
Agenda

 **Project Update**

 **Perceptions of the Trust**

 **Defining the MMT Portfolio**

 **Options for Proactive Investment**

 **Next Steps**

 **Appendix**

Executive Summary – External Perceptions of Meyer Memorial Trust

- The Trust is seen as the premier funder in Oregon, with enormous credibility and a unique ability to signal other funders
- Many interviewees are impressed by the Trust's excellent due diligence, and the calculated risks MMT is able to make on the strength of its rigorous proposal review process
- Interviewees applaud the Trust's willingness to fund capacity building and give large multi-year grants
- Stakeholders close to the Trust value its accessibility and the quality of its staff, Trustees, and executive director
- Although they see MMT as influential and increasingly accessible, stakeholders have many questions about MMT's specific impact and decision-making process
- Many stakeholders who are not recipients of grants perceive MMT as funding tangible things, and making conservative choices
- Although they generally perceive MMT as Portland-focused, interviewees encouraged the Trust to consider needs in the full range of Oregon's communities
- As the Trust's most visible proactive initiative, Chalkboard led many interviewees to think about the Trust in new ways
 - Chalkboard's political neutrality is cited as an asset – one that is vital, but difficult to preserve
 - While interviewees generally applauded the Chalkboard approach, there are both critics and remaining questions about its impact
- The Trust's overall reputation, resources, and success with Chalkboard give it license to play a more proactive role in the region
- Interviewees challenged the Trust to lead change, with clear priorities – and the Trustees and ED playing an even more visible role

The Trust Is Seen as the Premier Funder in Oregon, With Enormous Credibility and a Unique Ability to Signal Other Funders

Meyer is perceived as the premiere private funder, with an impeccable reputation



- “Meyer has always been the **platinum standard**.”
- “Locally, you don’t talk about foundations without talking about Meyer.”
- “They will always continue to have **credibility**. They’ve been around a long time and are the largest funder in the region.”
- “Meyer has a **wide network** of people and organizations it has helped, who feel very favorable about it. It has a really good name.”
- “There isn’t one good thing in Portland that Meyer doesn’t have its fingerprints on.”

A grant from Meyer serves as a “seal of approval” and gives a positive signal to other funders



- “If you have a Meyer grant, it is a **good housekeeping seal**.”
- “Meyer **matching grants get community attention** and promote more philanthropy in the state. A lot of Meyer grants have gotten people excited and **leveraged additional giving**.”
- “If Meyer gives you a grant, other funders in town assume a level of vetting of the project. So some **people go to Meyer first**.”
- “Meyer is the place people look to for new initiatives or lasting change in the community. If you get Meyer on board, three or four other funders will follow suit. They are **seen as a validation**.”
- “Once you get Meyer money, you get **instant credibility** across funders.”

Many Note the Trust's Excellent Due Diligence, and the Calculated Risks MMT Is Able to Make on the Strength of its Rigorous Review Process

Admired for the rigorous review process



- “**They do their homework**, due diligence and thoughtful, excellent in-depth analysis of grants.”
- “**MMT forces nonprofits to think critically about their projects**. It makes them better organizations and able to deliver the best possible outcomes. It’s like taking a class from the killer instructor who makes you work your butt off. You are better for it later, though maybe don’t feel it at the time.”

Open to new ideas and willing to take smart chances on promising organizations



- “They take chances on groups with solid business plans. The hardest money to get is the seed money, and **Meyer is willing to take chances** where they see a need and where there is a clear mission and plan on how to address a need. They are **not taking reckless changes**, they are taking thoughtful chances.”
- “Meyer is known as the place that has significant enough resources that if you have a good idea and need help, that’s where you go. **It is the first name on everyone’s list**, from small NGO’s to bigger groups.”
- “They take leaps with organizations to **give them a chance without a track record.**”

