

# Guideposts Point to New Heights

2012 Columbus Survey Findings



The idea behind CF Insights is simple:  
What if ***each*** community foundation could know what ***all*** community foundations collectively know?

**Created by Community Foundations**

CF Insights responds to a hunger for shared knowledge and greater impact among U.S. community foundations.

Community foundations grow stronger when their decisions are based on timely, accurate, and complete information. Through CF Insights, community foundations improve performance and sustainability – individually and collectively.

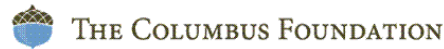
**Propelled by FSG**

As nonprofit consultants dedicated to social impact, FSG combines deep knowledge of the community foundation field with world-class research, strategy, and evaluation capabilities.

In partnership with the Community Foundations Leadership Team, FSG has been a driving force for CF Insights since its inception.

Learn more about CF Insights at [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org).

## Acknowledgements



CF Insights would like to offer special thanks to The Columbus Foundation which conducted the hallmark community foundation survey on behalf of the field from 1988-2007. We are grateful for the opportunity to now manage this important work of collecting and reporting field-wide data.



We would also like to thank the Council on Foundations' Community Foundations Leadership Team (CFLT) for providing funding to transition the Columbus Survey to CF Insights in 2009, building on the infrastructure The Columbus Foundation established. This funding helped incorporate the Columbus Survey data within CF Insights' online database, creating a longitudinal field-wide dataset of great breadth and depth that is easily accessed by community foundations. The CFLT's support also helped to improve the quality and variety of reports available to the field.

In addition, a wide range of community foundations contributed data to this report. We would like to thank all Columbus Survey participants for your contributions. We especially thank CF Insights members and funders for their continued support, which makes possible the growth and development of CF Insights' knowledge base.

## Advisory Board

**Brent Christopher**  
Chair, President and CEO  
Communities Foundation of Texas

**Mike Batchelor**  
President  
The Erie Community Foundation

**Mari Ellen R. Loijens**  
Chief Business, Development and Brand Officer  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation

**Scott McReynolds**  
Vice President for Finance and Administration  
The Greater Cincinnati Foundation

**Steven Seleznow**  
President and CEO  
Arizona Community Foundation

**Heather Scott**  
Chief Operating and Development Officer  
ACT for Alexandria

**Judy Sjostedt**  
Executive Director  
Parkersburg Area Community Foundation

**Deb Watt**  
Chief Finance and Officer  
Foundation for the Carolinas

## Foreword

With this report, CF Insights' aim is to share a snapshot of community foundation asset growth and activity during 2012. The findings are based on 276 community foundation responses to the Columbus Survey as of June 2013.

Participants interested in detailed 2012 results for their foundation can visit [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org) to find a wider range of comparative and longitudinal reports. CF Insights members can compare their 2012 performance to peer benchmarks in over 80 online reports. Available metrics focus on asset development, grantmaking, investment performance, and sustainability.

And for those community foundations who have not yet contributed data, there is still time. We encourage you to share your 2012 results and use the resources at [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org) to create custom reports that put your own foundation's performance in context.

As more foundations contribute and 990s are completed, more comparative data will be available and CF Insights will continue to build on this snapshot with analyses based on the growing data set.

## CF Insights Membership

If you find this report valuable, we hope you will join CF Insights' membership and become part of a community that is improving access to performance data and sharing knowledge across the field. Annual membership contributions start at \$200 and are based on asset size. Visit [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org) to learn more.

## Overview of 2012 Findings

The 2012 Columbus Survey results mark new heights in major benchmarks for the first time since 2007. Overall, community foundations experienced increases in assets, gifts, and grants and continue to increase investments in operating budgets to expand capacity in order to pursue their mission.

While the findings focus on the totals and averages for the field, we hope that the data provides context to assess opportunities and challenges facing individual community foundations today. What we have heard time and again, particularly post-2008, is that sustainability is an evergreen challenge – no matter how you are able to grow your assets and operating budget, there will always be an interest in stretching resources as far as they will go.

Given the on-going challenge of limited resources, growth is reason to celebrate. However, an individual community foundation's goals and focus should be driven not by reaching a particular asset size, but by an intentional and strategic approach to developing priorities given your donor base, community needs, and organizational strengths. CF Insights will further examine these themes in a publication on the evolution of community foundation business models, to be released in September 2013.

