Institute for Philanthropy

After The Giving Pledge: Giving Behaviour of 22 Wealthy Donors

In February this year, the Gates Foundation announced that the Giving Pledge, founded by Warren Buffett and Bill and Melinda Gates in 2010, would for the first time extend its invitation to wealthy donors outside the US. They added twelve signatories from eight non-US countries, bringing the total number of those who have so far taken the Pledge to 105.

Following this move, we asked 22 donors within our networks about the rate at which they intend to deploy their philanthropic assets. They provided us with the following response about their giving behaviour.

About the donors
- They come from **the UK, the US, Brazil, Canada, Lebanon and Mexico**;
- They give away **an annual average of $2,168,050**;
- Their foundations have **an average endowment of $79,081,250**;
- Their areas of philanthropic giving, in order of frequency, are: education; children and youth; community re-generation; environment; healthcare; international development; women and girls; board governance; impact investing; reproductive health; film as a vehicle for social change; local charities; technology; transparency; human rights; encouraging philanthropy; encouraging non-profit impact; allevation of poverty; religion; and historic preservation.
- Eight donors had made provision for their families to pursue their own philanthropic goals separate to their own philanthropy. Eight had not, and four others had not yet decided.

The rates of their giving
- Of the twenty-two donors, seven had decided the precise time-frames within which they were looking to give away all of their philanthropic capital. Three of them aim to do so within the next ten years; two of them aim to do so five to ten years after their death; one over the next five to eight years; and one over the course of the next twenty years.
- One of the donors commented that "I strongly believe that philanthropy can be more effective when driven by the wishes and strategy of a living donor. Long-lasting philanthropic institutions can become sclerotic and bureaucratic, not always but often. Family foundations may end up with their hands tied, by a legacy directed at tackling a social problem that no longer exists. Innovation and risk taking is often reduced."
- Another stated that "Risk taking and innovation are crucial for philanthropy. Philanthropy needs to be able to adapt as social problems and the needs of society change over time."

The percentages of their giving

What proportion of your wealth will you ultimately dedicate to philanthropic causes or charitable organisations?
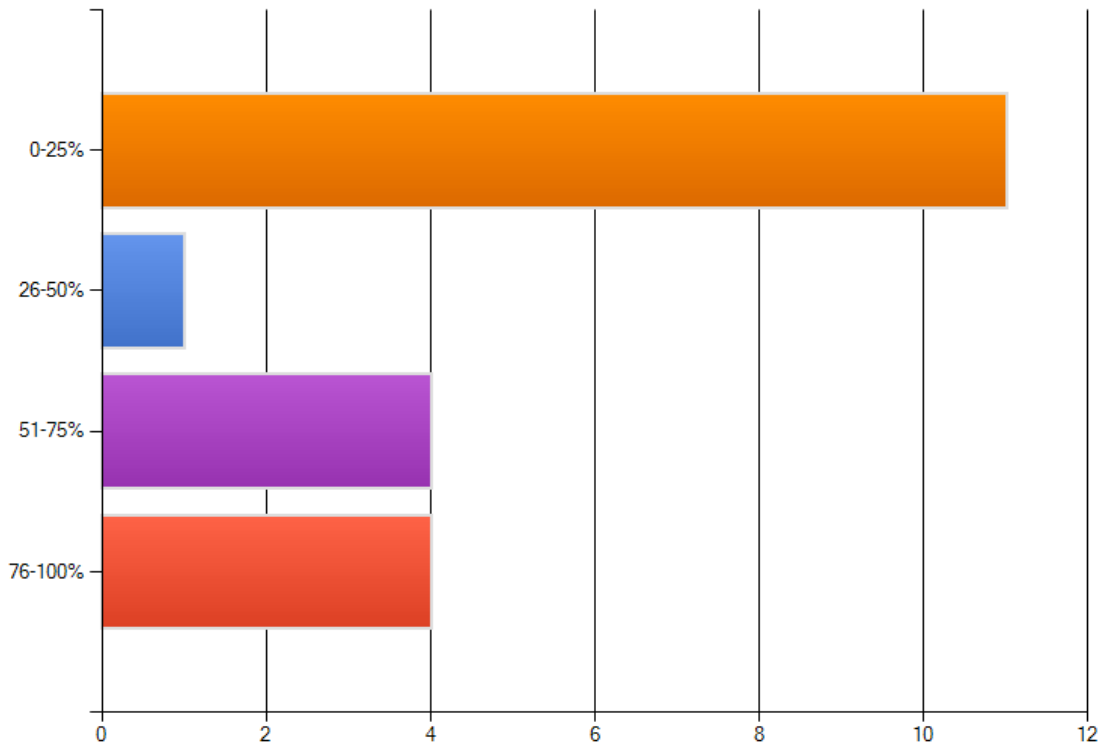
The values and beliefs that drive their giving

- "Partnership: the more we (civil society, philanthropists, NGOs and activists) can work together towards a cause, the faster we can move the needle. Engagement: not only personal engagement, but moral and legal and financial engagement. Empower the organisation so they do the best they can to move the needle. Help the executive team to excel in their strategy and operations to achieve their mission and reach goals they have set with their trustees (and other constituencies)."

- "I focus on leadership and because my funds are limited support smallish charities with dynamic leadership in unattractive and unpopular fields where it is difficult to raise funds."

- "Philanthropic capital should be deployed in the most strategic way possible."

- "I generally believe in addressing the needs of underserved poor in the neediest parts of the world (where I have worked for much of my professional life), not the arts or environmental needs so popular among donors here at home, or SOBs (symphony, opera, ballet) - as much as I love them personally."

- "Everybody deserves the opportunity to grow in a safe environment, with responsible, caring and self-sufficient parents, as well, to receive quality education. Seeing how many individuals and communities have improved their lives as a result of my father´s work in philanthropy is the best example of the importance of philanthropy in my life."