



Evaluation of WINGS Forum 2010

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Contents

Contents.....	2
Summary	3
Introduction	4
Methodology	4
Respondents	4
Plenary sessions	5
Concurrent sessions.....	6
Learning	7
Networking	7
Meeting expectations	8
Logistics	10
Factors driving the success of the meeting	11
Future	12

Summary

The WINGS Forum 2010 was a resounding success. Of 74 participants who responded to an on-line survey, more than 95 per cent said that their expectations had been met or exceeded. They said that the content, processes, and organization were all of high quality.

Needless to say, there was some variation in the ratings that people gave to individual sessions. However, overall there was a good balance between a conceptual understanding of global philanthropy and a practical how-to-do-it approach.

The Opening Plenary and the Importance of Philanthropy Research were particularly valued plenary sessions. The Barry Gaberman Lecture was more controversial. Concurrent sessions varied in their value, and were not – in general – regarded as having as much substance as the plenaries.

People especially valued the learning and networking opportunities. A third said that they could directly apply something they had learned when they got home and a third said they would follow up a project with participants at the meeting.

The logistics and organization of the meeting were well regarded.

On the future, people felt that the formula for the WINGS Forum was right and should not be changed, though Forums should be held more frequently.

Introduction

This report evaluates the WINGS Forum, which took place in Lake Como, Italy from November 18th to 20th 2010.

The report examines whether the meeting met participants' expectations. It includes information on how people assessed sessions, what they learned, who they met and what this led to, as well as an assessment of the organization, location, and logistics of the meeting.

Methodology

The evaluation is based on an on-line survey of meeting participants.

The survey, which took five to seven minutes to complete, was based on 'tick box' answers, with the opportunity to give a brief comment in each case. In a more discursive section, participants were invited to say how they saw the future of WINGS Forum.

The survey was sent out immediately after the Forum ended. Following this initial invitation, there were two follow-up reminders to encourage full participation.

The survey was closed on December 1st 2010, and this report produced on December 2nd so that it could be available for a discussion by a WINGS committee on December 3rd.

Respondents

Seventy-four people responded to the survey. Exactly half of these were from membership associations, a quarter (27.8 per cent) from support organizations, with the remainder being funders (8.3 per cent), other non-profit organizations (9.7 per cent) and consultants (4.2 per cent).

The largest single group came from Europe (44.6 per cent), followed by North America (18.9 per cent), Asia Pacific (12.1 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (10.8 per cent), Africa (8.1 per cent), and the Middle East and North Africa (5.4 per cent).

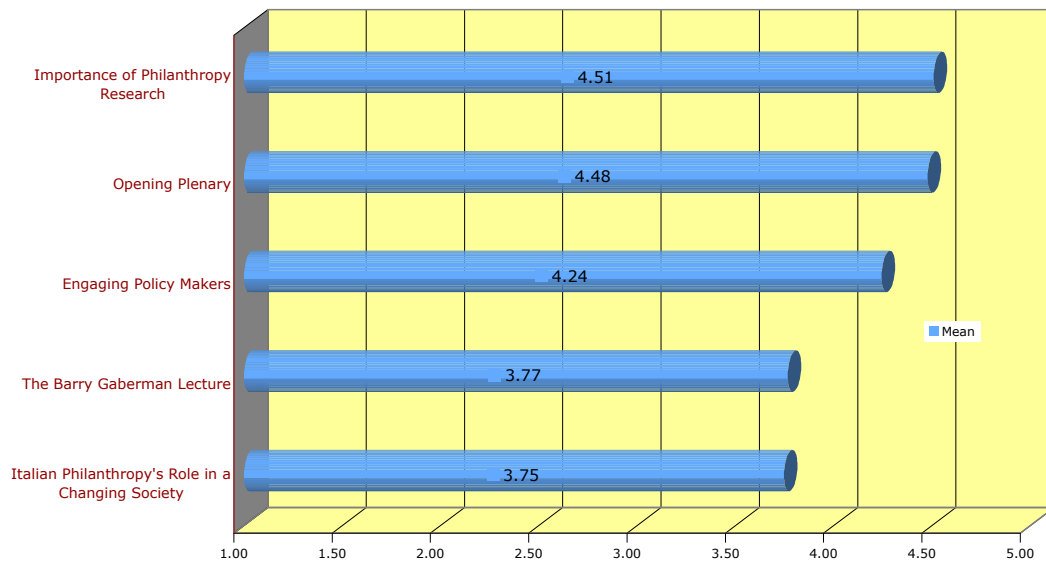
Most respondents (51.6 per cent) were chief executives of their organizations and just over a third (35.5 per cent) program staff, and the remainder were board members (12.9 per cent). Two-thirds (68.9 per cent) represented organizations that were members of WINGS.