### Quick Takeaways from 2012 Data

- The community foundation field represents \$58B in assets, \$6.9B in gifts, and \$4.5B in grants
- Between 2011 and 2012, average growth rates were:
  - Assets – 9%
  - Gifts – 15%
  - Grants – 6%
- Fiscal year end matters when comparing asset growth rates by community foundation
- 79% of community foundations have 2012 asset levels that exceed 2007 asset levels
- Donor advisors increased assets held in DAFs by 22% on average, representing faster growth than assets overall; these funds represent a significant amount of gift and grant activity at many community foundations
- Administrative fee revenue accounts for ~65% of total revenue and smaller community foundations typically have a more diversified revenue base
- Almost 3/4 of community foundations increased their operating budget in 2012

## 2012 Findings

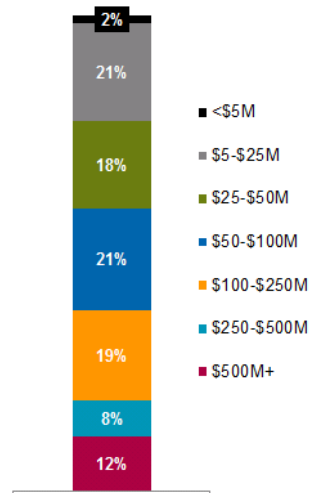
The questions that Columbus Survey participants most frequently want to know are:

1. How did community foundations as a field grow in the last fiscal year?
2. How did my community foundation grow relative to peers?

Thanks to the 276 participants in the 2012 Columbus Survey, we are able to provide insight into both of these questions. Columbus Survey respondents represent over 90% of estimated total field assets and reflect the field's diversity in assets, geographies, and strategies.

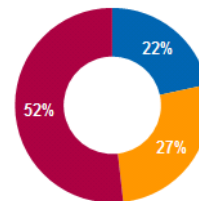
Examining the operating performance of these community foundations provides a perspective into the field's performance and indicators to help you compare your community foundation's performance.

**Participant Asset Distribution**  
n = 276



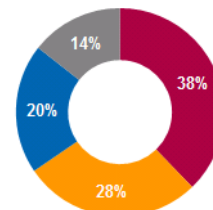
**Participant Service Density Distribution**  
n = 276

■ Urban ■ Rural ■ Mix Urban and Rural



**Participant Regional Distribution**  
n = 276

■ Midwest ■ South ■ West ■ Northeast



### Perspective #1: The Field Reached New Heights in 2012

By looking at the performance of the largest community foundations by asset size, we can consistently compare trends in the community foundation field over a longer time frame. In 2012, the largest 100 community foundations marked the largest total gains in assets, gifts, and grants since 2006. All metrics are at an all-time high.



Data reflects the largest 100 CFs by asset size as of FYE 2012 and includes only those from that cohort that have data for all years represented

### Perspective #2: Individual Community Foundations Saw Varying Degrees of Growth

On average, community foundations of all sizes experienced increases in assets, gifts, and grants.

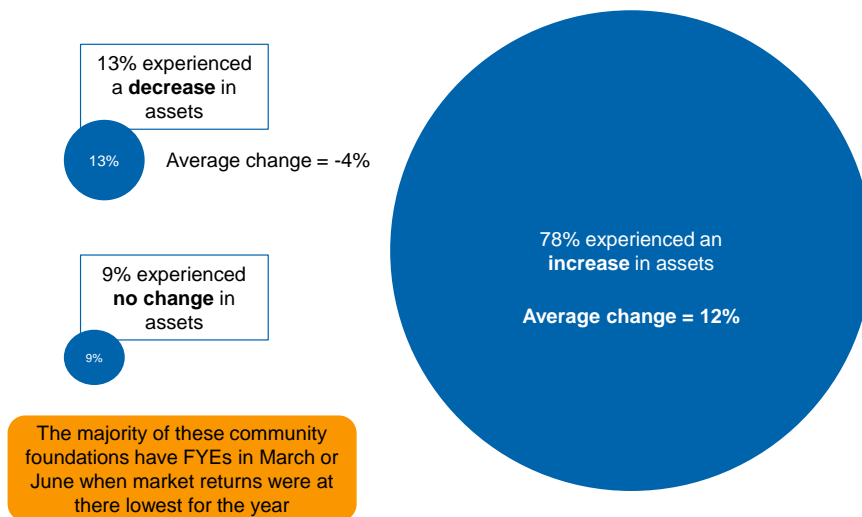
	Average Change for CFs >\$250M in Assets N = 52	Average Change for CFs \$50 - \$249M in Assets N = 108	Average Change for CFs < \$49M in Assets N = 85
<b>Assets</b>	Increased 8%	Increased 9%	Increased 10%
<b>Gifts</b>	Increased 13%	Increased 20%	Increased 10%
<b>Grants</b>	Increased 9%	Increased 5%	Increased 5%

