The Listen4Good Journey So Far

Lessons and Findings from Three Complete Cohorts

ORSIMPACT

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Introduction

Fund for Shared Insight (Shared Insight) began with an idea: high-quality feedback loops will provide valuable data and insight from the people nonprofits and funders seek to help, so that they listen, learn, and act on that feedback.[1] Initial grants to three individual nonprofits to build feedback practice (i.e., Center for Employment Opportunities, LIFT, and Habitat for Humanity) bore out the initial hypothesis that it was possible for nonprofits to collect useful feedback from their constituents with greater quality. These initial grants also showed that making a small number of grants to a few organizations was unlikely to create momentum toward greater uptake of feedback practices in the nonprofit field. In addition, this approach failed to engage funders beyond those already at the Shared Insight table, making it even more difficult to create broader adoption of feedback practices. These learnings called for a different approach.

A group of Shared Insights' core funders engaged in a listening tour and developed an idea to build upon a platform already widely used by nonprofits, SurveyMonkey, and create a set of supports—including money and assistance—to try to reach more nonprofits more quickly and engage more funders in the work. Thus, Shared Insight created Listen4Good (L4G) in 2016 to support direct-service nonprofits in implementing high-quality feedback loops with their clients. This approach built in a connection to funders by requiring a co-funding partner in the work, with the hopes that learning about the needs of clients based on feedback would impact funders supporting or nominating nonprofits and in turn, funders would become stronger supporters of feedback practice (among other funders and nonprofits) and consider the implications of listening to constituents in their own foundations grant-making and strategy development.

Over time, as the initial test of L4G bore out the hypothesis that greater numbers of nonprofits could be reached and their capacity and use of feedback could be enhanced, Fund for Shared Insight was also refining its vision and focus on equity. The theory of change evolved to focus on nonprofits and foundations being more responsive to the needs, preferences, and opinions of the people and communities they seek to help, particularly the voices of those least heard. The overall goal for Shared Insight shifted from "philanthropy being increasingly effective at contributing to social and environmental change" to "communities and people, especially those whose voices are least heard, being better off in ways they define for themselves as a result of foundations and nonprofits being meaningfully connected to each other and to the people and communities they seek to help, and more responsive to their input and feedback." Thus, L4G has also been seen as a possible tool for lifting up the voices of those least heard and advancing practices that more explicitly embody the values and goals of Shared Insight around equity, diversity, and inclusion.

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[1] Original theory of change long-term outcome for feedback practice.

L4G is now entering its fifth year of operations and has completed work with three cohorts of nonprofits through two-year cycles of support in building high-quality feedback loops.[2] Throughout this time, ORS Impact has collected and analyzed data about L4G's impact on nonprofits, funders, and the people they seek to help. Reports of findings so far have mostly been divided by cohort, tied to grant cycles. This report looks across 158[3] nonprofits, 80 co-funders, and 7 organizations' clients, to more robustly test the hypotheses around the changes stakeholders experience over time related to their participation in L4G and elucidate learnings and implications for future iterations and experiments of the overall model. Figure 1 summarizes L4G's expected results for participating organizations, co-funders, and clients. This report focuses on L4G's impacts on organizations and funders as they have been the main focus of the evaluation to date, and includes findings related to clients as evidence for the extent to which L4G is contributing to Shared Insight's overall vision of "foundations and nonprofits being meaningfully connected to each other and to the people and communities they seek to help, and more responsive to their input and feedback."

Figure 1 | Expected results from L4G for organizations, co-funders, and clients

ORGANIZATIONS	FUNDERS	CLIENTS
Improved client experience	Use feedback	Increased engagement
Changes made	Support feedback	Improved experience
Insights gained	Promote feedback	Feel valued
Improved feedback ability	Value feedback	Opportunity to give feedback

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[2] L4G has two cohorts currently in progress through an 18-year cycle of support, for a total of five cohorts completed or underway. This report focuses on the three cohorts that have completed their L4G engagement.
[3] The total number of organizations across the three cohorts is 158. We collected data from most of these organizations at the six, 12, and/or 24-month mark within their grant period, but not all organizations responded to surveys at all time points, so sample sizes for questions differ.

Summary of Key Results

This section provides an overall assessment of progress on expected results for organizations, funders, and Shared Insight's goal, along with a summary of key results for each section. The following key shows our rating of progress thus far:

- ● **Strong progress toward the goal.**

- ● **Some progress toward the goal, which might be uneven or incomplete.**

- ● **Low progress toward the goal thus far.**

L4G's Impact on Nonprofits

L4G has had strong impacts across three cohorts of nonprofit organizations[4] on their capacity to collect feedback, gain insights, take actions, and see organizational effects by the end of the L4G grant.

Overall Assessment of Progress

Co-funder activity	Assessment of Progress	Rating
Improved feedback ability	L4G effectively increases organizations' ability to implement high-quality feedback loops, especially in the first six months.	●
Insights gained	Client feedback continues to provide many organizations with insights across multiple areas of their work. 85% reported getting quite a few insights in at least two areas.	●
Changes made	Eighty percent of organizations are making changes in response to what they learn from their clients' feedback. However, 20% are not making changes.	●
Improved client experience	L4G had the most impact on self-reported program effectiveness, and organizations reported significant increases in this impact between 12 and 24 months. Most clients reported feeling that their voice matters to the organizations, suggesting they felt a meaningful connection.	●
Areas are connected	Data suggest the theory holds: building feedback capacity is positively correlated with making changes and seeing organizational impact; however, not all organizations benefit equally from L4G engagement.	●

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[4] Nonprofits receiving grants to participate in L4G are referred to as organizations in the rest of the report.

Summary of Data and Findings

- Ninety percent of organizations feel the survey designing process has gone very well, and about three quarters feel equally strong in their ability to administer surveys and interpret data.

- Eighty-five percent of organizations have gained insights in at least two of the following areas: client needs, client experiences, client interactions with staff, trouble spots, and differences in experiences among clients. Forty percent had gained "quite a few" insights in four or five of these areas.

- Eighty-one percent made at least one change in response to feedback in programming, operations, client-staff interactions, or offering new services.

- Eighty percent of organizations say L4G impacted their organization to at least a "moderate" extent in three of the following five areas: culture, decision-making processes, interactions with clients, program effectiveness, and values.

- All nonprofits plan to continue with feedback beyond the grant; of the forty-six 2016 organizations, we know at least two thirds continued and only two ended their feedback work.

- Many organizations see the connection between feedback and advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in their work, valuing the way it helps them listen to their clients, improve or change their services, or deepen their commitment to other internal equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives and efforts.