Sometimes perceived as the lead funder

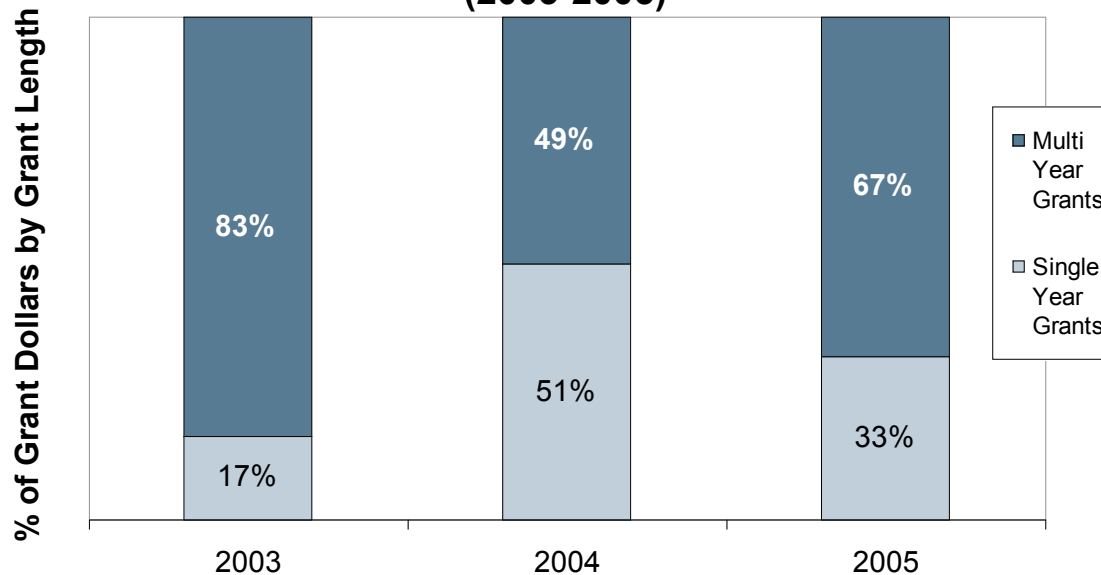


- “One of the great things about the Trust is they are **not shy about being the first one in.**”

The interviewees noting MMT taking chances on new projects were often talking about their own organization, or a major new capital project

Interviewees Applaud The Trust's Willingness to Fund Capacity Building and Give Large Multi-Year Grants

Multi-Year vs. Single-Year General Purpose Grants (2003-2005)



# of Single-Year Grants	191	231	240
# of Multi-Year Grants	54	61	95
Multi-Year Grants as a % of All Grants	22%	20%	40%

- “They’ve done **more capacity grants in recent years**, and there is no one else in town doing that.”
- “Meyer is the exception to the rule [to the practice of most foundations]- our past two grants were **straight operating grants with no strings attached.**”
- “The **capacity building grants and the multi-year funding** that allows organizations to grow has been very helpful.”
- “To me it is important that the Trust fund **capacity building and give some seed funding.** I think they are moving in that direction.”
- “One thing that makes Meyer uniquely valuable is the **size of its grants.**”

Note: In 2003 MMT made a ~\$10M multi-year grant for Oregon Small Schools Initiative. As with all multi-year grants, these grant dollars are reflected entirely in the year it was awarded and not redistributed across subsequent years upon payout.

Stakeholders Close to the Trust Value Its Accessibility and the Quality of its Staff, Trustees, and Executive Director

Seen by many as accessible and open



- “They are **viewed as more approachable** than most foundations...people know the program officers and feel like they see the Trustees.”
- “The **Trustees are more active** in the grantmaking community than most.”
- “The **staff are very accessible** and willing to meet. Their accessibility is very important considering how few foundations we really have.”
- “Meyer’s **good standing in the rural communities** is not due to the size of its corpus, but is entirely related to relationships people had with people at the Trust, because of its accessibility, and site visits staff made.”
- “Meyer is one of the most open foundations. They are always **willing to talk to people** about ideas that aren’t fully formed.”

