

Measuring Together

A Learning Approach for
Inclusive Economies



Surdna Foundation

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Learning & Grants Operations

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Foreword

In 2018, the Surdna Foundation approved refined program strategies that included a transition from what was known as the “Strong Local Economies” program to the “Inclusive Economies” program (IE). This approval responded to macro shifts in the global and US economy, including (not exhaustive):

- a recognition of the growing role technology plays in shaping and distributing economic opportunity,
- persistent barriers to financial capital in BIPOC communities,
- concentrations of corporate and political power, and
- the linkages between worker power and a thriving democracy.

As part of this shift, the Foundation developed three organizational objectives centering racial equity—Building Wealth, Increasing Democratic Participation, and Increasing Accountability and Transparency. To complement the refined program strategy, the IE program has implemented a learning process that examines these concepts and attempts to understand how solutions focused on closing the racial wealth gap and advancing a more equitable form of grantmaking can accelerate desired program and institutional objectives.

IE recognizes this approach may be distinct from others in the Inclusive Economies field, where poverty reduction or workforce development play a more central role. We appreciate the opportunity to learn with our grantee partners on how to enable the systemic shifts necessary to create wealth of multiple forms, empower communities of color and build authentic relationships with grantee partners—whose work generates data which substantiates that an inclusive economy is possible. The IE program values its partnership with our colleagues in the Learning & Grant Operations (LGO) team in developing and deploying our metrics work. We hope that this learning is useful to our grantee partners, allies, and funders in the Inclusive Economies field.

Inclusive Economies Team

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Introduction

Surdna's IE Program has worked in close partnership with grantee partners, peer foundations, and many others for several years to mitigate the barriers in creating a business ecosystem that truly supports entrepreneurs of color. As the work progresses, we have many anecdotal stories to share—good, bad, or somewhere in between. But a common question among all of the partners is: How will we know whether we are making a difference toward achieving our goals?

In October 2018, the Surdna Foundation's IE and LGO teams, alongside a dedicated group of grantee partners and philanthropic colleagues, began to collectively explore these questions by co-creating impact metrics. This group also worked together to imagine how we might share learning about the types of data being collected and examples of successes and challenges to help inform and improve the way we work.

One body of work that emerged from this exploration was a two-phase pilot program to determine how to set, track, and report the outcomes of Surdna's grants.

One year ago, we completed a phase 1 pilot with IE grantee partners to select and set targets for impact metrics. In phase 2, which is the subject of this report, grantee partners were asked to report on what they learned about the metrics and targets they set after one year of work.

It is important to note that we are not making assumptions about the impact of our grantmaking on the field based on this pilot. While it was a momentous year, 12 months is a short period of time to make systemic change in such an enormous ecosystem; this is long-term work. Rather, these two pilots were a way of field-testing the process we all designed for sharing learning so that we have data to improve our work over time.

Some of our key takeaways from the phase 2 pilot are:

- **Measurement for learning; not proving impact.** The pilot is focused on establishing a system for learning rather than evaluating if grantee partners reached their targets. In the early stages of reviewing the results of our grantee partners' reports, we need to take a critical look at the metrics themselves to see if these measures hold up as the best measures of success. In the pilot, some metrics were not selected, and others were selected by only one organization.

- **Timing matters.** This pilot coincided with the pandemic, which yielded interesting results, such as an influx of capital and investment deals partially due to the Paycheck Protection Program. This is, of course, a temporary flow of federal dollars. This contributes to the argument that, while the snapshot of learning around these metrics is important, we need to look at a long arc of these data before we can make conclusions about field-level impact.
- **Economic narrative change is an emerging theme.** Several organizations reported on narrative change work, highlighting issues such as preemption, fair wages, and working conditions. Narrative change is becoming a more central theme both to the IE Program and to the Surdna Foundation generally.