As in previous years, fiscal year end is a factor to consider when comparing asset growth rates. Market returns greatly impact the asset levels of community foundations and in 2012 the market closed lower in March and June than it closed later in the year. As a result, community foundations with FYEs in September and December experienced higher asset growth rates, unlike 2011 when a fiscal year end in March or June resulted in higher asset growth.

	Average Change for CFs with March or June FYE N = 92	Average Change for CFs with September or December FYE N = 153
<b>Assets</b>	<i>Increased 4%</i>	<i>Increased 12%</i>

### Perspective #3: 2012 Was A Good Year, But Growth and Recovery Are Not A Given

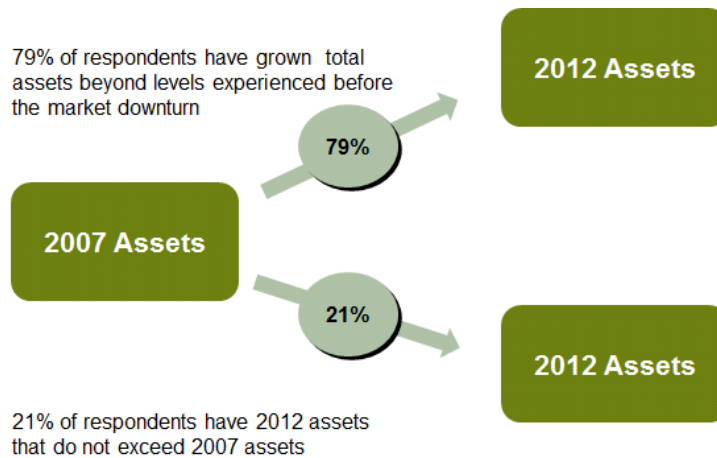
While the averages suggest growth across the board, 13% of Columbus Survey participants experienced a decrease in assets between 2011 and 2012. Typically these foundations have FYEs in March or June.



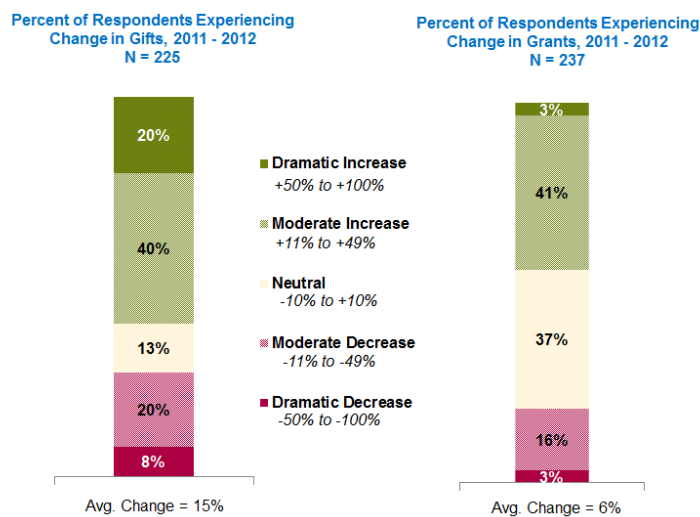
For an individual community foundation, full recovery following the market downturn in 2008 is not a given. Last year 63% of respondents had 2011 assets higher than 2007 levels. In 2012 almost 80% reached this bar. This leaves 20% that continue on a path to recovery as measured by asset levels. Region, FYE, and asset size do not appear to be factors that explain the differences. Success in generating new gifts does explain some of the difference. Those community foundations that have not



fully recovered saw gifts decline an average of 6% between 2007 and 2012. Those that have recovered have seen gifts grow by an average of 2% annually



