

# FUNDER GROUP ANALYSIS

## A Closer Look at Funder Groups

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**in collaboration with The Aspen Institute, Religion & Society Program**

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### **Introduction**

Funder groups are formal or informal networks of philanthropic organizations sharing a common interest or cause. Funder groups maximize impact within the philanthropic community by providing opportunities for grantmakers to collaborate and share knowledge and resources. Relatively little research exists about this class of philanthropic organizations, and even less considers the presence and influence of faith within these network. Our analysis focused on the identification and assessment of institutional funder groups. Our goal is to understand the degree of collaboration between secular and faith-based foundations and grantees within these funder networks. In our analysis, we determine the relationship, if any, between the religious nature of a funder group and its member composition.

### **Composition of Funder Groups**

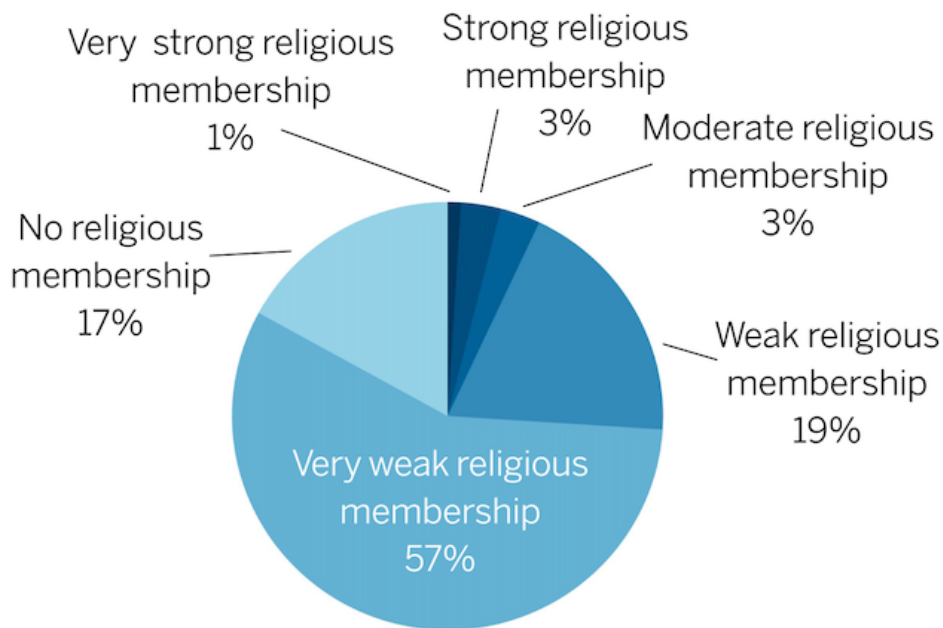
Our funder group analysis began with the identification of 74 funder groups and their members, in addition to four faith-based groups that do not have public membership lists. This list was compiled using the United Philanthropy Forum's list of funder groups and our own exploratory research of faith-based funder groups. We classified each funder group as either religious, secular, or hybrid according to mission statement and the composition of their membership. The classification of each member organization was determined by cross-referencing a member organization's EIN with Dr. Fulton's database of religious and secular foundations and grantees. Dr. Fulton classified foundations and grantees as either secular or religious based on whether religious sentiment or terminology was referenced in the organization's mission statement. We were able to determine the classification of approximately 30% of the member organizations.

We used this data to identify the percentage of faith-based member organizations in each funder group. Since our team could only determine the classification of 30% of the member organizations, the percentage of faith-based member organizations for each funder group was weighted by the percentage of identified members. Funder groups with zero religious member organizations are classified as secular. Funder groups with both secular and religious member organizations are classified as hybrid. Funder groups whose mission is rooted in religious sentiment are classified as faith-based.

To understand to what degree funder groups include both secular and faith-based member organizations, we measured the percentage of religious members within each of the 74 funder groups with public membership lists. Figure 1 demonstrates the religious and secular makeup of these funder groups. We found that most groups (87 percent) include a mix of secular and faith-based members. Of these hybrid groups, the majority have weak religious composition, meaning less than 10% of their membership is faith-based. Even those funders that appear explicitly faith-based contain both secular and faith-based members.

