

Mapping the Community Foundations Movement

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Executive Summary

Commissioned by Australian Community Philanthropy (ACP), the Mapping the Community Foundation Movement report for the first time presents data on the size, reach, resources and strategies underpinning the community support work of Australia's community foundations. In 2014 there are 36 'true' community foundations across the country, (plus a number of other organisations which identify as community foundations but don't meet the peak body's criteria.)

Together these organisations hold over \$310 million in funds under management, and in the past reported year have granted at least \$21 million to their communities. Since the first community foundation was started in 1923, Australian community foundations have granted over \$97 Million to their communities, and will reach the \$100 million mark in grants in 2014.

This data is just a starting point. Now in our third wave of growth, there are several pathways we can follow, armed with this data at the individual foundation level and as a movement: evaluation and benchmarking; reviewing the effectiveness of individual foundations; forecasting sustainability in new and embryonic foundations; identifying trends across the movement as a whole; formulating strategies to support and grow the community philanthropy movement; strengthening the peak bodies. Certainly, the collection and evaluation of sector-wide data marks a milestone in the movement, when we collectively take stock, reassess our strategies, and make informed decisions - with a new level of professionalization and credibility - from an evidence base.

- Contents:**
- Chapter 1. Background
 - *Purpose*
 - *Acknowledgements*
 - *Methodology*
 - *Definitions*
 - Chapter 2. Summary of Findings
 - *Numbers*
 - *Distribution*
 - *Timelines*
 - *Structures*
 - *Resources – people power*
 - *Resources – dollars*
 - *Income / Funds generation*
 - *Seed funding*
 - *Fundraising & donations*
 - *Sub-funds*
 - *Fees*
 - *Grants*
 - *Community engagement*
 - Chapter 3. Next steps: Issue and Recommendations

Chapter 1 Background

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this document is to inform the growth and development of the community foundation movement in Australia, by reporting on the status quo, with an eye on where we have come from, and sights set on creating the best environment for a healthy future. It reports on the outcomes of the Community Foundations Mapping Project after its first year.

This is the first attempt to map the community foundations sector in Australia, and aims to collect data on as many community foundations as possible and report back on the state of the sector. We have started off in a small way, limited by time and resources, but with the intention of building on this work over time. Each element of the work undertaken – the database, the survey, the website, the map, and the relationships – can be expanded and adapted as needs and resources determine over the coming years.

Acknowledgements

The Community Foundations Mapping Project was generously supported by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, and builds upon earlier reports produced by Catherine Brown and Dr. Diana Leat, looking at the health and sustainability of community foundations in Australia.

ACP thanks the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and the FRRR for their generosity, and their commitment to the community foundation movement in Australia.

Methodology

Step 1: ACP created an in-house database, to be accessed by its Board and staff.

Step 2: We populated the database with information from community foundations' websites, annual reports, phone and email conversations. The database is built in a flexible platform, which can be adapted and expanded as needed.

Step 3: ACP conducted the 2014 Community Foundations Mapping Survey in the first quarter of 2014, intended to be the first of many, allowing us to track growth and trends over time. This first survey achieved a 63% response rate. The data was manually entered into the database.

Step 4: We published a searchable map, pinpointing the office/headquarters location of every community foundation, on the ACP website. The map displays summary data, drawn from selected fields in the database. These fields are:

- Organisation Name
- Website
- Location
- Date Commenced
- Total grants to date
- Grants made last year

We have planned several incremental improvements to the map, which have been scoped and costed, but are yet to be implemented. Currently the map data needs to be manually updated, so the next step is to build a program to automatically update the map whenever the database is updated. Following that, the next improvement will be to augment the by displaying a shaded area which reflects the reach of each community foundation (ie. the geographic locations in which they fund-raise and grant). This would use the LGA data which has been collected on each foundation.

The idea behind the database is to collect overview data about all Australian community foundations in order to better understand the movement as a whole. It is not intended to be a CRM database, or to duplicate what is on foundations' websites – both of which would require constant updating. Ideally, regular updating will be undertaken as conversations take place, foundation newsletters and websites publish new data, and new facts emerge. However with few staff resources it makes sense not to expect the database to be the 'ultimate word'; it will always be good practice to refer to foundations' websites to confirm up-to-date information. The annual ACP survey of community foundations will be the major vehicle for updating the database.

Definitions

At the heart of this work is an agreed understanding of what a community foundation is, and does. In Australia the term itself has no legal meaning, so any organisation can call itself a community foundation.

For example we have *The Community Foundation of North Western Sydney* which, as their website explains, is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Hills Community Aid and Information Service Inc. While it raises money for the local community it is not community-owned or independent. In a similar vein there is the *South Gippsland Hospital Community Foundation*, which raises funds only for the hospital, and the *RACV Community Foundation* which is in fact a corporate foundation and has no fundraising arm or community input.

Within the community foundation movement there is a general understanding, but not consensus, of what a community foundation is. ACP has defined community foundations as:

place-based, independent, community-owned philanthropic vehicles. They work with a range of donors to build endowment funds as long-term community assets; they make grants to local organisations and initiatives; and they bring people together to build social capital and strengthen their communities.