- Nonprofits feel less able to close the loop, an important aspect of high-quality feedback. After two years, more than one third do not feel that this has gone well, and it was the practice most frequently dropped a year post-grant by the 2016 organizations.

- Nonprofits continue to gain less value from the benchmarks and the Net Promoter Score (NPS) item, key elements of the survey model.

- There is still room for growth in how feedback results, analysis, and actions can support inclusion and equity. Some organizations have seen differences in results and not taken action on them. There is promise shown in the cases where differences are found and actions taken, such as translations, program adjustments, changes to outreach, and even changes around hiring and retaining staff of color or bilingual staff/volunteers.

L4G's Impact on Co-funders

L4G has had some impacts on co-funders, despite a light touch approach to engaging with them.

Overall Assessment of Progress

Co-funder activity	Assessment of Progress	Rating
Valuing Feedback	While co-funders who join L4G already value feedback, their perception of how feedback can help grantees and their foundations improves with L4G engagement.	●
Promoting Feedback	A few co-funders are actively promoting feedback within their foundations or with grantees.	●
Supporting Feedback	There was strong impact related to "more funders supporting feedback," considering the light touch engagement strategy in place thus far.	●
Use feedback	There was low impact on the use of grantee and/or constituent feedback within foundations.	●

Summary of Data and Findings

- Co-funders tend to join L4G because they already value feedback in some way. However, the majority share that the focus on the value of feedback and potential benefit for nonprofits and their own foundations increased through L4G engagement.
- Thirty-three percent of interviewed co-funders reported changes to their foundation practices related to feedback from grantees or communities and mentioned that L4G contributed to that change.
- Co-funders express a strong intent at the end of the first year to continuing to support nonprofits in their feedback work.
- There is room to potentially see more impact among co-funders, especially in how they can support and use feedback. While there is value for feedback for their grantees and for their own foundations, to date, only a third have taken actions. While we are limited in what we know about impacts after the one-year mark, when we spoke to funders, given the level of engagement, we wouldn't expect stronger impact over time within these three cohorts. However, as Shared Insight increases its engagement activities with co-funders beginning with the 2019 cohort, we will assess whether these increased efforts lead to better outcomes.

L4G's Contribution to Shared Insight's Goal

To assess L4G's contribution to Shared Insight's overall goal, we divided the goal statement into five components and assessed progress on each one.

Overall Assessment of Progress

Element	Assessment of Progress	Rating
Nonprofits connected to people and communities	L4G is strongly and directly contributing to nonprofits' meaningful connections with the people and communities they seek to help.	🟢
Nonprofits responsive to people and communities	L4G is strongly contributing to "nonprofits being more responsive to input and feedback from the people and communities they seek to help.	🟢
Nonprofits connected to foundations	L4G has made some contribution to meaningfully connecting nonprofits and foundations, but contributions are uneven, and there is opportunity for greater impact.	🟡
Foundations connected to people and communities	So far, L4G has had relatively low impact on meaningfully connecting foundations and the people and communities they seek to help, but there is potential for greater contribution with more intentional engagement.	🔴
Foundations responsive to people and communities	Outcomes so far suggest low impact on "foundations being more responsive to input and feedback from the people and communities they seek to help."	🔴

Summary of Data and Findings

Shared Insight's vision is deeply tied to seeing a more equitable world, in which communities and the people foundations and nonprofits seek to help, especially those whose voices are least heard, will be better off in ways they define for themselves. L4G clearly contributes to the overall theory of change, most strongly for nonprofits and the people they seek to help to date, whereas there have been limited impacts on co-funders given the light touch engagement. However, there are opportunities for greater impact with co-funders as the planned level of engagement increases.

L4G's Impact on Nonprofits

L4G builds the capacity of nonprofits to implement and sustain high-quality client-focused feedback loops. Participating organizations receive three main supports: grants to support feedback work, access to resources like a defined framework and tools that enable their feedback practice and coaching from trained L4G staff to guide them through their feedback process. The hypothesis is that these supports will increase organizations' ability to build and sustain high-quality feedback loops, which equips them with insights and information about their clients' needs and preferences. With that new information, organizations are able to adjust their programs in response to feedback, which leads to better services and operations. This section presents detailed findings about L4G's contribution to these outcomes, shares other findings gleaned from this broader dataset to inform future model iterations, and examines organizations' perceptions of how L4G has supported them throughout this process.

About Our Sample of L4G Organizations

The total number of participating organizations in L4G's first three cohorts was 158. While some of our analysis included the full sample of organizations, we used a few key variables to sub-divide and segment our data for further analysis. Specifically, we segmented organizations by the year in which they began L4G (cohort), the nature of interaction with clients (how often organizations' staff interact with clients), whether their budget was above or below the median budget for the sample, and number of staff assigned to feedback work. Appendix 1 shows the breakdown of the sample by these categories.

When dividing the sample by cohort, it is worth noting that there were few changes to the L4G model across the three cohorts. While the 2016 cohort received $60,000 grants, the 2017 and 2018 cohorts received $45,000. In addition, L4G supported the 2016 cohort through a team of two feedback coaches and expanded to a greater number of coaches in 2017. Therefore, the 2017 cohort was the first one to receive coaching from a broader coach pool, while the 2018 cohort received coaching from staff who had already had the 2017 experience. Finally, the 2017 and 2018 cohorts received earlier and more frequent access to webinars and support materials including an improved website, and more specific guidance on sustaining feedback post grants.

Earlier steps in L4G's feedback cycle are easier for organizations, while later steps such as responding to findings and closing the loop grow more difficult.

Figure 1 | L4G's five-step feedback
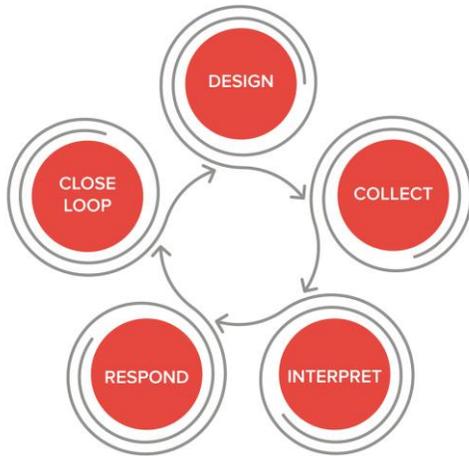
The L4G model defines feedback loops as a five-step process where organizations first design their data collection, gather data from clients, analyze and interpret the data, respond to the findings, and close the loop with clients to share learnings and changes that resulted from the feedback (Figure 1). By 24 months, 95% of organizations had completed at least two feedback cycles with their clients, and half of them had completed three or more. In their experience through these feedback cycles, nonprofits report that designing the process has gone very well, but each step becomes less easy for organizations. As Figure 2 shows, 90% of organizations indicated that design went well or very well; however, that percentage decreases to about three

fourths of organizations for administering surveys and interpreting data, and to around two thirds for responding to feedback and closing the loop. In other words, after 24 months of engagement in L4G, one third of organizations report the latter two steps of the process are not going well or very well.

