

The State of Youth Philanthropy 2020 – 2021

By Sheryl Seller and Katherine Ponce

The Effects of COVID-19 on Youth Grantmaking Programs: An Introduction

Youth philanthropy and youth grantmaking programs bring together young people, typically from a defined community, school system, or region to learn about social problems and make funding decisions. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic led to abrupt changes in the way that these young people and program leaders work, learn, engage, and live. As we transitioned to virtual learning and programming, youth philanthropy programs also had to pivot. Further, as we moved through Spring 2020, it became clear we would not simply be going back to “normal” in Fall 2020 or for months thereafter.

At the Sillerman Center, we have long researched the ways in which youth philanthropy programs thrive, how they support and give power to young people, and how they can and should be a model for democratizing the philanthropic sector. Our past research focused on these programs more broadly, in **From Beneficiary to Active Agent: How Youth-Led Grantmaking Benefits Young People, Their Communities, and the Philanthropic Sector.**¹



Photo: Philadelphia Foundation, YOUTHadelphia

1 See “From Beneficiary to Active Agent: How Youth-Led Grantmaking Benefits Youth People, Their Communities, and the Philanthropic Sector,” by Sheryl Seller, 2018, The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy (<https://heller.brandeis.edu/sillerman/pdfs/opportunity-briefs/youth-led-grantmaking.pdf>)



Photo: Midland Area Community Foundation, Midland Area Youth Action Council

In furthering this work, we asked, “How might youth philanthropy democratize the sector of philanthropy as a whole?” This question can be investigated by considering how the field of philanthropy can shift power and how young people see problems in their communities and understand themselves as change makers. So, we also deeply explored a program that represents these and goals in [Community-Centric Youth Philanthropy: A Case Study of Greater Worcester Community Foundation’s Youth for Community Improvement Program](#).²

As youth philanthropy transitioned to virtual programming, we wondered how young people and their adult supporters were adapting. How would young people stay engaged? Would organizations continue to prioritize youth philanthropy?

We also considered external factors that might impact the answers to these questions. We know that COVID-related youth unemployment rose throughout the beginning of the pandemic³, with “unemployment among youth in the U.S. between the ages of 16 and 24 increas[ing] from 7.8 percent to 27.4 percent between February and April 2020.”⁴ Simultaneously, the need for mental health services and support due to the pandemic, job loss, and vast racial and social injustices and uprisings was imminent. As of February 2020, “depression and anxiety among young people were at a two-decade high, according to the CDC.”⁵ The onset of COVID-19 led to significant increases in young people suffering from depression and anxiety and less than one-third of children with a mental health disorder receive services or complete treatment.⁶

2 See “Community Centric Youth Philanthropy: A Case Study of Greater Worcester Community Foundation’s Youth For Community Improvement Program,” by Sheryl Seller, 2020, The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy (<https://heller.brandeis.edu/sillerman/pdfs/opportunity-briefs/community-centric-youth-philanthropy.pdf>)

3 See “COVID-related unemployment rates high among youth, report finds,” by Tyra Mariani, 2021, PND by Candid (<https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/covid-related-unemployment-rates-higher-among-youth-report-finds>)

4 Ibid

5 See “It’s Time to Fund Children’s Mental Health,” by Joan Steinberg, 2021, Philanthropy New York (<https://philanthropynewyork.org/news/it-s-time-fund-children-s-mental-health>)

6 Ibid

However, there is a dearth of funding for mental and behavioral health. Ken Zimmerman, a Distinguished Fellow at NYU's Furman Center and the former Director of U.S. Programs for the Open Society Foundations, notes that, "Mental health accounted for 1.3% of overall foundation investments from 2015 to 2018, and, even more strikingly, only 5% of foundation spending on healthcare."⁷ The portion of funding specifically for children's mental health is even lower.⁸

These findings led to additional questions. Given the rise in youth unemployment and mental health disorders, would young people be more or less likely to participate in traditionally unpaid after school programs? And, generally, would young people have time or energy to devote to programs given everything else going on in the world and their lives?

At this point we decided to develop a survey to send to Massachusetts-based youth philanthropy programs to see how they were faring. We reached out to Foundation for MetroWest, a community foundation in Massachusetts that has traditionally run upwards of 10 youth philanthropy programs in any given year.⁹

In collaboration with Foundation for MetroWest, we crafted more precise research questions:

- (1) To what extent and how have youth philanthropy programs, youth grantmakers, and their adult supporters adapted to a virtual environment throughout COVID-19?
- (2) How do participants in and supporters of youth philanthropy programs describe the challenges and benefits programs are facing during this time?
- (3) What practices and structures could make virtual programming more accessible?
- (4) How do we consider our institutional and organizational memory as we navigate uncertainty?

Throughout Fall 2020 we co-designed and disseminated a survey, aimed at answering these questions, to 19 youth philanthropy programs based in Massachusetts.¹⁰ We decided that based on results, data trends, and feedback, we would then consider further disseminating the survey to other states. Massachusetts-based program surveys were due back on January 8, 2021. Both the Sillerman Center and Foundation for MetroWest

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Photo: Midland Area Community Foundation, Midland AREA Youth Action Council

7 See "Mental Health Needs to be a Top Priority for Philanthropy. Here's Why," by Ken Zimmerman, 2020, Inside Philanthropy (<https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2020/6/28/more-than-ever-mental-health-needs-to-a-top-priority-for-philanthropy-heres-why>)

8 See "It's Time to Fund Children's Mental Health," by Joan Steinberg, 2021, Philanthropy New York (<https://philanthropynewyork.org/news/it-s-time-fund-children-s-mental-health>)

9 For more information about Foundation for MetroWest's Youth in Philanthropy Program please visit: <https://yipmetrowest.org/>

10 See Appendix A for the original version of the State of Youth Philanthropy Survey (2020-2021) sent to youth philanthropy programs in Massachusetts



Photo: Jewish Community Federation Endowment Fund, Jewish Teen Foundation

are based in Massachusetts, and we are in relationship with or direct many programs and classes in the state. The results and survey response rate were high so we decided to release an updated version of the survey to programs based in California, Indiana, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.¹¹ This survey officially closed on June 1, 2021.