Finally, we are very sensitive to the fact that collecting and evaluating metrics is time-intensive work. And we are also well-aware of the power dynamics involved when a funder requests data from grantees. For these reasons we have tried hard to take the approach that:

- Makes the collection and reporting of metrics as simple as possible.
- Partners with our grantees throughout the metrics process.
- Engages our partners in what we are learning, as the purpose of doing this work is to help us learn together in our aim to provide value to our grantees and the field beyond Surdna's dollars.

Inclusive Economies Fluxx

Pilot II: Metrics Reporting

In March 2020, Surdna’s IE and LGO teams conducted a pilot (Pilot 1). Surdna invited a subset of the IE Program’s grantee partners to help test the process for selecting and collecting impact metrics through Fluxx—Surdna’s grants management system. Pilot 1 participants were asked to select two metrics from a list that had been established through an extensive collaboration between Surdna’s IE grantees, Surdna staff, and partners in the philanthropic community. Pilot 1 participants also had an optional third metric of the grantee’s choosing.

Grantees were asked to set outcome targets—some quantitative, others qualitative—and describe why these metrics were important to them. They were also asked to provide their feedback about the process for providing this information, which resulted in a public-facing report designed for transparency and to benefit the learning of our grantees, Surdna’s staff and board, and the broader field. [See the report here.](#)

Pilot 2, the focus of this report, centered on reporting the results of the metrics chosen by grantees over the previous year.

Section 1: Methodology

In March 2021, sixteen eligible participants from Pilot 1 were asked to participate in Pilot 2. Of these, 75% (12 grantees) completed the metrics report. The report form pulled information from their grant proposal, which presented the grantee with read-only versions of the metrics selected and the targets they specified. The form also provided space for grantees to report on the one-year results. In all cases, grantees were given the opportunity to provide additional context, describing what enabled or inhibited them from meeting targets.

Finally, grantees completed a brief survey to provide Surdna with feedback on the process. This helped us with some of our decisions about reporting frequency and changes to improve the metrics process as we began their implementation with all grantees beginning in September 2021.

Section 2: Impact Analysis

Let's start with the impact the IE program seeks to achieve—to foster the creation of an inclusive, equitable economy where people of color can maximize their potential as leaders, creators, and innovators across sectors. Its grantmaking is guided by two strategic goals:

- **Business Start-Up and Growth** to increase representation in ownership of businesses and high-growth sectors by people of color with an emphasis on Black and Latinx people.
- **Equitable Economic Development** to amplify community voice in decision-making and increase the number and percent of quality jobs among communities of color, especially Black and Latinx.
- The **12 grantees that reported metrics data** represent about 15% of the Inclusive Economies Program portfolio of active grantees. They reported their results about one year after they set their initial metrics and targets just before the onset of the pandemic.

We begin with a summary of results that give some idea of the impact of the work of these grantees, and then offer a detailed look at how grantees set and measure their impact. For a detailed description of the metrics, with examples, please see the [metrics glossary](#).

Impact Summary

65

Policies Passed

Collectively, grantees were able to influence, directly or indirectly, the passage of 65 policies across the country. These policies focused on state-mandated paid leave, building local power, and equitable economic development.

75%

Targets met

Participants reported the results of the metrics chosen in Pilot 1. Of those responses, 75% showed that grantees either met or exceeded their targets.

5

Network Building Efforts

Many IE grantees serve as conveners and connectors. Grantees facilitated critical conversations between policymakers and the small business community to amplify impact and build business ecosystems.

\$21.7M

Capital Secured

Directly resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the passage of the Paycheck Protection Program, IE grantees mainly focused on deploying debt capital to distressed business owners.

362

Investment Deals

Mostly in the form of debt, participants reported an influx of deals facilitated. This directly resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic and the passage of the Paycheck Protection Program..

21

Campaigns/Organizing

Collectively, grantees waged a multitude of campaigns across the country, predominantly around workers' rights. Such issues became more salient because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

\$2.98M

Regranted

Some grantee partners from the Equitable Economic Development and Business Start-up & Growth Strategies used a portion of their funds for regranted purposes—the majority of which were rapid response grants.