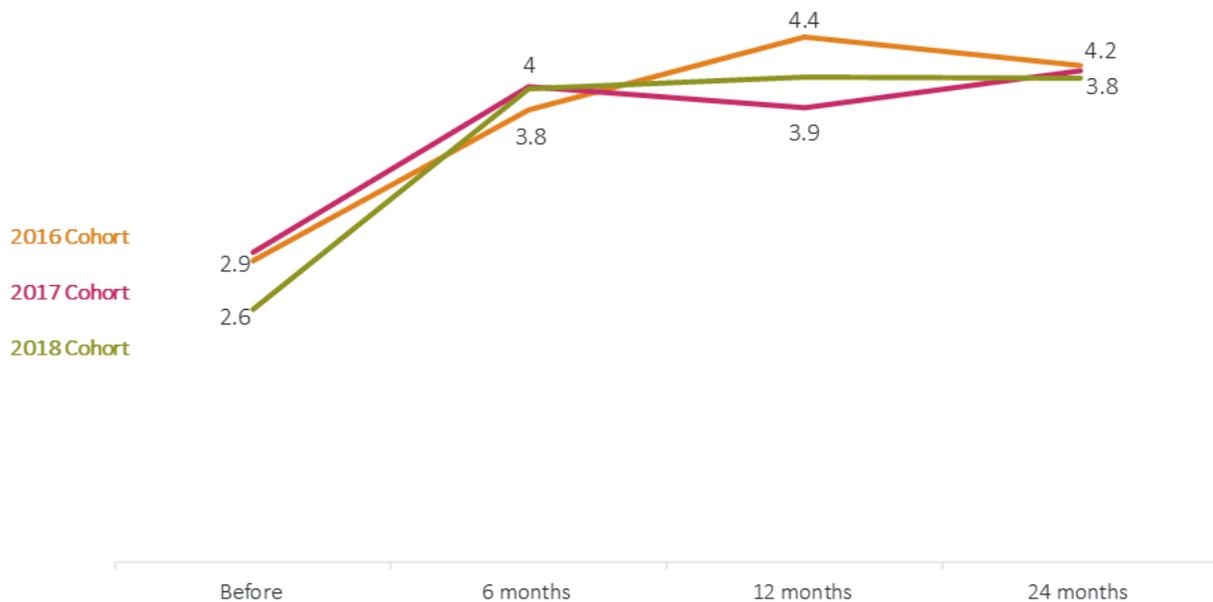Figure 2 | Percent of organizations indicating that each step is going well or very well at 24 months.[5]
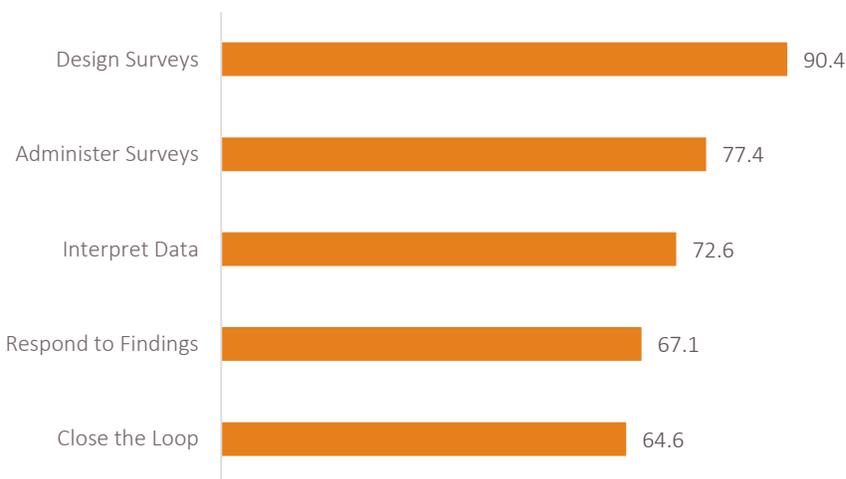
L4G effectively increases organizations' ability to implement high-quality feedback loops, especially in the first six months.

To implement high-quality feedback loops, organizations go through a five-step process detailed by L4G. We developed an assessment of organizations' ability to implement high-quality feedback loops that closely reflects those five steps and have measured their self-reported ratings across seven items before engaging in L4G[6], at 6, 12, and 24 months into their grant period. The seven items include the ability to implement surveys with clients, achieve high response rates in those surveys, collect useful data from clients, analyze and interpret the data, use data to improve programs, and close the loop with clients.

Data show that organizations' ability significantly increases from before L4G to six months into their grant period.[7] However, there is a ceiling effect to this growth, as ability does not increase significantly from 6, to 12, to 24 months. This pattern is also evident if we divide the sample by cohort, with all cohorts exhibiting the same effect (Figure 3).[8]

Figure 3 | Ability growth over time by L4G cohort

Client feedback continues to provide many organizations with insights across multiple areas of their work.

We asked organizations whether they were getting insights in five areas of their work including:

- Client needs
- Client experiences
- Staff-client interaction
- Trouble spots
- Differences in experience among client sub-groups

A large majority, 85%, reported getting quite a few insights in at least two of these areas while more than a third (40%) reported getting at least quite a few insights in four or five areas. Among organizations who reported getting insights, 86% are learning about their clients' experiences while slightly less than two thirds are learning about the other areas of their work.

However, we found that key elements of the L4G model are not as helpful for organizations in generating actionable data. Custom questions and open-ended questions were the most helpful elements in generating actionable data, followed by segmenting data by sub-groups. In line with past findings, the NPS question and benchmarks were the least helpful items. In the past, we had hypothesized that these elements might show more value over time, as the L4G dataset increased and nonprofits collected more feedback or could have more comparisons internally; however, their usefulness did not increase over time, despite L4G coaching and resources on how to interpret and use this data.