This is further explained by the following points:

1. They are community-owned, not-for-profit, charitable organisations which exist for public benefit in a specific, named geographic area.
2. Their shared purpose is to attract resources to support and revitalise local communities and build financial and social capital.
3. They lead and connect communities, facilitate projects, and encourage civic engagement, volunteering and philanthropy.
4. They have multiple sources of funding from a range of donors and supporters.

5. They make philanthropic grants, and often seek to build a perpetual financial asset for their community.
6. They make grants or give support to a broad range of charitable purposes in their local area, not just to one cause or field of endeavour.
7. They are managed by voluntary boards, and may have additional input from advisory committees from the local area/s.
8. Community foundation people are experts in their region, with local knowledge and understanding of the strengths, needs and opportunities in their communities.

The vast majority of community foundations have established a corpus and their purpose is to grow this capital base as a permanent community asset. The grants they give come from the interest earned on these investments. Some foundations focus primarily on building this corpus, engaging donors and on fund-raising.

In contrast, other community foundations do not engage in fund-raising in any substantial way, having established a healthy corpus from the proceeds of a large gift, or from the sale of a community asset. While these foundations – *Mirboo North Community Foundation* and *Broken Hill Community Foundation* for example – do not currently engage in fund-raising, they may do so in the future and thus are deemed to fall within the ACP definition. This activity is also informed by their legal obligations, which vary with their particular tax status.

In 2014 we are witnessing a rise in various forms of community philanthropy across the globe, such as giving circles and crowd funding, which some US commentators describe as a challenge to the traditional form of community foundation.

In the midst of a rapidly shifting global, community, and philanthropic context, the question is: Are community foundations changing enough? ... If community foundations can't effectively meet the shifting needs of local donors, nonprofits, and residents, they risk losing their relevance and standing in their communities... Little by little, other organizations are chipping away at what was once primarily the domain of community foundations.¹

In the light of this overseas experience, it may be prudent for ACP to maintain a broad and flexible view of what constitutes a community foundation. However, for the purpose of the mapping project, information was collected from the 36 community foundations which fell within the ACP definition quoted above, and from the 2 community foundations which are managed by public trustees.

¹ *"To Stay Relevant, Community Funds Must Adapt to a Radically Changed World"*, by Gabriel Kasper, Jess Ausinheiler, and Justin Marcoux. Published in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, June 9 2014
<http://philanthropy.com/article/To-Stay-Relevant-Community/146981/>

Chapter 2 - Summary of Findings

This chapter summarises the scale and attributes of Australian community foundations.

Numbers of community foundations

- 36 community foundations
- 2 community foundations managed by public trustees
- 19 geographic sub-funds

For the purpose of this first mapping exercise, we have identified 36 community foundations that fit ACP's broad definition: independent, community-owned, place-based, supporting their local communities.

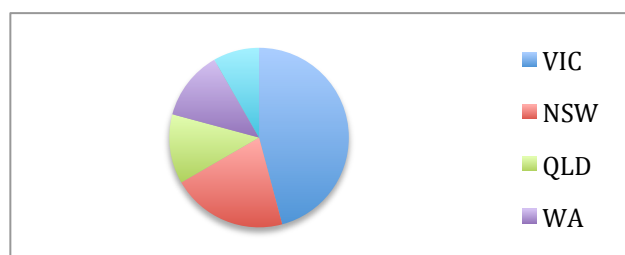
In addition, some community foundations and trustee companies manage geographic sub-funds which were created to benefit a specific geographic region, usually a specific town or suburb within the range of the community foundation. We have identified 19 geographic sub-funds. Including these in our mapping exercise allows us to identify suburbs, towns or regions that have a dedicated fund, even though they don't have their own community foundation – such as the *Sunshine Coast Community Foundation* or *Gold Coast Community Foundation* that are both sub-funds managed by the *Queensland Community Foundation*, and the *Banyule Charitable Fund* and *Brimbank Charitable Fund* which are both sub-funds of the *Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation* created by local councils.

There are also two community foundations which are managed by public trustees – *Queensland Community Foundation* and *Greater Good: Capital Region Community Foundation* - while their purpose is the same as other community foundations, to raise funds to support their communities, they are not community-owned or independent.

All identified community foundations and geographic sub-funds are listed on the ACP website, and marked on the map.²

Distribution

The breakdown of community foundations within the States is as follows: 11 (46.8%) in Victoria; 5 (20.8%) in NSW; 3 each (12.5%) in WA and QLD; and 2 (8.3%) in SA.



To understand better the distribution, we looked at how many Local Government Areas (LGAs) are served by community foundations so we can see what regions of the country have access to/are serviced by a community foundation. They may have a dedicated

² <http://australiancommunityphilanthropy.org.au/community-foundations/community-foundations-in-australia/>

one such as Broken Hill Community Foundation or Denmark Community Foundation that serves the one LGA, or be part of a community foundation that services several LGA's, such as South West Community Foundation that covers 6 LGAs in western Victoria.