accountability, technology, and the benefits of virtual programs, (3) explains the limitations of this data and analysis, and (4) offers recommendations and conclusions on how programs can thrive moving forward. We also provide three spotlights of programs that ran virtually during the past year.¹²

The remainder of this brief (1) provides descriptive statistics from the survey dissemination and results, (2) explores survey findings, including respondents thoughts on program barriers, adaptability,

Survey rollout, responses, and state-level statistics

We released the State of Youth Philanthropy (2020-2021) survey to 244 programs across seven states (California, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania). According to YouthGiving.org, there are 513 youth philanthropy programs, that are also grantmaking programs, in the U.S.¹³ Thus, the survey was sent to 47.5 percent of youth grantmaking programs across the country even though it was sent to just seven states. As we researched and updated contact information it became apparent that at least 20 programs across the states we researched no longer exist. We estimate, therefore, that there are closer to 450-475 active youth grantmaking programs across the country.



Photo: Midland Area Community Foundation, Midland AREA Youth Action Council

We sent the first iteration of the survey to 19 youth philanthropy programs in Massachusetts and received back 14 surveys, for a response rate of 74 percent. Six of the 14 respondents ran programming throughout 2020. Those that ran programs found that virtual programming had both benefits and drawbacks, but that they would continue to run programming in 2021. Programs developed online learning materials, shortened meeting times, and did what they could to relieve the burden on the youth and grantees.

11 See Appendix B for the updated version of the State of Youth Philanthropy Survey (2020-2021) sent to youth philanthropy programs in California, Indiana, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania

12 See Appendix C for the questions asked in interviews with program directors of the three program spotlights.

13 See [YouthGiving.org](https://youthgiving.org), Programs

Some respondents also indicated that virtual programming was useful because it helped increase who had access to attend the program. It removed travel as a barrier to access and participation. However, respondents indicated that they struggled to engage young people virtually, there was a feeling that many young people were no longer interested in youth philanthropy programs, and program directors and supporters faced technology challenges and a lack of time, resources, and staffing. Despite these challenges, almost 70 percent of Massachusetts-based respondents still see youth philanthropy as a strategic focus to their organization.

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Given this feedback, we decided to move forward, update the survey, and release it to select states that were geographically dispersed, had high populations of youth, had reasonable levels of computer and internet access, and, based on data from YouthGiving.org, had high numbers of youth philanthropy programs. Thus, we chose to release the survey in Michigan and Indiana, which both have organized youth philanthropy umbrella organizations and support systems - through Council of Michigan Foundations and Indiana Philanthropy Alliance respectively. Indiana and Michigan alone account for 118 (23 percent) of youth philanthropy programs in the US. We also released the survey to programs based in California, North Carolina, New York, and Pennsylvania. We released the survey across a 3 week time period and sent three email reminders to all survey recipients.

The states we selected are some of the most densely populated states in the country. Figure 1 illustrates that, combined, these seven states account for over 32 percent of the total population of youth, those ages 10-24, across the U.S.¹⁴

Figure 1: Youth Population by State Surveyed

States	Population #	Percent
US Total Youth (10-24)	64,130,527.00	100.0%
California	7,815,750.00	12.2%
Indiana	1,407,307.00	2.19%
Massachusetts	1,331,340.00	2.08%
Michigan	1,945,628.00	3.03%
North Carolina	2,088,881.00	3.26%
New York	3,616,839.00	5.64%
Pennsylvania	2,364,846.00	3.69%
	20,570,591.00	32.1%

As Figure 2 shows, approximately 90 percent of households across these states have at least one computer and nearly 83 percent have internet access.¹⁵ Given robust virtual programming amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it

14 See “US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Age and Sex, 2019 Estimates.” (<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=demographics%20by%20age%20and%20state&tid=ACST1Y2019.S0101&hidePreview=false>)

15 See “US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, Computer and Internet Usage, 2015-2019.” (<https://www.census.gov/quick-facts/fact/table/IN,MI,CA,MA,PA,NY/PST045219>)

is reasonable to expect that higher levels of computer and internet access would permit higher numbers of young people to participate in virtually-based youth philanthropy programs.¹⁶

Figure 2: Household Computer and Internet Access by State Surveyed

State	Household Computer	Internet Access
US Total	90.30%	82.70%
California	93.00%	86.70%
Indiana	88.70%	80.10%
Massachusetts	91.40%	86.40%
Michigan	89.60%	81.50%
North Carolina	89.10%	80.70%
New York	89.60%	82.50%
Pennsylvania	88.00%	81.50%
	89.91%	82.77%



Photo: Midland AREA Youth Action Council

Overall, we received back 86 completed surveys, including Massachusetts surveys, for a **response rate of 39.85 percent**. There was variation by state, with Massachusetts and Indiana having higher response rates of approximately 74 percent and 55 percent respectively. As previously mentioned, given that the Sillerman Center and Foundation for MetroWest are based in Massachusetts, this higher response rate is expected. Additionally, in both Indiana and Michigan, given their youth philanthropy legacy, umbrella organizations and convening bodies, and that each state had a representative share the survey with their constituents, higher response rates were also reasonable to expect. Figure 3 illustrates response rates across states that received the survey.

Figure 3: Survey Response Rate by State

State	Sent Surveys	Responses	Response rate
California	45	11	24.44%
Indiana	29	16	55.17%
Massachusetts	19	14	73.68%
Michigan	89	28	31.46%
North Carolina	20	6	30.00%
New York	29	3	10.34%
Pennsylvania	13	7	53.85%
	244		39.85%

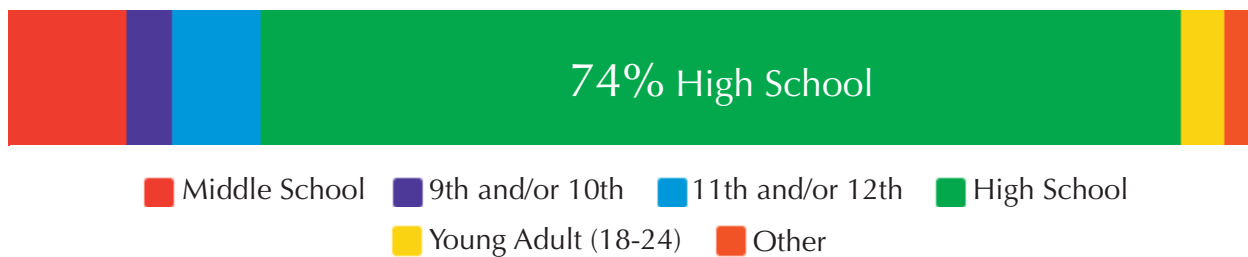
16 There is room for improvement in the number of households with a computer and internet access across the country. Increased numbers could lead to higher levels of participation in youth philanthropy programs.