11

Narrative Change Efforts

Grantees published reports, articles, and opinion pieces, received national and local attention from media outlets, and launched new websites to strengthen messaging on issues like preemption and fair wages and working conditions.

Business Start-Up & Growth Strategy

The IE program seeks to increase the number of high-growth and scalable firms created by people of color and to facilitate the continued growth of these businesses. To achieve these goals, the program makes strategic grants and partnerships that create the necessary conditions for more founders, entrepreneurs, and leaders of color to participate in the economy and create the long-term benefits of higher wealth and income.

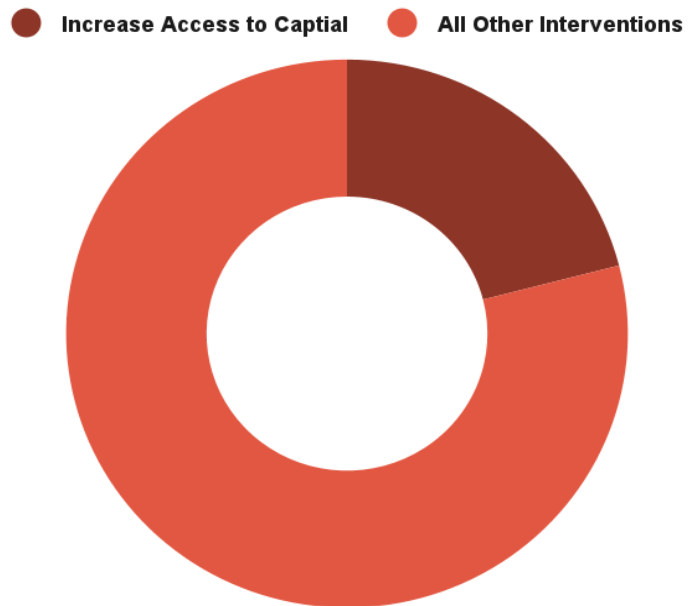
The Business Start-up & Growth strategy consists of three interventions: “Increase Access to Capital,” “Reform Procurement Practices,” and “Improve Business Support Systems.” Associated under each of these interventions are 4 - 5 unique metrics, which were co-created with IE grantee partners.

I. Increase Access to Capital Metrics Summary

Under the “Increase Access to Capital” intervention, the IE program seeks to open up access to venture capital, equity investors, and commercial lenders, which are crucial for people of color seeking to expand their businesses beyond early-stage operations. The IE program aims to influence the flow of financial capital so that it can better meet the business growth needs within communities of color.

To understand progress toward the goals of this intervention, the IE program and its grantee partners identified 4 unique metrics. In Pilot 1, participants selected metrics and set targets for each in early 2020 (summarized in this report).

In Pilot 2, **21%** of the responses received (5 responses) reported on metrics related to the “Increase Access to Capital” intervention.



Below is a summary of the available metrics on which 3 of the 12 grantees reported:

Strategy: Business Start-up & Growth		
Intervention: Increase access to capital	Dollar size (range and median) of investment deals (equity and/or debt) to firms owned by people of color.	1 response
	Number and percentage of investment deals (equity and/or debt) with firms owned by people of color.	2 responses
	Total dollar/currency of financial deals (equity and/or debt) secured by entrepreneurs of color.	2 responses
	Median cost of capital (equity and/or debt).	0 responses

Based on Surdna’s staff interpretation of the information reported, **80% of the targets set were met or exceeded** by grantees reporting on metrics under this intervention.

A need for more capital was evident due to businesses shutting down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resulting from the launch of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) by the federal government, much of the capital deployed by pilot participants came in the form of forgivable loans. Grantees who focused on deploying debt capital exceeded their targets due to the heightened demand for funds made available through PPP. Fortunately, many of our partners and their members are recognized as authorized lenders by the Small Business Administration, leaving them well-positioned to meet the demand of small business owners. The National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders said they:

“...provided low-interest loans to network members that are authorized lenders under the Paycheck Protection Program, which supported approximately \$6.4 million in forgivable loans. [We] organized 21 additional member organizations in a ‘hub and spoke’ network to refer small business clients who would otherwise have difficulty accessing or applying for PPP funding through a conventional bank to a qualified [Community Development Financial Institution] CDFI PPP lender.”