Figure 4 | Percent of organizations reporting that specific survey elements are very helpful in generating actionable data.[9]

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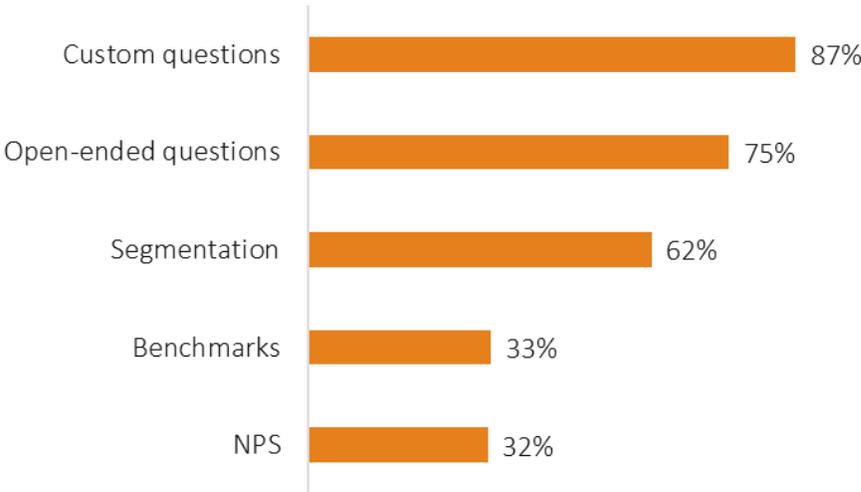
[9] n= 114. Percentages reflect the proportion of organizations answering 4 and 5 on a 1-5 scale.

Most organizations are making changes in response to what they learn from their clients' feedback.

In addition to gaining insights from the data, we asked organizations if they are making changes in response to what they are learning across four different areas of their work, including changes to current programming, operations, client-staff interactions, and offering new services. Overall, 81% made a change in at least one of these areas in response to feedback About two thirds of organizations (61%) have made changes to their current programs while about half adjusted their organizations' operations or client-staff interactions. About one fourth (23%) provided new services in response to feedback. Data shows that about two thirds (64%) of organizations have made changes in two or more of these areas by the 24-month mark. Furthermore, the proportion of organizations that report making changes increases over time for three of the four areas, suggesting that changes in response to feedback take time.

Despite these positive results, one in five organizations did not report making changes in response to feedback. After two years of engagement, this is unlikely to result from a lack of understanding of the data and might signal lack of actionable findings or a lack of internal ability or will to make the necessary changes due to budgets, organizational infrastructure, or other limitations.

There is some progress—and more opportunity—for using feedback to advance equity and inclusion.

Shared Insight and L4G have made an explicit commitment to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) through their work, so through the evaluation, we have sought to see how that is being supported among L4G organizations. Among the 84 organizations from the 2017 and 2018 cohorts who responded to questions related to EDI in their work at the 24-month mark,[10] most (67) saw a connection between the concepts feedback and EDI. Specifically, more than a quarter (25) reported that feedback practice was an important tool to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion within their organizations because it ensured that they were listening to their clients by giving them an opportunity for their voice to be heard, and eight said that feedback practice aligned with their internal initiatives and culture around EDI and deepened their commitment to it. In addition, 15 organizations expressed that feedback practice allowed them to better understand their client needs/experiences, which then informed them on how to improve or change their service, which presumably contributed to greater inclusion or equitable experiences and services. Finally, three others said that the feedback process made them reflect on their internal practices and other power dynamics that affect their clients.
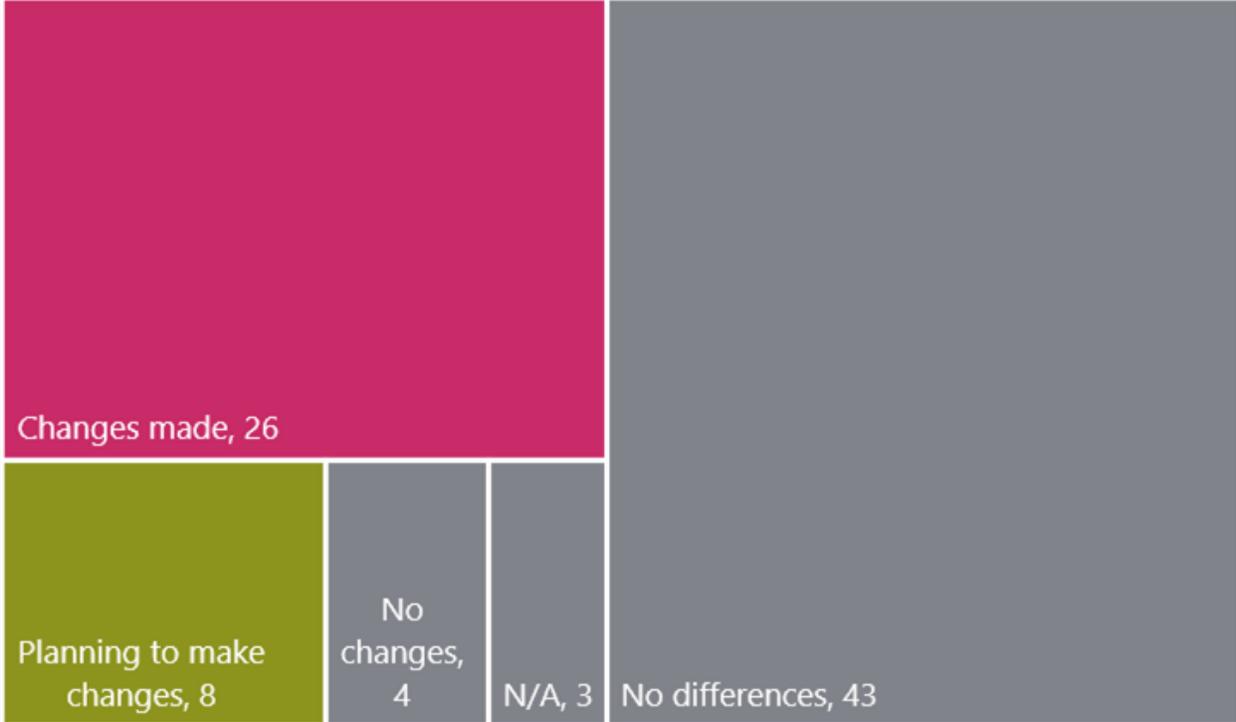
One of the ways in which EDI considerations manifest in L4G's work is by coaching organizations in equity-focused data analysis practices, which includes segmenting data by sub-groups to identify

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[10] The focus on EDI within L4G's work began toward the end of the 2017 cohort, so these question were not asked of the 2016 cohort, hence the lower number of responses.

differences in client experience, thereby advancing more equitable practices and greater inclusion. Therefore, we were particularly interested in knowing whether segmenting data by sub-groups yielded insights and if organizations made changes to respond to those differences. Among the 84 organizations who responded to these questions at the 24-month mark, nearly half (38) reported seeing differences in responses across sub-groups in their populations when they segmented feedback data. Among them, only 26 reported making changes to respond to these differences while 8 others plan to make changes. Changes made thus far included program-level changes, strategy-level changes, and changes to internal practices. Figure 5 shows the proportion of organizations reporting differences and making changes and lists the changes organizations reported. Nevertheless, this leaves 10 organizations who are seeing differences but not making changes to respond to them: half did not answer the question or are not seeing changes, and from another question, we know that more than a third of organizations still do not find segmenting data very helpful for generating actionable data. These findings point to potential opportunities to further assist organizations in segmenting data, interpreting findings, and developing appropriate responses to differences they find. The L4G team is already thinking about this issue and has hypotheses about why these patterns might emerge, including lack of variation in the data, patterns not holding over different survey rounds, or challenges in understanding the differences that emerge.

