

Partner Feedback Report Prepared for Co-Impact

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THE CENTER
FOR EFFECTIVE
PHILANTHROPY

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Executive Summary

Co-Impact's partners maintain an appreciation for Co-Impact's distinctive, collaborative approach to change, meaningful support beyond the grant, and considerable impact on their organizations. Survey results and qualitative interviews confirm largely positive experiences with Co-Impact. The longest term, Foundational Fund, partners often provide the highest quantitative ratings, while Gender Fund partners show slightly more variation across their responses. Overall, partners continue to express appreciation for the quality of their relationships with the Co-Impact team, valuable and unique design phase and grant, additional materials and supports, and encourage Co-Impact, particularly in this moment, to leverage its unique position and influence to further shape the philanthropic sector.

- **Unique Approach:** Partners continue to value Co-Impact as a thought leader in applying a systems change approach to creating impact, appreciate its commitment to gender equity, and many prefer its approach over other funders. Partners believe that this approach enables greater innovation and risk taking, supports longer-term change, and focuses on root causes. Many early-stage and Design partners grapple with some of the concepts and applications within their specific contexts and work; however, longer-term partners mention that these issues often resolve over time as they develop their engagement and relationship with Co-Impact. Further, they view Co-Impact as having an important role to play in influencing the philanthropic field more broadly, while offering examples of practices of peer funders from which Co-Impact could learn.
- **Impact on Partner Organizations:** Partners often cite Co-Impact's unique grantmaking, flexibility, and trust-based approach as a key strength. They also spend considerable time commenting on the depth of impact that Co-Impact's partnership and additional capacity building support have had on their organizations, noting how working with Co-Impact has often fundamentally pushed their work further, established stronger systems and processes, and allowed them to take a much longer, more strategic view.
- **Support Beyond the Grant:** The vast majority of Co-Impact partners utilize at least one type of assistance beyond the grant that Co-Impact provides. They speak to a deep appreciation for the value that Co-Impact brings in creating connections, both between partners and with other organizations in their sector. They also highlight Co-Impact's deep expertise in systems change work. However, survey data and interviews also suggest more mixed experiences with Communities of Practice (CoP), coaches, and workshops. This highlights an opportunity to continue to finetune and right-size these offers to better suit the needs of specific partners and where they are in their journeys with Co-Impact.
- **Design Grant:** The design phase remains unique. Partners overwhelmingly describe this as an opportunity for deep thinking and strategy development, appreciate the methodology and time provided for their own organizational development, and continue to provide positive ratings for the value of many different aspects. A few challenges remain, namely availability and applicability of data within specific contexts and environments, some issues with the formulation of different modules, as well as some lack of clarity with Co-Impact's guidance and expectations.
- **Grant Processes:** Co-Impact's processes remain rigorous but helpful for many partners. Comparatively, the clarity of requirements and timelines and level of effort required to receive funding is an area for continued improvement. Still, many partners do derive value from the process and most commonly cite the value in narrowing and refining proposals into more strategic, targeted, and focused approaches. Despite the considerable time investment, Co-Impact's processes continue to bring rigor and reflection to partners' work, and where partners do suggest improvements, it is most often in timelines and requirements as well as the complexity of applying Learning, Measurement, and Evaluation frameworks to their own work.

- **Relationships with Partners:** Interviews with partners continue to suggest that they hold deeply meaningful relationships with Co-Impact staff. These are consistently described as positive, respectful, useful, and trusting relationships. Survey data does suggest that there is room, comparatively, for continued improvement as, for nearly all measures, Co-Impact receives typical or lower than typical ratings. However, when pressed for ways in which these relationships could improve, partners mostly cite administrative or process-oriented suggestions rather than relational ones, highlighting responsiveness during busy periods of work, staff burden, and timing of feedback. When further analyzing interviews by grant type and other segmentations, a few broad differences emerge.
 - Anchor partners have more mature, strategic relationships focused on long-term partnership and organizational development beyond the specific grant. Design partners experience more intensive, hands-on relationships centered on program development, with higher appreciation for flexibility but also more concerns about feedback timing. Additionally, relationships appear to mature from process-intensive (Gender Fund 3 - Gender Fund 4) to relationship-building (Gender Fund 1 - Gender Fund 2) to strategic partnership (Foundational Fund), suggesting a natural progression toward greater autonomy and strategic advisory relationships that speak directly to the stage of funding and length of relationship partners have with Co-Impact.

Background and Methodology

Co-Impact has engaged the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) to gather feedback from its currently funded partners. Perceptions from this group are summarized in this report, and compared, where possible, to past CEP assessments in 2018, 2020, and 2023.

Interviews: Between April and June 2025, CEP conducted a total of 38 interviews with Co-Impact’s partners. Using a purposeful sampling approach based on criteria established together with Co-Impact’s LME team, partners were asked to participate in hour-long online interviews.

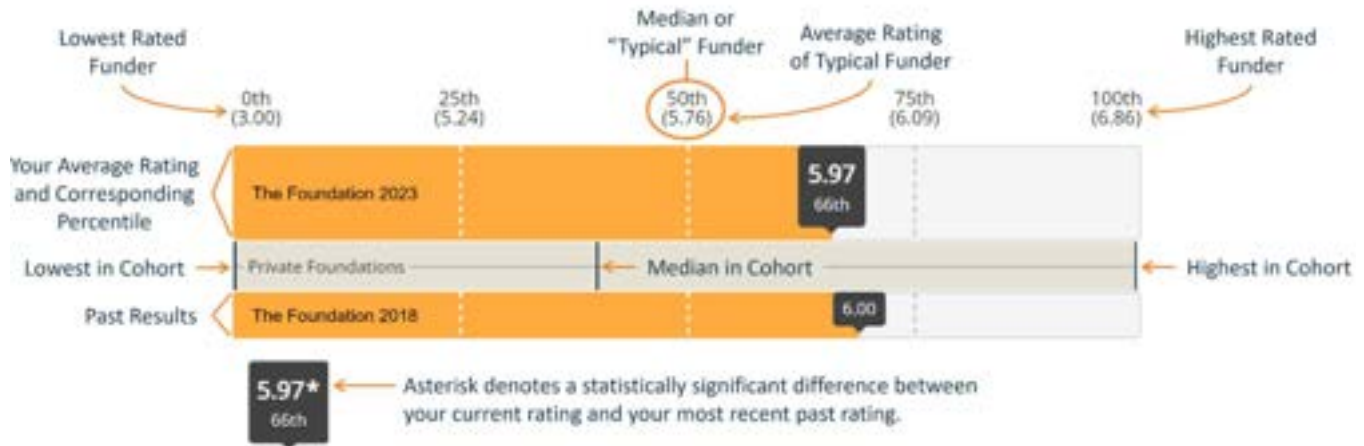
Surveys: In January and February 2025, CEP fielded a survey to 131 partners and received a total of 93 responses for a response rate of 71 percent.¹ 2025 represents the first time Co-Impact utilized CEP’s Grantee Perception Report survey in its entirety as well as including additional questions specific to Co-Impact’s resources, processes, and values from previous fully customized surveys. While survey results are referenced in this report; a more comprehensive set of results can be found in the interactive online report at <https://cep.surveyresults.org>.

Where data is available, partners’ responses are shown benchmarked to the responses of more than 60,000 grantees of over 350 funders in CEP’s grantee dataset. In most cases, partners’ ratings are also benchmarked against a smaller peer cohort of 15 funders. In these comparisons, ratings are referred to as “lower than typical,” “typical,” and “higher than typical.” This language relates directly to Co-Impact’s ratings in comparison to CEP’s overall dataset. “Lower than typical” refers to any rating that is in the bottom 35 percent of CEP’s comparative dataset, “typical” is defined as a rating between the 35th and 65th percentile, and “higher than typical” refers to a rating that is above the 65th percentile when compared to all funders in CEP’s dataset. Ratings described as “significantly” higher or lower reflect statistically significant differences at a p-value less than or equal to 0.1.

¹ All survey response rates are in line with or greater than CEP’s targets.

Interpreting Your Charts: Below is an explanation of the chart elements

Most questions in the grantee survey are asked on a 1-7 rating scale, where 7 most often reflects the positive end of the range. Given the power dynamic between funders and partners, and the intrinsically positive perceptions of organizations that have received funding, notice that average ratings cluster towards the higher end of the scale.