There was comparatively less activity in cases where grantees were focused on raising equity.

A Word From the IE Team:

“BIPOC-entrepreneurs are often limited in the types of capital they have access to, which disproportionately pairs them with debt products. The lack of patient working capital is a significant problem that the IE program hopes to address with grantee partners through support of diverse fund managers and financial products.”

Collectively, these grantees achieved the following results:

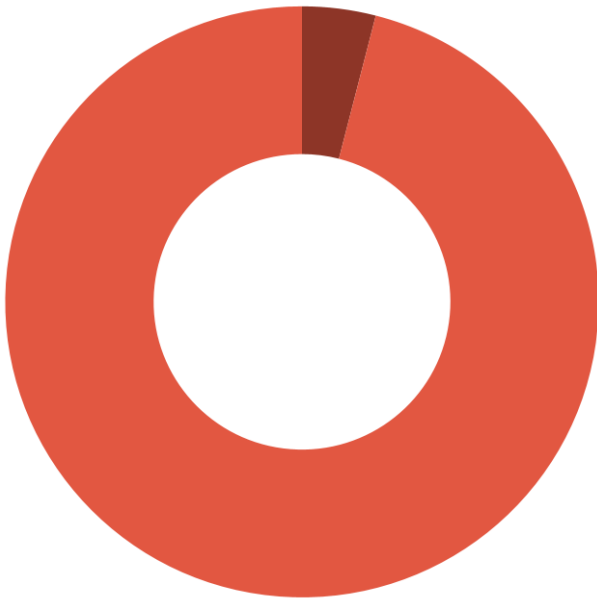
- \$9M in debt capital secured for BIPOC entrepreneurs
- 343 investment deals secured for BIPOC entrepreneurs
- \$2.2M regranted in rapid response grants

The Paycheck Protection Program, a \$953B business loan program, provided IE grantee partners with a significant tailwind, equipping them with the resources required to meet high demand from its constituents. Without PPP, it is difficult to predict how these results might change in the future.

II. Reform Procurement Practices Metrics Summary

Under the “Reform Procurement Practices” intervention, the IE program seeks to support businesses owned by people of color in accessing contract opportunities, which are critical to growing a company’s revenue stream and operating capacity.

● Reform Procurement Practices ● All Other Interventions



To understand progress toward the goals of this intervention, the Inclusive Economies program and its grantee partners identified five unique metrics. In Pilot 1, participants selected metrics and set targets for each in early 2020 (summarized in this report).

In Pilot 2, **4%** of the responses received (1 response) reported on metrics related to the “Reform Procurement Practices” intervention.

Below is a summary of the metric on which one of 12 organizations reported:

Strategy: Business Start-up & Growth		
Intervention: Increase access to capital	Contract awarded to firms owned by people of color (median dollar size and quantity)	1 response
	Number of companies and/or public agencies adopting new targeted procurement practices and policies.	0 responses
	Number of firms owned by people of color that win contracts with cities / large institutions for the first time	0 responses
	Percent growth in revenue of firms owned by people of color with large contracts	0 responses
	Percentage of contracts with firms owned by people of color.	0 responses

Based on Surdna’s staff interpretation of the information reported, **100% of the targets set were met or exceeded** by grantees reporting on metrics under this intervention.

While many businesses had to shut down and/or operate in a limited capacity during the pandemic, some industries (e.g., construction, trucking, digital media/technology) maintained the ability to secure contract opportunities. Our grantee partner worked with procurement council members and other strategic partners to continue seeking and advertising contract opportunities.

