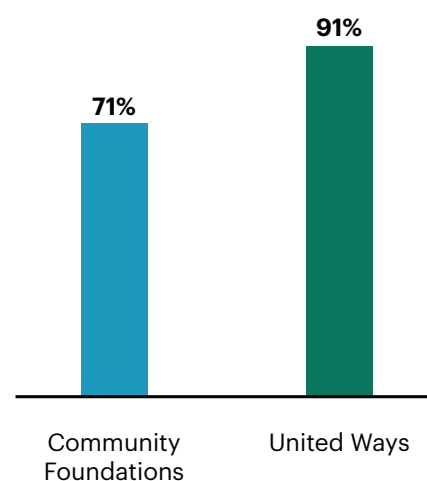
identify CED organizations, but we feel our definition provides a reasonable starting point for understanding the extent to which CPOs support the work of these related organizations serving low- and moderate-income communities. As Figure 2 illustrates, roughly 60 percent of the grant volume distributed by United Ways during the study period was directed to CED organizations — triple the value for community foundations (20 percent).¹¹

How Much CPO Grant Funding Remains in the Community?

In addition to shedding light on the types of organizations supported, our data set also gives us insight into the spatial relationships between these organizations and the CPOs themselves. We do not know the specific service areas of these CPOs as they define them, but we do know the county location for all CPOs and for the recipient organizations accounting for nearly all of the grant volume distributed during the study period. We classify a grant as going to a local organization if the organization and CPO are located in the same metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or, for nonmetropolitan CPOs, in the same county. As illustrated in Figure 3, this approach suggests that most of the grant volume remained local for United Ways (91 percent) and, to a lesser extent, for community foundations (71 percent).

Figure 3

Share of Grant Volume to Local Organizations



Note: This figure ignores the roughly 1 percent of grant volume for which the county of the recipient organization is unknown.

Sources: Authors’ analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016); HUD-USPS zip code-to-county crosswalk (Q4 2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master Files (2013–2019); Missouri Census Data Center Geocorr 2018 county-to-CBSA crosswalk (2015 definitions)

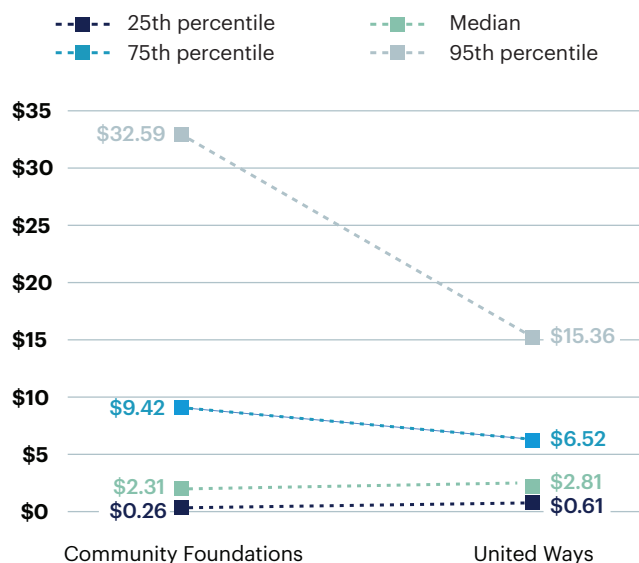
¹¹ As described in Appendix 1, we use a keyword dictionary approach to assign many of the recipient organizations missing from the Current Master NTEE Lookup file to a broad category. Because our definition of CED uses finer-grained major groups that nest within these broad categories, our keyword approach leaves some of these same organizations unclassified when it comes to their involvement in community and economic development.

The CPOs in this sample are in small nonmetropolitan counties and sprawling metropolises. During the study period, these CPOs had an average annual grant volume ranging from the thousands of dollars to the hundreds of millions. Given their varying contexts and capacities, it is informative to normalize each CPO's local giving by the size of its region — a process that simply involves dividing its average annual grant volume distributed locally by its region's population. Doing so provides a sense for the relative level of support these CPOs provided in their communities, with the caveat that this calculation is less meaningful for individual CPOs with a true service area that is appreciably smaller or larger than their MSA or nonmetropolitan county.

After adjusting for population size, the typical community foundation and United Way distributed comparable levels of grant volume per resident, at \$2.31

Figure 4

Local Grant Volume Per Capita (2016 Dollars)



Note: This analysis includes only grants made to local recipient organizations as described previously. For CPOs with multiple tax returns in the sample, this value reflects their average annual local grant volume per capita. Tax returns that include geographically classifiable grants but no grants to local recipient organizations have a calculated local grant volume per capita of \$0.00.