Findings: Hybrid components of youth philanthropy programs are here to stay

From 2020-2021, 65 of 86 (75.5 percent) respondents ran youth grantmaking programs. The majority of the programs surveyed provide programming to high school aged young people (74 percent). Figure 4 illustrates the grade and/or age of youth philanthropy participants based on survey responses.

Figure 4: Youth Philanthropy Program Participants by Grade and/or Age

State of Youth Philanthropy Survey: 2020-2021 Q3: “Participant Overview: Select Grade/age range of youth philanthropists served”



For those programs that did not run throughout 2020-2021, on average, time and lack of technology were listed as the biggest barriers. For those that did run, respondents still listed time as the most significant barrier to entry, followed by a lack of interest from young people. Specifically, a lack of interest from young people was most highly weighted as a barrier for programs that serve 11th and 12th grade participants. We want to think more deeply about why young people may no longer be interested in youth philanthropy programs as well as why adult supporters state this as such a significant barrier. It is unclear, based on this survey alone, whether a lack of interest was an issue before COVID-19 or since COVID-19. Regardless, based on our past research, we know how busy young people are and it is reasonable that adding after school programs, especially unpaid work, to a young person’s schedule is not feasible for all.



Photo: Jewish Community Federation Endowment Fund, Jewish Teen Foundation.

Additionally, given that surveys were completed by adult supporters, there could be a gap in communication. For example, we know that during COVID youth unemployment more than tripled in mid-2020. So, young people may have been interested but could not afford to participate (whether in regards to technology access, helping out around their homes, looking for work, changes in responsibilities, etc.). Interestingly, for programs that ran in 2020 and specifically served middle school participants, financial burdens/restrictions was the most commonly cited barrier. This could perhaps be due to lack of childcare, whereas high school students are perhaps less in need of supervision.

The surveys also clearly showed that some sort of hybrid program model is here to stay. Figure 5 illustrates the percentage of programs surveyed that plan to run future programming virtually, in-person, or in a hybrid format.

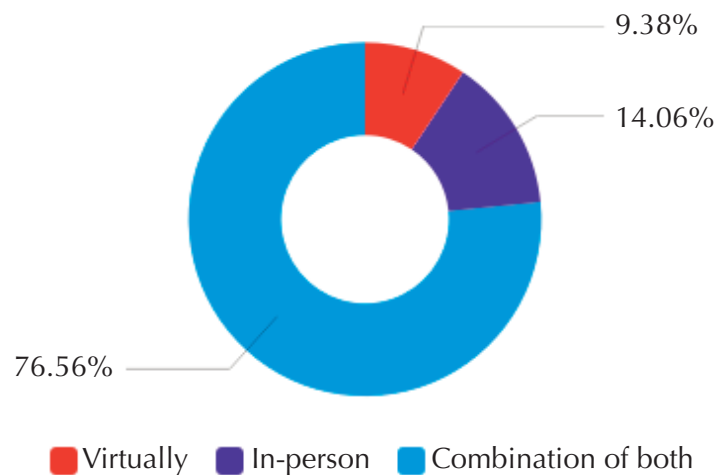
The surveys also clearly showed that some sort of hybrid program model is here to stay.

Approximately 76 percent of respondents indicated that they would continue to run youth philanthropy programs in the future in a hybrid model, meaning that they would keep some component of their virtual programming moving forward. Only 14 percent of respondents indicated that they would return to fully in-person programming when safe and nearly 10 percent of programs stated they would stay fully virtual moving forward. Virtual components of programs that respondents indicated would likely remain include: (1) optional Zoom sessions for students who are unable to access the physical program site, (2) use of phone apps such as WhatsApp group chats or Slack so young people can connect on their own outside of program time, and (3) virtual site visits and communication with potential grantees.

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Figure 5: Virtual, In-Person, or Hybrid Future Programming

State of Youth Philanthropy Survey: 2020-2021 Q8: “Do you plan to run future programming either virtually or in-person when possible?”



In the survey we asked, “What feedback, if any, have students provided about their virtual youth philanthropy experience?” Nearly every individual who answered this question (22 out of 27 unique responses) stated that young people were eager to be in person again, they missed one another, and were tired of being in a virtual setting.



Photo: Endowment Fund, Jewish Teen Foundation

Nearly every individual who answered this question (22 out of 27 unique responses) stated that young people were eager to be in person again, they missed one another, and were tired of being in a virtual setting. However, in order for programs to continue in a virtual or hybrid setting, there are additional changes and improvements needed. One program director from the Midwest explained, “If we have a need to go hybrid next year, we’ll really need to consider limiting the number of members or increasing staff resources.”

Another program director in the Midwest wrote, “While engagement has improved over the course of the year and we’re able to get things done, students really miss meeting in person and the more social aspects of our programming, like conversations during breaks, having lunch together, and the ability to informally check-in with peers and advisors. Many of them find being on camera during virtual meetings to be uncomfortable and technology/internet access issues can be frustrating.” This sentiment indicates that while young people adapted to virtual programming, there are aspects of in-person meetings that are necessary for full engagement - hence why hybrid programming could be so successful.

