

Overview

The Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) established the Midwest Early Recovery Fund (the Fund) in 2014 to support early recovery efforts following low-attention disasters in the Midwest. The Fund catalyzes recovery efforts two weeks to 18 months after disaster events within a 10-state region that includes Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and the 77 sovereign tribal nations that share the land.

At the end of 2024, CDP partnered with Point b(e) Strategies to evaluate the Fund. The evaluation sought to understand the Fund’s effectiveness in catalyzing local-led and equitable early recovery efforts and how its funding, education and technical assistance contribute to the outcomes for grantee partners. It is important to note that the Fund approached this evaluation through a *contribution* lens, rather than an *attribution* lens. As such, the evaluation is designed to highlight how the Fund contributes to early disaster recovery efforts in its region.

Point b(e) Strategies utilized the following data collection methods:



Key Findings About the Fund

THE FUND’S UNIQUE VALUE

- It funds low-attention disasters that are often ignored by disaster philanthropy.
- Through its grantmaking approach, the Fund utilizes a data-informed funding process, which removes barriers to ensure vulnerable populations receive support.
- The Fund’s staff have deep, trusted relationships with communities and are seen as connectors and partners.
- The Fund’s staff are seen as subject matter experts in disaster response and recovery in the region.
- The Fund works to address the needs of marginalized and vulnerable communities.
- The Fund has worked diligently to establish close relationships with tribal communities throughout the region.

STRENGTHS OF THE FUND’S MODEL

- It is more than a fund—it is a program offering capacity building support, technical assistance and connection to resources and expertise.
- The Fund is strategically focused on early recovery and fills gaps.
- The Fund has pre-positioned dollars and long-term, sustainable funding.
- The Fund has a dedicated geography along with a focus on hyperlocal communities.
- The Fund is committed to equity and has been strategic and thoughtful in how it has built relationships with tribal communities.
- The Fund relies on data to identify communities and assess needs, especially for vulnerable communities.
- The Fund plays a role as convener for grantee partners and funders.
- The Fund employs dedicated, trusted staff who have developed strong relationships and connections within the region and are trusted by communities.

Key Findings About Grantee Outcomes

The Fund has supported grantee partners in feeling less isolated and more connected to others.

79% of grantee survey respondents agreed that CDP's involvement has reduced the sense of isolation in their early recovery work.

The Fund has helped increase grantee partners' knowledge about effective early recovery practices.

64% of grantee survey respondents indicated that their partnership with CDP has helped them learn how to implement equitable recovery strategies.

The Fund has helped grantee partners increase skills and confidence to take initial steps to recovery.

75% of grantee survey respondents indicated that their partnership with CDP has helped their organization improve capacity to align recovery strategies with community needs.

The Fund has helped grantee partners increase their capacity to translate next steps to recovery.

86% of grantee survey respondents agreed that their organization has become more skilled at disaster recovery activities and has improved their planning and implementation of disaster recovery activities.

The Fund has helped grantee partners understand how to be inclusive and equitable in recovery efforts.

73% of grantee survey respondents agreed that they have incorporated feedback from marginalized groups in their recovery processes and have prioritized equitable outcomes in their work.

The Fund has helped grantee partners support their communities, provide services, and connect members with

86% of grantee survey respondents agreed that their organization has improved their ability to connect community members with critical resources, has enhanced their capacity to provide necessary services to underserved populations, and has increased availability of services for their community members.

The Fund has increased connections to funders and resources that will further community recovery, sustainability and capacity for some grantee partners.

39% of grantee survey respondents indicated that they have secured additional funding for recovery efforts to a great extent or quite a bit.

Recommendations

1

Continue to adequately staff the Fund.

2

Identify more ways to highlight the work of the Fund and the lessons learned.

3

Explore opportunities to create more collaborative spaces for networking and connections.

4

Identify the Fund's role in bringing more awareness to low-attention disasters and grantee partner stories.

5

Understand the Fund's unique value with organizations that have been in the disaster recovery space for a long time.