Sources: Authors' analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016); HUD-USPS zip code-to-county crosswalk (Q4 2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master Files (2013–2019); Missouri Census Data Center Geocorr 2018 county-to-CBSA crosswalk (2015 definitions); U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey detailed table B01003 (2012–2016)

and \$2.81, respectively, although as Figure 4 illustrates, differences emerged among the highest-capacity CPOs. At the 75th percentile of the distribution, it becomes apparent that community foundations were a greater source of local grant volume per capita than were United Ways — a distinction that is reinforced and amplified at the 95th percentile. The maximum value exceeded \$275 of local grant volume per capita for community foundations but did not eclipse \$40 for United Ways (results not shown). Many of the community foundations responsible for the highest levels of local grant volume per capita were located in sparsely populated nonmetropolitan counties.

Do Certain Types of CPOs Provide Greater Support for Local Community and Economic Development Organizations than Others?

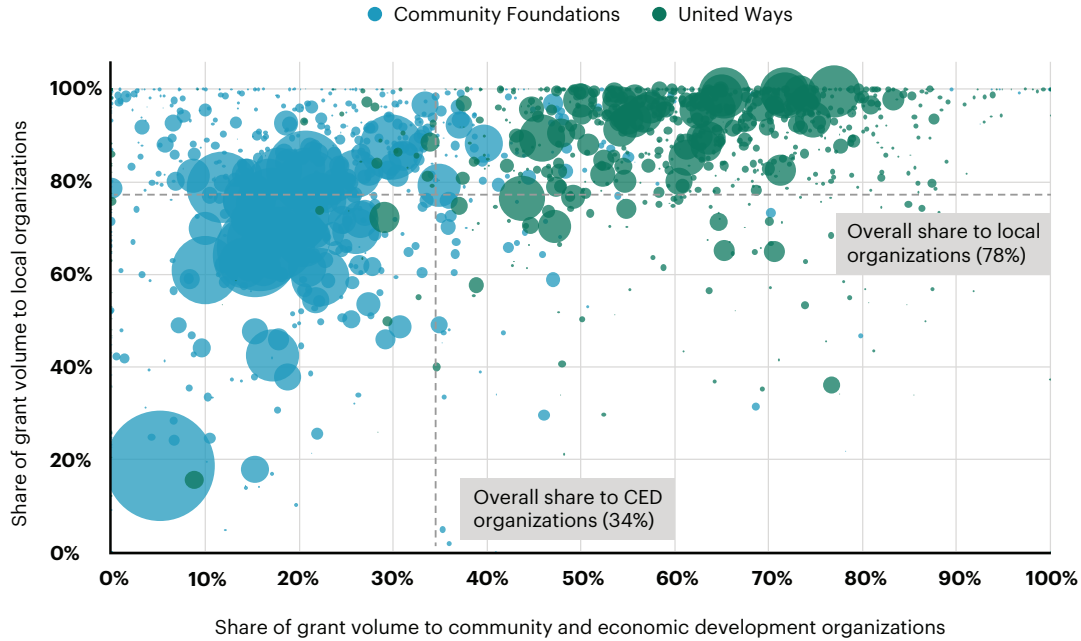
The findings presented thus far make clear that, overall, the grantmaking patterns of community foundations and United Ways differed with respect to the types and locations of organizations they supported. These overall patterns, however, are simply aggregations and abstractions of the day-to-day operations of the individual CPOs in our data set. In Figure 5, we plot the activity of these individual CPOs using two metrics examined earlier: the share of grantmaking to CED organizations and the share of grant volume directed to organizations in the same community.

Two critical conclusions can quickly be drawn from Figure 5: First, when it comes to the share of grant volume distributed to CED organizations, the overall share of roughly 34 percent represented a clear left-right divide in the figure between community foundations and United Ways that was crossed by few of the largest CPOs in this sample. Second, the vast majority of United Ways provided a disproportionate level of support to local organizations, as few drifted below the overall share of 78 percent; local giving by community foundations tended to be lower by comparison but still largely clustered around this overall share, with a few obvious outliers. As suggested by the previous analysis, giving to CED organizations, rather than giving locally, is the distinguishing characteristic for these two types of CPOs.

