

Foundations Keep Promises to Share Grants Information

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Most of the nation's largest foundations have followed through on a commitment they made six months ago to report to the public at least quarterly every grant they make.

[A *Chronicle* review of the 15 foundations that made the pledge](#) in October has found that 11 are making information available to the Foundation Center, an organization that helps grant seekers and that agreed to post the information. The rest face technological hurdles getting the information in a form the Foundation Center could easily make available. [

Editor's note:

The previous sentence has been corrected to make clear that grant makers agreed to make the information available to the Foundation Center; the Foundation Center did not persuade the grant makers to take this step.]

All of the foundations, however, are reporting grants information on their own sites regularly, including five that update the awards daily.

Additionally, of the 13 foundations eligible to file an electronic informational tax return, 10 did so. Such a filing makes it easier for researchers and others to analyze large batches of computer-readable data. Only the Getty Foundation does not feature a searchable grants database, although Melissa Abraham, a foundation spokeswoman, said the organization is working to make one public.

Not Helpful Enough

But while many foundation officials point to the pledge as an important step forward in the effort to make information about grant makers more publicly accessible, some observers say the disclosures aren't particularly useful for grant seekers who want to make better decisions about which foundations are worth approaching.

“The biggest barrier isn’t with information. It’s with decision-making power and the fact that many grant makers aren’t transparent about how they make decisions and who they are going to fund,” says Aaron Dorfman, executive director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, a watchdog group in Washington. “It would be useful for grant seekers to know the grant decision-making process, especially smaller nonprofits without multiple development staff members.”

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