Foundation Funding for Land Conservation in the Northeast

Trends in Grant-making between 2004 and 2014

Appendix

April 2019

Nathalie Woolworth
Spencer R. Meyer, Ph.D.

Appendix for Foundation Funding for Land Conservation in the Northeast: Trends in Grantmaking between 2004 and 2014

Available at www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/our-reports

In order to ensure a high level of consistency in the data used for analysis, the scope of information included in this study was limited in a number of ways. First, report findings are based on data from the top 1,000 funders across the United States, as measured by a three-year average of foundations' total annual giving across all content areas (i.e., beyond environmental giving). The scale of foundations included varies significantly; in the last year of data, 2014, the total annual giving (i.e., all subject areas) of the top 1,000 foundations that supported environmental organizations in the northeast ranged from $800,000 to $956 million. We chose to focus on this subset of top 1,000 funders given that Foundation Center's data on these entities is more robust and consistent than its data on smaller funders. Second, the findings reflected in this report do not include giving to organizations that primarily work in the following subject areas: education, human services, marine work, research, communications, arts and culture, and zoos. Organizations that focus on these areas were removed to ensure that the funds included in analysis were primarily dedicated to terrestrially-focused environmental work. Lastly, report findings do not include giving to any organizations located outside of New England and New York, even if those organizations undertook work in the region. Conversely, any funds identified as going to organizations in the northeast to complete work elsewhere were removed from the dataset.

While the choices explained above improved the consistency of our data, and therefore our ability to make meaningful comparisons over time, it is important to note that the dataset does not capture the full extent of foundation giving between 2004 and 2014. It leaves out the contributions of small funders, and misses conservation work undertaken by organizations that are located outside of these seven states or focused primarily on other subject areas. While there is no way to determine the scale of funding that has been left out, we undertook this study with the best data available and believe our findings provide a useful gauge of macro-level trends.

Data Sources

To conduct the quantitative analysis on which most of the report findings above are based, Highstead purchased data from Foundation Center, a nonprofit that collects and classifies giving information on foundations across the United States. While the Foundation Center's data is not perfect, it represents the most comprehensive database of information on US grantmakers available. This data source is used by Giving USA to compile the foundation component of its *Annual Report on Philanthropy*, the nonprofit sector's go-to source on charitable giving.

As noted above, the data Highstead purchased from Foundation Center includes information on the top 1,000 foundations in the United States, as determined by total giving averaged over the last three years. Total giving in this instance includes all content areas, not only the environment. Highstead chose to only use data on the largest 1,000 foundations because it is more comprehensive and consistent than Foundation Center's data on smaller foundations; for top 1,000 funders Foundation Center has verified that all grants of $10 thousand or more have been captured.

Given that our data only captured the grant-making activities of a subset of funders, we recognize that this study does not represent the full scope of giving from foundations to organizations in the northeast. That said, we are confident that it provides an accurate representation of trends across the sector between 2004 and 2014. Our ethic in moving forward with consistent, but incomplete, data—the best available—was that the perfect should not be the enemy of the good. It is our hope that data on foundations of all sizes will continue to be made available, thereby expanding the scope of undertakings such as this one in future.

Foundation Center Data Query

Highstead restricted the parameters of the data it purchased from Foundation Center in a number of ways described below. Our high-level approach was to include all grants categorized by Foundation Center as "environmental," except for those that are explicitly excluded in the list below. Our exclusions were based on geography of recipient, type of recipient, subject area of grant, and type of grant support provided. Through a lengthy process of trial and error we did our best to ensure that the data captured through this query was the data that we wanted. That said, there are doubtless instances of grants that should have been included but were not as well as grants captured that should have been excluded.

Below is the exact data query Foundation Center used to pull grant information from their database. The codes for subject area, organization type, and support strategy are from Foundation Center's database.

Date Range
- 2004-2014

Geographic scope
Include recipients in following states:
- New York
- Connecticut
- Massachusetts
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- New Hampshire
- Maine

Exclude grants to recipients in these states that are spent elsewhere:
- Work in states other than the seven above
- International work

Defining conservation
Include all "environmental" grants with the exception of following:
- SC030200 (solid waste management)
- SC030201 (recycling)
- SC030202 (composting)
- SC030300 (hazardous waste management)
- SC030301 (toxic substance control)
- SC030302 (radiation control)
- SC030401 (coral reefs)
- SC030403 (oceans and coastal waters)
- SC030501 (deserts)
- SC030601 (energy efficiency)
- SC030602 (fossil fuels)
- SC030603 (nuclear energy)
- SC040101 (aquariums)
- SC040105 (wildlife rehabilitation)
- SC040107 (zoos)
- SC040200 (plant biodiversity)
- SC040201 (botanical gardens)
- SC040202 (invasive plant species)
- SC040303 (rainforests)
- SC050000 (domesticated animals)
- SC050100 (animal welfare)
- SC050101 (animal adoptions)
- SC050102 (animal population control)
- SC050103 (animal rescue and rehabilitation)
- SC050104 (humane education)
- SC050105 (research on animals)
- SC050106 (vegetarianism)
- SC050200 (animal training)
- SC050300 (veterinary medicine)
- SC050400 (human-animal interaction)