Across all states surveyed, the greatest benefit listed from running virtual programming during COVID-19 was learning an additional skill and/or virtual event organizing. Barriers to join decreased (meeting times, capacity, etc.), which was the second most cited benefit overall. One program director from New York explained, “Despite the challenges of virtual programming, we have noticed quite a few positive outcomes. We have been able to cast a wider net to participation with more students from the suburbs that typically have

a harder time commuting into the city for in-person sessions. We’ve also found that the teens who are participating in the program saw this as an opportunity to really support the community during such a challenging time when other avenues of support like volunteering were limited.”



Photo: Jewish Community Federation Endowment Fund, Jewish Teen Foundation.

However, additional barriers in a virtual setting came up. Some programs faced technology firewalls, so students couldn’t access certain programs or files. Other programs saw a decrease in participation overall. As programs switched to virtual mode and Zoom fatigue increased, some saw retention and participation decline.

Overcoming virtual programming barriers and challenges

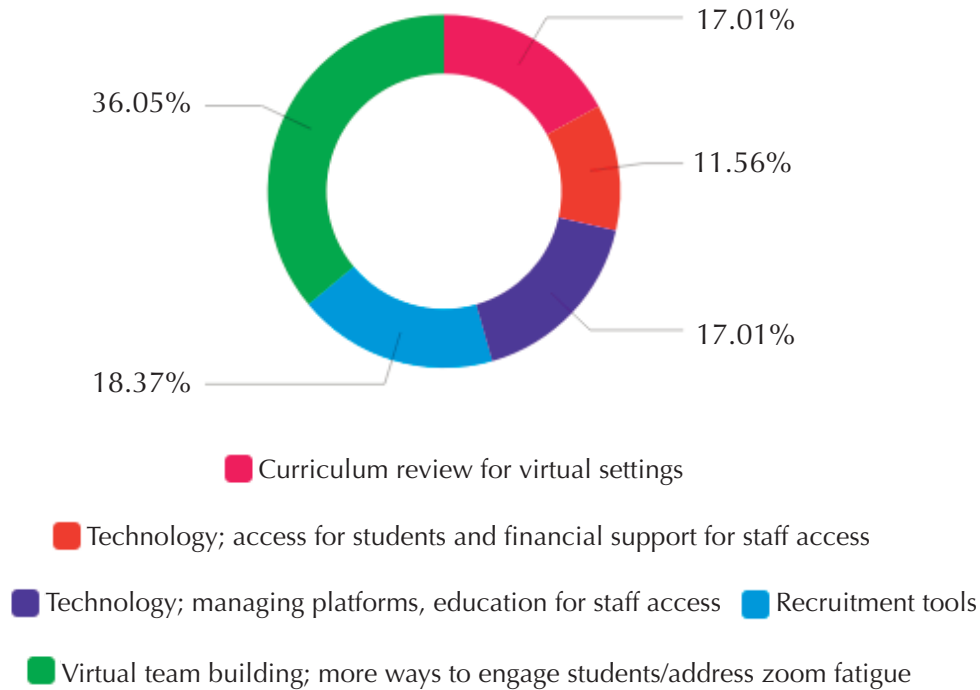
Overall, virtual team building (more ways to engage students/address zoom fatigue) is the number one resource respondents cited as to what was lacking as they transitioned from in-person to virtual programming. Figure 6 illustrates the most stated challenges of virtual youth philanthropy programming according to respondents. As one program director from California wrote, “Youth have asked for other ways to engage besides zoom, so we incorporated Canva animated slides, jamboard and created a culture where folks make most of the chat feature.”

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Figure 6: Challenges of Virtual Programming

State of Youth Philanthropy Survey: 2020-2021 Q12: “What would have helped ease the transition from in-person to virtual programming? What resources do you feel you are lacking in order to successfully run programs in a virtual setting? Select all that apply.”



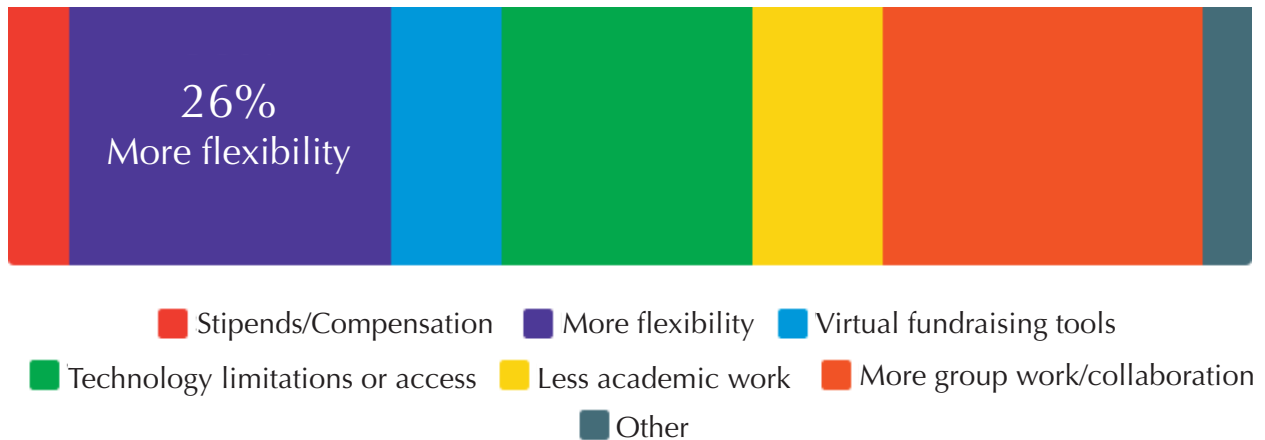
Respondents also indicated that they needed more recruitment tools and technology assistance, specifically related to managing platforms and education for staff versus student access to technology. Jewish Teen Foundation, a California-based program, hired a marketing consultant to increase reach to young people. Survey responses indicated that recruitment was a challenge because they could not present to in-person classrooms as a recruitment tool. Other programs adapted by using different technology and apps to communicate with their young people. For example, programs used Google Classroom, WhatsApp and Slack more frequently. They also used more interactive online tools such as Kahoot surveys and Jamboards.

On average, more flexibility within programs was the number one thing young people needed in order to engage in youth philanthropy programming during COVID.