Consistently viewed as having high quality staff and Trustees



- “Staff are more thorough than most foundations. **They actually have program officers that spend time trying to figure out what is going on.**”
- “**The Trustees are thoughtful, well motivated people** with a variety of interests and expertise, good skill sets, and have broad representation.”
- “I really appreciate the work of the staff.”

Doug’s leadership is seen as an asset and signal of new things



- “They have **stable, recognized leadership**. Doug is very highly thought of around the state.”
- “The new leadership of Doug Stamm **has brought in fresh thoughts and ideas** and he has been willing to look at needs in the state.”
- “Doug’s leadership and vision are critical in pursuing a larger agenda.”

Although They See MMT as Influential and Increasingly Accessible, Stakeholders Have Many Questions about MMT's Impact and Decisions

Although stakeholders believe the Trust has had a big impact in Oregon, most had trouble articulating where or how that impact was made



- “They are influential, but **I can't tell you what they are focused on.**”
- “They are a **well-known brand with shallow awareness.**”
- “I don't know other than Chalkboard what focus they've had. It is evident that there is not a direction that you can say, ‘Meyer will always fund good applications in that area.’”

Unsure what the Trust funds



- “It has **not articulated their role as a funder.**...I'm not sure what their priorities are except supporting institutions in their fundraising efforts.”
- “If you asked five people if they had heard of Meyer, a few might say small schools, but other than that, **I doubt many people would know what they do.**”
- “If you say the Gates Foundation, I think global health and education. **Meyer needs to be more clearly understood.**”
- “They define capacity building as it suits them grant by grant, and that the rules are always changing at MMT. **What they are interested in and what they are looking for is unclear.** It is always a roll of the dice.”

Some ambiguity about how the Trustees make decisions



- “Their **review process is mysterious.**...they are more top down, less wide open and transparent.”
- “You would be naïve to believe a relationship with a Trustee isn't helpful.”

Many Stakeholders Who Are Not Recipients of Grants Perceive MMT as Funding Tangible Things, and Making Conservative Choices

MMT is perceived as funding “things”



- “They are a **critical partner in capital** projects.”
- “I see them funding a variety of things, like the museum and opera.”

MMT is often described as a conservative funder that funds already well-established organizations



- “They **want to fund established, safe organizations**, not necessarily ones that are on the cutting edge and want to try new ideas.”
- “I see Meyer as a **conservative funder** that funds children’s programs, arts, and non-controversial mom and apple pie types of issues.”
- “They are **more about social services than getting at root causes**. They tend to fund the community partners who have long-standing credibility in wealthy circles.”
- “I always looked at them as **not taking risk**. The programs they funded have basic sponsorship by organizations with some credibility, that already had some financial support.”
- “They have been safe...they **fund children and issues that are warm and fuzzy**.”

Some criticized the Trust for looking at grants in a vacuum



- “In the grant making process, **they look at each grant in a vacuum** without a real sense of what is going on. Even when there is research on best practices, it is not part of their conversation.”
- “There is a continually a lot of new thinking on issues, and **the Trust needs to educate itself**. Some of the feedback we’ve gotten from Meyer is ‘yeah, you are doing something new, but we are investing in this traditional organization so we can’t fund you.’”

Although They Generally Perceive MMT as Portland-Focused, Interviewees Encourage the Trust to Consider Needs in the Full Range of Oregon's Communities

Perceived as Portland-centric rather than representative of Oregon



- “They should **explore how much they fund Portland versus the rest of the state**. Is there a relative advantage to being the favorite stepchild of the Portland area? I’m not clear where their focus is geographically. Maybe there is a center of gravity and it is fuzzy around the edges.”
- “The Board has historically been **Portland-centric and arts-centric**. Going forward, it may evolve to one that is looking at other needs.”
- “MMT is viewed as a major funder, but with little local presence [in Central Oregon].”