This grantee achieved the following results:

- \$12.7M in contracts secured by BIPOC-entrepreneurs
- 20 contracts secured by BIPOC-entrepreneurs

III. Improve Business Support Systems

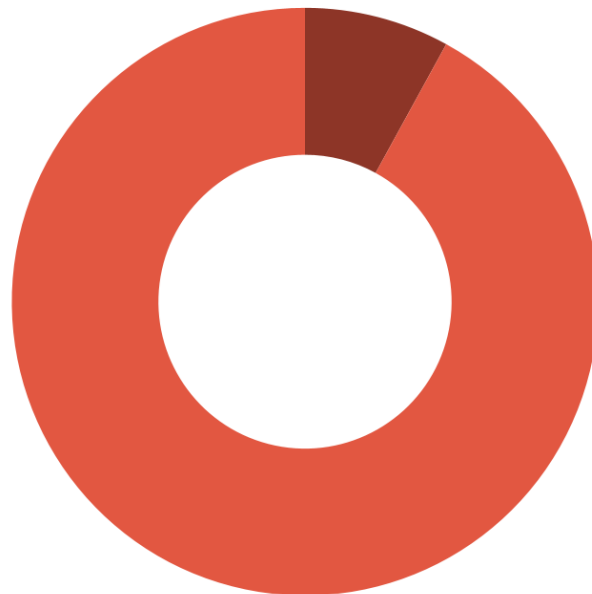
Metrics Summary

Under the “Improve Business Support Systems” intervention, the IE program seeks to strengthen business ecosystems for early-stage entrepreneurs of color via connections to mentors, opportunities, capital, skills, and information so that they are more competitive. The IE program funds efforts that foster business support systems that meet the needs of growing companies that seek larger contracts, growth capital, and new markets.

To understand progress toward the goals of this intervention, the Inclusive Economies program, in partnership with its grantee partners, identified five unique metrics. In Pilot 1, participants selected metrics and set targets for each in early 2020 (summarized in this report).

In Pilot 2, **8%** of the responses received (2 responses) reported on metrics related to the “Improve Business Support Systems” intervention.

● Improve Business Support Systems ● All Other Interventions



Below is a summary of the metrics on which one of 12 organizations reported:

Strategy: Business Start-up & Growth		
Intervention: Improve Business Support Systems	Change in business confidence of entrepreneurs of color.	1 response
	Number of firms owned by people of color accessing two or more programs / services within the ecosystem.	0 responses
	Percent change in diversity/variety of business support organizations.	0 responses
	Percent growth in revenue of supported firms owned by people of color.	1 response
	Percent of firms owned by people of color receiving investment within two years of program graduation.	0 responses

Based on Surdna’s staff interpretation of the information reported, **100% of the targets set were met or exceeded** by the one grantee that reported on metrics under this intervention.

This grantee achieved the following results:

- Significantly increased business confidence of entrepreneurs of color, noted by their ability to pitch at competitions and with prospective investors.
- Observed 30% increase in revenues in companies participating in programming efforts.

Equitable Economic Development Strategy

Through its support of organizations working to reshape the field toward equitable economic development, Surdna's IE program seeks to increase the amount of quality jobs, strengthen public and private sector accountability, and amplify community voice in decision making. Improvements along these goals will lead to outcomes such as business growth, job creation, greater representation in public and private sector leadership, decision making that reflects the views and needs of our priority populations, and increased influence of people of color and other marginalized communities to shape the future economy, and more fully participate as drivers of the economy.

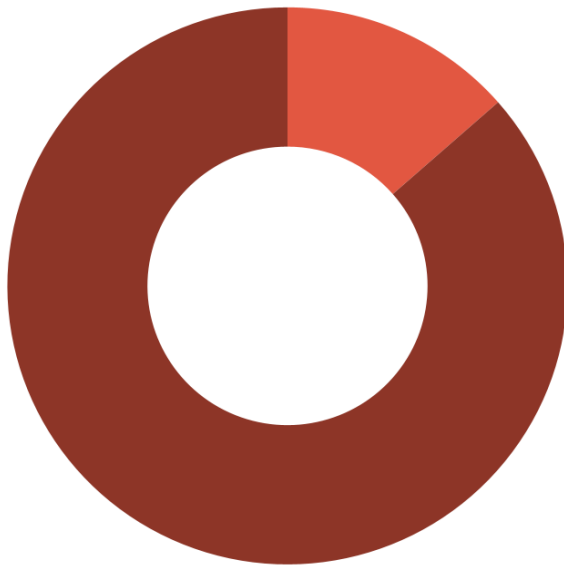
The Equitable Economic Development strategy is comprised of two interventions: "Advocate for Stronger Labor Standards" and "Reform the Practice of Economic Development." Associated under each intervention are 4 - 5 unique metrics, which were co-created with IE grantee partners.