*Figure 1.*

### Funder Group Religious Member Composition



**Categories:**

- Very strong religious membership = > 50% religious composition
- Strong religious membership = 20-50% religious composition
- Moderate religious membership = 10-20% religious composition
- Weak religious membership = 5-10% religious composition
- Very weak religious membership = 1-5% religious composition
- No religious membership = 0% religious composition

*Example interpretation: Of the 74 funder groups analyzed, 57% have between 1 and 5% religious members.*

## Religiosity of Funder Groups

After identifying the list of 78 funder groups, our team took a closer look at the religiosity of 27 funder groups (10 secular, 10 hybrid, and 7 religious). We define religiosity as a measure of religious devotion demonstrated through actions performed either for the benefit of the devotee or to minister to others who may or may not share the same religious beliefs. Religiosity may be measured at the individual level or the organizational level (Ebaugh, 2010).

Our team used Ebaugh et al.'s articles, *Where's the Faith in Faith-Based Organizations*, to create a comprehensive list of religious signifiers that we divided into four categories: inter-organizational operations, intra-organizational operations, physical and virtual environment, and finances. We used these four categories to create a specialized version of the religiosity survey to construct a measure of religiosity for the 27 funder groups. Our team assessed the religiosity of each funder group based on public-facing material available on the organization's website and Tax Form 990. This specialized religiosity survey measured how much religion influenced a funder group's organizational operations, environment, and finances.

The religiosity survey included 15 questions to calculate a funder group's religiosity score. Each question was worth 1 point for a total of 15 points. A funder group's religiosity score can range from 0 points (no religiosity/completely secular) to 15 points (high religiosity). The survey questions had two types of response options. Seven questions required a binary yes (1 point) or no (0 points) response. Eight questions were scored on a three-point frequency scale – a lot (1 point), some (0.5 points), and never/no evidence (0 points). To check for interrater reliability, three team members independently scored 3 funder groups (1 secular, 1 hybrid, and 1 religious). The result was an interrater reliability score of 93%.

Results from the religiosity analysis showed low religiosity among the 27 funder groups. See Table 1 for a complete list of funder groups and their corresponding religiosity score. Twelve of the 27 funder groups (44 percent) scored zero on the religiosity survey, indicating these funder groups show no religiosity and appear completely secular according to their publicly facing digital and tax materials.

Only three funder groups, all of which were religious funder groups, scored above 8 points: Christian Funders Forum, FADICA Catholic Philanthropy Network, and Jewish Funders Network. Out of all 27 funder groups, the mean score was 2.6 points, the median was 0.5 points, the minimum was 0 points, and the maximum was 12 points. Out of the 15 factors we used to assess religiosity, funder groups were most likely to work with external religious entities and receive funding from faith-based organizations. They were least likely to conduct worship services or pray with staff and volunteers.

*Table 1. Religiosity Scores*

<b>Funder Group Name</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Religiosity Score</b>
Africa Grant Makers Affinity Group	Secular	1.5
Animal Grantmakers	Secular	0
Appalachia Funders Network	Secular	0
CFLeads	Secular	0
Connecticut Council for Philanthropy	Secular	0
League of California Community Foundations	Secular	0
The Funders Network	Secular	0
Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers	Secular	0
Women's Funding Network	Secular	0
Workforce Matters	Secular	0
Funders for Reproductive Equity	Hybrid	0
Grantmakers Council of Rhode Island	Hybrid	0
Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania	Hybrid	2
Greater Good Greenville	Hybrid	0
Mission Investors Exchange	Hybrid	2
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy	Hybrid	1
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement	Hybrid	4.5
Philanthropy Southwest	Hybrid	0.5
Funders Together to End Homelessness	Hybrid	0.5
Health and Environmental Funders Network	Hybrid	0.5
Christian Funders Forum	Religious	11
FADIC Catholic Philanthropy Network	Religious	12
Faith Matters Network	Religious	5.5
Interfaith Funders Group	Religious	7.5
Jewish Funders Nework	Religious	11.5
Notre Dame Family Philanthropy Network	Religious	7
The World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists	Religious	4.5

## Funder Group Profiles

The profiles in this section serve to illustrate the types of funder groups we considered and the ways religiosity appears, or does not appear, in their forward facing materials.

### Secular Funder Group - Animal Grantmakers

Animal Grantmakers' mission is to promote animal protection and provide data and information that will help guide grantmaking decisions for animal protections and sustainability. Animal Grantmakers is comprised of nearly 40 member organizations and is a vital part of the growth in animal protection funding over the years. These member organizations have backgrounds in animal protection, animal welfare, and animal rights (Animal Grantmakers, 2023). Animal Grantmakers was one of the twelve funder groups with a religiosity score of zero. Religion yielded no influence on the organization's operations, environment, or finances.