The GPR represents a snapshot of partners’ perceptions at a particular moment in time on several themes: Co-Impact’s overall impact on and understanding of partners’ fields, local communities, and organizations; perceptions of Co-Impact’s grantmaking and assistance beyond the grant; funder-grantee relationships; grant processes; and commitment to gender equity and social inclusion.

This is one learning tool to get a better understanding of partners’ perceptions and is not an evaluative tool. It should be considered one input to a larger set of feedback, reflection, and learning tools Co-Impact uses in its learning and reflection process.

Data analysis: CEP reviewed Co-Impact’s partners’ interview and survey data at multiple levels: the experiences of partners across rounds, types, and geographies, themes reflected in individual conversations, the prevalence of themes within each question, and changes from ratings and themes in CEP’s 2023 assessment. For much of this report, CEP has also organized partner comments and differences, if any, by grant type as seen in the chart below²:

Grant Type	Organizations represented in interviews	Survey responses received/ Number of partners surveyed
Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL	14	23/35
Design (Pre-Anchor and Pre-Domain)	16	31/40
Other	8	39/56

Notes on confidentiality: CEP is committed to the confidentiality of the partners who shared information for this project. CEP does not share individual survey responses from any partners. As part of its reporting on the interviews with partners, CEP has shared direct quotes only when they were representative of broader themes and do not contain any information that it believes could identify any specific respondent. Many quotes have been edited and redacted for clarity and to preserve anonymity. Please note however, that in the written

² Other specific partner groupings include partner region as well as funding round. Notably, for the online survey, CEP did not find any consistent, significant differences across different groupings. More details can be found in the online report.

comments provided by partners in their GPR responses, there are cases where they have offered identifying information that is included in the Partners' Comments and Suggestions file that accompanies the GPR.

Co-Impact's Unique Approach and Opportunities for Influence

In custom questions included in the GPR, funded partners continue to provide positive ratings, very similar to those obtained in 2023, regarding different aspects of Co-Impact's approach. They feel that their engagement has contributed to:

- a bigger, more powerful vision for systems or institutional change (mean rating of 6.26 out of 7),
- a deeper understanding of what it will take to successfully execute against their vision (5.84)
- adding a useful perspective and approach to integrating intersectional gender equality in their work (5.71)

Both in their written comments in the survey and in interviews, partners refer to Co-Impact's focus on systems transformation rather than traditional project-based funding. Grantees consistently highlight Co-Impact's expertise in systems change methodology and its ability to guide partners through this complex approach³, while emphasizing how critical it is to "think beyond 'projectized' approaches to shift injustice and discrimination."

Funding Approach Just Right

Further, when asked about it, half of interviewees⁴ expressed a clear preference for Co-Impact's systems change approach over issue-based funding. These partners value the broader perspective, innovation opportunities, and organizational strengthening that comes with systems-focused funding and make the following points:

- Systems approach enables greater innovation and risk-taking
- Allows organizations to "own" their work more fully
- Supports long-term institutional change rather than just project outcomes
- Enables focus on root causes rather than symptoms

Quite a few partners⁵, consider that there is value in both funding approaches but still tend to provide certain criticism regarding issue-based funders, who are often seen as coming with rigid frameworks and predetermined solutions. They do however recognize that diversifying their funding streams is helpful for their organization's sustainability and resilience. All in all, Co-Impact partners express appreciation for being regarded and trusted as the issue experts. Only in a handful of cases, partners identify challenges linked to a perceived lack of specialized knowledge in particular sectors, especially technical or highly specialized fields like law, education, or natural resource management. For example, one design partner suggests, "If they want to really have this regular set of grants on women in law, they must hire some lawyers or people with a legal background, it will make it easier for them to understand the proposals."

When asked about whether there was something not clear about Co-Impact's approach to them⁶, certain challenges continue to persist, particularly regarding grappling with the concepts of systems change and their application in partner's specific context. Often, partners mention that these issues get ironed out overtime as

³ When asked what is unique about Co-Impact's approach, half of interviewees (19) mentioned its approach to systems change. The second most common characteristic mentioned (by 14 partners) was the existence of the design phase and overall focus on strategy development.

⁴ 19 interviewees

⁵ 14 interviewees

⁶ 18 partners mentioned challenges

they advance through the process and their relationship with Co-Impact. Many of the challenges are related to a perceived lack of clarity in communicating expectations, which is treated later in this report.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

"For me, what makes Co-Impact unique is the... singular focus on system transformation... I've never come across a donor yet that that gets it in the same way as Co-Impact and is able to articulate it and genuinely support and act as a sort of genuine thought partner in that space." – **Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner**

"What we've not ever been able to do is also have a more holistic view of not only our program implementation side, but also looking at organizational strengthening and combining those efforts is really unique and we're really appreciative of that opportunity." – **Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner**

"When we work with issue-based funders, ones who are well versed in the in the ideas, they come with preconceived notions, and they come and say, 'this is what we think is a problem, and this is what we want you to do.' And there's very little room for... co-creation." – **Design Grant Partner**

Design Grant as a Unique Characteristic of Co-Impact's Approach

The focus on initiative design and the fact that Co-Impact provides specific design grants remains one of the most unique characteristics in the eyes of its partners.

In the GPR, 78 percent of partners would recommend (rating above a 6 or above on a 7-point scale) the design phase to an organization similar to theirs. As in previous years, they continue to rate positively (with mean ratings above 6 out of 7) the value of the different aspects of the design phase such as conducting analyses of relevant systems or incorporating an intersectional approach to their initiatives design and internal practices. It is worth noting however that there was a significant decline in ratings from 2023 on the value of the design phase in building or significantly strengthening relationships with critical partners (5.42 out of 7 in 2025 vs. 6.1 in 2023).

Overwhelmingly, partners described the design phase as an unprecedented opportunity for deep thinking based on a rigorous methodology. It enables them to build their systems thinking, as well as transform their organizations and capacities. They are also appreciative of the particular emphasis on organizational development in Co-Impact's approach during this phase.

Some of the main challenges relative to the design grant approach that partners have brought up are:

- Challenges with the formulation of the different modules, particularly the non-linear nature of them, making partners having to revisit previous modules
- Challenges with availability of data within their particular context

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

"It's very rare for organizations like us to be able to just take time off to conceptualize something all the time we're running and we're already implementing before we have the chance to conceptualize. So, I really want to appreciate that." – **Design Grant Partner**

"So, I would say the design phase was very helpful, in the sense that it introduced us to some of the key concepts and approaches that Co-Impact wanted us to employ in the implementation of our initiative. So, one of the key things was political economy analysis, how to unpack political economy issues, and that was very useful to the process. We also were introduced to how to apply a gender lens in unpacking the issues that constrain women from accessing services. And there was also a focus on organizational strengthening, which was also very useful."

There were some key tenants that Co-Impact wanted us to focus on strengthening our organizational capacity to achieve the goals that we set out to achieve in our in our strategy. So, I think these were quite useful as part of the process.” – **Other Grant Partner**

“They ask you for a module every two months, or something like that. So, you have to hand-in module one, hand-in module two, etc... and the problem is it's not linear at all. Like the actual process of reflection of etc., is very kind of, how do you say, iterative?” – **Design Grant Partner**

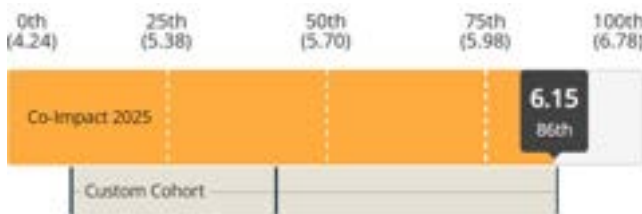
“There is a lot of repetition across the board. And even when we were having conversations with Co-Impact, you know, they would say, hey, but this should come later in your narrative. But a lot of the prompts kind of expect you to start thinking about some of those things.” – **Design Grant Partner**

“Data was difficult to get on our end. That’s always a problem on this side of the world, getting the kind of data you need to get your work done.” – **Design Grant Partner**

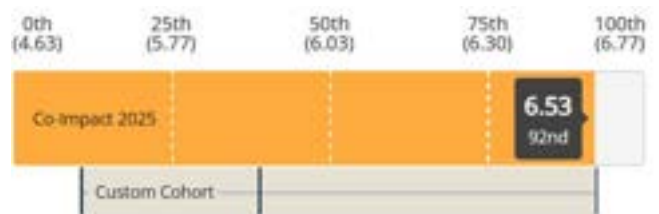
Strong Commitment to Gender Equity and Social Inclusion

Grantees appreciate Co-Impact's commitment to gender equity and feminist funding principles. This is consistent with ratings provided in the GPR, where Co-Impact was rated amongst the top 15% in CEP’s dataset and at the top of its custom cohort for: how clearly it communicates what gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) means for its work and for demonstrating an explicit commitment to GESI.