Figure 5 | Organizations reporting sub-group differences and changes made in response

Program-level changes, 14	Strategy-level changes, 8	Internal practice changes, 4
• Translating surveys, outreach materials, workshops to other languages (5) • Creating new content/services that are relevant to particular sub-groups—e.g., low-income women, alumni (3) • Changing office hours (1) • Creating new referral system to meet the needs of other clients not served by their organization (1) • Experimenting with new ways of doing—e.g., making changes to instruction model, one-on-one vs. individual reading, and expanding modules for entering (1) • Segmenting data differently (1) • Reporting data differently (1) • Changing to type of data collected to better inform changes to make (1)	• Changing marketing and branding to be more inclusive of the entire community served (4) • Increasing resources to better support priority populations (2) • Continuing partnering with local agencies and community-based organizations (1) • Increasing communication and relationship-building among sub-groups, in this case, girls (1) • Improving outreach efforts to minority groups (1)	• Hiring staff of color and bilingual staff (3) • Adding other feedback avenues (1)

L4G is contributing to changes in organizations' culture, values, and effectiveness and increasing commitment to feedback among organizations' leaders and staff.

We asked how L4G impacted organizations in the following areas: culture, decision-making processes, interactions with clients, program effectiveness, and values. Overall, L4G involvement contributed to moderate changes in organizations across all of these areas. Specifically, L4G had the most impact on self-reported program effectiveness, and organizations reported significant increases in this impact between 12 and 24 months. Moreover, though impact on other areas was still moderate, impact on program effectiveness was statistically higher than impact on culture and values. However, this represents self-reported data on perceived impact on these elements; we have not independently reviewed data or assessed impact on program effectiveness. Finally, similar to findings from past analyses, we found that engagement in L4G significantly increases leadership and staff commitment to feedback work, further

signaling that L4G helps shift values and culture in favor of client engagement and inclusion in addition to building technical ability.[11]

Data suggest the theory holds: building feedback capacity is positively correlated with making changes and seeing organizational impact; however, not all organizations benefit equally from L4G engagement.

In past analyses with smaller samples, ORS Impact found a significant and positive correlation between increased ability to gather feedback, gaining insights, making changes in response to feedback, and overall impact on the organization, which are key elements of the theory behind how feedback and L4G can lead to change in organizations. Within this larger sample, we still found significant correlations between these components. However, while ability, changes, and organizational impact are all positively and significantly correlated—meaning that as one increases the other one increases as well—we did not find a significant relationship between higher ability and gaining insights from feedback. Nevertheless, both increased ability and gaining insights are correlated with making changes and seeing organizational impact. In other words, having greater ability doesn't always lead to more insights, but having ability and gaining insights are both related to making changes and seeing impact from feedback on the organization.[12]

However, the data shows that some organizations are benefitting more from participating in L4G than others. Specifically, we found that organizations with annual budgets below $5 million dollars were significantly more likely to report that L4G has impacted their organization in terms of culture, values, operations, or program effectiveness. In addition, organizations with sustained client interactions were significantly more likely to gain insights across different areas of their work.[13]

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[11] All p values < .01
[12] All p values < .01
[13] p-values range from < .01 to <.06. A p-value < .06 is considered to be approaching significance. See appendix 1 for definition of sustained interactions.

L4G is generally effective in supporting organizations, especially through more custom/personalized interactions.

L4G engaged nonprofits in a 24-month cycle where nonprofits received grants, access to curated tools and resources, and one-on-one coaching to support their feedback practices. In addition to assessing L4G's impact on organizations, we gathered feedback about how the model and process are working for nonprofits. Specifically, we asked organizations if they would recommend L4G to other nonprofits using the same NPS methodology that organizations use with clients. Among the 120 organizations who responded to this question at 24 months, the vast majority reported that they would, in fact, recommend L4G, giving it an NPS score of 72.5 (Figure 6). There were only five detractors.

Figure 6 | NPS score for nonprofits

73

-100   100
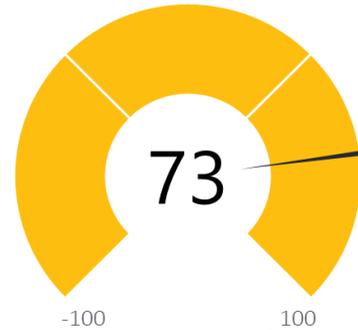
We also asked organizations from the 2017 and 2018 cohorts[14] how helpful L4G's package of technical assistance (TA) resources had been throughout their 24-month engagement in the program. At the end of their grant, organizations reported that L4G's TA was very helpful, giving it an average rating of 3.8 on a five-point scale (n = 84). Because L4G provides TA in different ways, we asked organizations how helpful each type of interaction with the L4G team had been for their feedback practices. Data shows that on-call or ad hoc TA by phone or email were the most helpful for organizations, followed closely by scheduled one-on-one calls with feedback coaches. These two items were significantly more helpful for organizations than webinars or the L4G website, although the website refers to an earlier version of the L4G website, not the updated version that is structured to more effectively guide organizations through the feedback process.[15]

When looking across different types of organizations, we found that TA for the 2017 cohort was significantly less helpful than for the 2018 cohort at 24 months. A possible explanation for this difference is that the 2017 cohort was the first cohort to receive TA from an expanded pool of coaches as L4G increased its coaching staff and worked to standardize and ensure high-quality across coaches. Moreover, within the 2017 cohort, TA was significantly less helpful at 24 months than it was at 12 months. The 2018 cohort also reported a slight decrease in helpfulness between 12 and 24 months, albeit non-significant. This finding suggests that, similar to ability, there might be a ceiling effect in how helpful TA is over time, although the lack of comparable data at six months prevents us from testing this hypothesis. We will continue looking at this aspect of the L4G model in future cohorts and have plans to coordinate with the

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[14] The 2016 cohort was not asked this question in a comparable way: therefore, we report 2017 and 2018 results only.
[15] All p values < .01

L4G team to delve deeper into this question, considering the different types of interactions L4G is having with organizations in light of the online support the newer version of the model provides. Finally, we found some differences in organizational performance depending on who the organization's feedback coach was. We will share these findings internally with L4G staff to inform their work moving forward.

