

# Partner Perception Survey

Results summary

2023



# Introduction



The McConnell Foundation greatly values our relationships with our partners. We aim to work in a spirit of mutual accountability, and to this end, in 2019, the Foundation commissioned the [Center for Effective Philanthropy \(CEP\)](#) to conduct a partners' perception survey – seeking feedback from partners on how we can better support them and the communities they serve.

The [2019 results](#) identified key areas for improvement, and we followed up on this feedback by:

1) Making our application process more accessible and easier to understand, and taking steps to help partners navigate the journey with:

- a two-step application: a short application and then, a detailed one
- resources for applicants including the [Funding and Partnership Guide](#)
- weekly virtual office hours to assist applicants in determining whether their project aligns with our focus areas.

2) Sharing the refined focus areas strategy and updates on our funding streams:

- communicating changes to our partners directly and to the public via social media
- updating our website with information on our focus areas
- publishing our first [Year in Review in 2021](#).

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## Four years later



Four years later, we wanted to hear from our partners again. The CEP conducted a second perception survey in spring 2023, inviting current partners with active projects to share their feedback; 64% responded.

Once again, the survey provided valuable feedback for us to learn from in order to improve our work.

# Key Strengths in 2023

## Funding Processes

### 1) Funding Processes

In 2023, partners expressed higher satisfaction with our selection process. The Foundation has improved significantly on this point since 2019. Partners highlighted that one-on-one communications and virtual office hours with Foundation staff were the most helpful resources offered by McConnell. This was a significant area of weakness identified in 2019. We are proud to have taken the feedback seriously and to have made improvements that are having a positive impact for our partners.

## Impact on Partner Organizations

### 2) Impact on Partner Organizations

Another major improvement since 2019 touches on the Foundation's overall impact on partner organizations. McConnell has significantly improved on metrics related to our understanding of internal strategies and goals organizations may have. Partners mention funding for larger projects and multi-year projects as well as continued non-monetary support as having the most impact on their organizations.

## Non-Monetary Assistance

### 3) Non-Monetary Assistance

As in 2019, nearly all partners surveyed in 2023 indicated that support beyond funding has had a big impact. Partners that received additional non-monetary support rated their experience more favorably than those that received funding only. Partners most frequently indicated that the Foundation's support enhanced their organizational capacity (63%) and raised the profile of their organization (61%). In parallel to this positive feedback, the most common suggestion for improvement is to increase non-monetary assistance, including facilitating convening and collaboration among partners, organizational strengthening, and influencing other funders.

# Opportunities for improvement

## Partner's Context & Communities

### 1) Understanding partners' contexts and the communities they serve

While the Foundation's ratings on these topics have improved since 2019, they continue to be lower than the typical funder in CEP's dataset. Ratings indicate that the Foundation still needs to work on a deeper understanding of the social, cultural or socioeconomic factors that affect the work of partners and the communities they serve. Partners suggest that the Foundation should invest more time in developing and demonstrating a deeper understanding of the factors affecting their ongoing work.

## Relationship with Partners

### 2) Relationship with partners

Partners are open to increased frequency of contact and more meaningful engagement with the Foundation. As in 2019, respondents indicated in their ratings and written comments that their interactions with McConnell staff could be improved. Approachability and interactions could be improved by offering more frequent communications and site visits. Communications could also be improved by providing greater clarity when it comes to our goals, strategies, and funding approaches. As well, surveyed partners indicated that they would like to see greater transparency and a better understanding of how their work fits with the Foundation's broader efforts.

## Funding Processes

### 3) Funding Processes

While ratings regarding funding processes have risen significantly, there are still areas where we can improve. Partners expressed that the Foundation can be clearer and more transparent about the selection process requirements and timelines, as well as the criteria used to decide whether a proposal is funded or declined.

# Next Steps



The Foundation will integrate these learnings to improve our practices with the objective of supporting our partners in the best possible way.