Not surprisingly, distribution is not evenly spread:

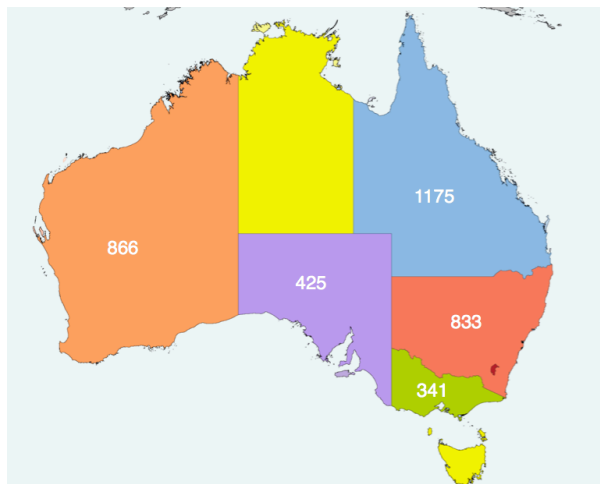
State	No of LGAs	Population	LGAs with a CF
VIC	80	5,800,000	43
NSW	153	7,500,000	26
QLD	74	4,700,000	7
SA	71	1,700,000	25
WA	136	2,600,000	3
ACT	1	385,000	1 (+ 1 geographic sub-fund)
TAS	29	515,000	0 (1 geographic sub-fund)
NT	17	243,000	0

Victoria is traditionally the home of philanthropy, primarily because of that State's favourable tax laws early in the 20th century, whereby people leaving money to establish a charitable foundation received a reduction in death duties payable on their estate. We see this tradition carried on with Victoria having over 50% of their Local Government Areas with access to a dedicated community foundation. South Australia also has a strong presence, with 35% coverage. And the ACT has one LGA and 2 foundations – *Greater Good*, and it's sub-fund *Hands Across Canberra Foundation*.



Ideally, we want every LGA across Australia to have a community foundation or sub-fund that supports it. This data also highlights which regions of the country do *not* have access to a community foundation. [NB. However, there are two community foundations which grant across the whole country – Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and Australian Communities Foundation (both based in Melbourne). For the purpose of this exercise they are counted as serving Victoria.] There is obviously more capacity in New South Wales and Queensland for example.

We also looked briefly at the distribution in another way - per head of population.



This map shows the relative number of CFs per 1,000 head of population: Victoria is has the best ratio of 341,000 people per community foundation, and South Australia is the next best state, as their population is relatively low at 1.7 million people, but they have 4 community foundations. Queensland is the worst state with 1,175,000 people per community foundation.

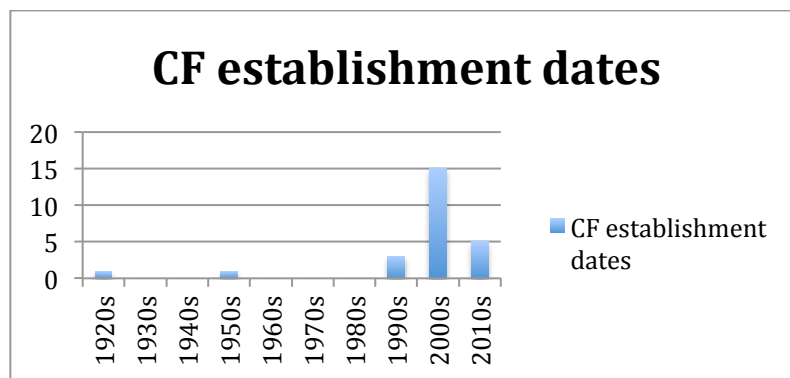
However gross population figures alone are not a useful indicator of the capacity of a region to support a community foundation. As Catherine Brown’s 2005 report ‘Community Foundation Success Factors’ explains, even levels of income and levels of wealth in a community are not determinants of the successful growth of community foundations. Rather, the factors that indicated likely sustainability are:

- A stable population (ie. % of the population living in the same house for the past 5 years)
- Higher geographic density (population per 1000 sq km)
- Highly educated workforce (% of the population with a tertiary degree)
- Age of the population (% aged over 65)

This mapping project was not able to drill down to this level of detail, but identifies this exercise as a recommendation for future action.

Timelines

- 3 (12.5%) commenced in the 1990s
- 15 (62.5%) commenced in the 2000s
- 5 (20.8%) have been created in this current decade , 2010–2019. As we are not yet half way through this decade, this column will rise.



The start of the community philanthropy movement in the early twentieth century in Australia saw philanthropic individuals start charitable organisations with the purpose of raising funds for local community benefit. However at this early stage they did not identify as community foundations.

The first was the *Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation* which commenced in 1923 and raised funds to support hospitals in Melbourne. The *Geelong Community Chest* and *United Way* (historical entities) were established in 1954. Out of the [redacted] grew two new entities: the *Geelong Community Foundation* was established in 1997, and *Give Where You Live Foundation* in 2011.

The 1980s saw the first surge of interest in community foundations, which were created by the ANZ Bank when one of their staff brought back ideas on the administration of



charitable bequests from a visit to the United States. Most of these early-established community foundations have since closed, or lapsed into abeyance, such as Melbourne Community Foundation, the New South Wales Community Foundation and Victorian Community Foundation.