Continuing Feedback Beyond L4G

Given the supports and resources provided by L4G during the 24-month grant period, it is not surprising that organizations perform well during the grant period. However, an important question related to the effectiveness of the initiative is whether organizations continue feedback practices after the grant period ends and they no longer have access to those supports and dollars. In other words, do organizations find feedback work valuable enough to prioritize it among competing priorities and invest the necessary resources without L4G's support? This section summarizes the evidence we have to respond to this question to date.

At the end of the grant, all organizations plan to continue feedback practices beyond the L4G grant, and some have already expanded feedback beyond what L4G is supporting.

At 24 months, all responding organizations plan to continue feedback post-grant. About half plan to continue and increase the amount of feedback they collect, and more than a third plan to continue at current levels; 13% plan to continue but decrease the amount of feedback they collect. However, we do not have data from 38 organizations at 24 months, so we do not have a clear indication of their intent to continue.

Beyond their intent, we do know something about the extent to which they have expanded feedback work beyond what L4G is supporting. Almost three fourths (71%) of organizations are currently collecting feedback in additional ways, including the following:

- 54% are collecting feedback from other stakeholders (staff, board, volunteers)
- 42% are collecting feedback from clients in other programs
- 25% are collecting feedback from different clients in the same program L4G is supporting

These expansions suggest organizations are finding feedback valuable and therefore prioritizing the work among competing priorities.

In addition, half of the organizations (42) are engaging clients in new ways, going beyond L4G surveys (figure 7); a few others are planning to engage their clients differently in the future. The most common method that organizations are using or planning to use is through focus groups. Other new ways of

engagement mentioned included advisory groups/committees/councils, bringing clients on as staff, board members, volunteers, or champions/ambassadors, and through additional surveys/interviews.

Figure 7 | Ways of engaging clients beyond L4G surveys (*n* = 60)[16]
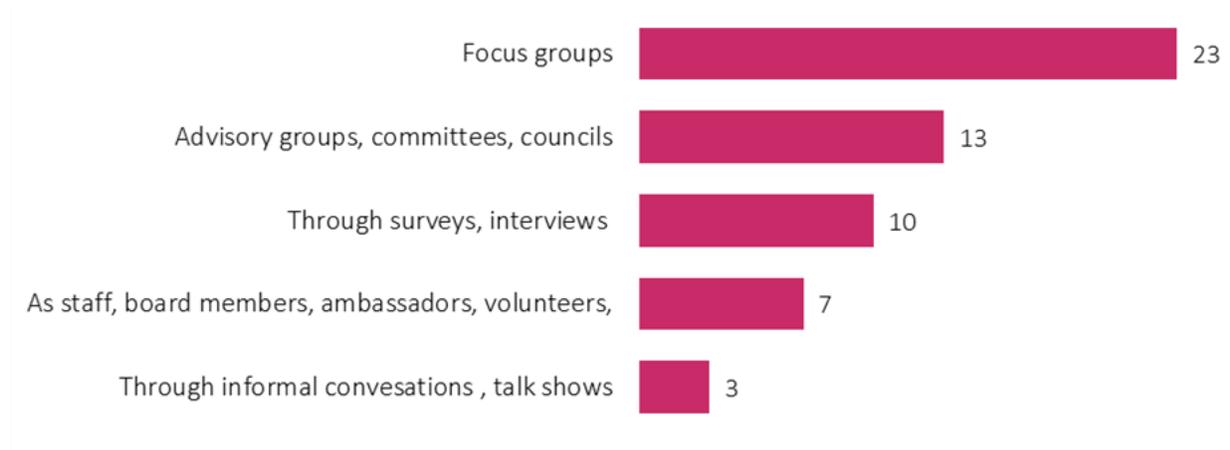
Of course, intent and action are not the same. When following up with 2016 organizations one year after their grant, we found that two thirds definitely sustained their feedback practice, and up to 91% may have, as we were not able to speak to all of the originally participating organizations. Only two of the organizations we spoke with were not continuing their feedback work. Additionally, most maintained the same steps and thus, presumably, the same level of quality. More than three fourths (26) of the 31 organizations that continue collecting feedback reported that they are still using all five steps in the L4G process.[17]

We plan on following up with 2017 and 2018 organizations one year after their grant period ends to assess whether they are indeed continuing and to better understand the sustainability of practices following the grant.

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[16] This sample size reflects the 60 organizations among the 87 from the 2017 and 2018 cohorts who responded to this open-ended question at 24 months.

[17] Sustainability of Feedback Practices, 2016. ORS Impact. https://d35kre7me4s5s.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/30122415/ORS-Impact-Sustainability-of-Feedback-Practices-2016-L4G-Cohort-Final.pdf

L4G's Impact on Co-funders

Shared Insight's theory of change seeks to see greater numbers of funders value, promote, and actively support/use high-quality feedback and listening practices so that more funders use the feedback to incorporate the perspectives of the people they seek to help and identify and address equity, diversity, and inclusion issues. For this analysis, we have broken down the desired changes into four components relating to the extent to which co-funders

- value feedback,
- promote feedback,
- support feedback, and
- use grantee and/or constituent feedback.

L4G's co-funding model is one way in which Shared Insight is engaging funders and has been the main tool for doing so to date; therefore, we wanted to look back across data from L4G co-funder interviews to understand the degree to which the co-funding aspect of the L4G approach contributes to these desired changes. This section describes co-funders' general reactions to the L4G model and summarizes the evidence we have about how the co-funder model is contributing to these changes.

There have been 80 L4G co-funders across the three cohorts. To better understand co-funders' experiences with L4G, we interviewed 52 co-funders (65% of the total)[18] one year into their co-funding experience. Engagement with co-funders by Shared Insight and L4G has been variable but generally light touch. In past cohorts, this has included a group orientation webinar, invitations to events, periodic communications, and notification of additional funding opportunities.[19]

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[18] By cohort, we interviewed 16 from the 2016 cohort, 26 from 2017, and 10 from 2018. We excluded co-funders who were individual donors (5 total), as they are not target funders for Shared Insight.
[19] Two co-funders supporting multiple organizations received additional support around a convening with their organizations for more dialogue around what they were learning for the 2016 cohort.

Co-funders are highly satisfied with their experience through L4G and are highly likely to recommend it to other funders and nonprofits.