On average, more flexibility within programs was the number one thing young people needed in order to engage in youth philanthropy programming during COVID. As depicted in Figure 7, according to survey respondents, there are many resources and support that young people need in order to engage in a youth philanthropy program. One program director in Michigan explained that their program made some substantial changes in order to increase flexibility. They stated, “We have also emphasized an open-door attendance policy, encouraging but not requiring students to attend, given the incredible amounts of stress students are facing with virtual learning. For grantmaking, we explicitly told grant applicants that we would welcome requests for general operational support. This adjustment is here to stay.”

Figure 7: Youth Needs during COVID-19

State of Youth Philanthropy Survey: 2020-2021 Q13: “What supports/resources have young people needed in order to engage in youth philanthropy programming during COVID? Select all that apply.”



Many programs changed meeting schedules to shorter, but increased numbers of meetings. One program director from California wrote, “In previous years we met for 8 sessions and did 2.5 hours each. Midway through this year we adjusted our schedule to be about 12 sessions at 1.5 hours each because 2.5 hours on zoom was not working for our teens or facilitators.” Another program director from Massachusetts concurred stating, “We cut the program in half. Zoom attention span is rough at even 90 minutes compared to a 3 hour meeting.”

Other programs permitted pre-recorded presentations. For example, one program director in Michigan explained, “The required presentations have changed to a pre-recorded digital video format. Students have also generated pre-meeting questions for the presenters so they can answer them via video. We have also conducted zoom meetings for program members.” This may help to decrease the burden because young people can watch these recordings outside of the scheduled meeting time as needed.

To overcome some of these barriers and challenges program staff can make adjustments in both virtual and in-person settings. Given high levels of youth unemployment as well as a general need for young people to earn income, we recommend that, as possible, programs compensate young people for their youth philanthropy work. For example, when Heinz Endowments ran its summer youth philanthropy program, all young people were compensated at an hourly rate and they were given computers for the summer. Additionally, Greater Worcester Community Foundation’s Youth for Community Improvement program provides a transportation stipend to young people and also provides dinner. During the pandemic the program had food delivered to participants.

Given high levels of youth unemployment as well as a general need for young people to earn income, we recommend that, as possible, programs compensate young people for their youth philanthropy work.

Survey Limitations:

As with any survey, there are limitations to the State of Youth Philanthropy Survey 2020-2021:

1. The survey was disseminated to only seven states. While these states represent 47.5 percent of youth philanthropy programs across the country, and reach 32.1 percent of young people ages 10-24, program outcomes and responses from other states could alter overall findings.
2. We saw that the vast majority of respondents indicated that their programs ran between 2020 and 2021. However, because their programs ran, they were likely also more inclined to complete the survey. While in our outreach we did include a statement that we were eager to hear from programs directors whose programs did not run, we recognize that these individuals still may be less likely to complete such a survey.
3. Given that both Indiana and Michigan have youth philanthropy umbrella organizations and conveners, and that we are well-connected in Massachusetts, programs in these states were more likely to respond.
4. Surveys were completed by youth philanthropy program adult supporters. Thus, responses did not directly capture young people's thoughts or feelings around program engagement, expectations, and outcomes.
5. YouthGiving.org bases program information on self-reported data. Data is only updated upon request. This means that there could also be programs across the country that we do not know exist. And, as previously mentioned, this also means that, based on our research, more than 20 programs listed as active on the YouthGiving.org website no longer exist.

Recommendations: Key lessons moving forward

Throughout our analysis we included recommendations for program administrators who may continue to run virtual or hybrid programs in the future. Here we provide a list of recommendations for both youth grantmaking programs as well as funders.

1. Be flexible. Program hours and time spent online and/or in-person may need to change throughout the program in order to best serve the needs of young people and the community. This, too, includes flexibility for potential grant recipients, how they complete and submit applications, and the type of funding for which they can apply.
2. Increase accessibility for young people. Compensate young people to further support their engagement in youth philanthropy programming. Support can be through a stipend, hourly wage, food, technology assistance, etc.
3. Be patient as young people and their adult supporters adapt and learn from one another. Although we've been in a virtual space for well over a year, we are still learning how to adapt, cope, and heal from the myriad problems our communities face. People who fund youth philanthropy should support this ongoing process.
4. Provide technology to young people and program directors and staff as needed. If young people do not have access to the proper computers or devices in order to engage, programs should provide young people with this technology. They should also provide training on how to use technology and software as needed.

5. Be creative, inclusive, and engaging in technology choices and use. Be willing to try new programs and technology, such as Google Classroom, Kahoot, and Canva, and be willing to listen to feedback from young people as they engage with different programs.
6. Continue to utilize technology as an opportunity and option for programming. Technology can be used to engage young people who would otherwise not be able to access the program location, to keep young people engaged outside of program meeting times, and to help decrease the burden on potential grantees.
7. Provide professional development and curriculum building support to youth philanthropy program directors and supporters. Virtual curriculum development that allows for space and accounts for mental health wellbeing and healing is critical for young people and their adult supporters. Funders should provide support to their staff in order to also best support young people.
8. Don't assume that young people will struggle to adapt or engage. Do assume that young people are responsible, amenable to change, and ready and willing to support each other and their communities.

Conclusion: Youth philanthropists and their adult supporters are flexible and dedicated

Our findings show that young people are adaptable to change. Respondents made it clear that they were impressed by their participants' flexibility, dedication, and ability to support one another. As one program director from Michigan stated, "While our students are definitely experiencing Zoom fatigue and are eager to get back to meeting in-person, they have been very flexible, patient, and willing to try new things over the last year. They are making the best of the situation and have impressed us with their dedication."

Young people further surprised their adult supporters by strongly engaging in their programs. Eburne Irizarry, program director of YOUTHadelphia explained this well stating, "Our retention rate has been 100 percent since the pandemic started. This surprised the adults, but the longer we're in this mess, the more engaged our youth participants have been. We think this has to do with curriculum content and the need of the participants to make sense of what's happening around them with their 'after school' work."