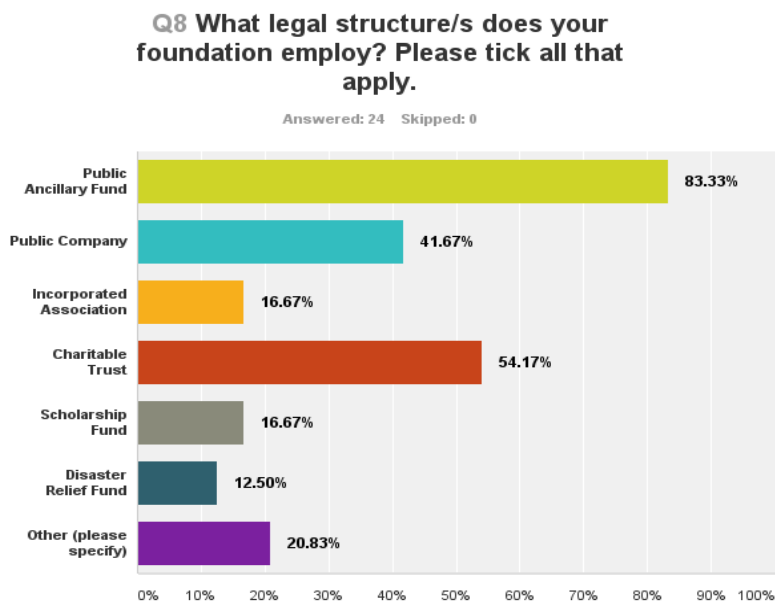
The next wave of growth occurred in the first decade of the 21st century, with support from the newly established Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), the peak body Philanthropy Australia, a dose of commonwealth government funding and an injection of funds from the C. S. Mott Foundation in the United States.

(The early history of Australian community foundations is explored in depth in Dr. Diana Leat’s report: *The Development of Community Foundations in Australia: Recreating the American Dream*, QUT 2004.)

The past year (2013/14) has seen two new community foundations launch – *Red Earth Community Foundation* in Queensland’s South Burnett and *Albany Community Foundation* in Western Australia.

Structures

The unique Australian not-for-profit regulatory environment is extremely complex, and community foundations employ a variety of legal and tax structures, making it hard to generalize about how they operate.



The ‘Other’ field included:

- Incorporated under Victorian Act of Parliament
- Necessitous Circumstances Fund

In March 2014, ACP sent a submission to the Assistant Treasurer and the Minister for Social Services on behalf of all community foundations. Titled 'Maximising the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Community Foundations in Australia', it requests and recommends improvements to community philanthropy through the reduction of unnecessary and onerous regulation for Community Foundations.

In particular, it states that the overly complex structure and regulatory regime is a deterrent both in the establishment and management of Community Foundations. The submission recommends that:

Ideally Community Foundations would be set up as an incorporated body and be able to carry out all the activities noted above in one structure, able to receive tax deductible donations and grants from other private and public ancillary funds and carry out the work in, with and for the community benefit. This would greatly increase community philanthropy throughout urban and rural Australia.

The submission was led by Australian Community Philanthropy, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Australian Communities Foundation, and Sydney Community Foundation, with pro bono legal advice from Herbert Smith Freehills (Melbourne).

Resources – people power

Community foundations are clearly about more than money. A key role for community foundations is to facilitate community engagement and connectivity, to grow social capital and strengthen communities from within. Community foundation people – board members, staff and volunteers - are experts in their region, with local knowledge and understanding of the strengths, needs and opportunities in their communities. Many of them wear several hats within their communities, professional and voluntary, so the reach of community foundations often extends way beyond what is apparent at first glance.

Most community foundations have between 9-12 directors. None had fewer than 7 or more than 13. Seven of the 24 survey respondents answering this question had unfilled vacancies, so have capacity to expand the number of Directors. All community foundation boards are voluntary (the exception being those foundations run by the Public Trustees in Queensland and the ACT, which have voluntary advisory boards for some of their regional sub-funds).

However, the staff picture presents a contrast. The majority of community foundations are distinctly lacking in paid staff.

- 12.5% of those surveyed (3 foundations) had no staff at all
- 87.5% have some staff, however 58% of these employed 1 person or less EFT, and 37% have less than 0.5 EFT
- Only 28% (5 CFs) had more than 2 EFT (varied between 3.2 and 17 EFT)

The impact of this is easy to imagine, with foundations having limited capacity for delivering projects, raising funds, promoting grant activity, etc. This lack of paid staff puts an enormous load on voluntary boards. Having staff is transformative in terms of what a community foundation can achieve, so this is an issue for the community foundation movement, the peak bodies and other funding partners, to think about.

Resources – dollars

The 24 community foundations which responded to the survey between them have \$305,312,762 invested. While these responses represent only 63% of the total number of community foundations, they do include the largest three: *Lord Mayor's Community Foundation, Australian Communities Foundation, and Queensland Community Foundation.*

Many of the newer (and currently less active) ones, did not complete the survey, so we can estimate that the remaining 36% (14 foundations) probably have less than \$1M funds under management each, resulting in another \$5-\$10 Million funds under management. We can therefore estimate that community foundations have in total over \$310 Million funds under management.

Looking at the known figure of \$305 million, if we remove the 3 largest community foundations (*Lord Mayor’s Community Foundation* – \$163 million; *Queensland Community Foundation* - \$56 million; and *Australian Communities Foundation* - \$46 million) then the average funds under management for the remaining 21 foundations is \$1,877,417 each. Over half the foundations (14) have less than \$1 million.