### Hybrid Funder Group - Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement

Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) is focused on empowering citizens to play an active role in advancing democracy and civic life in America (PACE, 2023). PACE is a hybrid funder group with religious organizations making up 10% of its membership. PACE scored 4.5 points on the religiosity index, with religious indicators appearing in all four dimensions (inter and intra organizational operations, physical and virtual environment, and finance) of the organization.

Religion is present in PACE's inter-organizational operations such as programming and partnerships. PACE launched a three-year Faith In/And Democracy (FIAD) program that explored the connection between faith, faith communities, faith leaders, democracy, and civic life. Through this million dollar project, PACE examined the characteristics that make faith leaders and institutions effective in problem-solving within the current democratic environment and launched projects to illustrate the influence of faith on democracy. PACE partnered with multiple religious organizations for this project including American Muslim Advisory Council, Chicago Theological Seminary, Faith in Indiana, and Faith Matters Network (PACE, 2023).

PACE's intra-organizational operations are influenced by religious staff members. For example, one staff member is a trained theologian and holds "religious life roles in higher education" and founded the Gustavus Academy of Faith, Science, and Ethics. Another staff member also obtained a degree in theology and displayed a background in both Christianity and Judaism (PACE, 2023).

We found religious symbolism and imagery in PACE's online environment, such as people praying and attending religious services. Finally, religion influences PACE's financial makeup. The organization receives a significant amount of funding from faith-based entities, which is

most clearly displayed through the one million dollars raised for the Faith In/And Democracy program. Most of this funding came from PACE's faith-based partners (PACE, 2023).

### **Faith-based Funder Group - FADICA Catholic Philanthropy Network**

FADICA is a Catholic philanthropy network whose primary mission is to strengthen the Catholic church and help those in poverty (FADICA, 2023). FADICA members gather together to network and share ideas with other Catholic leaders and discuss the role of spirituality in philanthropy. Our team classified FADICA as a religious funder group because of the overtly religious goals in the organization's mission statement. FADICA aims to "promote the growth and effectiveness of Catholic philanthropy inspired by the joy of the Gospel and the Catholic social tradition" (FADICA, 2023). Although our team anticipated FADICA and the other religious funder groups to have a highly religious membership composition, we were surprised to find that only about half (47 percent) of FADICA's membership is faith-based.

Catholicism can be found in all four areas we assessed for religious signifiers, inter- and intra-organizational operations, environment, and finances. FADICA scored 12 out of 15 points on our religiosity index, the highest religiosity score of the 27 funder groups we analyzed. In terms of inter-organizational operations, religion influences nearly all of the organization's programming and to whom the programming is offered. For example, one of FADICA's programs is the Catholic Education Initiative. This initiative works with Catholic schools around the United States to explore the governance style most likely to ensure the sustainability of Catholic schools. Other events hosted by FADICA include events centered around best practices in Catholic philanthropy and the spirituality of giving among all generations, especially youth (FADICA, 2023).

Intra-organizational factors demonstrate a high level of religiosity. All of FADICA's staff and many board members have either an education in theology, background working with other Catholic organizations, or have authored books centered around Catholicism. (FADICA, 2023).

FADICA's environment is also highly religious. The organization's website, online blog, and research papers all contain images of Catholic churches and traditionally Catholic symbols such as a cross and an outline of church building. These same symbols appear in the organization's printed materials such as the annual report brochure (FADICA, 2023). Finally, FADICA financial composition indicates a high level of religiosity. FADICA receives a substantial amount of funding from religious organizations and uses this funding for religious programming (FADICA, 2019; FADICA, 2023).