Although these measures are treated together in Figure 5, it is possible for a CPO to provide a moderate level of support for both local organizations and CED organizations but to provide only minimal support for organizations that sit at the spatial and topical intersection: those advancing local CED initiatives. Overlaying these metrics, Figure 6 shows the

Figure 5

CPO Giving Patterns by the Type and Location of Recipient Organizations

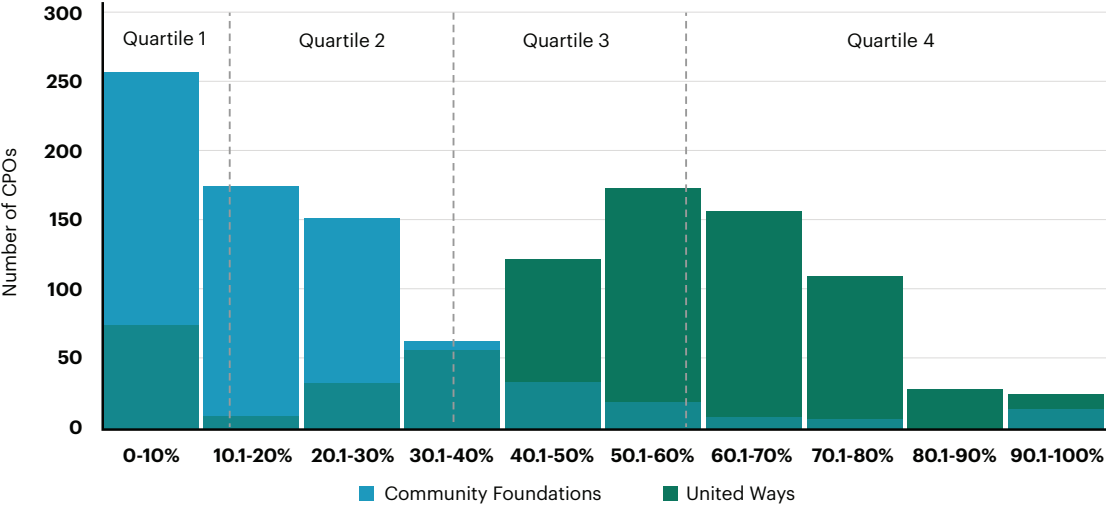


Note: This analysis includes only grants for which the location and CED classification of the recipient organization are known, which restricts the data set to 1,539 CPOs with at least one qualifying grant. The size of the bubble reflects the average annual grant volume for each CPO.

Sources: Authors’ analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Current Master NTEE Lookup file (accessed May 2021) and Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master Files (2013–2019); HUD-USPS zip code-to-county crosswalk (Q4 2016); Missouri Census Data Center Geocorr 2018 county-to-CBSA crosswalk (2015 definitions)

Figure 6

Distribution of CPOs by Their Share of Grant Volume to Local CED Organizations



Note: This analysis includes only grants for which the location and CED classification of the recipient organization are known, which restricts the data set to 1,539 CPOs with at least one qualifying grant.

Sources: Authors’ analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Current Master NTEE Lookup file (accessed May 2021) and Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master Files (2013–2019); HUD-USPS zip code-to-county crosswalk (Q4 2016); Missouri Census Data Center Geocorr 2018 county-to-CBSA crosswalk (2015 definitions)

distribution of community foundations and United Ways by their share of grant volume supporting local CED organizations. The vast majority of community foundations (shown in blue) directed no more than 30 percent of their grant dollars to local CED organizations and fell in the bottom half of the distribution (i.e., the first two quartiles) on this measure. Conversely, most United Ways (shown in green) clustered in the 30 to 80 percent range and largely occupied the third and fourth quartiles. The typical CPO directed 35.4 percent of its grant volume to local CED organizations; median values for community foundations and United Ways were 16.3 percent and 55.4 percent, respectively.

Table 2 provides information to help better understand and differentiate the CPOs that fall into each of the quartiles depicted in Figure 6. The classification of the

CPOs into quartiles is driven by their share of grant volume distributed to local CED organizations, and the median level for each group is provided in the third row of the table. Reinforcing earlier findings, Table 2 shows that across the quartiles, the typical CPO offered a high level of support to local recipient organizations. In general, the type of organizations funded, rather than the location of the recipients, was instrumental in shaping support for local CED organizations among this group of CPOs.