Income/funds generation

Looking at where this money comes from, we asked questions about seed funding, fundraising and donations, sub-funds, and earned income (ie. fees charged) as the main sources of income.

i) Seed funding

20% did not receive seed-funding.

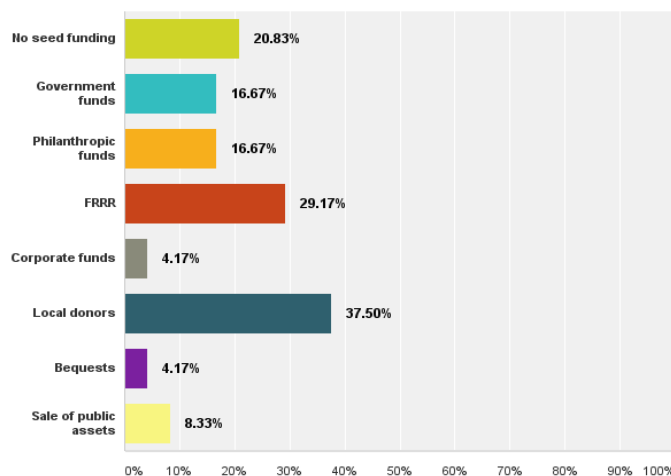
Of the rest:

- 37% received seed funding from local donors
- 30% received funding from FRRR eg. sustainability grant
- 17% government funds
- 17% philanthropic funds
- 8% sale of public assets
- 4% corporate funds
- 4% bequests

There is a notable absence of seed funding from other philanthropic foundations.

Q15 Upon establishment, did you receive seed-funding? If yes, where from?

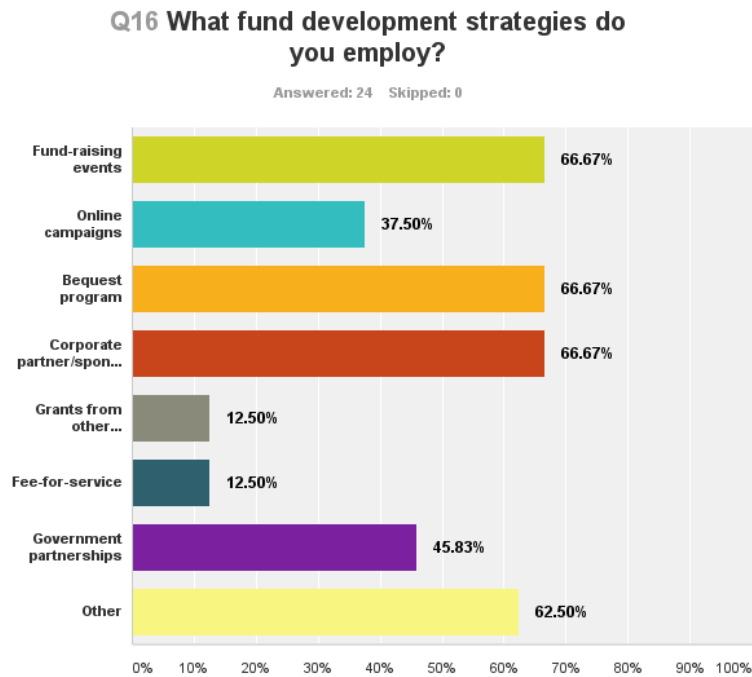
Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



ii) Fundraising and donations

There is a healthy variety of fund-raising strategies in use.

- 67% - Events, Bequests and Corporate Partnerships/Sponsorships
- 46% - Government Partnerships
- 37% - Online campaigns



The 'Other' field yielded great ideas for fundraising:

1. Local councils have sub-funds
2. Advertising
3. Online donations via Give Now or other donation platforms
4. Recipient charity for other organisations' fund-raising efforts or local events
5. All board members make an annual contribution
6. Collaboration with lawyers, advisors and financial planners
7. Workplace giving
8. Challenge grants
9. Named sub-funds
10. Direct approach to local businesses
11. Regular donations from local residents
12. Annual appeal
13. Direct donor approach/mailouts

Only 12.5% (3 respondents) ticked Fee for Service or Grants from Other Philanthropic Foundations. So there may well be some untapped potential there.

iii) Sub-funds

Approximately 80% of community foundations have sub-funds. Sub-funds are a great way for community foundations to engage more donors, being an attractive option for individuals, families and businesses to have their own 'named' fund without the responsibilities of managing an independent foundation. The community foundation invests the funds, and manages all grants coming from the fund, as well as any marketing or events relating to the fund's activities. Most community foundations charge a fee to establish and manage their sub-funds, and this is a valuable source of income for them.