Overall, it is clear that youth grantmaking programs are able to engage young people in a virtual setting. Some programs faced initial barriers to access such as overcoming technology challenges, finding schedules that worked for program directors and participants, and recruiting young people. For programs that were able to run in a virtual environment, though, program directors and adult supporters provide clear feedback that young people, amidst Zoom fatigue and virtual programming burnout, remained engaged and dedicated to their work. Program directors, too, demonstrated their own adaptability by reworking curriculum, and providing their young people with support beyond grantmaking practices.

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The longer we're in this mess, the more engaged our youth participants have been.

Philadelphia Foundation: YOUTHadelphia

Foundation Year Founded: 1918

YOUTHadelphia Year Established: 2004

Program Officer: Edurne Irizarry

YOUTHadelphia Website:

<https://www.philafound.org/nonprofits/available-grants/fund-for-children-grants/>

Foundation Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PhilaFound>

Mission: To give Philadelphia teens opportunities to build youth leadership through philanthropy. YOUTHadelphia participants identify issues of public concern and, together, make grants to nonprofit organizations addressing those issues.

As a 103-year-old community foundation, Philadelphia Foundation, has learned to evolve based on the current social context in which the foundation sits. Program Officer Edurne Irizarry notes that with this history “comes innovation but also respect and reliability.” Irizarry also directs the Philadelphia Foundation’s youth philanthropy program, YOUTHadelphia, along with Aurora Sanchez, the program’s Adult Advisor.

YOUTHadelphia was established in 2004 to ensure that the foundation’s Fund for Children was reflective of “current youth development practices, which called for young people having control and decision making power around their own development, programmatic outcomes and goals, and additionally how their out of school time experiences were shaped,” said Irizarry. YOUTHadelphia’s mission is to give Philadelphia teens opportunities to build youth leadership through philanthropy, the donation of time, energy, and resources. Since the program’s inception, YOUTHadelphians have granted out over \$2,000,000.

The program prioritizes inclusion of young people of color and those with marginalized identities. In 2020-2021, the 15 young people who participated in YOUTHadelphia met for 2 hours per week for 8 months, and worked through an intensive curriculum that focused explicitly on anti-black racism, native invisibility, white supremacy, and intersectionality and how social identities affect grantmaking practices. Irizarry noted that through this program and curriculum, “We’re asking for a lot of intellectual and emotional energy.”

Like many other programs, YOUTHadelphia transitioned to using Zoom throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Irizarry explained, “This year, it was a risk because we’re not meeting with each other. We had to be ready to hold an emotional space for young people... [that would] be safe enough for all of us to dialogue together...and then think about how to use grantmaking to address some of these concepts in the nonprofit sector.” Even with Zoom, the program held a 100 percent retention rate for both new and returning participants.

As a program, YOUTHadelphia aspires to introduce current trends in philanthropy and grantmaking to young people. And, as Irizarry says, “the ultimate goal is to ensure that philanthropy is populated with well-informed, well-trained people of color.” The program helps to hold the foundation and sector accountable as well. “[The young people] really hold me to a certain standard. Because I am teaching these lessons I have to hold myself to these lessons as well... my work is reflective of YOUTHadelphia” said Irizarry.

Midland Area Community Foundation Youth Action Council

Foundation Year Founded: 1973

YAC Year Established: 1991

Youth Impact Coordinator: Sara JacobsCarter

Youth Action Council Website: <https://www.midlandfoundation.org/initiative/youthactioncouncil/>

Youth Action Council Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MidlandYAC/>

Mission: Improve the lives of youth in Midland County

Midland Area Community Foundation's Youth Action Council, brought 26 young people together, from Fall 2020 through Spring 2021, to sustain and drive forward their program mission: To improve the lives of youth in Midland County. In a normal year, this is a large and challenging undertaking. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Youth Action Council participants demonstrated their adaptability, flexibility, leadership skills, and care for the community in which they live.

Youth Impact Coordinator Sara JacobsCarter described some of the changes the group implemented this year. The group transitioned to remote programming, via Zoom. Even after a long day of attending school online, the young people still participated in their three-hour virtual Youth Action Council meetings. JacobsCarter acknowledged that Zoom is here to stay and she plans to continue to use Zoom to help include young people who would otherwise not be able to make the commute to the program location.

JacobsCarter said that given recent world events students were more social and racial justice conscious than in prior years. "The students did a lot more adjusting than most of the adults that I know...They were resilient," she said. "They wanted to do something. They wanted to help." The young people involved in the Youth Action Council contributed over \$80,000 in grant funds to organizations focused on mental health and social justice as well as organizations that focused on helping young people get outside, and away from their screens and computers.

As their program neared completion, the young people still wanted to do more. When they learned that over \$20,000 in unclaimed grant funds were available for distribution, they requested a grant to the foundation's COVID relief fund. The Board of Trustees supported this and made a \$23,000 grant to the fund. This was the single biggest grant that the Youth Action Council has given in its 30 year history. They also continued to volunteer within the community, via Zoom, putting together care packages for local youth, working at seasonal and holiday events and drives, and writing letters to young people struggling with mental health challenges.

Beyond the grants, young people who participate with the Youth Action Council are involved in additional leadership roles. For example, young people in the Youth Action Council also serve on additional foundation and local committees including the Health and Human Services Committee and the Cultural Awareness Committee. This inclusion benefits the young people who sit on the committees and boards, the young people that the committee or board serves, and their fellow committee and board members as well. JacobsCarter added, "No decisions about me without me. The youth should have a voice at all of the tables."

Jewish Community Federation & Endowment Fund: Jewish Teen Foundation

Organization Year Founded: 1910

Jewish Teen Foundation Year Established: 2004

Program Manager: Rachel Halevi

JTF Website: <https://jewishfed.org/get-involved/teens/jewish-teen-foundation>

Organization Twitter: <https://twitter.com/jewishbayarea>

Mission: To cultivate Jewish high school students with lifelong skills in philanthropy, social justice, confidence, effective communication, leadership skills, and teamwork in order to influence, affect, and drive change.

Two years ago, Jewish Teen Foundation (JTF), the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund's youth philanthropy program, began to frame complex social issues by centering the people and populations affected by those issues. For example, the 2020-2021 cohort focused their grantmaking on people affected by domestic violence, including children of survivors and safety for all those harmed. JTF Program Manager Rachel Halevi noted, "We ask, 'Who are the people affected by this issue?' This helps to humanize the issue, have the teens exercise their empathy muscles, and make it a little bit more tangible." With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this people-centered approach became ever more necessary.