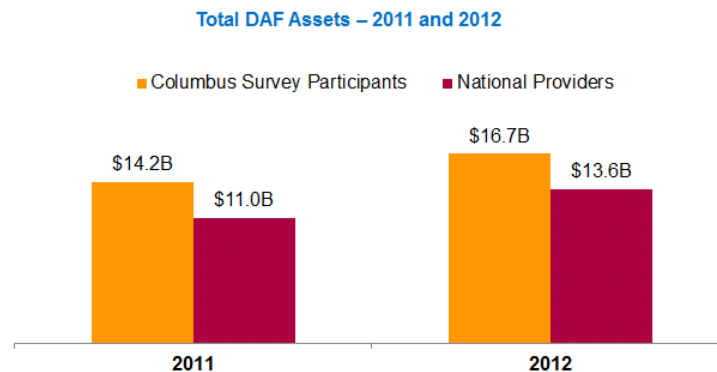
There is also variability in the trends for gifts and grants. While the averages show positive growth in both gifts and grants, 28% of respondents experienced moderate or dramatic decreases in gifts, while 19% decreased grants. In 2011 these numbers looked rather different, with 44% experiencing decreases in gifts and 26% decreasing grants.



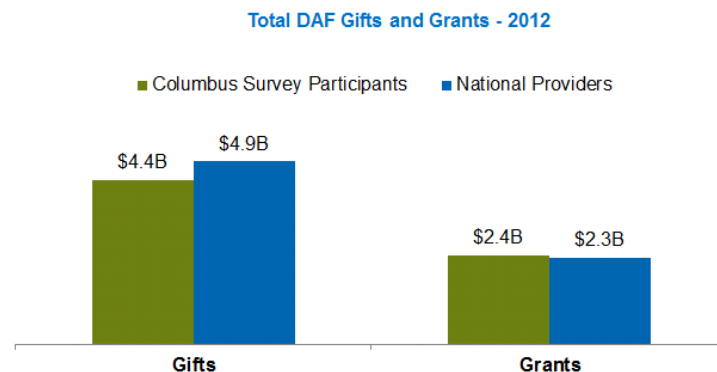
## Perspective #6: DAFs Rev Up the Engine for Growth

Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) grew in 2012 and accounted for significant activity in the community foundation field. Excluding supporting organizations, DAFs represent 69% of total gifts and 61% of total grants for the community foundation field. At a typical community foundation, DAF gifts and grants were just over 40% of both gifts and grants (excluding supporting organizations) – a trend that has been consistent over the last few years.

Community foundations continue to hold the majority of DAF assets at almost \$17B. Total assets increased at a slightly higher rate at national providers than at community foundations between 2011 and 2012 (23% increase in assets at national providers vs. 18% increase at community foundations).



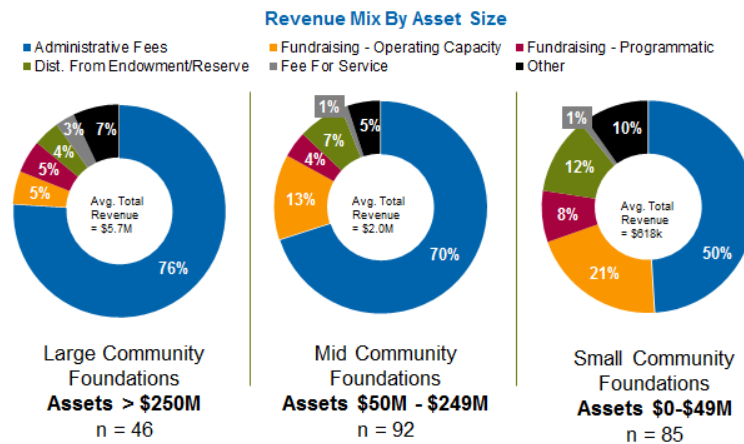
The larger growth in assets at national providers is driven by higher gift levels in 2012 and slightly lower grants paid out.



To understand more about the strategic opportunity of DAFs for community foundations beyond growth in assets, turn to CF Insights 2012 research [Do More Than Grow: Realizing the Potential of Donor Advised Funds](#).