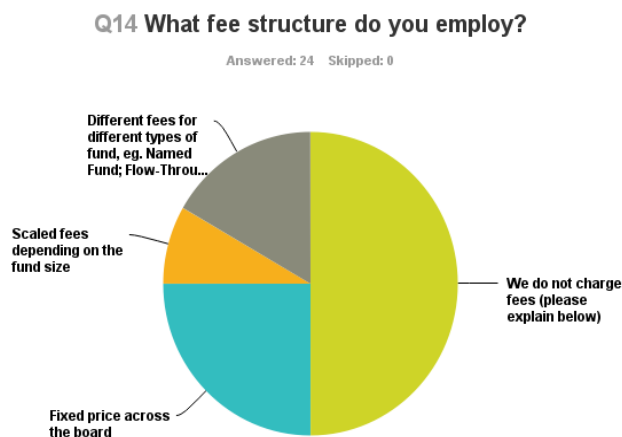
In total there are just over 800 sub-funds in Australian community foundations. However just 4 foundations account for 714 of these: *Australian Communities Foundation* – 228; *Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund* – 217; *Queensland Community Fund* – 188; *Geelong Community Foundation* – 81. The vast majority of these sub-funds were created to benefit a specific charity or field of endeavor, or named in honour of a person, family or business.) These have not been included in this mapping exercise.

Drilling down further, there are 29 sub-funds for specific geographic areas within the regions covered by the community foundation, often for particular towns or suburbs. For example Victoria's *South West Community Foundation* has the *Colac Region Sub-fund* and the *Koroit Region Sub-fund*; *Australian Communities Foundation* has the *Mansfield Community Fund*; and *Northern Rivers Community Foundation* has the *Lismore Shire sub-fund*, the *Ballina Shire Sub-fund* and *Byron Shire Sub-fund*.

There are some sub-funds which are further refined for specific fields within the named geographic area, eg. the arts, young people. One recent example is the *Yarra City Council Room to Create Charitable Fund*, which is a new sub-fund of the *Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation*.

iv) Fees

In the survey we asked 'What fee structure do you employ?' In retrospect this question was not well phrased. 'How do you cover your costs?' would be a more accurate way to frame the question. Some community foundations don't refer to 'fees' but take a set percentage out of each donation to cover their costs. Others only recoup costs from sub-funds, but not from stand-alone donations.



- 50% do not charge fees.
- 25% charge a fixed price across the board.
- 17% have different fees for different types of funds
- 8% charge scaled fees depending on the fund size

Of those that don't charge fees :-

- 5 said they don't charge fees because they don't have sub-funds
- 5 say their administration/operating costs are covered by corporates or other sponsors
- 4 say this policy is under review, or they have the option to charge but have yet to implement it

For those that charge a fixed price across the board, this varied from 1% to 15%, with 2% being the most common fee level.

There is a wide divergence in the practice of charging fees, and while it may be a competitive point of difference, some standardization of the sector could enable foundations to defend a base-line fee to help cover their costs.

Grants

Respondents have granted a tantalizing total of **\$96,431,661** to date. However the figure is likely to be higher than this, as 4 survey respondents did not give a figure, 3 saying they don't have this data available.

In addition there are 14 community foundations that did not complete the survey. Therefore we can estimate that Australian community foundations have now granted over \$97 Million to their communities, and will reach \$100 million in grants in 2014.

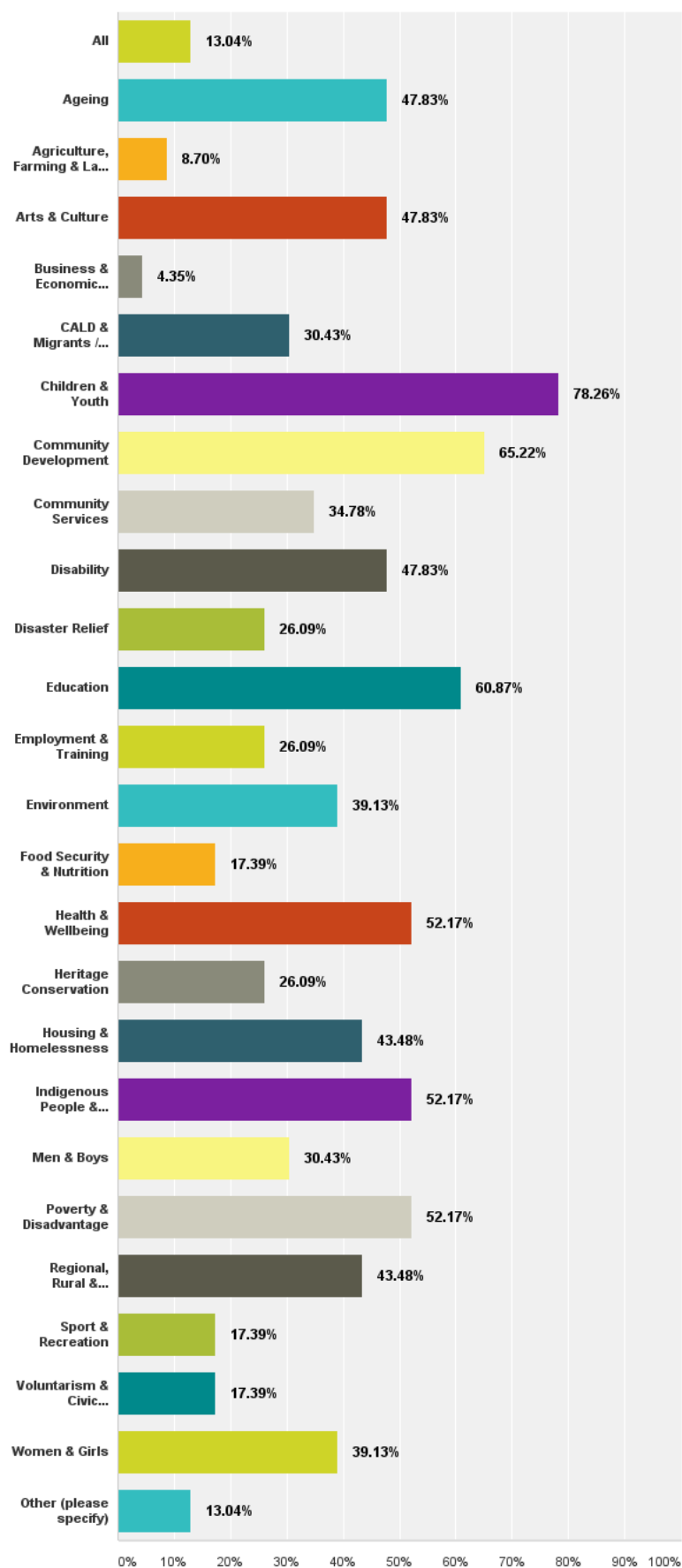
\$21,274,191 was granted by community foundations during the last reported year (which may be Jan-Dec 2013 or July 2012-June 2013). This figure includes community grants, scholarships and back to school vouchers.