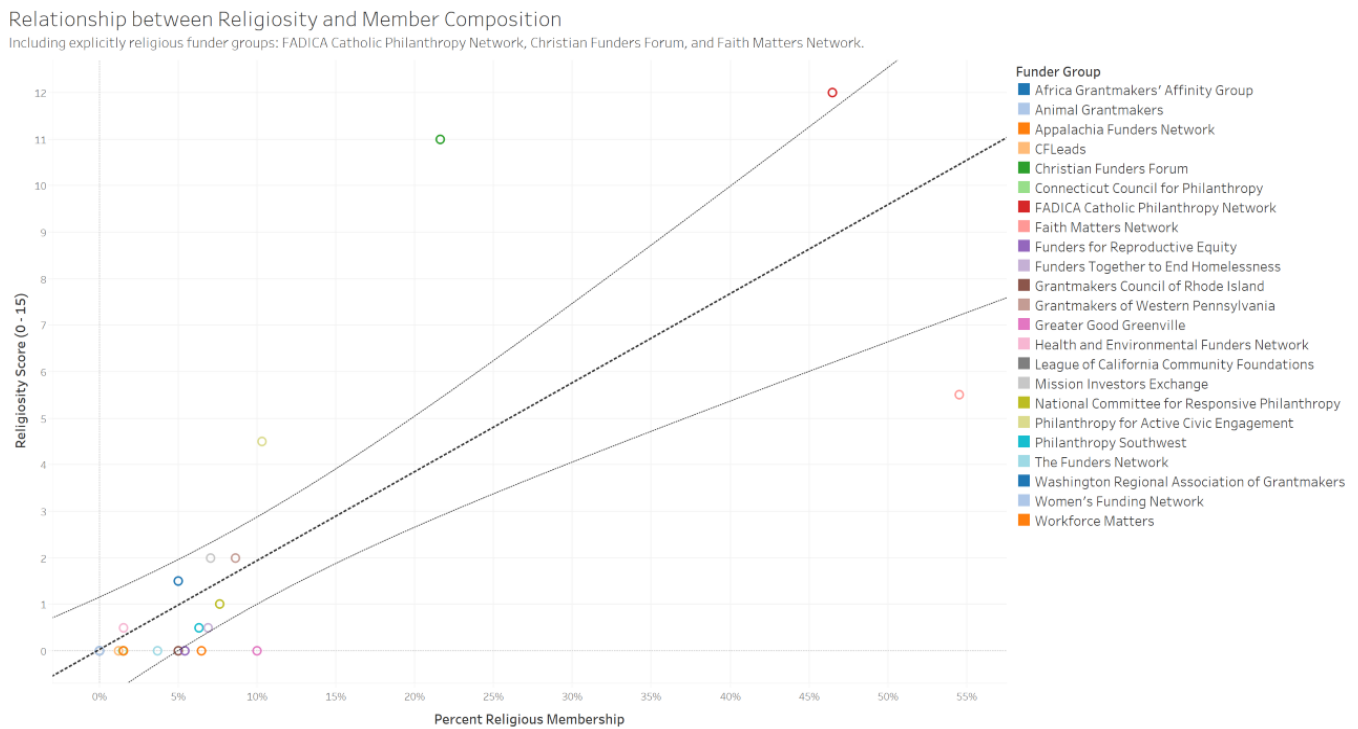
### **Analysis of Funder Groups**

After calculating the religiosity score of the 27 funder groups, we compared the religiosity scores of each funder group to its membership composition to find the correlation between the two measures. Only 23 of the original funder groups (10 secular, 10 hybrid, and 3 religious) were included in this analysis. Many religious funder groups do not make their members lists



publicly available and without data related to the religious composition of these funder groups, we could not make a useful comparison. We found the correlation coefficient between the membership composition of each funder group and its religiosity score. As shown in Figure 2, the correlation coefficient is 0.76, indicating there is a highly significant positive relationship between the membership composition of a funder group and its religiosity score. The same held true when explicitly religious funder groups were removed from the analysis. When the religious funder groups were removed, the correlation coefficient remained significant, with a moderately strong (0.60) relationship between membership composition and religiosity score. Figure 3 indicates that religion plays a more influential role in the funder group's organizational operations, environment, and finances as funder groups increase in religious composition.