Plenary sessions

Participants were asked to rate each of the plenary sessions on a five-point scale using one of the following ratings: 'very good' (score 5), 'good' (4), 'average' (3), 'poor' (2) and 'very poor' (1).

Mean ratings for each of the plenary sessions are shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: Ratings of Plenary Sessions on a Five-Point Scale



Participants were generally happy with plenary sessions. As one participant put it, 'Speakers were uneven – some great, some good, but overall a good mix.'

The most popular sessions were those on the 'Importance of Philanthropy Research' and the 'Opening Plenary'. Less popular overall was the 'Barry Gaberman Lecture' and the session on 'Italian Philanthropy'. However, even in less popular sessions, some participants found considerable merit. For example, one participant described the session on Italian philanthropy as 'an excellent job and a good grounding of where and how philanthropy is moving'.

The most controversial session was the Barry Gaberman Lecture. Participants disagreed with each other about the value of about this session more than any other session at the conference.¹ Some found it 'bold' and 'enlightening', while others found it 'dull' and 'unengaging', or 'full of weird philosophical excursions'.

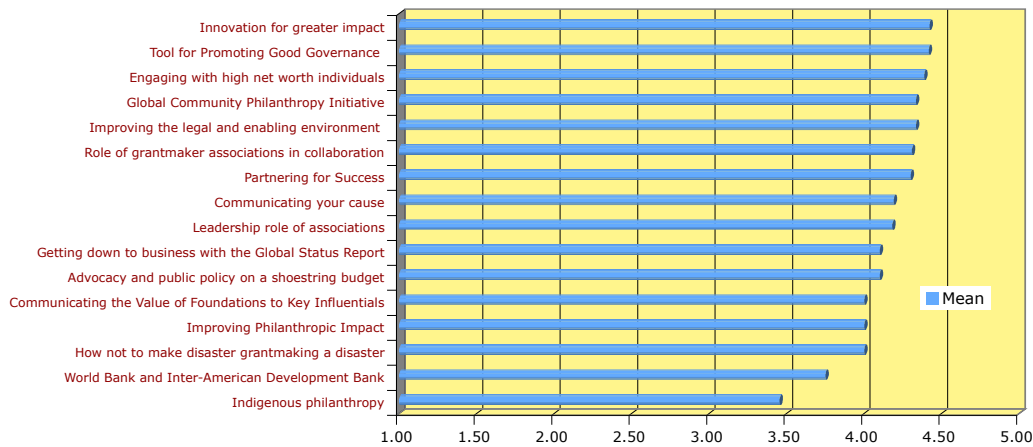
¹ The standard deviation for this session was 1.23 – more than double the standard deviation for the session on Italian Philanthropy, which was 0.56.

Regardless of the quality, many found that the final session was too long, but 'rescued by the band'.

Concurrent sessions

An identical five-point scale was used to rate the concurrent sessions. The mean ratings for each session are shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Ratings of Concurrent Sessions on a Five-Point Scale



Overall, people generally enjoyed the concurrent sessions and got much learning from them. The chart above shows that almost all the mean scores were rated '4' or above, which means good or better.

Some sessions were regarded as 'sensational'. For example, people felt that the session on engaging with high net worth individuals had been excellent. And another respondent said 'the disaster session was probably one of the best.'

At the same time, the concurrent sessions were enjoyed less than the plenary sessions. Several respondents suggested that some of the concurrent sessions lacked depth. As one participant put it, 'In general, I found the plenaries to be more substantive and informative than the concurrents.' Others felt that there were too many concurrent sessions relative to the size of the meeting, so that some sessions were sparsely populated. Still more felt that they wanted to be in two places at once and this was frustrating.