### Perspective #4: Administrative Fees Still Drive Revenue, But There's a Mix

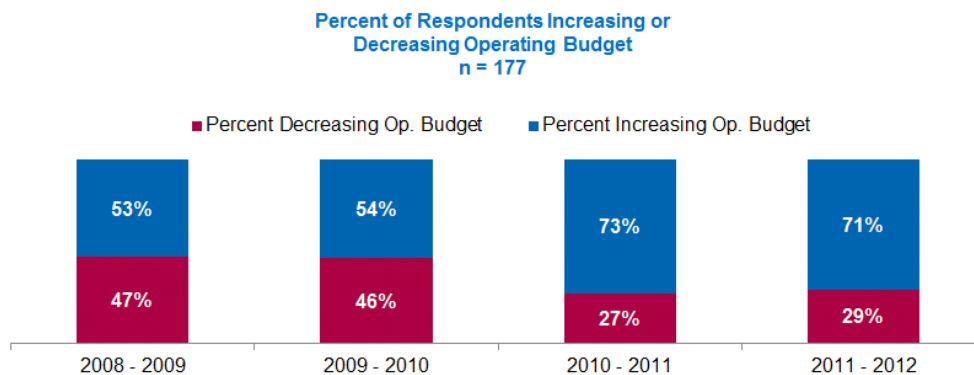
In 2012 administrative fees accounted for over 60% of total revenue on average. However, virtually all community foundations have a diversified revenue base. This is particularly true for smaller community foundations which rely on a more diversified revenue base than mid and large-sized community foundations.



### Perspective #5: Operating Budgets Have Grown As Community Foundations Increase Capacity

In each year since the beginning of the downturn, the majority of community foundations have increased their operating budgets, despite seeing assets and gifts contract. In 2012, 75% of respondents increased their operating budget by an average of 20%.

What accounts for increases in operating budgets? Costs associated with running a community foundation on a day-to-day basis have increased since 2008. But intentional decisions at the community foundation to increase organizational capacity through staffing or investment in leadership efforts may have had the biggest impact on the budget. Personnel costs typically account for 60-80% of total community foundation operating costs.



## Perspective #7: Community Foundation Business Models Have Evolved Over the Last 10 Years

In the early 2000s, the discussion around community foundation business models centered on the misalignment between costs and revenues for each product offering. As a result, many community foundations focused on making investments intentional and aligning economics with mission. Ten years later, we see an improvement in the clarity with which community foundations allocate resources, and observe a more nuanced discussion about how to increase operating capacity and revenues to strengthen their strategic positioning. From the community foundations who have shared data with CF Insights, we have learned that:

- **Being disciplined works.** Business models have become stronger by adjusting the economics of individual offerings, and as things change there is always room for further adjustments.
- **Business models have flexed.** Community foundations are increasingly confident about a value proposition and identity tied to leadership roles. Adding roles has added complexity to the business model, and revenue sources have diversified and expanded alongside.
- **Adapting is the key to sustainability.** Community foundations will always be challenged to adapt the business models to serve what they see as part of their mission and changing roles.
- **Effective choices are aligned.** The biggest challenge for many community foundations is finding a way to integrate and balance strategic priorities and business model choices – aligning roles designed to serve different constituents.

CF Insights will release a publication looking at the evolution of community foundation business models in September 2013.

## Moving Forward

Asset growth, grants, and especially gifts will vary by foundation and by year. This variation underscores the importance of understanding your community foundation's performance not only as part of the overall trends, but also in the context of your peers. To engage in benchmarking, and make data-driven decisions about your goals for the future, visit [cfinsights.org](http://cfinsights.org). Our goal is to support your community foundation along the path to greater sustainability and impact.