Co-funders have typically been quite satisfied with their experience, though feedback around more communication and supports for funders have been common. NPS scores referring to whether they would recommend L4G to other funders have been high, 87 in 2017 and 90 in 2018; we did not ask this in 2016. Interestingly, the NPS for recommending L4G to other grantees is lower, 79 and 60, respectively (Figures 8 and 9). Across the ratings and timepoints, however, there was only one detractor.

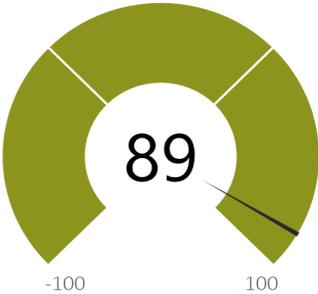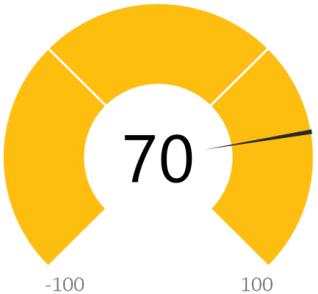Figure 8 | Average NPS score across cohorts recommending L4G to Funders

89

-100   100

Figure 9 | Average NPS score across cohorts recommending L4G to grantees

70

-100   100

We compared results from interviews with co-funders over time to explore the contribution co-funding has made to outcomes for funders in the current theory of change. While our inquiry has been similar over time, the exact questions and analyses have varied. This meta-analysis of these reports does provide some useful trends and findings across the 52 co-funders who participated in interviews across the three cohorts.

While co-funders who join L4G already value feedback, their perception of how feedback can help grantees and their foundations improves with L4G engagement.

Most co-funders originally engage in L4G because they value how feedback can support nonprofits' efforts (65%). Over time, the majority of co-funders shared ways in which they are valuing feedback more, either because the issue was elevated in importance and they were more intentional or aware of high-quality feedback practices (the majority of 2017 and 2018 co-funders) or because they were contemplating practice changes around feedback and listening that suggested the value of feedback, often for grantees, and sometimes for themselves. Co-funders' focus on the value and potential benefit for their own foundations increased over time, with 18/26 (69%) and 8/10 (80%) saying their thinking had been affected in 2017 and 2018, respectively, compared to just 4 of 16 (25%) in 2016. It seems that while

this is a ready audience, participation as a co-funder builds upon an initial value for feedback to increase valuing and top-of-mind-ness.

A few co-funders are actively promoting feedback within their foundations or with grantees.

While we never asked about co-funder promotion of feedback specifically as part of our interviews, for this analysis we looked at co-funders' responses about the degree to which they had either taken actions that promoted feedback among grantees or they had shared information with colleagues internally. Across the three rounds, 8 of the 52 told us they had added new feedback practice-related questions into grant proposals. Sharing information about feedback and L4G with colleagues increased with each cohort, from 38% in 2016 to 65% in 2017 to 90% in 2018 sharing more about feedback practice happening through L4G. It's not entirely clear what the depth and nature of the information shared with colleagues was, but it does suggest some new/different conversations that might not have happened otherwise. While these might be relatively "light" examples of promotion, there does seem to be some minor effect on co-funders in this area.

There was strong impact related to "more funders supporting feedback," considering the light touch engagement strategy in place thus far.

Shared Insight's theory of change identifies more funders supporting feedback as a desired short-term outcome. We interpreted "support" to mean what co-funders were doing that would increase the use of feedback practice in their own foundations or within their grantees. Among the thirty-six 2017 and 2018 co-funders we interviewed, 33% reported changes to their foundation practices related to feedback from grantees or communities and mentioned that L4G contributed to that change.

Regarding support for nonprofit practice across the three cohorts, co-funders shared high likelihood of continuing to support nonprofit feedback, with 80% to 100% using the top two points of the likelihood scale. We have not followed up with co-funders to know if this intention was realized in year two or beyond, but it does seem that engagement as a co-funder can build intentionality to support nonprofit practice over time.

There was low impact on the use of grantee and/or constituent feedback within foundations.

When we asked co-funders about changes made around their use of feedback, we heard examples relating to their use of feedback from grantees and thoughts on using feedback from the people they seek to help. A few individuals from each cohort did say L4G participation contributed to them seeking more feedback from their grantees, usually via a grantee survey. When it came to intent to increase the extent to which their foundation uses feedback in the future, it was notably lower than their intent to

support grantees' feedback practice. We asked this slightly differently over time, but generally ~60% of each cohort of funders said they would be likely or very likely to increase their use of feedback and, when asked, often did not have a clear set of ideas, timelines, or next steps to do so.

While L4G seems to grow value for feedback for foundations and nonprofits and more support for nonprofit use, it isn't (yet) tipping the scales around foundations' own use of feedback from the communities they seek to help. We are limited, of course, by the fact that we have only spoken to co-funders at one time point and midway through the L4G experience.

Overall summary

While the co-funder strategy has employed relatively light engagement and supports and seems to be from a pool of people who are already "feedback believers" to some degree, L4G co-funding does seem to be contributing to some key outcomes for Shared Insight, particularly around increased value for and support of feedback. The changes achieved so far through this light touch model point to opportunities for further impact with the more intentional and strategic approach Shared Insight is embarking on to engage co-funders in a deeper way.

L4G's Contribution to Shared Insight's Overall Goal and Impact

Shared Insight's overarching goal across all the bodies of work is that "foundations and nonprofits be meaningfully connected to each other and to the people and communities they seek to help, and more responsive to their input and feedback." With this robust dataset and analysis, we wanted to better test the degree to which this signature initiative is working toward the different aspects of this overarching goal. To do so, we broke down this goal into five components:

1. Nonprofits are more meaningfully connected to the people and communities they seek to help.
2. Nonprofits are more responsive to input and feedback from the people and communities they seek to help.
3. Nonprofits and foundations are more meaningfully connected.
4. Foundations are more meaningfully connected to the people and communities they seek to help.
5. Foundations are more responsive to input and feedback from the people and communities they seek to help.

L4G is strongly and directly contributing to nonprofits' meaningful connections with the people and communities they seek to help.

While Shared Insight has not defined "meaningfully," the fact that nonprofits report learning from feedback, making changes in response to it, and seeing organizational impact indicated that clients' voices are having a "meaningful" effect on organizations. We also spoke directly to clients about their experience in providing feedback to nonprofits, which gave us a different vantage point about how the process works for them and whether it connects them to the organization. Overall, clients feel it is important to meaningfully connect with organizations, and most were happy with the opportunity to do so through feedback. Most clients reported feeling that their voice matters to the organizations, suggesting they felt a meaningful connection.