Clearly communicated what GESI means for Co-Impact’s work



Explicit commitment to GESI



Notably however, across the survey, ratings from respondents to identify as women are significantly lower than respondents who identify as men for many measures in the GPR, including:

- Aspects of beyond the grant assistance
- Gender equity and social inclusion
- Aspects of relationships such as comfort, trust, and responsiveness
- Aspects of communications such as clarity, transparency, and understanding of fit
- Aspects of process such as straightforwardness, adaptability, relevance, and helpfulness of reporting

These differences were not, however, reinforced or explained in interviews. When partners were asked how they would describe the embodiment of a commitment to gender equity by Co-Impact staff in their interactions, almost all partners said that Co-Impact “walks their talk” when it comes to their commitment to gender equity. Alongside their positive perceptions, partners noted that Co-Impact brings deep expertise and knowledge, with a particular recognition of intersectionality and complex gender dynamics. In the words of one partner: "They have been gender experts and have been working in the space of gender for a very, very long time. So, any conversation, any suggestions that they would have, it is an embodiment of... years of expertise and experience."

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPT:

"[Co-Impact] is one of the most feminist funders that could possibly exist... you guys have sort of incorporated many of these feminist principles in the ways in which you work... through a principle of care, right, through a principle of empathy." – Design Grant Partner

Role in Influencing and Learning in the Field of Philanthropy

Co-Impact is consistently viewed as setting a high standard in the philanthropic sector, with many grantees using them as a benchmark for evaluating other donor relationships.

Partners see therefore significant unrealized potential for Co-Impact to influence the field of philanthropy⁷ more broadly through greater visibility and more active thought leadership. They appreciate Co-Impact's unique approach but want to see it shared more widely and they identify three main ways of doing this:

- Influence other funders' practices through sharing their learning in different forums and overall work on Co-Impact's visibility as a funder
- Support the adoption of multi-year, flexible approaches to funding by "positioning themselves as an advocate for that within the philanthropy space"
- Facilitate networks and access for their partners to other players and funders in the field by "brokering relationships, opening more doors..."

They also offer some best practices from their experience with other funders that they believe Co-Impact could consider, namely:

- Opportunities for grant renewal or expansion beyond initial commitments (the Ford Foundation's BUILD program was offered as an example for this)
- More regular engagement, through a more localized presence or conducting more often field visits (the Gates Foundation was mentioned as an example)
 - o Relatedly, attending and participating in the events and activities organized by partners
- Using guided conversation meetings, instead of formal written reports (BUILD program example)
- Even more in-person opportunities for grantee learning and networking (Hewlett Foundation's regional gatherings were mentioned here)

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

"Learning what they're seeing from across the world...them sharing these stories, them sharing this evidence to the larger political world, as well as the donor world, the philanthropy world will have a significant impact in the sector." – Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner

"Co-Impact can...facilitate some of these conversations, bringing some of these philanthropists to the table." – Design Grant Partner

"I would like to see Co-Impact more often in like conferences and events." – Design Grant Partner

Recommendations – Co-Impact's Approach

- Continue to engage and offer support to partners to explain in plain language the concepts behind the systems change approach.

⁷ 32 out of 34 interviewees who directly referred to this, explicitly affirmed that Co-Impact has a role to play in advancing the field of philanthropy, with only 2 expressing uncertainty due to insufficient knowledge or unclear positioning.

- Particularly for partners who are at the beginning of their systems change journey with Co-Impact that may not always have the language or methods internally and may grapple with certain concepts, continued efforts to communicate them in clear and concise language are still helpful.
- To the extent that Co-Impact may be contemplating continuing to work or expanding its work on certain specific themes, such as Women in Law, consider integrating staff members with more related expertise or knowledge in those fields.
- As Co-Impact gains more experience and begins to compile partner outcomes, share these learnings more widely, through external communications and participation in sector events and working groups. Consider developing a specific advocacy and influencing strategy for the social change and development finance field.
- Seek opportunities to engage in learning exchanges with other funders similar in size and approaches to support learning and further development of Co-Impact's approaches.

Thoughtful Grantmaking Practices with Opportunity for Further Impact on Partners' Organizations

In the GPR, ratings for Co-Impact's overall impact on grantees' organizations are similar to 2023, now in the 31st percentile of CEP's dataset compared to the 37th percentile in 2023. In their open-ended survey responses, partners highlight Co-Impact's flexible trust-based funding approach, as well as the internal transformation their organizations have been able to achieve as a result of Co-Impact's support. One partner says, "They have helped us establish stronger systems and processes, which are foundational for our long-term sustainability and scalability."

In interviews, partners comment on the important impact Co-Impact has had on their organizations. Namely, partners comment on how working with Co-Impact has fundamentally shifted their approach to their work, moving them from project-based thinking to systems change thinking. Several also comment on the impact that the partnership-based relationship model had on their organizations, saying "the Co-Impact strategic document is not for Co-Impact. This is for our organization, for our vision, for our work, our future work, and related to how to see the problem with the helicopter view." This helps partners shift their thinking and mission to be focused on systems change strategy. Others comment on the fact that Co-Impact's long-term funding has allowed their organization to plan strategically. One partner emphasizes, "they believe in the fact that it takes a whole lot of resources to be able to push for change, and they are willing to take a shot on organizations, on collectives, on partners who are invested in that work, and not just invested in the short term, but invested in that work for the medium to long term."

Understanding of Partners' Organizations and Contexts

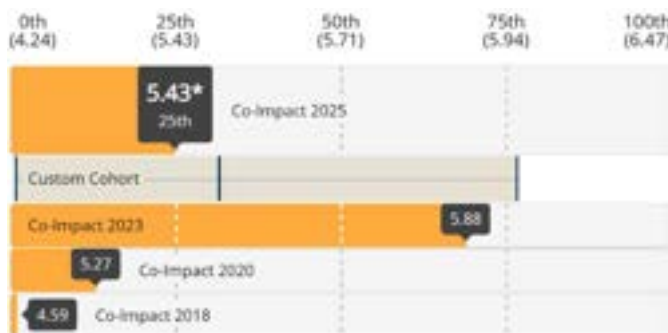
Survey ratings for how well Co-Impact understands the social, cultural, or socioeconomic factors that affect partners' work have significantly decreased since 2023, and while still largely positive (mean rating of 5.43 out of 7), in comparison to other funders they are now lower than typical. Ratings are below typical levels in comparison to the custom cohort for how well Co-Impact understands partners' fields, and typical for its awareness of challenges that partners' organizations are facing. There is some variation in these ratings based on partners' funding round. Foundational Fund partners provide ratings near the top of the dataset for aspects related to Co-Impact's understanding of their organizations, while Gender Fund 1 partners provide ratings near the bottom of the dataset on these same measures. Similarly, for Co-Impact's understanding of partners' fields

and contexts, Foundational Fund and Gender Fund 4 partners provide higher ratings than Gender Fund 1, 2, or 3 partners.

Co-Impact’s understanding of partner organizations’ strategy and goals



Co-Impact’s understanding of the social, cultural, or socioeconomic factors that affect partners’ work



In interviews, partners were also asked directly how they feel that the team at Co-Impact understands the socio-political context they work in, and how it affects the work that they do. Echoing the overall positive ratings, the majority of partners respond that Co-Impact does understand their socio-political context. Partners frequently mention the value of having staff based in and from their local country or region, as well as the value of in person engagement with staff. Partners describe staff as having “a very strong understanding and knowledge of how [their] country works.” About a fifth of partners in interviews respond that they do not feel Co-Impact completely understands their context, or they spoke about some challenge related to this understanding. A few of these challenges came from partners working in particularly complex or rapidly changing political environments, where they noted limitations in Co-Impact’s understanding, especially regarding day-to-day political dynamics and highly localized challenges. Partners also acknowledge that due to Co-Impact’s approach, a deep contextual understanding might not be feasible or necessary. One partner says, “I think, given the strategic decision they’ve made, to work across every issue area and geography, they are about as good as they could possibly be on that.”