## Appendix I – Next Steps

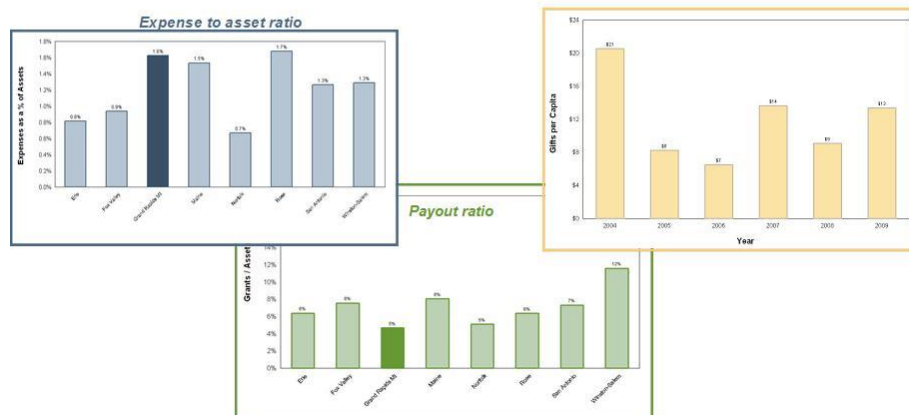
### Compare Metrics for your own Community Foundation

We hope this field-wide analysis serves as a starting point for understanding your community foundation's growth and grantmaking in the context of relevant comparisons.

CF Insights supports the field and our members in using data to uncover insights. Some action steps to consider:

- **SHARE** this report with your board, highlighting how your foundation compares to the field
- **CONNECT** with you peers to understand best practices and fresh ideas in the field
- **CREATE** benchmark reports at [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org) to view metrics for your foundation's performance over time or compared to a peer aggregate

Once you've logged in to [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org), you can instantly generate comparative data to further understand your community foundation's performance relative to peers. Longitudinal trend and high level comparative reports are available for the field and CF Insights members have access to reports with customized benchmarking data. Examples of these reports are listed below and more detail is available in Appendix IV.