We have identified the following areas to focus on:

## **1) Demonstrate our understanding of context and communities**

We will invest time and resources in developing a better understanding of the cultural and socioeconomic factors that affect the work of our partners and the communities they serve. Linked to the Foundation's EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility) efforts, we will place a particular focus on the perspectives of communities most directly impacted by our fields of work.

## **2) Strengthen our relationships with our partners**

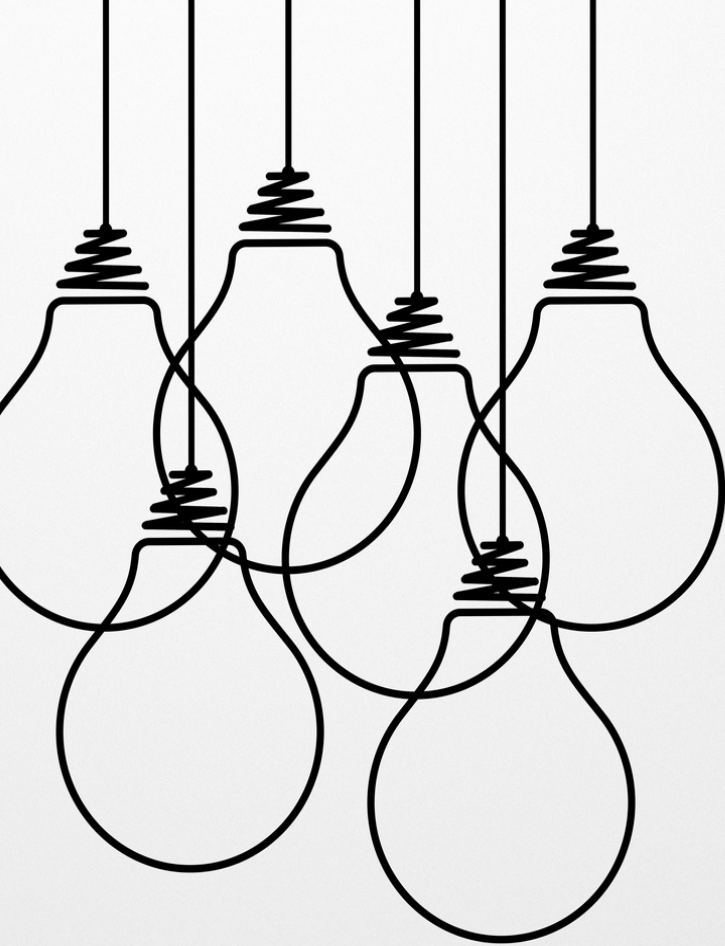
We will explore opportunities for more frequent communication, site visits, and other ways of connecting with the communities we work with. We want to do this in line with our staff capacities, investing in relationships while avoiding unnecessary increases in internal expenditure. We will also look to create opportunities to learn from and with our partners through convenings and to foster strategic learning across sectors.

## **3) Communications**

We will increase the clarity and accessibility of our external communications. Our newly updated website (fall 2023) is a helpful step in this direction. As we continue to refine our strategies, we will continue to share any important updates through our newsletters and webinars.

## **4) Funding Processes**

We will keep improving the Foundation's funding processes to provide greater clarity regarding the requirements and timelines of our application process and we will continue to streamline our internal procedures.



# Thoughts?

Please reach out to [communications@mcconnellfoundation.ca](mailto:communications@mcconnellfoundation.ca) and share your thoughts about these survey results. We'd love to hear from you!

*We hope this summary of the CEP survey results are helpful. We'd love to hear from you and continue the conversation.*

The McConnell Foundation office sits on ancestral and unceded Indigenous territory, a place known as Tiohtiá:ke in Kanien'kéha and Mooniyang in Anishinaabemowin. We recognize that the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation are stewards of the lands and waters of this territory, which has long been a place where meetings and exchanges among nations have occurred.

<https://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/>