Similarly, when asked how well partners think that Co-Impact staff understand the challenges their organization is facing internally, and the changes they are trying to make, partners feel positively, though somewhat mixed.⁸ One partner says, “They underestimate the maturity of organizations. So therefore, when an organization is mature in its thinking and its programs, they’ve moved far ahead of Co-Impact offering suggested routes... coupled with the experience of the organization, and things that the organization has tried.” Many other partners also make nuanced responses, acknowledging Co-Impact’s efforts to understand their context while identifying specific gaps or areas needing improvement. For longer-term partners, several mention that this understanding has changed or grown over time. One partner says Co-Impact has “...a pretty good grasp. I think we’ve walked a long journey with them, and I think they understand both the operational complexity we deliver... as well as the pivots that we’ve had to make.”

⁸ 18 partners interviewed mentioned a positive comment while 9 mentioned a constructive or negative comment related to organizational understanding

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

“Well, I don't know, because it has to do a lot with the political scenario that we are living right now, which was completely different as the one that we had when we got to Co-Impact. So really, I don't think so. And when we talk to them, we tell them what we are struggling with. But sometimes it's hard. I mean, Co-Impact is [not based locally]. It's completely different from the chaos that we are living right now in [our country]. So, I think they have this open approach, but to get them into it would be hard.” – Other Grant Partner

“They are funders, so their understanding is, of course, limited. But given that among funders, I would say they're among the most sophisticated in terms of understanding organization change, like we are regularly talking about how, as we try to get more system change throughout our work, internal change strategies and things like that, which almost no funder asks about.” – Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner

“The ability to listen, with complete heart and soul and mind. I think there was so much depth in listening and understanding our program in such a way that it almost felt that they had such a thorough understanding that they could be a part of the program.” – Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner

“Sometimes their understanding and our understanding about the political situation is a little bit different, and it's very logical because some of their team members are in Europe, other team members are in the US, and we are here in India, or any other developing countries, and in each and every place, the politics are very, very different.” – Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner

“Sometimes, if they don't know, they will ask. They will ask us about what we mean with this, what terminology is, or something like that. So, I think, they are open...I think it's very helpful for us also to explain what we mean with the terminology or the situation [here].” – Design Grant Partner

Impactful Grantmaking Characteristics

CEP's broad research finds that grantmaking characteristics are related to perceptions of impact, with large, multi-year, and/or unrestricted grants associated with stronger perceptions of impact. Based on partners' self-reported survey data, Co-Impact's median “main” (Anchor, Design, SC or WiL) grant size is \$7 Million, which is larger than the average size of grants made by all other funders in CEP's dataset. Over half of this type of grantees indicate that their funding is unrestricted, which is well above the typical funder in CEP's dataset and the custom cohort. At the median, Co-Impact's partners who receive these grants have an organizational budget of \$11 Million, which is amongst the highest in the comparative dataset. On average, Co-Impact's Anchor, Design, SC or WiL grants fund 21 percent of partner organizations' budgets, compared to only four percent at the median funder in the overall dataset, and ten percent in the custom cohort.⁹

Main Grant Characteristics:

Median Grant Size	Average Grant Length	Unrestricted Grants
\$7M	5 Yrs	52%
Co-Impact 2025	Co-Impact 2025	Co-Impact 2025
vs.	vs.	vs.
\$465K in the custom cohort \$127K at the typical funder	2.5 yrs in the custom cohort 2.2 yrs at the typical funder	32% in the custom cohort 25% at the typical funder

⁹ Please note that these data have been self-reported by partners in the survey and may differ from Co-Impact's internal records.

In survey comments and interviews, partners mention grantmaking characteristics as a key distinguishing factor in their experience with Co-Impact. In interviews, one partner praises the unrestricted support they received, saying, “The unrestricted grant has been instrumental in allowing us to concentrate on developing the long-term strategies needed for systemic change... Unrestricted funding provides us with the opportunity to fully immerse ourselves in solving this complex issue layer by layer.” A few people also speak about the length of the grant, making the case that although they are grateful for the relatively large and long-term grant, systems change takes a long time, suggesting that Co-Impact should invest for an even longer period of time. One partner says, “So even though the Co-Impact model says that [they make] long-term grants, the question is, how long-term are they?” Relatedly, some longer-term partners that are nearing the end of their funding talk about the importance of considering what happens after the grant, and potential continuity in funding. While considering strategies for how to exit funding with these partners, Co-Impact should look for ways to ensure these partners are supported to continue their systems change work, as one partner puts it, they could be “stuck in the middle of the sea” after their funding with Co-Impact concludes.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

“I mean, just the type of grants they give is very unique. They are ...the example of the kind of grant we want... large grants, multi annual.” – Design Grant Partner

“System change does take time, and so even though they're already some of the longest term funders out there, you know, five years is pretty impressive, it would be nice if there were renewal or stronger renewal opportunities, but...this is about as good as it gets in social change.” – Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner

“We've been looking at other funders, and have secured other funders, but we have understood that there is a competition perspective, not from Co-Impact, but from other funders into us. So sometimes [we will say] Oh, we're Co-Impact grantees, and then smaller donors don't recognize us as an organization that should be receiving [their grants] because we already got a big amount of money that will last us a long time. So, they're like, you're no longer the size of the organization we're supporting. And then there are other major funders... that we knocked on their door, and both of them were like, ‘Oh no, but we donate to Co-Impact, so we do not need to donate to you.’ But it was a weird process in which it's like we're too big for the small ones, but the big ones are donating to Co-Impact in itself.” – Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner

“I think, with a catalytic grant making process, which is quite different to the anchor and domain grant that have been provided, it is really allowed organizations to be able to come on board and use the three year period as a way to get our house in order to start working at the scale at which we need to work if we are going to push in strategic ways for gender justice to be a reality for our communities, and I think that is something that we don't often see with other donors.” – Other Grant Partner

Opportunity for Further Impact Through Support Beyond the Grant

Another way through which Co-Impact has an impact on partner organizations is through the non-monetary assistance that it provides. Seventy-one percent of partners indicate receiving at least one form of assistance beyond the grant from Co-Impact. The most frequent types of assistance grantees received are program-related assistance, learning, measurement, and evaluation assistance, and strategy-related assistance. Ratings are in line with the typical funder for the extent that the support received met an important need for partners’

organizations or programs, lower than typical for the extent that the assistance was a worthwhile use of time required of them, and that they felt Co-Impact would be open to feedback about the assistance¹⁰.



When partners are asked in the survey what the top challenges and priorities are which they might benefit from external support from, the most commonly mentioned items are related to the funding and financial sustainability, Learning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (LME), and government engagement and policy advocacy.

In interviews, when asked to provide their overall appreciation of CI’s assistance beyond the grant, partners frequently mention the value of Co-Impact’s role in creating connections – both among fellow partners and with other organizations in their sector. This networking includes international meetings, donor convenings, and strategic introductions that help smaller organizations access networks typically beyond their reach. Partners also mention Co-Impact’s deep expertise in systems change work and their ability to provide strategic guidance through a variety of ways.

Overall, partners have mixed experiences with Co-Impact’s different supports beyond the grant, indicating opportunities for learning and improvement. More granular feedback on specific aspects of support beyond the grant is discussed in the following section.