## Appendix II – Rankings

### 2012 Columbus Survey of Community Foundations List of Top 100 Community Foundations by Asset Size as of May 22, 2013

Rank	Foundation Name	2012 assets (\$M)	FYE	Rank	Foundation Name	2012 assets (\$M)	FYE
1	Tulsa Community Foundation	\$3,929	12-31	51	The Community Foundation in Jacksonville	\$257	12-31
2	Silicon Valley Community Foundation	\$2,910	12-31	52	Greater New Orleans Foundation	\$250	12-31
3	The New York Community Trust	\$2,148	12-31	53	Rochester Area Community Foundation	\$250	03-31
4	The Cleveland Foundation	\$1,860	12-31	54	Grand Rapids Community Foundation	\$250	06-30
5	The Chicago Community Trust	\$1,804	09-30	55	The Dallas Foundation	\$239	12-31
6	The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation	\$1,637	12-31	56	Community Foundation of New Jersey	\$230	12-31
7	The Columbus Foundation	\$1,521	12-31	57	Delaware Community Foundation	\$229*	06-30
8	The Oregon Community Foundation	\$1,458	12-31	58	San Antonio Area Foundation	\$227	12-31
9	Marin Community Foundation	\$1,334	06-30	59	Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines	\$226	12-31
10	California Community Foundation	\$1,205	06-30	60	Gulf Coast Community Foundation	\$210	06-30
11	The San Francisco Foundation	\$1,082	06-30	61	Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, Inc.	\$204	06-30
12	Foundation For The Carolinas	\$1,013	12-31	62	Fremont Area Community Foundation	\$203	12-31
13	Minnesota Community Foundation and The Saint Paul Foundation	\$952	12-31	63	Amarillo Area Foundation	\$195	12-31
14	The Pittsburgh Foundation	\$910	12-31	64	Community Foundation of Sarasota County	\$194	06-30
15	Communities Foundation of Texas, Inc.	\$853	06-30	65	Community Foundation of the Ozarks	\$194	06-30
16	Hartford Foundation for Public Giving	\$811	12-31	66	St. Louis Community Foundation	\$192	03-31
17	Community Foundation Serving Richmond and Central Virginia	\$807	12-31	67	Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation	\$191	12-31
18	The Boston Foundation	\$804	06-30	68	East Tennessee Foundation	\$187	12-31
19	The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta	\$771	12-31	69	Erie Community Foundation	\$187	12-31
20	The Seattle Foundation	\$689	12-31	70	Community Foundation of Western North Carolina	\$186	06-30
21	The Rhode Island Community Foundation	\$678	12-31	71	Stark Community Foundation	\$181	12-31
22	Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan	\$656	12-31	72	Toledo Community Foundation, Inc.	\$172	12-31
23	Omaha Community Foundation	\$654	12-31	73	The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham	\$169	12-31
24	Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Inc.	\$634	06-30	74	The Vermont Community Foundation	\$168	12-31
25	The Greater Milwaukee Foundation	\$612	12-31	75	Community Foundation of North Texas	\$168	12-31
26	The Minneapolis Foundation	\$610	03-31	76	Endeavor Foundation	\$162	12-31
27	Baton Rouge Area Foundation	\$563	12-31	77	The Miami Foundation	\$161	12-31
28	The San Diego Foundation	\$563	06-30	78	Community Foundation For Monterey County	\$157	12-31
29	The Denver Foundation	\$553*	12-31	79	Arkansas Community Foundation	\$157	06-30
30	Central Indiana Community Foundation, Inc.	\$542	12-31	80	North Carolina Community Foundation	\$156	03-31
31	New Hampshire Charitable Foundation	\$508	12-31	81	Community Foundation of Sonoma County	\$154	12-31
32	Arizona Community Foundation	\$504	03-31	82	Fairfield County Community Foundation	\$150	06-30
33	The Greater Cincinnati Foundation	\$487	12-31	83	Baltimore Community Foundation, Inc.	\$148	12-31
34	Hawaii Community Foundation	\$428	12-31	84	Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina	\$148	06-30
35	Greater Houston Community Foundation	\$397	12-31	85	Community Foundation of Greater Flint	\$147	12-31
36	The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven	\$379	12-31	86	Community Foundation of Tampa Bay, Inc.	\$147	06-30
37	The Dayton Foundation	\$379	06-30	87	Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro	\$146	12-31
38	The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee	\$366*	12-31	88	Triangle Community Foundation	\$145	06-30
39	The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region	\$358	03-31	89	Orange County Community Foundation (CA)	\$144	06-30
40	The Community Foundation of Louisville, Inc.	\$347	06-30	90	Community Foundation for Muskegon County	\$143	12-31
41	Kalamazoo Community Foundation	\$345	12-31	91	Akron Community Foundation	\$141	03-31
42	The Philadelphia Foundation	\$334	12-31	92	Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties	\$140	06-30
43	East Bay Community Foundation	\$328	06-30	93	Madison Community Foundation	\$139	12-31
44	Maine Community Foundation, Inc.	\$318	12-31	94	Austin Community Foundation	\$139	12-31
45	The Winston-Salem Foundation	\$310	12-31	95	Central New York Community Foundation	\$131	03-31
46	Santa Barbara Foundation	\$299	12-31	96	Community Foundation of St. Joseph County, Inc.	\$129	06-30
47	Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, Inc.	\$280	03-31	97	Spartanburg County Foundation	\$126	12-31
48	Rose Community Foundation	\$270	12-31	98	Greater Worcester Community Foundation	\$125	12-31
49	Hampton Roads Community Foundation	\$265	12-31	99	Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation	\$123	12-31
50	Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo	\$259	12-31	100	Harrison County Community Foundation, Inc.	\$123	12-31

\* Based on 2011 Fiscal Year End Assets

## Appendix III - Methodology

This year's Columbus Survey builds upon the work of The Columbus Foundation from 1988-2007. The Survey was transitioned to CF Insights for data collection via CF Insights' online benchmarking database ([www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org)).

Field-wide survey participants entered their FYE 2012 data in the online form between April 2012 and June 2013. This process generated 276 responses, though not all data points were filled in – including assets, gifts, grants, fund-level data, total expenses and geographic information. Partial responses in some areas result in different sample sizes for various data points. For all data analysis, outliers of +/- 100% were removed from average calculations.

Longitudinal analyses only use data from foundations with complete data across the time period defined. Therefore, the sample size for these analyses is smaller than the complete 2012 data set.

The survey captures fiscal year end data, which results in some differences due to the timing of changes in the market or overall economy over 2011-2012. The time at which the data was recorded is of significance, especially for asset values, and in comparing an individual foundation to a peer cohort, we recommend taking fiscal year end into account when selecting peers.

### Still Need to Participate?

CF Insights will be publishing future analyses on the 2012 data – make sure your foundation is included!