As expected, community foundations grant across a wide range of fields, accepting applications from any eligible charity or community group in their community. In fact there were 13 fields (out of a possible 25, listed below) that scored 40% or higher. (Foundations could tick as many as apply).

- Children & Youth – 78%
- Community Development – 65%
- Education – 61%
- Health & Wellbeing; Poverty & Disadvantage, Indigenous – 52%
- Aging, Arts & Culture, Disability – 47%
- Housing & Homelessness, Regional Rural & Isolated Communities – 43%

Q19 Which fields do you grant in? [Published]

Answered: 23 Skipped: 1



Children and youth and Education are supported by the vast majority of community foundations, and a key contributor to this is FRRR’s Back to School program, which provides vouchers for rural and regional community foundations to grant to needy families through the schools in their region.

61% of community foundations participate in the Back To School voucher program. Of these, for 54% of these community foundations, the Back To School program accounts for between ¼- ½ of their total annual granting. (For 23% it accounts for less than ¼ of their granting, and for another 23% it makes up between ½ and ¾ of their granting.)

Community Engagement

A key strength of community foundations is that they are excellent leaders and connectors in their communities, and the often ideal organization to facilitate cross-sectoral events and partnerships with a shared aim to build community capacity. The trustees, executive officers and volunteers of these foundations are very often highly active ‘experts’ in their region, with exceptional local knowledge and understanding of the strengths, needs and opportunities in their communities.

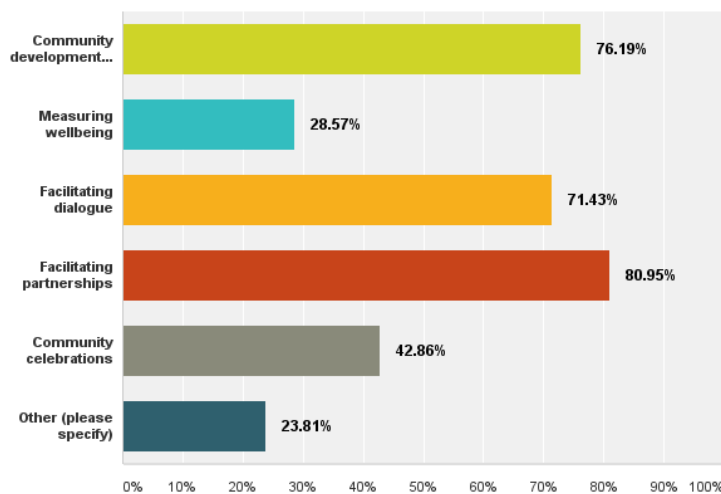
While a foundation’s grants may be a popular and highly visible activity, they are often expending as much, if not more, effort on other ways to generate community engagement, collaborate with other funders to support community initiatives and generally raise the profile and capacity of the programs they run and/or support.

The most popular ways in which community foundations engage their communities, beyond fundraising and granting, are:

- Facilitating Partnerships - 81%
- Community Development Initiatives - 76%
- Facilitating Community Dialogue - 71%

Q22 How else do you currently engage with your community, other than fund-raising and granting?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 3



Other initiatives include:

- Regular columns in newspapers
- Newsletters
- Ambassadors

It is, of course, hard to distinguish the purpose of these activities from one another, as they are all connected and often working towards the same objectives. For example, marketing activities such as writing an article for the local paper may be ostensibly to promote a new community development project, but at the same time they might lead to new donations for the foundation, potential new corporate partners or increased numbers for a fund-raising event.

Chapter 3 What next? Issue and Recommendations

The mapping exercise and the data it has generated raises several issues for stakeholders in community foundations. There are several pathways we can follow armed with this data, at the individual foundation level and as a movement: evaluation and benchmarking; reviewing the effectiveness of individual foundations; forecasting sustainability in new and embryonic foundations; identifying trends across the movement as a whole; formulating strategies to support and grow the community philanthropy movement; strengthening the peak bodies.