To fulfill its mission throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the JTF program leaders made several changes. They moved to virtual learning, shifted from one 4-hour meeting a month to two 2-hour meetings per month, created participant led pods focused on peer to peer mentorship and support, and hired a marketing consultant to expand their reach to recruit a diverse group of young people. While in the future JTF plans to go back to one 4-hour meeting a month, the peer to peer networks are here to stay. "Having double the amount of meetings even if it's the same amount of time, it's a bigger commitment. [Our participants] really stepped up," said Halevi.

To train the next generation of Jewish philanthropists and leaders, Halevi noted that the program must "equip them with the skills to take action with more intentionality, to find their passion and use that for the greater good." Halevi continued, "We'll provide the structure, but we really strive to empower them to use their voice and make their own decisions."

This past year, JTF had its biggest board yet. Thirty three teens, from across the Bay Area, came together to take action. The board awarded \$66,000 in grants to 8 organizations that support people affected by domestic violence.

This work led to a successful year for JTF. For Halevi, success means "participants are engaged, they are paying attention, and they feel connected to the rest of the board...But also [when] they have a greater sense of self awareness, they feel more confident, and they have and feel that they have the knowledge to act."

JTF helps garner this success by focusing on relationship building between participants, participants and nonprofits, and participants and community leaders and changemakers. According to Halevi, "When teens are entrusted with responsibility they will step up."

Appendix A: State of Youth Philanthropy Survey: 2020-2021 (Massachusetts)¹⁷

Q1 Program Questions:

Name/contact information of program director

Grade/age range of youth philanthropists

Do we want to ask any questions on funding source/s?

Q2 Yes or No:

Did your organization run youth philanthropy programming during Spring 2020?

Did your organization run youth philanthropy programming during Summer 2020?

Did your organization run youth philanthropy programming during Fall 2020?

Does your organization plan to run youth philanthropy programming during Winter/Spring 2021?

Q3 Those not running programming

If your organization has not run youth philanthropy programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, what are some barriers that have prevented you from doing so? (select as many as apply)

- Financial burden/restrictions
- Time
- Lack of interest from young people
- Lack of technology
- Staff have been reassigned
- Other: Write in answer

If your organization has not run youth philanthropy programming thus far during the COVID-19 pandemic, do you plan to run future programming either virtually or in-person when possible?

- Virtually
- In-person when safe
- Both
- Neither
- Other: Write in answer

¹⁷ The first iteration of this survey, sent to programs in Massachusetts, was disseminated via SurveyMonkey. Findings from the first survey helped craft the updated version of the survey, which was sent to California, Indiana, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, and was disseminated via Qualtrics (see Appendix B).

Q4 Does youth philanthropy remain a strategic focus or priority for your organization?

Q5 Those running programming (short answer)

If your organization has run youth philanthropy programming since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, what has been the biggest challenge/s you have faced?

If your organization has run youth philanthropy programming since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, what has been the biggest positive or benefit to running programs virtually?

What would have helped ease the transition from in-person to virtual programming?

What resources do you feel you are lacking in order to successfully run programs in a virtual setting?

Does youth philanthropy remain a strategic focus or priority for your organization?

What feedback, if any, have students provided about their virtual youth philanthropy experience?

Would you be willing to provide a survey to your young people inquiring about their experience in the virtual youth philanthropy setting?

Q6 Youth Philanthropist Survey: (For those programs, which are running virtually, that have not yet surveyed their young people)

What have you enjoyed most about having your youth philanthropy experience in a virtual setting?

What have you disliked most about having your youth philanthropy experience in a virtual setting?

What would improve the virtual youth philanthropy experience?

Would you recommend that your friends participate in youth philanthropy programs that are held virtually? Select: Yes, No, Maybe

Appendix B: State of Youth Philanthropy Survey: 2020-2021 (California, Indiana, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania)

Q1 Contact Name, Contact Name Email

Q2 Which state does your program operate in?
State ▼ Alabama (1) ... Wyoming (50)

Q3 Participant Overview
Grade/age range of youth philanthropists served ▼ (1)

- Middle School
- 9th and/or 10th
- 11th and/or 12th
- High School
- Young Adult (18-24)

Region served ▼ (2)

- Town/City
- County
- State
- Region
- National

Q4 Program Overview
Number of programs annually ▼ (1)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+

Number of participants served ▼ (2)

- <5
- 5-20
- 20-50
- 50-100
- 100+

Selection process ▼ (3)

- Application
- Unlimited sign-ups
- Targeted recruitment
- Other

Length of program(s) ▼ (4)

- Full school year
- Semester
- 3-6 months
- 1-6 weeks
- Other

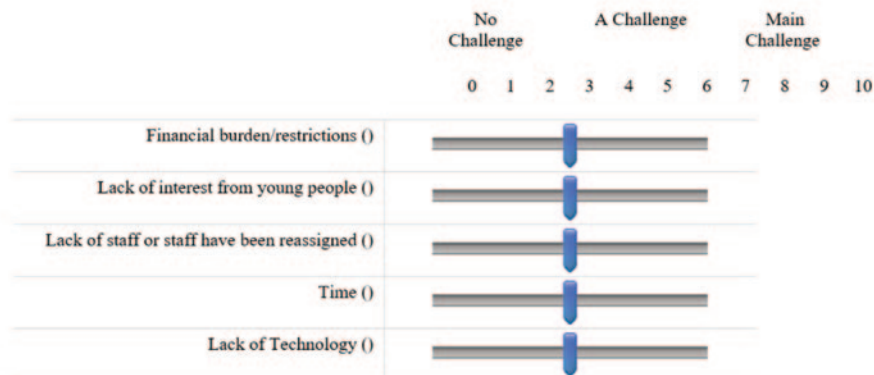
Q5 Has your organization run youth philanthropy programming over the 12 months?