Visit [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org) to enter your 2012 data or data from prior years. Click on the “Log-in” button in the upper right-hand corner of the homepage.

CF Insights members have data automatically submitted to the survey once their annual data entry is complete. You are able to submit “unaudited” data if your 990 or audit is not complete; CF Insights will ensure that your final 990 data will be automatically included once you submit your 990.

Non-members can email [info@cfinsights.org](mailto:info@cfinsights.org) to obtain log-in and password information.

## Appendix IV – Peer Benchmarking Reports

As a part of our field-building mission, CF Insights has made benchmarking reports available to all Columbus Survey participants. Participants can log-in at [www.cfinsights.org](http://www.cfinsights.org) to generate dynamic online reports that show longitudinal and benchmark data to analyze your foundation's historical performance and your performance compared to a selected peer aggregate and the entire field.

### Available to All Community Foundations Participating in Columbus Survey

#### **Longitudinal Reports for Your Foundation**

- Annual Growth Rates of Assets, Gifts, and Grants
- Average Fund Size
- Assets Per Capita
- Percent Assets Endowed vs. Nonendowed
- Gift/Grant Ratio
- Average Gift Size
- Gifts per Capita
- Annual Payout Rate
- Average Grant Size
- Grants Per Capita
- Assets Per Audit Per FTE
- Expense to Asset Ratio
- Revenue to Asset Ratio
- Operating Reserves
- Operating Endowment

#### **Benchmark Reports**

- Total Asset Growth
- Total Gift Growth
- Total Grant Growth

### Available to CF Insights Members

Additionally, CF Insights members can generate customized comparative reports based on Columbus Survey data as well as many other detailed metrics. CF Insights members can define who their peers are according to a variety of characteristics such as product focus, geography, asset size, or grantmaking levels. In addition to the non-member reports listed above, CF Insights members also have access to peer group reports:

#### **Assets**

- Assets by Product Among Peers
- Endowed vs. Nonendowed Assets Among Peers
- Average Fund Size Among Peers
- Change in Assets Among Peers
- Per Capita Assets Among Peers

#### **Contributions**

- Average Total Gift Size Among Peers
- Average Discretionary Gift Size Among Peers
- Average DAF Gift Size Among Peers
- Total Transactions Among Peers
- Change in Gifts Among Peers
- Historical Gifts Among Peers
- Gift Ratio Among Peers

#### **Operating Efficiency**

- Budget to Asset Ratio Among Peers
- Revenues to Asset Ratio Among Peers
- Operating Endowment Among Peers

#### **Grantmaking**

- Average Grant Size Among Peers
- Average Discretionary Grant Size Among Peers
- Average DAF Grant Size Among Peers
- Change in Grants Among Peers
- Per Capita Grants Among Peers
- Historical Grants Among Peers
- Grant Ratio Among Peers
- Payout Rate Among Peers
- Community Leadership Activities Among Peers

#### **Staffing**

- Assets per FTE Among Peers
- FTEs by Functional Area Among Peers
- Funds per FTE Among Peers

#### **Investments**

- Annual Investment Performance Among Peers
- Annualized Returns Among Peers
- Asset Allocation Among Peers





All statements and conclusions, unless specifically attributed to another source, are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the other organizations or references noted in this report.

For questions or comments on this report, please contact:

**Becca Graves**

Executive Director, CF Insights  
Managing Director, FSG  
rebecca.graves@fsg.org

**Diana Esposito**

Member Services & Program Manager  
CF Insights  
diana.esposito@fsg.org

**Hollie Marston**

Consultant, CF Insights  
hollie.marston@fsg.org



**The idea behind CF Insights is simple:**

What if **each** community foundation could know what **all** community foundations collectively know?

**Created by Community Foundations**

CF Insights responds to a hunger for shared knowledge and greater impact among U.S. community foundations. Community foundations grow stronger when their decisions are based on timely, accurate, and complete information. Through CF Insights, community foundations improve performance and sustainability – individually and collectively.

**Propelled by FSG**

As nonprofit consultants dedicated to social impact, FSG combines deep knowledge of the community foundation field with world-class research, strategy, and evaluation capabilities.

In partnership with the Community Foundations Leadership Team, FSG has been a driving force for CF Insights since its inception.