This analysis also suggests community foundations represented the majority of the CPOs providing the lowest share of funding to local CED organizations, constituting 79 percent of the first quartile and 84 percent of the second quartile. CPOs in the first quartile tended to be smaller in terms of both assets and annual grant volume, and nearly half were located in

Table 2

Characteristics of CPOs Classified by Their Share of Grant Volume to Local CED Organizations

	First Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	Fourth Quartile	Overall
Share of grant volume					
To local organizations (median)	86%	83%	89%	96%	90%
To CED organizations (median)	2%	26%	54%	73%	42%
To local CED organizations (median)	0%	23%	49%	70%	35%
CPO type					
Community foundations	79%	84%	19%	9%	48%
United Ways	21%	16%	81%	91%	52%
Annual grant volume (2016 dollars)					
Median (millions)	\$0.1	\$0.8	\$0.4	\$0.4	\$0.4
Average (millions)	\$3.7	\$5.1	\$2.2	\$2.0	\$3.3
CPO characteristics					
Assets (millions) (median)	\$5.6	\$20.9	\$2.5	\$1.6	\$3.9
Age in 2016 (median)	23	26	44	49	38
Ratio of donor-advised fund contributions to total contributions (median)	0.11	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.00
Metropolitan status					
Located in an MSA	52%	74%	65%	70%	65%
Nonmetropolitan	48%	26%	35%	30%	35%

Note: This analysis includes only grants for which the location and CED classification of the recipient organization are known, which restricts the data set to 1,539 CPOs with at least one qualifying grant. The maximum share of grant volume to local CED organizations for each quartile is 12.9 percent (first quartile), 35.4 percent (second quartile), and 58.3 percent (third quartile). Donor-advised fund contributions represent the sum of contributions to donor-advised funds and other similar funds or accounts from Schedule D of Form 990, and total contributions reflect the value reported in the Form 990 Summary. Return-level values were inflation-adjusted to 2016 dollars before being aggregated to the CPO, and the ratio was topcoded to 1.00 for the less than 10 percent of community foundations for which the calculated value exceeded that level. This ratio is greater than zero for more than 80 percent of community foundations but only 4 percent of United Ways. Both zero and nonzero values are included in the calculation of the median.

Sources: Authors' analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Current Master NTEE Lookup file (accessed May 2021) and Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master Files (2013–2019); HUD-USPS zip code-to-county crosswalk (Q4 2016); Missouri Census Data Center Geocorr 2018 county-to-CBSA crosswalk (2015 definitions)

nonmetropolitan areas. The typical CPO in the second quartile, on the other hand, exceeded the others in terms of annual grant volume and assets by wide margins. Given the preponderance of community foundations in this quartile and prior research suggesting larger community foundations are more likely than smaller ones to host donor-advised funds (Qu and Paarlberg 2021), it is unsurprising that this quartile was the most reliant on contributions to these funds.

Finally, United Ways accounted for the majority of the CPOs in both the third and fourth quartiles. Organizationally, little differentiated the CPOs in these quartiles from one another, but the fourth quartile stands out for its interrelated features of being the smallest in terms of assets and average annual grant volume and for consisting of United Ways almost exclusively (91 percent).

Our analysis is descriptive in nature, but there are associations between observed grantmaking patterns and some of the CPO characteristics explored in Table 2 that are worth highlighting. For example, among community foundations, we find statistically significant negative correlations between a CPO’s share of giving to local organizations and the share of its contributions directed to donor-advised funds (-0.18), its average annual grant volume (-0.13), and its assets (-0.10). Among United Ways, there are weaker (but still significant) positive correlations between a CPO’s share of giving to

local CED organizations and the CPO’s age (0.09) and average annual grant volume (0.07). For both community foundations and United Ways, the average share of grant volume to local CED organizations is lower for nonmetropolitan CPOs than for those in MSAs. These associations could be explained by any number of factors and provide fertile ground for additional quantitative or qualitative research.

Illustrating Local Heterogeneity

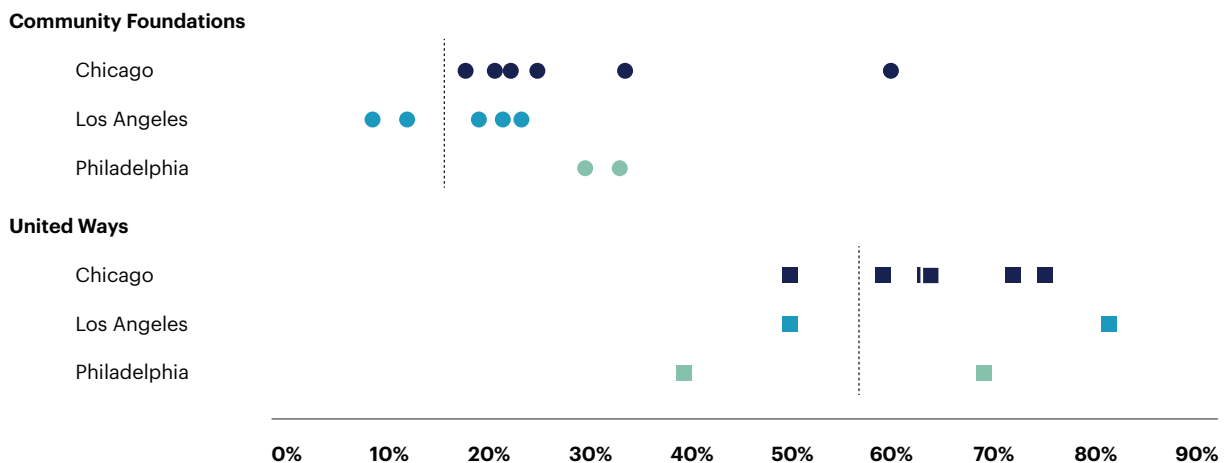
Each bubble in Figure 5 and each CPO classified in Table 2 represents an observation in our sample and, as such, conveys information that is pertinent to local stakeholders but too voluminous to include in this report. This section illustrates how the online data appendix can be used to inform local conversations about CPO grantmaking activity.¹²