Recommendations – Impact on Organizations

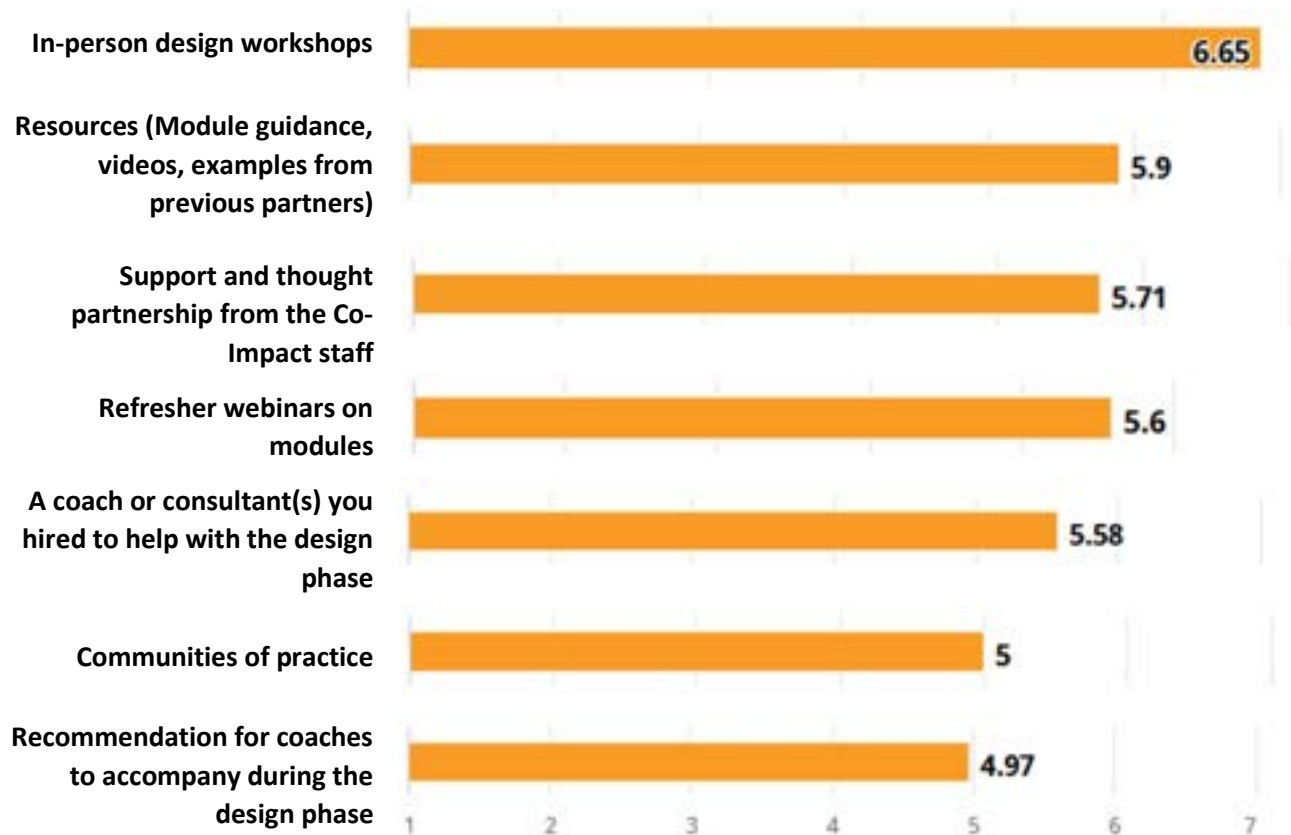
- Despite partners’ recognition that due to Co-Impact’s specific strategy, it is not necessary for Co-Impact to have a deep understanding of all partners’ contexts, organizations, or challenges, reflect on how Co-Impact still might be able to gain deeper understanding of partners and the context they operate in.
 - As Co-Impact continues to work with new partners across diverse geographies and fields, consider how to properly continue to staff up in order to meet the needs of partners. Consider staff with expertise in fields like Law, and staff based in or from communities that partners are working in.
 - Continue to be aware of the trade-offs of more limited understanding due to Co-Impact’s approach of systems change funding rather than being subject area experts.
- Consider even longer grants, or continuity grants for successful partners to continue their systems change work. Work to explicitly to define an exit strategy with grantees in order to ensure these partners and their work are supported and can continue after their funding from Co-Impact ends.

¹⁰ Please note that there were insufficient data points in Co-Impact’s custom cohort in order to be able to display comparative ratings for these two measures. As an alternative, we offer a benchmark comparison to the sub-cohort of funder in the GPR that work internationally.

Mixed Perceptions on Co-Impact’s Support Beyond the Grant

In the survey, when partners are asked about the usefulness of various supports provided by Co-Impact during the design phase, communities of practice (CoP) and recommendations for coaches are the two least useful supports, with about 40% of partners rating a four or below out of seven.

Usefulness of support mediums during the design phase



Despite this, in interviews, several partners comment on the value of their coach or participating in a CoP, saying, “I’m quite happy with the way they run the CoP,” and their coach has “been an amazing sister to us. She’s been very supportive, and she’s been there for us and she also looks at the issues. She understands challenges [in our country] and she encourages us as well.” Taken together, the survey data and interviews both confirm a somewhat mixed perception of the non-monetary supports Co-Impact provides.

Growing Pains with Communities of Practice

Partners that have participated in the Communities of Practice (CoP) speak highly of them for their value from peer learning and community. Partners express appreciation for cross-learning opportunities, feeling less isolated in their work, and gaining practical insights from peers facing similar challenges. Perceptions are more varied when it comes to topics like facilitation, structure, and participation.

Partners speak to these challenges in survey open-ended responses, where they suggest adjustments to the CoP’s structure and format.¹¹ One partner writes “the Community of Practice conversations were usually too general to be helpful. More structure and a focus on specific topics would improve their usefulness,” and

¹¹ 13 comments

another notes, “We had the opportunity to meet with other organizations, but the conversation didn't flow...I think a better methodology for interaction would be necessary.”

Overall, about a quarter of people that participated in CoP's noted some type of challenge, and over half of people offered some type of suggestion for how to improve the Communities of Practice. Grantees had different experiences with how CoP sessions were facilitated, with some praising the structure and preparation while others criticized the quality of facilitators and their understanding of the partners' context. Some partners also struggled with digital communication methods, Slack in particular. Feedback and suggestions also vary based on partners with different fund types and stage of funding. Anchor or Domain grantees that are in the implementation phase tend to be more advanced in their work, so they are seeking a different type of guidance compared to partners in the design phase. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to Communities of Practice may not serve the diverse needs of different partners effectively.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

“Some of the sessions were not directly applicable to all the initiatives, you know. So, there are instances where they mix the cohort of grantees. So, you have those in the design phase together with those implementing, and some of the things being discussed may not be applicable to those who are implementing. So, I think going forward, if there's a way of segregating the cohort, so that we have specific or tailored discussions for the different cohorts [it would] be a useful addition. – Other Grant Partner

“Yeah, it was just generally useful. I think there was a lot of like-minded support for peers, and I think people understanding exactly where each other was going. You know, I found it probably more helpful supporting peers, from my perspective, rather than providing expert input into anything perhaps. So, I think was a good, strong infrastructure for peers.” – Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner

“It was a great idea, but I don't think we used it as much. We had the Slack, and we opened up these different channels where people could come in and ask questions like, Oh, what are you guys doing? ...we didn't use it as much ... I think it was a good idea, and it would have been wonderful to kind of have the time and space to kind of call others or reach out to the other groups for questions, but we just found it more efficient to just ask the coaches or to use the Co-Impact team to answer questions.” – Design Grant Partner

“I like the way her team runs the community of practice because I'm a member of several other communities of practice run by predominantly white organizations, and they can be quite autocratic.” – Other Grant Partner

“The first thing was that it helped to douse affairs. So sometimes I'm not the only one struggling. That was very helpful. And then also when others were sharing feedback on the stages they were on, it allowed for cross learning on the work. So even though we're working on different things, we could pull some of the approaches that they were using and see that, okay, how can we learn from this, leverage it to the work that we're doing, and vice versa.” – Design Grant

Value and Challenges in Working with Coaches

According to survey data, about half of partners have engaged an external coach for support through Co-Impact. They provide strongest ratings for the extent that a coach was useful in providing strategic thought partnership and feedback, helping to clearly write and communicate their ideas, and helping to structure, approach, and manage the design phase process.

In survey open-ended responses, the most commonly cited suggestions for improvement related to coaches are the selection, expertise and training.¹² One partner writes about struggling to find a qualified coach, saying, “It is not easy to find coaches who align well with our organization,” while another says, “we have found that we have had to go back and forth quite a bit in bringing our coach up to speed.”

Partners’ sentiments in interviews support this data. Most partners that have engaged a coach speak positively¹³ about their experience, emphasizing the value of coaches, particularly for navigating new concepts like systems change, providing structure and frameworks, and offering external perspective. Grantees also appreciate the flexible approach to choosing a coach, and half of partners indicated that they used Co-Impact’s repository of coaches, while the other half found their coach through their own network. The highest proportion of partners engaged their coach during the design phase¹⁴, and partners in the design phase most often used coaches for learning systems change methodology and proposal development support.

In their suggestions, a few partners note conflicting feedback between coach advice and Co-Impact staff, as one partner says, “The challenge is that we had a great coach, and they would give us good advice, but when we take the revised proposal back to Co-Impact, [they] had a different idea, so we ended up doing a lot of back and forth... It was a cause of a lot of frustration, the misalignment between the coaches and Co-Impact.” Some partners also mention challenges related to timing, and other process related challenges. For example, several mention time pressure to select coaches quickly after funding, unexpected expectation for budget of coach, or need to engage with the coach at a different moment in the process.