Many recommend focusing more on covering the whole state of Oregon



- “Unless they have a change of heart and decide only to fund the metro area, **they have an obligation to do good funding in rural communities**.”
- “**Foundations in this state have tended to be Portland-centric and rural-centric**. Meyer has done a lot in Baker city because they like Baker. But between Baker and Portland, they haven’t done a whole lot.”

As the Trust's Most Visible Proactive Initiative, Chalkboard Led Many Interviewees to Think about the Trust in New Ways

Role in Chalkboard is generally viewed as a valuable new leadership role as a proactive convener, taking a long-term view



- “They were **innovative in their role as a convener**, in bringing funders to the table to take a long term approach.”
- “Chalkboard is **an example of Meyer’s new role**. It is much more proactive about trying to focus. This is a positive development.”
- “They played a leadership role with Chalkboard. **They focused on an issue and took the role to sustain something long-term**. This is one of their greatest strengths.”

The Trust has signaled that advocacy is an important role for foundations



- “In Chalkboard, **they said it is okay to be an advocate for change**. Earlier, advocacy would be the last thing on Meyer’s list.”
- “Chalkboard is well suited to have an impact due to the leadership of foundations willing to put their neck out. It is a **new role for foundations to work together around advocacy**.”

Observers and participants agree that partnerships are advantageous



- “We’ve discovered with Chalkboard that foundations have this weapon in the arsenal...we should **leverage public policy and our cash resources**.”
- “Oregon doesn’t have a big foundation base. By five funders coming together, **they created something of scale they couldn’t do on their own**.”
- “Chalkboard works well because it is protected as part of a group and **it’s not perceived as a special interest group**.”
- “They’ve now been thinking about giving as **engaging in partnerships to jointly realize a measurably different level of impact**.”

Chalkboard's Political Neutrality Is Cited as an Asset – One that Is Vital, But Difficult to Preserve

Value is in being a source of nonpartisan, research-based information



- “They have tried to step back and say there is a **non-partisan, even-handed way to look at the education system** in Oregon.”
- “Increasingly you see Chalkboard being referred to as the source of non-biased information...they are **established as an honest broker of data.**”
- “**Its power as a statewide initiative is to maintain its neutrality.** MMT as a funder has grown in the public’s appreciation for that sense of neutrality and for starting this conversation on a statewide issue.”

Chalkboard needs to be deliberate about its positioning and intentional about becoming more or less partisan



- “Chalkboard **has not maintained a sense of political neutrality.** What came out were more conservative and more right-wing leaning than things coming out of the initial committee recommendations.”
- “What is bad about Chalkboard is **they’ve lost control of their message and agenda.** Saxton was up on air using Chalkboard by name, in debate and in ads. So Chalkboard is losing credibility. If the Democrats take control of the Legislature, then anything that looks like pay for performance is ‘dead on arrival’. Anything not part of Oregon Education Association agenda is gone.”
- “In the gubernatorial debate, one candidate mentioned Chalkboard five times and the Governor did not mention it once. This is a problem for Chalkboard and **is an example of where a completely non partisan initiative was hijacked by a political candidate.** If it took 100 years to build pristine non partisan reputation, you can ruin it in a year.”
- “To gain neutrality back, **they will have to be very careful going into this next legislative session.** There will be a lot of attempts to bring the Chalkboard onto one side or the other.”