Figure 7 compares the grantmaking patterns of the largest CPOs in three of the most populous MSAs in the country. Each symbol in the figure represents a specific CPO, and its placement on the chart reflects its share of giving to local CED organizations. In addition to being of interest for stakeholders in these three MSAs, the figure illustrates a few themes that may be lost in the aggregate findings

¹² The online data appendix is available at www.philadelphiafed.org/philanthropiccapital.

Figure 7

Share of Grant Volume to Local CED Organizations in Three Large MSAs



Note: This analysis includes only grants for which the location and CED classification of the recipient organization are known. The figure includes all CPOs with annual grantmaking averaging over \$1 million in these MSAs. Vertical lines indicate the overall share of grantmaking to local CED organizations for the CPOs included in this analysis: 16.1 percent for community foundations and 57.7 percent for United Ways.

Sources: Authors’ analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Current Master NTEE Lookup file (accessed May 2021) and Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master Files (2013–2019); HUD-USPS zip code-to-county crosswalk (Q4 2016); Missouri Census Data Center Geocorr 2018 county-to-CBSA crosswalk (2015 definitions)

presented earlier. For example, even though the share of grant volume to local CED organizations is generally higher for United Ways, a community foundation in Chicago shows that there are certainly exceptions to this rule. Further, the pattern of giving can look different from one MSA to another, as exhibited by the lower shares for all the community foundations in Los Angeles relative to Philadelphia. Finally, as is clear by the dispersion among United Ways in all three MSAs, there can be tremendous variation in grantmaking patterns even within a metro area. Information provided in the online data appendix allows stakeholders to conduct this kind of within- and across-community analysis for all of the CPOs in our sample.

Discussion

Nonprofit organizations play an increasingly important role in the provision of public services (Agranoff and McGuire 2003; Jung and Harrow 2015; Reckhow and Snyder 2014). CPOs like United Ways and community foundations are important funders of local nonprofits and play key roles in setting agendas, convening cross-sectoral partnerships, and mobilizing community action (Perry and Mazany 2014). Recent research also underscores the important role that CPOs can play in helping communities respond to crises, including natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact (Gazley 2012; Paarlberg et al. 2020). Still, few studies use a large sample of CPOs to examine variation in grantmaking across activity areas and the extent to which grants stay in the local region. Although our study period ends in 2016, this report provides a heretofore unavailable baseline for understanding CPO grantmaking.

Our study underscores the importance of CPOs in supporting local organizations and organizations involved in community and economic development. Most of the grant volume for both United Ways (91 percent) and community foundations (71 percent) supported organizations located in the same community as the grantmaking institution, and United Ways demonstrated strong support for CED organizations. However, challenges faced by these CPOs may undermine the important role they play in supporting local nonprofits and the communities they serve. These challenges include shifting community identities, difficulty raising unrestricted dollars for discretionary grantmaking, and addressing issues of equity in local communities. We briefly highlight each challenge and the implications for future research.

Changing community identification. Both community foundations and the United Way system have faced

growing pressure as local donors' conceptions of community have broadened. While the notion of community was traditionally place-based, donors today may identify as global citizens or emphasize their social identities (e.g., race, religion) and interests (e.g., cancer research, environmental protection) over geographic ones (Bernholz, Fulton, and Kasper 2005). In response, community foundation leaders have encouraged the field to recognize the multiple identities of donors (Carson 2013; Mazany and Perry 2014; Perry and Mazany 2014) — those connecting them to “local, national and international interests” (Carson 2015, p. 2). The United Way Worldwide has tried supplementing workplace giving campaigns, focused on a place-based community, with online giving platforms that provide donors increased opportunities to support organizations that align with interest-based identities (Gallagher 2018). A donor's concept of community may further be challenged by the ever-growing geographic divide between work and home. Finally, mergers and consolidations of CPOs intended to create administrative efficiencies may also weaken the connection between these place-based institutions and the places they serve. These forces may prompt both United Ways and community foundations to direct a larger share of their grantmaking to organizations outside the local area through donor-advised funds and other donor-driven vehicles. Future research should consider the flow of resources between geographies to identify philanthropic exporters and importers and the implications for local development.