Helpful Workshops

In the survey, Co-Impact partners have found the in-person design workshops to be the most helpful support medium during the design phase.

In interviews, partners speak very positively about their experience attending design workshops. The most common reflection¹⁵ related to design grant workshops is the valuable peer learning opportunities and cross-grantee connections the workshops provided. One partner says, “For the first time, we actually started seeing other partners in the same boat, struggling through the same kind of questions... there’s a bit of comfort in learning that, okay, it’s not very unique the challenges that I’m facing.” Many partners¹⁶ also expressed that the workshops were crucial for helping them understand Co-Impact’s specific approach to systems change, their terminology, and their requirements. For example, one partner says that the workshop allowed them to “think about how Co-Impact is thinking about the institutional change.” Partners also shared their preference for in-person workshops over virtual ones¹⁷, citing better networking opportunities, reduced distractions, and more effective learning experiences. When partners did attend a virtual workshop, it was usually out of necessity rather than preference for a virtual convening. Despite the format constraints, some partners did find the virtual workshops valuable and well executed as well, as one partner says, “I think even though we did it virtually, you know, it was still pretty interactive and helpful.”

¹² 13 comments

¹³ 25 interviews were conducted with partners that have engaged coaches. 22 of these interviews mentioned positive themes related to their experience working with a coach, and 4 provided negative comments on this topic. 10 partners provided at least one suggestion.

¹⁴ 14 partners engaged their coach during the design phase, 1 in the implementation, and 3 in both phases

¹⁵ 14 out of 16 partners mentioned this theme.

¹⁶ 12 out of 16 partners mentioned this theme.

¹⁷ 7 partners mentioned attending in-person workshops, 3 virtual, and 4 both.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

"I think it was helpful as an opportunity to just get to meet with the other, potential grantees of the design phase. Not just for economics, but also law. And you were able to kind of discuss similar questions, but across contexts. And I think even from our own experience of doing the virtual design workshop, it was really helpful to... just have that space to speak with other initiatives, thinking through how they're approaching it.... So I think it was very helpful to kind of have those discussions and think about the same barriers and structures that Co-Impact was asking us to think about. But from different lenses, I thought that was definitely one of the most useful aspects." – Design Grant Partner

"I think that was one of the best workshops that I have attended. Definitely, it was very useful. Because I think the first thing it allowed us to see was even internally as a team, there were so many differences in understanding of what we were doing. I think that workshop was very good in terms of helping us sharpen our own understanding.... It was also very useful that during that workshop, we had other people observing the ways in which we are articulating our problems. So, there was somebody who was constantly telling us, you know you're saying this, but this is not matching with what he's saying or she's saying, or what you're doing or how your documents look. So that kind of feedback, very sharp, critical feedback, I thought that was definitely useful." – Design Grant Partner

Useful Materials

In 2025, 79 percent of partners surveyed have read some or all of the Co-Impact Handbook created in 2019 (and revised in 2021). This proportion has almost doubled since 2023, when only 43 percent of partners had reported reading any of the handbook. Usage has also greatly increased for the Learning, Measurement, and Evaluation Guidebook published in 2021. Now, 74 percent have read some or all of it, while in 2023 only 28 percent had.

This is supported by partners' responses when they are asked in interviews if there are any materials provided by Co-Impact that they have found particularly useful, as the most common things mentioned are the handbooks and documentation. Several partners also commented on the usefulness of the videos provided, as they are easier to share with others, and less time-consuming compared to handbooks or guidebooks. One partner says, "There were a series of videos that we received right at the beginning.... extremely well-done pieces which we found very useful to share with the team." Partners also commented on the usefulness of examples from other organizations, and two partners requested even more examples, especially as Co-Impact gains more grantees, sector-specific examples from other partners would be particularly useful for some.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

"In terms of the resources, particularly the one that really comes to mind is, is the handbook, the Co-Impact handbook. I remember that being circulated quite early in the journey in our partnership with Co-Impact, and that was really helpful and in a very kind of clear articulation about the different levels at which Co-Impact works, the different kind of perspectives, and how it all kind of comes together." – Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner

"The individual guides that were available for writing those modules – all these were extremely useful. Most times we just kept going back to either the videos that were shared or those decks that were put together for our workshop to clarify a few things." – Design Grant Partner

"They give not just information, but also samples that relate to our issues, and it's really helpful." – Design Grant Partner

Recommendations – Support Beyond the Grant

- Continue to provide support beyond the grant like Coaches and Communities of Practice to those who are interested, as many partners find them very valuable. Examine partners’ specific feedback for each of these supports and reflect on how these programs can be improved.
 - For coaches, consider logistical challenges having to do with timing and funding, and revisit the roles and communication of expectations between coaches and Co-Impact. Consider also how Co-Impact can continue to develop the repository of coaches, to include individuals that are vetted and more well versed in partners’ different contexts and approaches.
 - For Communities of Practice, consider segmenting the groups by partner’s grant phase to ensure the structure is conducive for productive conversations. Create however the opportunity for new partners to request direct connections with already funded partners that can provide insights from their experience. Make cross cohort meetings more explicit and purposeful in order to facilitate learning for newer partners.
 - Be purposeful about how the CoP’s are structured, consider more in-person or live elements and ensure facilitators have proper expertise and understanding of partners’ work. Furthermore, look into challenges related to other factors including technology and expertise of facilitators.
- Since they are so useful, continue to provide and encourage the use of materials that Co-Impact provides, including the handbook and guidebooks. Consider providing even more sample documents and case studies, as well as short-form video content that partners can easily share with others within their organizations. Consider asking partners more proactively if Co-Impact can share their materials as examples with other or future partners.

Helpful, Yet Demanding Grant Processes

Similar to previous years, Co-Impact’s partners provide an overall positive assessment of its process requirements, which continue to require considerable effort from partners.

Application and Selection Process

Partners provide ratings in the top ten percent of funders in CEP’s dataset, and at the top of the custom cohort, for the helpfulness of the selection process¹⁸, with a mean rating of 6.27 out of 7. Co-Impact partners report on average spending 100hrs on its application and selection process. Despite this being one of the highest compared to other funders, ratings for how appropriate this level of effort is, given the amount of funding received, are near those of the typical funder.



In interviews, some grantees referred to certain challenges in relation to the application process:

- Some lack of clarity of what the overall process or “roadmap” to getting funded would be, specifically steps, sequence and timings

¹⁸ Here we are referring to funding proposals, either for grants that did not have a design phase, or applications for a design grant.

- In cases where templates were provided, there were a few mentions of inconsistencies or changes of templates leading to certain confusion, as well as frustration with word limits

In the survey, though trending down, partners remain feeling more pressure than typical to modify their organization's priorities in order to create a grant proposal that was likely to receive funding.

In interviews, CEP asked partners if their idea changed over time, to which there was an overall agreement that their ideas had evolved through their engagement with Co-Impact's processes. The most common experience¹⁹ was narrowing and refining initial proposals from broad, ambitious concepts to more strategic, focused approaches. This process typically maintained core objectives while sharpening target populations, geographic scope, or intervention strategies.

Partners commented that this evolution of their ideas occurred through a genuinely collaborative engagement,²⁰ with Co-Impact serving as thought partners rather than directive funders. Only a handful – six – partners mentioned experiencing some sort of pressure from Co-Impact to change their priorities, and this 'pressure' was not perceived in a negative manner.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

"I wish we had a bit more detail over the entire length of the process so we could plan better... walking through your potential grantees through the red tape, the steps that it takes for them to get to the implementation phase." – **Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner**

"They are telling us that it's our call... they actually emphasize a lot that it's our call, that they don't have a say in this, that they are only here to support." – **Design Grant Partner**

"We were very broad... through the process of refining our problem we had to refine our problem statement, target group... from what was non-specific, not quite defined to now we have something that's very clear." – **Design Grant Partner**

"There was some pressure from Co-Impact, but I wouldn't deem that pressure as negative pressure, right? I think it was, it was justified and necessary pressure." – **Other Grant Partner**

Design Grant Process

As discussed earlier in the report, partners assign great value to the Design Phase, which they single out as a key distinguishing factor for Co-Impact as a funder.

Partners who are currently or have recently completed the Design Phase, also offer some important notes about the process during this phase.