While Interviewees Generally Applaud the Chalkboard Approach, There Are Both Critics and Remaining Questions About Its Impact

Compromises have led to a watering down of suggested reforms



- “The **net effect of Chalkboard has been very cautious**. It is described as bold and innovative, but it is not so bold and innovative!”
- “The **criteria for selection of their recommendations are unclear**. They are good proposals, but they are not comprehensive. Their suggestions are not at the transformational level.”
- “The agenda is motherhood, apple pie and statue of liberty. It will get turned into bill draft, and **I think they are going to get skinned.**”

Slow process of gathering public input



- “They **spent a lot of resources on public participation** in that first round, but asking the general public about this is not very productive.”
- “From a policy perspective, **my concern was the timeline**. I’m all for public input, but it really dragged on and diminished the enthusiasm. If they do this again and choose to engage the public, you have to **speed it up so there is a real feeling of a start and finish.**”

Unsure what changes will materialize as a result



- “It has been slow moving. It seemed like a concentrated effort to push through something important, but I haven’t seen it translated into action.”
- “The jury is still out on Chalkboard.”
- “They’ve got to **start transitioning from research and design to implementation**. If it takes different talent and skills.”

Fears that funders won’t see it through



- “I’m worried they don’t have the guts to follow this through, because the unions and other stakeholders do. **They have to walk the talk.**”
- “**They need to stick with Chalkboard** for a while. We’ve stuck with it for three years and we are getting tired of it. We have to hang in there.”

The Trust's Overall Reputation, Resources, and Success with Chalkboard Give it License to Play a More Proactive Role in the Region

Credibility and brand name give the Trust an extraordinary level of influence



- “Meyer should take stock in its value and the prestige of its name. It could be the leader in many parts of Oregon’s life. It needs to build on its capital.”
- “Meyer really has a **convening role**. Nobody would turn down an invitation. You would have to be stupid to do that.”
- “They have not done a lot around public policy, but **there is a role for them in policy issues**...they can do it, but other foundations can’t. There is tons of respect for them, how they operate and deal with everyone. They can pull people together.”

Size of resources means that others will follow its lead



- “They have played a valuable role with very large grants and **their thoughtfulness can influence the direction of a community**. I would like to see them continue with that leadership role, look at those opportunities carefully, more proactively.”
- “It is **only Meyer that has enough resources** and yet is free enough to do something extraordinary.”
- “Aside from Gates, **they are the biggest and most sophisticated of local funders**, so they need to step into a leadership role.”

Success with Chalkboard lays a foundation for the Trust to play a leadership role in other areas



- “Meyer gave Chalkboard credibility...It would be a real contribution to Oregon if they would **fund more things like Chalkboard**.”
- “Chalkboard is where Meyer has had the biggest impact. I would like to see them do this in other areas.”
- “The **Trust can be a bridge** between business, government and community. The new Trust is in a position to speak up.”

Interviewees Challenge the Trust to Lead Change with Clear Priorities – with the Trustees and ED Playing an Even More Visible Role

Stakeholders challenge the Trust to lead change



- “I would love to see them be a leader in policy and social issues...they have the freedom to **take on issues that might not be warm and fuzzy.**”
- “People look to Meyer for leadership, and in some areas they have been nervous in that role and walked away. They have been a bit coy about their commitments. They are such a significant funder in Oregon that if they waiver, others waiver. **They need to recognize their leadership role, as it is much more than money. It is a stamp of approval.**”

Many ask that the Trust communicate more about priorities and activities



- “They need to **define an area.** Right now it is like they are just chasing the next thing.... If you want to demonstrate you have an impact, you need to be sure what you are trying to do.”
- “**Publicize your work.** What good is having Open Books unless taxpayers know about it? Fund a speakers bureau, put ads in the Oregonian, have public service announcements and more aggressive public outreach and communications to accompany funded programs.”
- “They need to **reintroduce the new Trust** and explain the new rules of engagement.”

Close observers see a need for Trustees to play a more active, visible role in the community



- “Meyer needs to **think about the role of the board** – funders can’t push staff out there and have Trustees continue to be in closed room. There is more scrutiny and visibility for foundations. Whatever direction they choose, wherever the Trust gets out there, **the Trustees must get out there** too. This is one way they can provide leadership around philanthropy.”
- “I’ve seen Doug do Op-Ed pieces. He and the Trustees are very highly regarded. It is relevant for them to **make statements on the editorial page.**”