Fundraising to support discretionary grantmaking.

As public charities that engage in ongoing fundraising, United Ways and community foundations face distinct challenges in securing unrestricted funding for discretionary grantmaking. Workplace giving campaigns, traditionally an important source of revenue for United Ways, have been declining for several decades. Many



corporations no longer host workplace campaigns, and some of those that do no longer exclusively focus on United Ways (Barman 2006; Hanson 2008). Partly as a result, the United Way lost its top spot among fundraisers to a national donor-advised fund, Fidelity Charitable, in 2015 and, after adjusting for inflation, raised less than two-thirds of the funds that it raised in 1990 (Lindsay, Olsen-Phillips, and Stiffman 2016). Given that United Ways play an important role in funding organizations involved in CED activities, these challenges to United Way fundraising capacity are concerning for community and economic development.

Moreover, the nature of fundraising by community foundations may limit their support for local activities. Much of the recent growth in community foundation assets has come from contributions to donor-advised funds, which generate revenue for the community foundation in the form of management fees. While these funds provide a mechanism for donors to express their philanthropic values and a source of revenue for community foundations' operating expenses, they also reduce the discretionary capacity of community foundations to make grants that align with community needs and the foundations' strategic goals. Donor-advised funds may also challenge the legitimacy of community foundations as place-based CPOs (Colinvaux 2018). Future research should explore the complex relationships between fundraising pressures, including the reliance on donor-advised funds, and grant allocations.

Addressing issues of equity. While this study does not directly focus on issues of equity in CPO grantmaking, our findings have implications for equity. Both public and private foundations have been criticized for their lack of representation and responsiveness to the needs of marginalized communities, especially communities of color (Villanueva 2021; Reich 2018). The disparities highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the protests following the murder of George Floyd have

strengthened calls for CPOs to prioritize issues of equity and justice in grantmaking processes and funding outcomes (Dorsey et al. 2020; Dorsey, Bradach, and Kim 2020). Networks of community foundations (CFLeads 2020; Community Foundation Opportunity Network 2022; Dubb 2022) and the United Way Worldwide (2020c), through its equity framework, have publicly committed to principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. This study is the first to build and examine a comprehensive grantmaking data set for a large sample of CPOs. This data set can support future research on how community characteristics such as race, ethnicity, income, and rurality are related to patterns in CPO grantmaking. An updated and expanded data set can also be used to examine CPO responsiveness to calls for social justice philanthropy.

Conclusion

While our study focuses on the grantmaking activities of United Ways and community foundations in a very specific context — local community and economic development — it is important to recognize that grantmaking is only one role that these institutions play in local communities. Historically and today, these organizations have served as independent knowledge brokers — conducting research and providing data to the community — to identify community needs and educate the public about local issues. Donor engagement increasingly includes efforts to connect donors to their community and other philanthropists through volunteerism and social activities, such as giving circles and donor societies, both building community and energizing philanthropy in the process. As anchor institutions, United Ways and community foundations also play key roles in facilitating and convening multisectoral partnerships. In this role, United Ways and community foundations bring together other philanthropic actors, government leaders, nonprofit organizations, and the faith community to address complex policy issues. With an eye toward equity and justice, United Ways and community foundations can play key roles in opening such leadership circles to previously marginalized community groups and voices. We highlight these diverse roles to underscore the multifaceted importance of CPOs in many local communities. Our baseline analysis of CPO grantmaking provides a foundation for understanding these roles and the response of CPOs to the adaptive challenges they are currently facing.

Appendix 1:

Data and Methods

The Data section of the main report describes the sources and assembly of the grant-level data set underpinning our analysis. This appendix explains steps taken to transform the information filed by community foundations and United Ways into a usable data set. These first points pertain to data cleaning:

- In approximately 160 cases, a CPO filed multiple tax returns in the same tax year. In these instances, we use the filing date to keep the most recent filing for which grant volume is greater than \$0 and discard the other returns.
- We exclude from all analyses nearly 11,000 grants from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, which would have constituted roughly 9 percent of the grant volume in the entire data set and dramatically skewed our findings; approximately 1,800 records listing the same CPO as both the grantmaking institution and the grant recipient; roughly 1,400 grants with negative, zero, or missing grant amounts; more than 800 records representing grants to multiple recipients, identified using a keyword search for terms such as “see statement” and “other agencies” on recipient organizations’ name and address fields; approximately 700 administrative grants,¹³ identified using a keyword search for terms such as “federal campaign” and “pass-through” on recipient organizations’ name and grant purpose fields; and eight grants from CPOs in U.S. territories.¹⁴
- In our exploration of the geographic relationships between CPOs and recipient organizations, our analysis excludes 24 CPOs whose name suggests a statewide service area and three community foundations that use another community foundation as a fiscal agent. We also exclude from the geographic analysis fewer than 400 grants that were made to national donor-advised fund

sponsors; prominent examples include charitable gift funds operated by Fidelity, Schwab, and Bank of America. Because these sponsors are themselves intermediaries that regrant to other organizations, we do not know the location of the recipient organizations that ultimately benefit from these grants.¹⁵

In addition to cleaning the grants data set, we merged it as follows with several files to provide supplemental information on the CPOs and the organizations receiving their grants:

- In order to standardize the name and county location of the CPOs, as well as the name (but not the county) of the recipient organizations, we use a series of IRS Exempt Organizations Business Master Files provided by the Urban Institute’s National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS). We compiled into a single data set the last Business Master File from each calendar year from 2013 to 2019, selected only organizations that had filed taxes in the two years prior to the file’s creation, and retained the most recent name and county location information from records pertaining to tax years 2012–2016.¹⁶ To explore differences in grantmaking by the size and age of the CPOs in the sample, we also extract the maximum nominal assets value (to minimize the occurrence of missing or \$0 values) and the earliest formation date for each CPO from this set of Business Master Files. We calculate the age of each CPO as the difference between 2016 (the last year of the study period) and this formation date.
- For the county location of the recipient organizations, we defer to the zip code associated with the grant on Schedule I, where available, and link the zip code to a county using the HUD-USPS

¹³ These records often reflect one United Way simply passing through funding to another United Way because the former is administering a private or public workplace giving campaign on behalf of the latter.

¹⁴ Because some grants meet more than one of these criteria, these counts are not mutually exclusive.

¹⁵ We developed a list of 14 national donor-advised funds using a keyword search in the grants data set and information provided in *Theis* (2019) and *National Philanthropic Trust* (2016).

¹⁶ These files were downloaded from the Urban Institute’s National Center for Charitable Statistics and are available at nccs-data.urban.org. For roughly 30 CPOs that appeared to direct very little grantmaking activity toward their resident county, we investigated the county location reflected in the Business Master Files and ultimately corrected this information for five.

zip code-to-county crosswalk from Q4 2016.¹⁷ For grants missing a valid recipient zip code, we use the county assigned to the recipient organization in the most recent Business Master File record. We defer to the Schedule I geographic information, where available, because in reviewing the data set, we found that many grants to local offices of national nonprofits listed the EIN of the national office. Defaulting to the county in the Business Master File would have assigned the grant to the nonprofits' national headquarters rather than to the local office receiving the grant.

- We identify the metropolitan area or nonmetropolitan status of both the CPOs and the recipient organizations using a county-to-CBSA crosswalk downloaded from the Missouri Census Data Center's Geocorr 2018 application, which uses the OMB's 2015 MSA definitions.¹⁸
- Although our data set has a field for the purpose of each grant, the description is often as generic as "General support." As a proxy for grant purpose, we use a classification system reflecting the recipient organizations' mission or purpose to understand how the CPOs in our sample support various causes.

For the vast majority of nonprofit recipients in our data set, we use the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) code provided by the Urban Institute's NCCS;¹⁹ where it is missing, particularly for government agencies and religious organizations that lack an NTEE code, we apply a keyword approach to the organizations' names to assign many of the remaining recipients to an NTEE broad category.²⁰ Roughly 88 percent of the grants in our sample are to recipient organizations with an NTEE classification assigned by the NCCS file, 9 percent are to organizations that we assign to a broad category using the keyword approach, and 3 percent remain unclassified at the broad category level after implementing the keyword approach. A greater share of grants remains unclassified for the purposes of identifying CED organizations and in Appendix 2 because these analyses are predicated on the finer-grained NTEE major groups, whereas we implemented the keyword approach at a higher level of aggregation (i.e., NTEE broad categories).

¹⁷ This crosswalk is available at www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/usps_crosswalk.html.

¹⁸ The Missouri Census Data Center's Geocorr 2018 application is available at mcdc.missouri.edu/applications/geocorr2018.html.