In interviews, partners put emphasis on the following key aspects of the process during the design phase:

- Co-Impact's support and responsiveness throughout the process, with specific mentions of high-quality and detailed feedback on the modules presented and regular check-ins and conversations
- Overall flexibility with timelines and use of budget, as well as agreeing to adaptations whenever needed
- Structured and iterative approach through the different modules
- Design workshops and peer exchange, including seeing examples and samples from peer organizations²¹

¹⁹ Mentioned by 13 interviewees

²⁰ Mentioned by 8 interviewees

²¹ 12 partners mentioned responsiveness and feedback, 10 mentioned issues related to flexibility, 5 provide positive aspects regarding the process structure and 6 for peer exchange and peer examples.

However, partners, in both their written survey comments and interviews, mention challenges and suggestions that are related to the above positive aspects:

- As with the application process, some grantees would like to have more clarity upfront about the full ‘roadmap’ and expected timelines
- They would like to have access to even more examples and samples that match their own context
- Streamline module prompts to reduce repetition across modules, including breaking them into smaller, more manageable pieces
- Promote even more exchange between peers, including new partners and partners that have already successfully completed the design phase
- Ensuring that feedback from the teams is provided in more timely manner
- Uncertainty linked to the lack of transparency around the criteria and availability of funding after the design phase is completed, particularly when partners already work to build relationships with stakeholders in the design phase, without having certainty about the implementation of the initiative.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

"So iterative... we've gone back, like so many times... However, it has also helped to bring clarity." – **Design Grant Partner**

"Seeing examples for me the most kind of eye-opening moments... when I heard examples from other organizations and the insights they had." – **Design Grant Partner**

"Knowing the schedule, all the schedule before starting work it would be helpful." – **Design Grant Partner**

"Always give a sample that resembles the institution where the people are working." – **Design Grant Partner**

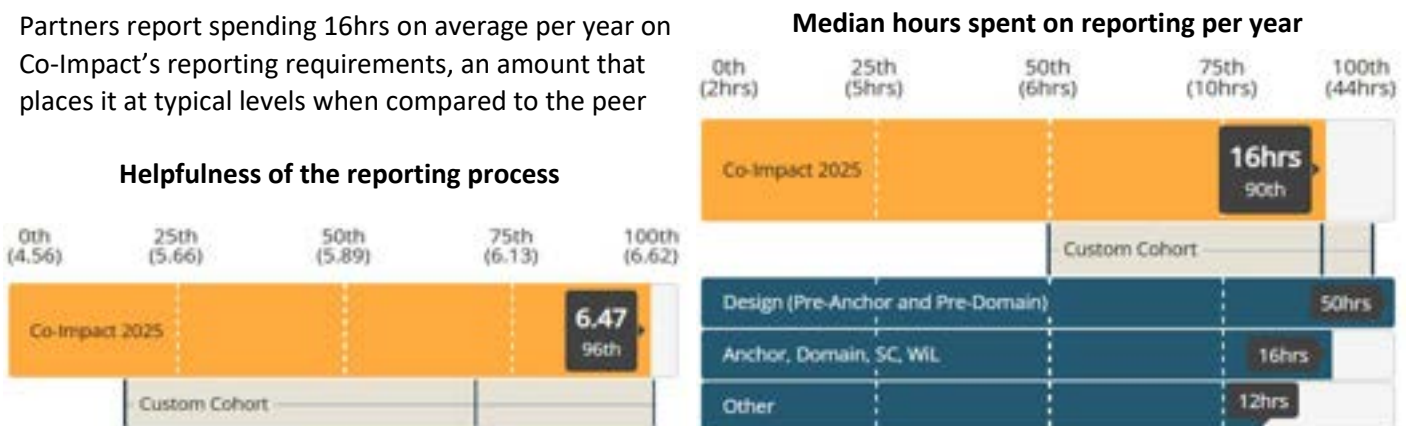
"Maybe there's room to streamline just some of those prompts that we're trying to address across modules." – **Design Grant Partner**

"Promoting the exchange between new organizations and organizations that already have funding." – **Design Grant Partner**

Reporting and Learning, Measurement, and Evaluation

Ratings for the extent to which the reporting processes was a helpful opportunity for partners to reflect and learn are in the top five percent of CEP’s dataset, and the adaptability of the reporting processes is in the top quarter of the dataset. However, ratings are lower than the typical funder for how straightforward the reporting process was.

Partners report spending 16hrs on average per year on Co-Impact’s reporting requirements, an amount that places it at typical levels when compared to the peer



funders in its custom cohort. Partners in the design phase spend considerably more hours than the rest of their partners on this aspect.

Both in survey comments and interviews, few partners mentioned challenges or suggestions for the reporting process. The main theme mentioned is a lack of clear guidance regarding reporting requirements, feeling that partners have to second-guess what is required of them, or receiving guidance and templates late.

Challenges²² are also mentioned with the Learning, Measurement and Learning framework and requirements. As in previous years, partners that express challenges refer to the complexity of the matter and their own lack of capacity or understanding of how to apply the framework from a systems change perspective. There is mention of lack of clarity on the side of the partners of what is expected of them in relation to LME and one partner thinks that the level of rigor and precision of the framework is not adaptable to the ever changing and adaptable nature of their feminist work.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS:

"Grant reporting process... is not very clear. My sense is that they don't want to be rigid, and they want us to choose our way of doing this... sometimes, I think we are kind of second-guessing what exactly they'd like to see and it does... take up a decent amount of time." – **Other Grant Partner**

"We're not sure how to report on it [The LME framework]. They've explained it. I can't tell you how many times they've explained it, and we keep trying to do it. And it's not what they're looking for, and it's not clear, ...and what works for other organizations doesn't seem to be applicable for ours... We're just doing it for Co-Impact at this stage, you know, it hasn't been useful to us, and we're not understanding what they want, how to make it useful to us or when we try to, it's not what they're looking for, so there's a disconnect." – **Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner**

Recommendations – Grant Processes

- Have a clear process road map shared with new partners at the beginning of the engagement, covering the full process from initial application, to reporting and LME requirements.
- Similarly, share a detailed process map with design grant partners, as well as the key criteria that will be used for deciding on final funding, and the available amounts for funding.
- Bring more intentionality in communicating clearly about process requirements and expectations from partners, as well as sharing available templates proactively.
 - There seems to be a need to address the trade-off between the risk of being perceived as a more prescriptive funder and being more considerate of partners' time and feelings of uncertainty. Co-Impact could consider sharing a sheet with key information and what guidance, templates or samples are available, indicating clearly when use is optional.
- Ensure consistency and set a standard about expected times for providing feedback on materials submitted by partners.
- Consider addressing openly the non-linear nature of modules in the design phase and offer additional support for navigating the process.

²² 7 partners referred to specific challenges with LME

Genuine Partnership with Some Communication Challenges

Partners continue to express that they derive high value from their interactions with Co-Impact’s staff, while wishing for some more directness in communications.

Relationships with Staff

Feedback from both the interviews and Co-Impact’s GPR provide a comprehensive view of Co-Impact’s relationships with its partners. Interviews suggest that partners have rich and meaningful relationships with Co-Impact staff.²³ Partners consistently describe their relationships with Co-Impact staff as exceptionally positive, characterized by respect, professionalism, and genuine care. The overwhelming sentiment is one of working with trusted partners rather than traditional donors. However, GPR ratings suggest there is room, comparatively, for continued improvement.

In 2025, ratings are typical or lower than typical for nearly all relationships measures in the GPR and often lower than the median of Co-Impact’s custom cohort of peer funders. There is some variation across these measures when responses are analyzed by grant type and funding round. For many measures, Gender Fund 1 and 3 provide ratings that are lower than Foundational Fund or Gender Fund 2 partners, while Other grant partners tend to provide more positive ratings compared to Anchor or Design partners.



Ratings are in line with the typical funder for partners’ comfort approaching Co-Impact if a problem arises and the extent that Co-Impact is open to ideas from partners about its strategy. However, ratings are lower than typical for the extent that Co-Impact exhibited trust in partners’ organization’s staff and staff’s overall responsiveness. Further, for questions where historical data is available, Co-Impact ratings have often declined, several by significant margins. One area where partners provide higher than typical ratings is the extent to which Co-Impact exhibits candor about its perspective on their work.