Include following subject areas (not under "environment"):
- SM010300 (farmlands)
- SM030100 (sustainable forestry)
- SQ010200 (parks)

Organization types (only include the following):
- EA010000 (community found.s)
- EA030100 (company-sponsored found.s)
- EA030200 (independent found.s)
- EA030300 (family found.s)
- EA040000 (public charities)

Other exclusions
Subject area:
- SA070400 (history museums)
- SA090300 (primary classification historic preservation)

Types of recipients:
- Universities
- Botanical gardens
- Aquariums

Support strategies:
- UR0000 (individual development)
- UM0000 (research and evaluation)

Cleaning the Data

Highstead purchased grants-level data from Foundation Center, meaning that each line of data refers to a different individual grant. As such, for each year, foundations could have 10, 20, or 50 lines of data that related to their activities. This data was pre-tagged in a variety of ways, including most importantly the location of recipient organizations, and the subject area(s) in which organizations work.

Highstead's first step in cleaning the Foundation Center data was to remove funds that fell outside the scope of our study. Unfortunately, the grants-level tagging done by Foundation Center turned out not to be consistent enough to rely on for analysis. As such, we winnowed down our dataset using tags for recipient organizations. The list below shows the buckets of organizations that were removed from our dataset. All decisions were based on whether we considered subject areas to primarily be focused on terrestrial environmental work.

- **Environmental/outdoor education (camps, school programs, teacher training).** Environmental education was excluded from the dataset because the tagging in this category was extremely broad

and ambiguous. While we considered some grants in this category to be primarily environmental in focus, there was no systematic way to weed out grants to summer camps, afterschool programs with outdoor components, and other examples of support that fell outside the scope of our study.

- **Human services.** Grants to social service organizations were removed from the dataset because the primary motivation of these grants was human wellbeing. Many of the grants excluded here focused on affordable housing, energy assistance and weatherization, and services for specific populations like youth, immigrants and the homeless.
- **Marine-focused work.** Only terrestrial-based activities were included in this study.
- **Research work.** This study only looked at funding for direct "on the ground" environmental work, and for the organizations that undertake that work. As such, research grants to universities, think tanks, and other entities were not included.
- **Environmental communications.** As above, communications work was deemed to be indirect. As such grants to media organizations for journalism and documentary film-making were not included.
- **Arts and culture.** Organizations primarily focused on arts and culture were excluded because their primary motivation was not environmental. Grants excluded in this category included public art installations, theater in parks, and natural history and science museums.
- **Zoos.** Zoos were removed because the work they do is often focused on education or species that are non-native to the northeast. Most of the funding excluded in this category went to the Bronx Zoo specifically.
- **Foundations giving to foundations.** This bucket of giving was removed to ensure there was no double-counting of grant support in our data.
- **National headquarters.** In some cases organizations' national headquarters, which serve work across the US or world, were located in New York City or Boston. We removed these recipients from the dataset because we were unable to determine how much of the funding they received went to supporting work in New England and New York versus other locations. Fortunately many of these organizations had regional offices that appeared as separate entities in the dataset, so we were still able to capture many of their activities in the northeast.

Tagging the Data

After removing organizations in the categories above from the dataset, Highstead added the following three data tags.

- **Subject Area.** Because Foundation Center's taxonomy includes so many subject area tags it was necessary to condense these tags for the purposes of bucketed analysis. Highstead created 13 subject tags in order to helpfully segment the data by subject area. These include: biodiversity, community/economic development, energy/climate, environmental health, historic preservation, land resources, parks, recreation, social programs, and umbrella. The umbrella category includes funding to organizations that work across a variety of topic areas within the broader environmental space (for example, The Nature Conservancy).
- **Land Trusts.** Highstead created a tag to identify land trusts as the organizations focused on acquiring and/or holding easements on land. This was accomplished by conducting a keyword search on words like "land trust," "conservancy," and many others. In addition to this keyword search, Highstead individually vetted many organizations to ensure they were land trusts using internet research. In analysis, Highstead used this group as a proxy for "traditional conservation" work focused on land acquisition and stewardship.
- **Funder Scope.** Highstead identified grantmakers by their scope of giving (i.e. funds are distributed across the nation vs. region) based on where they were located and their missions. In many cases this required research into individual foundations using Guidestar and other online resources.

Highstead is a regional conservation organization dedicated to conserving the New England landscape and achieving the Wildlands and Woodlands vision through science, sound stewardship, and collaboration with our regional partners.

PO Box 1097, Redding, CT 06875. | 203.938.8809 | www.highstead.net