¹⁹ Adopting the terminology in Jones (2019), we use *major groups* to refer to the 26 NTEE classifications based on the first character of the NTEE code and *broad categories* to refer to the sorting of these 26 into 10 higher-level classes. Following the recommendation in the Urban Institute's "Beginner's Guide to Using NCCS Data," we apply the NTEE codes in the "Current Master NTEE Lookup" file available at nccs-data.urban.org/data.php?ds=misc.

²⁰ For example, organizations with no NTEE classification with the word "church," "synagogue," or "mosque" in their name were classified to the "Religion-related" broad category. For the full list of keywords or our code in the R language, please contact the corresponding author.

Appendix 2:

Definition of Community and Economic Development Using NTEE Major Groups

NTEE major group code	NTEE major group description	Share of sample grant volume	Random sample of recipient organizations		
Included in the definition of community and economic development					
F	Mental health and crisis intervention	2.6%	Centerstone of Florida Inc.	Cumberland Heights Foundation Inc.	Pastoral Counseling and Education Center
I	Crime and legal-related	1.5%	Alliance for Children Inc.	Correctional Education Association of Ohio	Utah Legal Services Inc.
J	Employment	1.2%	CLC Inc.	Employment for Seniors Inc.	River Valley Resources Inc.
K	Food, agriculture, and nutrition	1.8%	Central Illinois Foodbank	Meals-On-Wheels Delaware Inc.	Neenah-Menasha Emergency Society Inc.
L	Housing and shelter	2.5%	NB Housing Partners	Residential Opportunities Incorporated	Sunrise of Pasco County Inc.
P	Human services	19.3%	Buckner Children and Family Services Inc.	Ohio Newsboys Association Inc.	Southwest Social Services Programs Inc.
S	Community improvement and capacity building	2.9%	Centerville Development Corp.	Salina Chamber of Commerce	Stowe Mission of Central Ohio
Excluded from the definition of community and economic development					
A	Arts, culture, and humanities	8.3%	A Contemporary Theatre Inc.	Balboa Park Conservancy	Dorset Theatre Festival
B	Education	15.4%	Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute	United States Catholic Conference	University of Maryland Foundation Inc.
C	Environment	2.7%	Aspen Center for Environmental Studies	Door County Land Trust Inc.	Forterra NW
D	Animal-related	1.3%	All About Animals Rescue Inc.	Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue Inc.	Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary Inc.
E	Health care	7.2%	Easter Seals Southwest Florida Inc.	QueensCare Health Centers	The Connection Inc.
G	Voluntary health associations and medical disciplines	1.9%	Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Inc.	Logan County Cancer Society Inc.	United Cerebral Palsy of New York City Inc.
H	Medical research	0.3%	Children's Cancer Research Fund	Foundation Fighting Blindness Inc.	Texas Heart Institute
M	Public safety, disaster preparedness, and relief	0.2%	First Response Ministry Inc.	Ohio Valley Volunteer Fire Department Inc.	Safer Dallas Better Dallas
N	Recreation and sports	1.9%	Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center	Hendrickson Foundation Inc.	World Baseball Outreach Inc.
O	Youth development	4.7%	Fort Smith Boys Club	Tucson Youth Development Inc.	Waltham Boys and Girls Club Inc.
Q	International, foreign affairs, and national security	1.5%	Adventist Development and Relief Agency International	Samaritan's Purse	Sister India Ltd.
R	Civil rights, social action, and advocacy	0.6%	Anti-Defamation League	Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization	Center for Constitutional Rights Inc.
T	Philanthropy, voluntarism, and grantmaking foundations	7.4%	United Way of Anderson County	United Way of Central Ohio Inc.	United Way of Kentucky
U	Science and technology	0.2%	Gerontology Network	Minerals Metals & Materials Society Inc.	Space of Her Own Incorporated
V	Social science	0.1%	Cornerstones of Science	Iowa State University of Science and Technology	Re:Gender Inc.
W	Public and societal benefit	0.9%	Cause Action Fund	Heritage Foundation	Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans Inc.
X	Religion-related	3.4%	Adam's Hope Ministries Inc.	Congregation of St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church	Jewish Charities of America
Y	Mutual and membership benefit	0.1%	ArtPrize Grand Rapids	Edge Hill Cemetery Co.	Polish National Alliance of the United States of N.A.
Z	Unknown	10.3%	Chaney-Graef-Pitsenbarger VFW	City of Pembina Community Center	Parker County Committee on Aging

Sources: Authors' analysis of IRS 990 Filings data set accessed in February 2020 from registry.opendata.aws/irs990 (tax years 2012–2016); Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Current Master NTEE Lookup file (accessed May 2021) and Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master Files (2013–2019)

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