1. Thinking about our own community foundations:

Evaluation

- how well do we perform, compared to our counterparts?
- How well do we perform, compared to our own capacity and potential?
- Are there lessons we can learn from the way other community foundations operate? Are we looking outward enough to see them?

Sustainability

- Is this foundation likely to be sustainable in the long term?
- Are we aiming for slow and steady or rapid growth? What does success look like for us?
- What strategy do we choose to focus on: grant-making; donor services; or community leadership/engagement?
- What contextual factors are healthy and what are our challenges? – eg. population age and transience, geographic density, personal and business wealth in the region, etc.

2. Growing the community foundations movement:

Perhaps more pertinent is **what this data indicates about the community foundation movement, and the health of community philanthropy in general.** There is no doubt we are stronger together than standing alone. A collective voice and shared assets - intellectual assets, such as a research base, annual survey data, the annual Community Foundations Forum - are going to be valuable in supporting and growing community foundations.

One challenge is to recognise other forms of community philanthropy, such as giving circles and crowd-funding, as allies with which community foundations can partner or collaborate. Across the board, traditional boundaries between types of community

sector activities are blurring, and top-down control has been relinquished, with the rise of social enterprises and the mass uptake of new fundraising and granting technologies. We need to adapt to this continually changing environment in order to remain relevant, and to engage people in our communities from a diverse range of ages and stages, cultural and religious backgrounds, and economic backgrounds or 'classes'.

3. Peak bodies

The data clearly shows that **community foundations movement in Australia is small – with less than 50 organisations.** The role of the peak body is crucial – uniting disparate groups around common agendas; researching and gathering data and knowledge; collating relevant information into a single newsletter or website; undertaking representation on behalf of the broader community; presenting a united front/ united voice.

A first priority is to clarify and strengthen the relationship between the community foundations peak (Australian Community Philanthropy) and the broader philanthropy peak (Philanthropy Australia), to enhance opportunities for collaboration and so that community foundations need only pay one membership fee. There is enormous scope for ACP to undertake work that would benefit all community foundations, such as running a community awareness campaign, putting in place sectoral standards and policies, and running the annual survey. Other organisations, such as FRRR, Philanthropy Australia, WINGS and other sister organisations around the world can do much to support us, either as project partners or from the sidelines.

The data also raises the question, in the face of our legislative and regulatory complexity, **do we want to go down the UK route of introducing a tighter framework, clearer boundaries and further sectoral regulation? This might take the form of an agreed code of conduct, a standardised reporting framework, or centralised policies for governance, such as board turnover?**

In Australia we have a **strong individualistic streak,** reflected in the community foundations movement with many foundations wanting to retain their particular approaches and characteristics. The data backs this up – **there is minimal consistency in our approaches, but a great mix of ingenuity and flexibility.** However, this **weak conformity** has led, in some cases, to a lack of accountability and some boards being **personality-driven, going 'off track' and in extreme cases failing altogether.** This is a challenge for any peak body, to work out where to draw the line, how to assist the movement to unite and grow, but not constrain its members by excessive regulation – a fine line.

Certainly, a healthy community foundation movement needs to be driven by a clear and shared vision, a strong and effective framework, an effective operational plan, and have gained the support of a healthy cohort of members and other supporters. It also requires a backbone organisation with appropriate resources.

Recommendations

In the face of these opportunities and challenges, what should we focus on in order to strengthen and grow community foundations? Where should we put our energies and resources?

We need:

1. **A raised and engaging public profile**
 - a. increased understanding and engagement within the general community; good social media and general media presence
 - b. increased awareness and support from/partnerships with other types of philanthropy, from corporations and government.
 - c. To get better at telling our stories, and promoting our business acumen.
2. **Champions** – having lacked a high-profile champion in the past, and would do well to follow the Canadian model where their Governor General is the highly visible patron of their Smart & Caring Communities program.
3. **To lobby, with a united voice, for an improved regulatory environment**, as detailed in ACP's 'Maximising the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Community Foundations in Australia' submission.
4. **Data collection and dissemination** – using our data as an evidence base to inform our strategies, bring understanding and credibility to our arguments, and help us participate in the global community philanthropy movement. Vital Signs is a exciting step forward.
5. **Adaptability** – the openness to engage with others of cultural diversity and across generations; to excite and respond to and bring on board young people; to find new ways of engagement which embrace the way they want to do philanthropy. This might mean loosening the framework of what we now recognise as community foundations.
6. **Collaborative approaches**, such as sharing infrastructure; partnering with corporates or other funders to deliver their funding programs in your communities.
7. **Stronger connections with the broader philanthropy sector**. In contrast to other countries, including New Zealand, private philanthropic foundations have (with a few notable exceptions) not yet chosen to grow philanthropy through supporting and partnering with community foundations. Despite legislative barriers, there is some scope for growth here, particularly with support from FRRR.
8. **A strategic approach**, lead by the peak body, working collaboratively with other stakeholders on various levels; we need to be proactive and targeted in our efforts.
9. **An open mind and a big vision**, so we can look outwards and embrace change and innovation, while not losing sight of our community roots and our mission.