I. Advocate for Stronger Labor Standards

Metrics Summary

Under the “Advocate for Stronger Labor Standards” intervention, the Inclusive Economies program seeks to support efforts that lead to shifts in public policy and private sector practices as they relate to labor. This intervention develops new partnerships with business associations and the private sector in hopes of improving labor standards and procurement policies from the “inside.” Grantmaking under this intervention supports longer-term, place-based investments in specific cities, states, or regions. The goal is to develop new progressive policies and protect existing ones, while also abolishing regressive policies that harm underserved communities and populations.

● Advocate for Stronger Labor Standards ● All Other Interventions



To understand progress toward the goals of this intervention, the Inclusive Economies program and its grantee partners identified four unique metrics. In Pilot 1, participants selected metrics and set targets for each in early 2020 (summarized in this report).

In Pilot 2, **13%** of the responses received (3 responses) reported on metrics related to the “Advocate for Stronger Labor Standards” intervention.

Below is a summary of the metrics on which two of 12 organizations reported:

Strategy: Equitable Economic Development Strategy		
Intervention: Advocate for Stronger Labor Standards	Change in skills and confidence of economic development practitioners.	1 response
	Number of labor standard policies proposed and adopted within local government / private sector.	1 response
	Quality of local government infrastructure for labor standards enforcement.	1 response
	Number of community members engaged in labor policy advocacy.	0 responses

Based on Surdna’s staff interpretation of the information reported, **100% of the targets set were met or exceeded** by grantees reporting on metrics under this intervention.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of state mandated paid leave—a core issue area for this intervention. Some pilot participants have been engaged in this type of work for decades and were well positioned to respond to the externalities that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to having success relating to state mandated paid leave, grantee partners also reported success in helping increase the confidence of economic development practitioners. [Good Jobs First](#) said they:

“...have actively assisted many with winning progressive policies. There is much more knowledge and confidence now in many localities in Illinois, New York, Wisconsin, Virginia, Florida, Texas, Missouri, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia, and New Jersey.”

Collectively, these grantees achieved the following results:

- Supported the passage of 40 policies focused on state mandated leave
- Waged 5 campaigns
- Produced articles, blogs, reports, that shifted the field of economic development toward accountability

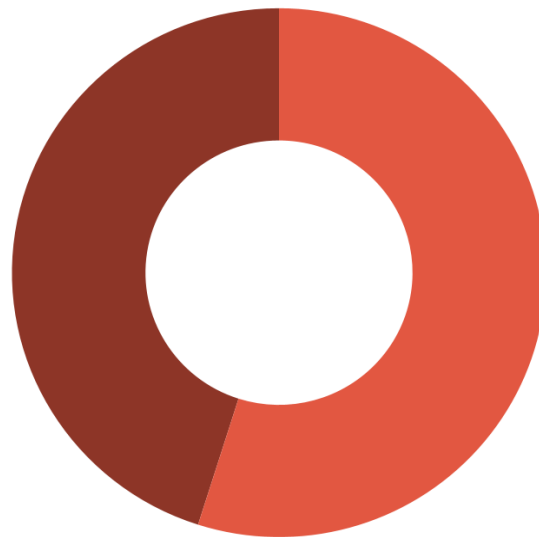
II. Reform the Practice of Economic Development Metrics Summary

Under this intervention, the IE program aims to change the way cities engage in economic development and shift them toward greater accountability. Grantmaking within this intervention focuses on supporting advocacy for the adoption of community benefits policies at the broader city- or county-scale. Surdna also aims to achieve this goal by facilitating a cultural shift through training programs, industry networks, and technical assistance that give agencies the tools they need to embed accountability into their economic development work.