However, a few themes emerged from the constituents themselves that raise opportunities for improvement. Specifically, most clients did not know what organizations were learning from surveys and

were not aware of the changes made in response to feedback. In addition, some clients questioned whether certain organizational structures hampered their ability to affect change if feedback remained with specific staff members and did not reach decision makers effectively. Finally, opportunities emerged for some organizations to improve survey design and administration to respond to clients' needs in providing authentic feedback, thereby enabling them to connect more meaningfully.

L4G is strongly contributing to "nonprofits being more responsive to input and feedback from the people and communities they seek to help."

L4G's model is designed to help nonprofits build and sustain high-quality feedback loops with their clients, and our data suggests that the model is achieving that goal. As the data on L4G's impact on nonprofits shows, engagement in L4G helps nonprofits improve their ability to collect high-quality feedback, which provides insights and information on clients' needs, experiences, and preferences. Equipped with this new knowledge, organizations are responding by making changes in current programs and internal operations, by how staff interacts with clients, and by providing new services. In addition, organizations report that L4G has increased commitment from leadership and staff to feedback and impacted organizational culture and values, suggesting that organizations value clients' voices and feedback.

We have also learned from organizations that while they are making adjustments where they can, not all feedback is easy to respond to. In cases where client feedback suggests changes outside of the organizations' scope or current budget, organizations can still close the loop by acknowledging the feedback and explaining to clients why certain changes are not possible. This type of interaction is a different yet valid way of responding to feedback.

L4G has made some contribution to meaningfully connecting nonprofits and foundations, but contributions are uneven, and there is opportunity for greater impact.

The L4G process has the potential to help nonprofits and foundations have new and different conversations about the work and the people they seek to help. Understanding community members' preferences and needs and the barriers and opportunities nonprofits have in addressing them could help build understanding, empathy, and a greater shared vision around communities that funders and nonprofits work with.

We have not specifically asked co-funders about the degree to which L4G has changed their connection with the nonprofits they co-fund. Our meta-analysis of co-funder interview reports suggest that co-funders did have some connection with their grantees through their L4G work, which we hope would be meaningful and additive to their ongoing relationship. Across the three cohorts, 32 of the 52 funders we interviewed (62%) had spoken with their grantee(s) about their results, takeaways, and changes they

were making based on feedback.[20] While a relatively small number of co-funders had made changes they attributed to L4G, a number were engaging grantees in different ways around their proposals and asking about what they were learning from their constituents (8 of 52) or seeking more regular feedback from them as partners (4 of 52), potentially creating more meaningful connections. This would be a ripe area for further exploration going forward.

So far, L4G has had relatively low impact on meaningfully connecting foundations and the people and communities they seek to help, but there is potential for greater contribution with more intentional engagement.

There hasn't been a strong "ask" or expectation for how co-funders would connect more with the people they seek to help through or as a result of L4G. Various hypotheses exist. They could learn more through grantees' lessons that could filter into their grant-making and strategies. They could rely more on grantee partners as sources of information to feed into their foundation's work. Co-funding could increase their interest in, appetite for, and value of seeking more input directly from communities for their work.

While we did not hear about a lot of concrete actions co-funders took to more meaningfully connect with the communities they seek to help, engaging in L4G did seem to have an impact on a number of the key point people and how they think about client voice and the benefit of feedback and listening. Due to data collection differences across cohorts, it was less clear how much 2016 co-funders attributed changes to L4G. Across cohorts, 32 co-funders (62%) spoke about the ways in which they were thinking about constituent feedback, including having internal conversations about grant-making and strategic planning, determining how to use constituent data directly, proposing specific initiatives to listen to or empower communities, and increasing intentionality around getting closer and using community input. While the realization of this desired goal might be low, the findings do suggest there may be more potential to untap in this area.

Outcomes so far suggest low impact on "foundations being more responsive to input and feedback from the people and communities they seek to help."

We have only spoken to co-funders one year into their L4G grants, and thus changes in participating foundations have mostly related to practices with grantees and thinking about feedback differently or considering changes. Thus, we don't have data to really understand the degree to which any of the changes, with grantees or communities, were met with receptivity or made a difference. The theory posits that more responsive grant-making leads to improved relationships and outcomes, but current data does not allow us to assess whether that hypothesis holds true.

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[20] Moving forward, L4G and Shared Insight are providing more tools and support to guide these conversations.

Conclusion

Shared Insight's vision is deeply tied to seeing a more equitable world, one in which the communities and people foundations and nonprofits seek to help, especially those whose voices are least heard, will be better off in ways they define for themselves. L4G clearly contributes to the overall theory of change, most strongly for nonprofits and the people they seek to help and somewhat for the co-funders. The patterns associated with the impacts on nonprofits hold up over time: L4G clearly contributes to greater nonprofit capacity, and that capacity is helping organizations gain insights and take actions in response to the feedback they receive. On the other hand, co-funders have deepened their value for feedback and show signs that it may deepen their openness to listen more to their grantees and communities.

Shared Insight and L4G should consider these findings as they continue to iterate upon the model and consider how to continue reaching a greater proportion of the nonprofit market. While this version of the approach expanded the reach from three nonprofits receiving individual grants to 158 who have completed the grant at this time, there are still questions about the scalability of the model that are tied to some of the very things that seem to make it successful until now like the one-on-one custom support and resources to keep it as a priority of the organization. There are also questions about the extent to which the impacts seen to date within this model hold true as L4G tests new models with different supports for nonprofits and levels of co-funder engagement. At the same time, the potential benefits of reaching more nonprofits and thus more people and communities could untap a host of additional insights, power sharing, and opportunities for people to feel valued and listened to beyond the journey to date. That makes these questions and tradeoffs associated with greater reach and uptake definitely worth wrestling over and experimenting with. Overall, we see some promise and more opportunity for how L4G can continue to help nonprofits and co-funders consider how feedback can advance their thinking and practices and how they can meaningfully connect with each other and with the people and communities they seek to help.

Appendix 1 | Breakdown of Sample by Categories

Table 1 | Breakdown by cohort

Cohort	# of Grantees
2016	46
2017	66
2018	46

Table 2| Breakdown by budget

Budget Size*	# of Grantees
< $4.9 million	78
> $4.9 million	80

* The median budget among the 158 organizations is $4.9 million dollars.

Table 2| Breakdown by nature of interaction with clients (categories developed by L4G staff)

Nature of Interaction	Description	# of Grantees
One-time	Organizations that interact with clients only once or, if recurrent, tend to be transactional in nature, with limited opportunity for relationship-building with staff.	23
Repeated	Organizations that interact with clients "behind the scenes," through intermediaries.	63
Sustained	Organizations that interact with clients over a longer period of time in which relationship-building is a primary goal of the interaction.	72