In interviews more broadly, when asked about their relationships with staff, partners most frequently cite the quality of their interpersonal relationships with Co-Impact’s team as a valuable component of their work with Co-Impact. They also highlight Co-Impact’s communication and responsiveness, understanding and contextual awareness, thought partnership, and flexibility. Where challenges do occur, they are most often administrative or process oriented rather than relational, in particular during busy periods in regard to responsiveness, staff burden, and timing of feedback. Only eight partners explicitly highlight suggestions for how Co-Impact could improve their interactions with partners. These suggestions focused primarily on providing more structured and frequent touchpoints, ideally more in-person and in-country interaction, more opportunities to develop deeper relationships, to ask questions, and to provide more clarity both from the perspective of individual organizations

²³ 36 out of 38 partners cited positive interactions with staff. Conversely, 14 partners highlighted encountering a challenge in their interactions with staff.

and Co-Impact. As one partner notes, “Co-Impact is one of the most fantastic funders we've ever worked with, just the friendliness...” Others praise their Co-Impact account leads as “kind,” “accommodating,” and “patient.”

SITE VISITS AND OTHER INTERACTION PATTERNS

There are some interaction patterns – like site visits²⁴, contact monthly or more often²⁵, and mutual discussion of how funded work would be assessed²⁶ – that are associated with more positive ratings for Co-Impact. Partners who report experiencing these touchpoints, both in type and frequency, provide significantly *more positive* ratings for many measures across the GPR, including:

- Aspects of Co-Impact’s overall impact and understanding
- Aspects related to people and communities served as well as GESI
- Aspects of funder-partner relationships and communications

Partners echo this sentiment in interviews as well when asked specifically about site visits and their relative utility. The vast majority of partners who received site visits described them as highly beneficial, useful, and impactful. Visits were characterized as learning-oriented rather than evaluative, providing both valuable feedback and strategic thinking support. The main areas for potential improvement center around increasing frequency of visits, enhancing field-level engagement, and addressing scheduling coordination challenges.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

“That's one of the things that I love about her, is that she's honest... she's straightforward, she's well intended, she's honest.” – **Design Grant Partner**

“I think that Co-Impact team [are one of] five donor partners that are my first port of call when I need to bounce an idea off of somebody or get an honest assessment as to whether I'm seeing things clearly.” – **Anchor, Domain, SC, WiL Grant Partner**

DIFFERENCES IN INTERVIEWS ACROSS PARTNER TYPES

As highlighted earlier, a few differences in experience emerged across partner types in interviews. Most broadly, longer-term partners reported deeper, more mature, and strategic relationships, while new partners highlighted a more hands on approach from Co-Impact and time spent developing mutual understanding. Specifically, Anchor partners have more mature, strategic relationships focused on long-term partnership and organizational development beyond the specific grant. Design partners experience more intensive, hands-on relationships centered on program development, with higher appreciation for flexibility but also more concerns about feedback timing. Other partners have a higher concentration of operational concerns and communication issues, possibly reflecting different engagement models or resource allocation. All groups highly value the quality of interpersonal relationships, but express different priorities based on their grant type and stage of engagement with Co-Impact.

Additionally, relationships appear to mature from process-intensive (Gender Fund 3 - Gender Fund 4) to relationship-building (Gender Fund 1 - Gender Fund 2) to strategic partnership (Foundational Fund), suggesting a

²⁴ In total, 58 (63 percent compared to 47 percent at the typical funder) survey respondents indicating having received a site visit from Co-Impact (either virtual or in-person) and 22 interviewees indicated having received a site visit.

²⁵ 24 (26 percent compared to 23 percent at the typical funder) survey respondents indicated monthly or more often interaction with their Co-Impact account lead.

²⁶ 87 percent of survey respondents (compared to 68 percent at the typical funder) report having had this type of discussion. However, questions regarding reporting and evaluation were only shown to a subset of Co-Impact partners and did not include responses from Foundational Fund or Gender Fund 1 and 2 partners.

natural progression toward greater autonomy and strategic advisory relationships that speak directly to the stage of funding and length of relationship partners have with Co-Impact.

Foundational Fund and Gender Fund 1 partners represent the most mature relationships with high strategic value and autonomous working arrangements. Gender Fund 2 partners often emphasize relationship quality and support, with some experiencing operational challenges. Gender Fund 3 partners are most appreciative of flexibility during the design phase process, while Gender Fund 4 partners show the highest emphasis on thought partnership but also express most concerns about demanding iteration processes.

SELECTED INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

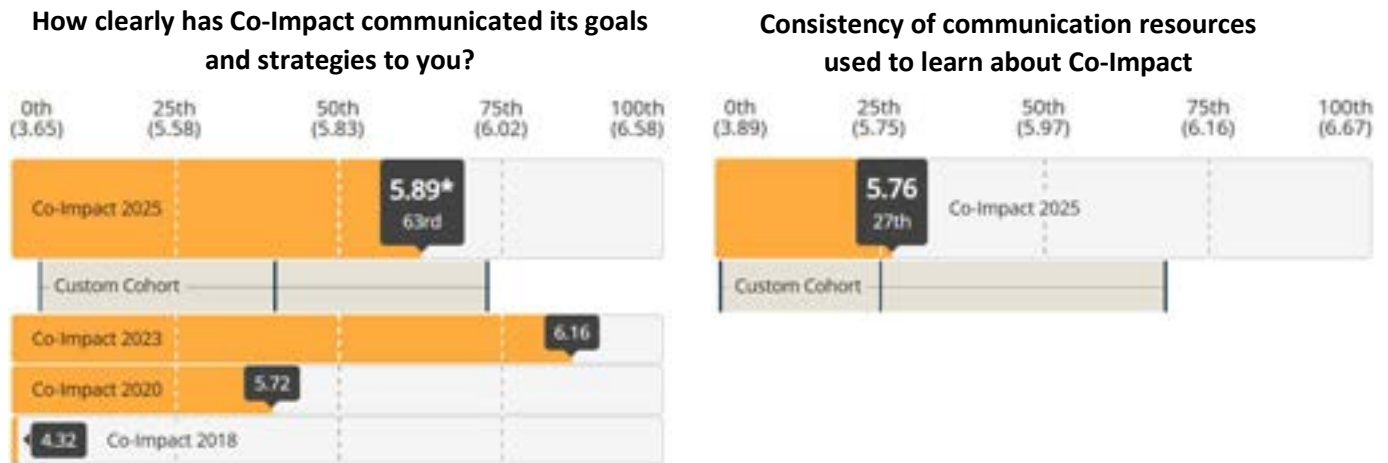
“They made it really comfortable and made it a really open space for us to even... make a few changes or think about a few new things while on the fly.” – Design Grant Partner

“One challenge is that it is very demanding to keep iterating an idea like 100 times... maybe there are things that cause all the different iterations but knowing that we’re all doing this to ensure that we, the implementing organization, have a winning idea to take on for the long haul [is a positive].” – Design Grant Partner

“So far, I think it’s been like working with friends and colleagues who understand your environment and understand the challenges as well.” – Other Grant Partner

Communication with Partners

Partner ratings in 2025 illustrate some continued challenges with aspects of Co-Impact’s communications. Ratings remain typical, though significantly lower than 2023 for how transparent Co-Impact is and how clearly Co-Impact has communicated its goals and strategy to partners. Ratings are also lower than the typical funder in CEP’s dataset, and near the median in its peer cohort for how consistent different information resources were.



Challenges continue to fall in roughly two camps previously covered in this report, both in Co-Impact’s overall approach and grappling with systems change language and methods as well as the lack of clarity with aspects of its processes and requirements. These have been covered in more extensive detail in previous sections.

Recommendations – Relationships and Communications

- As in 2023, celebrate the positive feedback received on the quality of the relationships maintained with partners, and if not already distilled and documented, consider codifying Co-Impact’s ways of working into a more explicit (and evolving) set of practices and principles for staff to follow into the future.

- Reflect on the areas in which qualitative feedback suggests deep meaningful relationships, while survey responses highlight ratings where, comparatively, Co-Impact could do even better.
 - Understanding staff capacity, consider providing more regular, routine, and clear touchpoints with partners, preferably in-person, at their organizations. Touchpoints that both sets of data suggest are deeply meaningful for partners.
- Given some differences across partner types, consider if there are specific pain points for specific partners that may be better managed through different types of engagement and interaction. Alternatively, reflect upon whether or not these differences, as they show up, are actually expected, natural, and reflective of a longer, deeper relationship and understanding of Co-Impact and its work.
- As in previous sections, continue to fine-tune aspects of Co-Impact's communications with its partners, both in terms of its approach and its expectations and requirements, for newer and Design partners especially, as they begin to move through their engagement with Co-Impact.