To understand progress toward the goals of this intervention, the Inclusive Economies program, and its grantee partners, identified five unique metrics. In Pilot 1, participants selected metrics and set targets for each in early 2020 (summarized in this report).

In Pilot 2, **54%** of the responses received (13 responses) reported on metrics related to the “Reform the Practice of Economic Development” intervention.

● Reform the Practice of Economic Development ● Other



Below is a summary of the metrics on which seven of 12 organizations reported:

Strategy: Equitable Economic Development Strategy		
Intervention: Reform the Practice of Economic Development	Change in community understanding of local decision-making processes	5 responses
	Change in pressure and action supporting progressive policies	6 responses
	Number of policies proposed and adopted to increase accountability and/or strengthen community benefits in economic development	1 response
	Representation of people of color in local decision-making processes	1 response
	Number of people of color, women, and other individuals who sit in local leadership positions that apply an equity-lens in economic development	0 responses

Based on Surdna’s staff interpretation of the information reported, **62% (8) of the targets set were met or exceeded** by grantees reporting on metrics under this intervention.

Pilot 2 participants report that much of their success is directly attributable to the lessons gleaned from COVID-19 pandemic; specifically relating to the need for progressive policies, representation, and democratized decision-making processes. One grantee partner reported:

“The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an unprecedented opportunity to transform how labor is valued and treated; It served as a reminder to us of the power that [community members] wield to bargain in this country.”

Grantees also continued to combat preemption through a series of approaches. One grantee reported authoring a series of opinion editorials with local officials throughout the country designed to increase communities' understanding of preemption. The Partnership for Working Family helped coordinate a series of successful campaigns combating preemption in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Colorado relating to issues of minimum wage, local paid sick days, and inclusionary zoning.

A Word From the IE Team:

“The power imbalances between state legislatures and local city leaders are a growing barrier to advancing more equitable economic development practice across the country. The IE team is working with grantee partners to address issues of preemption and identify solutions that can help local leaders advance progressive policy goals.”

Thirty-eight percent (5) of the targets set were not met by grantees reporting on metrics under this intervention. For organizations focused on building networks and leadership development, the COVID-19 pandemic had an adverse effect, requiring these organizations to pause programming. In some cases, such organizations pivoted towards fortifying their capabilities to deliver programming online. Other organizations saw challenges in achieving their goals due to staff turnover and difficulty accessing information due to the pandemic.

Collectively, these grantees achieved the following results:

- Supported the passage of **40 policies**
- Waged **16 campaigns**
- Produced **blogs, articles, and reports** designed to shift the field of economic development towards accountability
- **Strengthened networks** in order to amplify impact.

Survey Analysis

88.89% of participants reported that the reporting form was “Very Easy” to access and complete. This indicates that the design is effective enough to implement.

100% of participants thought it was helpful to be able to see their original responses to the metrics selected. This indicates that grantees perceive a benefit to recalling original responses and assessing their own consistency. Also, given this high percentage of grantees that found this helpful, the design is effective enough to implement once Surdna is ready to do so.

45% of participants think that the appropriate cadence for reporting on metrics is annually; 11% think metrics should be collected at the middle and end of the grant; and the remaining 44% think the grantee should determine the metrics reporting frequency at the time of grant approval. Our default will be to request reports on an annual basis, but we intend to be flexible depending on the needs of our grantee partners.

77% of grantees think that sharing learning and aggregate results about how IE grantee partners are progressing toward their previously set metric targets would be useful. Surdna feels strongly that our knowledge and learning should be shared broadly, particularly learning gained from information requested from our grantee partners. We commit to sharing reports like this with our partners as well as with the field in the hope that it will contribute to success in reaching our collective goals.

Acknowledgements

We would like to give special thanks to all the IE program's grantee partners who generously gave their time to participate in this second pilot. Your contributions are greatly valued and continue to inform our direction.

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