▼ Yes (1) ... No (2)

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: 'NO' Responses

Q6 If your organization has not run youth philanthropy programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, what are some barriers that have prevented you from doing so? Rate all that apply.



Q7 If your organization has not run youth philanthropy programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, do you plan to run future programming either virtually or in-person when possible?

- Virtually
- In-person
- Combination of Both
- Neither

Q8 How has your organization shifted its strategic focus or priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic? If one of the following was not a priority, BEFORE the start of COVID-19, please select 'N/A'.

	Youth Philanthropy			Youth Development			Youth Civic Engagement		
	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
2020 Strategic Focus (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2021 Strategic Focus (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9 Would you be willing to speak further about your organization's experience/perspective in the future?
 ▼ Yes, No, Maybe

Q10 Is there anything else you'd like to share in regards to your organization's youth philanthropy programming at this time?

End of Block: 'NO' Responses

Start of Block: 'YES' Responses

Q6 Does your organization plan to run youth philanthropy programming during Winter/Spring 2021?
 ▼ Yes, No, Unsure

Q7 Did your organization run youth philanthropy programming during the following time frames? (select all that apply)

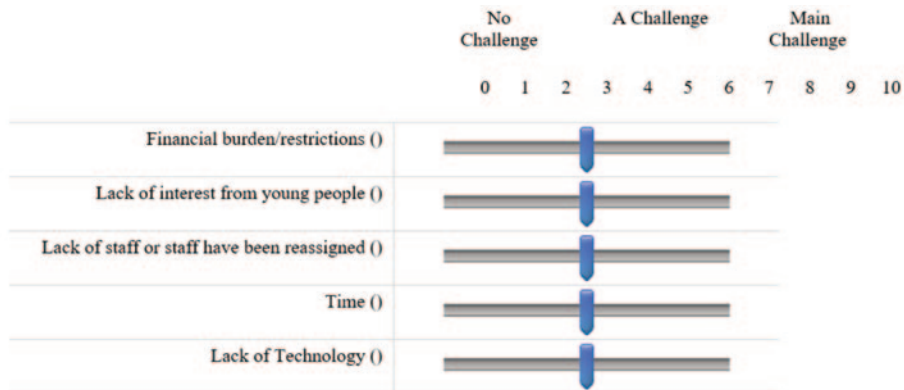
- Spring 2020
- Summer 2020
- Fall 2020

Q8 Do you plan to run future programming either virtually or in-person when possible?

- Virtually
- In-person
- Combination of Both

Q9 If your organization has run youth philanthropy programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, what adjustments have you made to continue offering your program?

Q10 If your organization has run youth philanthropy programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, what has been the biggest challenge(s) you have faced? Rate all that apply.



Q11 If your organization has run youth philanthropy programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, what has been the biggest positive or benefit to running programs virtually? Select all that apply.

- Increased number of participants
- Foundation staff and student interaction increase
- Community Engagement
- Barriers to join decreased (meeting times, capacity, etc.)
- Learning an additional skill; virtual event organizing
- Successful student engagement, meeting learning objectives
- Other (7)

Q12 What would have helped ease the transition from in-person to virtual programming? What resources do you feel you are lacking in order to successfully run programs in a virtual setting? Select all that apply.

- Curriculum review for virtual settings
- Technology; access for students and financial support for staff access
- Technology; managing platforms, education for staff
- Recruitment tools
- Virtual team building; more ways to engage students/address zoom fatigue

Q13 What supports/resources have young people needed in order to engage in youth philanthropy programming during COVID? Select all that apply.

- Stipends/Compensation
- More flexibility
- Virtual fundraising tools
- Technology limitations or access
- Less academic work
- More group work/collaboration
- Other

Q14 What feedback, if any, have students provided about their virtual youth philanthropy experience?

Q15 Does youth philanthropy remain a strategic focus or priority for your organization? (0=Not a priority, 10=our top priority)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Youth Philanthropy 0



Q16 Would you be willing to provide a survey to your young people inquiring about their experience in the virtual youth philanthropy setting?

▼ Yes, No

Q17 Would you be willing to speak further about your organization's experience/perspective in the future?

▼ Yes, No, Maybe

Q18 Is there anything else you'd like to share in regards to your organization's youth philanthropy programming at this time?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Youth Philanthropy Program Spotlights

1. Please state your name, organization, and title within your organization.
2. Please provide a brief overview of your organization and youth philanthropy program history, including in what year the YP program was founded and whether there have been any program lapses (either due to or not due to COVID-19)?
3. How, if at all, have you seen the demographic of participants change in the past year? (i.e. race, socioeconomic status, proximity to physical program location, age, gender, etc.)
4. Has the number of participants you serve changed in the past 12 months compared to past programming from before COVID-19? Has your organization worked with a whole new cohort of students during this time, students who were a part of your youth philanthropy program before the onset of COVID-19, or a combination of both new and returning students?
5. How have you gone about outreach for the program before and now during COVID-19? What sort of outreach do you find has been particularly effective?
6. In the past 12 months, could you share an example or two where the [your foundation] youth philanthropy participants really impressed you in some way and/or surprised you?
7. What curriculum changes have you made this year and what changes will you continue to or hope to make going forward?
8. What have you learned from this year during COVID-19 in terms of youth philanthropy programming? What is your biggest takeaway? How has this impacted your future youth philanthropy program-related decisions?
9. In your survey, you responded that your program plans to continue in a hybrid model moving forward. How do you plan to engage young people with a hybrid model?
10. Based on your experience with [your foundation], is there anything you'd change in terms of the youth philanthropy application process, outreach, or grant process?
11. What does success mean or look like for the youth philanthropy program at [your foundation]? Has that been redefined over the last 12 months? If so, how?
12. In your opinion, what are the biggest benefits of a youth grantmaking program? Think about benefits for the young people, foundations, nonprofits, community, etc. What do you think are the barriers keeping more foundations from achieving these successes or benefits?

SOCIAL JUSTICE FUNDER OPPORTUNITY BRIEFS

draw upon research, policy analysis and practitioner experience to identify promising grantmaking opportunities that aspire to create a fairer, more inclusive and more equitable society.

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We welcome your comments.

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