*Figure 2. Line graph with religious members.*



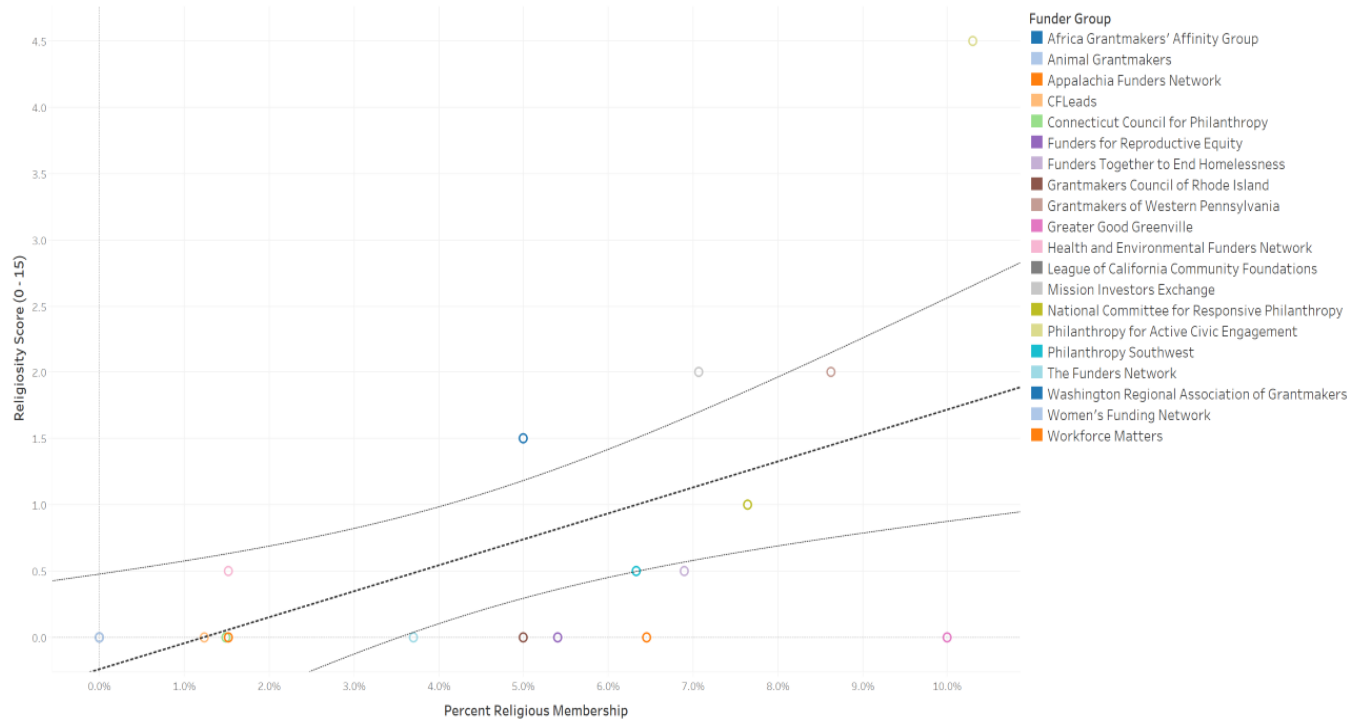
Comparing the religiosity score and religious member composition of 23\* funder groups.

Pearson's correlation coefficient = .76  
p-value = <.0001

\*Four of the 27 groups analyzed do not provide a public membership list.

**Figure 3. Line graph without religious members.**

Relationship between Religiosity and Member Composition  
Excluding explicitly religious funder groups



Compares the religiosity score and religious member composition of 20 funder groups.

Pearson's correlation coefficient = .60  
p-value = .005

## Conclusion

Our analysis focused on the identification and assessment of institutional funder groups. Our analysis began with understanding the degree of collaboration between secular and faith-based foundations and grantees within funder groups. Our team expected to find a large number of funder groups explicitly comprised of only secular members and funder groups explicitly comprised of only religious members. Our dataset and analysis revealed that most funder groups are made up of both secular and faith-based member organizations. Of these hybrid groups, the majority have weak religious composition, meaning less than 10% of their membership is faith-based. Even those funders that appear explicitly faith-based contain both secular and faith-based members.

After identifying the religious composition of each funder group, our analysis took a closer look at the religiosity of a select group of funder groups. The analysis determined the religiosity of each funder group by identify if, and to what extent, religiosity appears in the organization's inter- and intra- organizational operations, environment, and finances based on public-facing information. The results of the analysis revealed most funder groups have very little religiosity



in the organization and nearly half of the funder groups had no religious signifiers among their online material.

Our analysis concluded with a comparison of the religiosity scores of each funder group to its membership composition to calculate the correlation between the two measures. The correlation coefficient revealed indicated there is a highly significant positive relationship between the membership composition of a funder group and its religiosity score. We found religion plays a more influential role in the funder group's organizational operations, environment, and finances as funder groups increase in religious composition.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

There are a few important limitations to this analysis. Due to time constraints, our team was only able to determine the religious classification of approximately 30% of our member organizations. Future research should focus on creating a more comprehensive data set that includes the religious composition of more member organizations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the religious composition of funder groups across the United States.

Another limitation of this analysis is that the religiosity score of funder groups is only considered public-facing materials that were available on a funder group's website and Tax Form 990. Future research should survey funder groups, philanthropic foundations, and grantees to collect data related to the way these organization's self-identify the religiosity of their organizations. Finally, future research should consider the religious plurality or religious homogeneity among these philanthropic organizations.

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