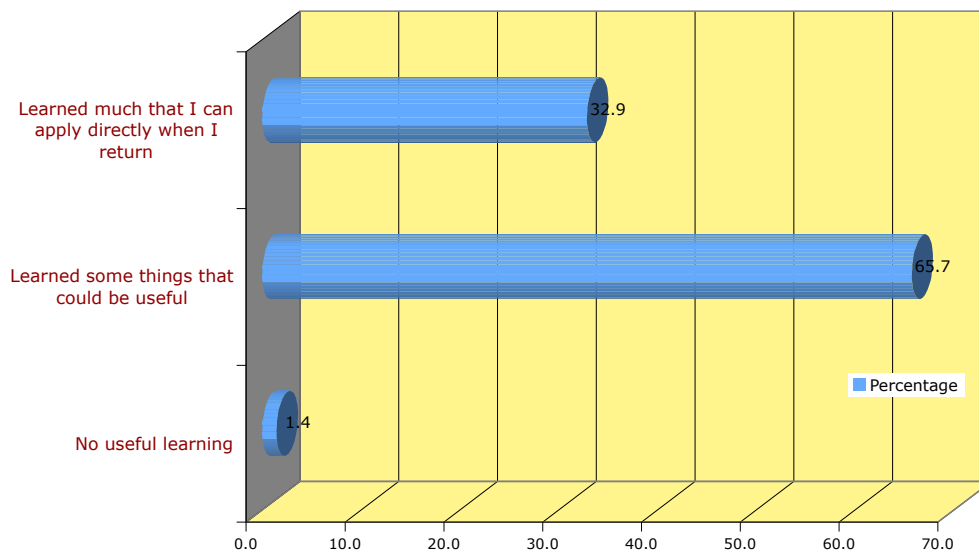
Quality in some of the concurrent sessions was an issue. For example, one person commented about the indigenous philanthropy session that 'we did not discuss indigenous philanthropy as I would have expected'.

Learning

People were asked whether they had 'learned anything useful from the meeting'. They were asked to say whether they had (a) 'learned much that I can apply directly when I get back', or (b) 'learned some things that could be useful', or (c) had 'no useful learning'.

The distribution of answers is shown in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Learning



These results suggest that the Forum was a very good learning opportunity. As one participant said:

'There were many excellent sessions and much learning took place. There was a good balance between conceptual debates and concrete work initiatives.'

Learning points that stood out for respondents included:

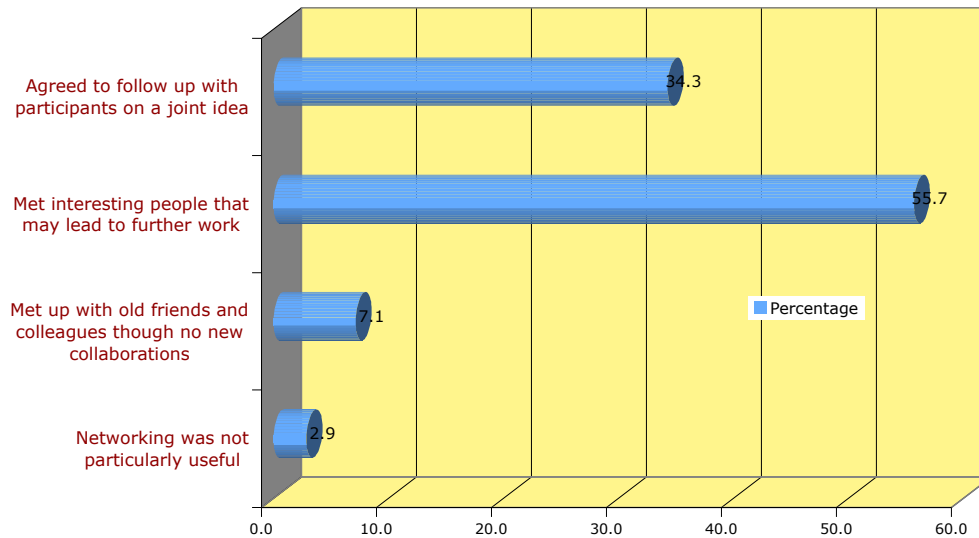
- Engaging with donors
- Global Community Philanthropy Initiative
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Value and templates of philanthropy research.
- Information on 'glass pockets'

Networking

Participants were asked to say whether they made useful connections that might lead to collaborations after the meeting. They were asked to say whether they had (a) agreed to follow up on a joint idea, (b) met interesting people that may lead to further work in

the future, (c) met up with old friends and colleagues though with no new collaborations in prospect or (d) found that networking was not particularly useful at the meeting.

Chart 4: Value of Networking



It is clear from the chart that networking was a great success at the meeting. Some of the comments included:

'There was a great range of opportunities to network.'

'I made some very useful connections for my organization. I was particularly pleased with this aspect of the meeting.'

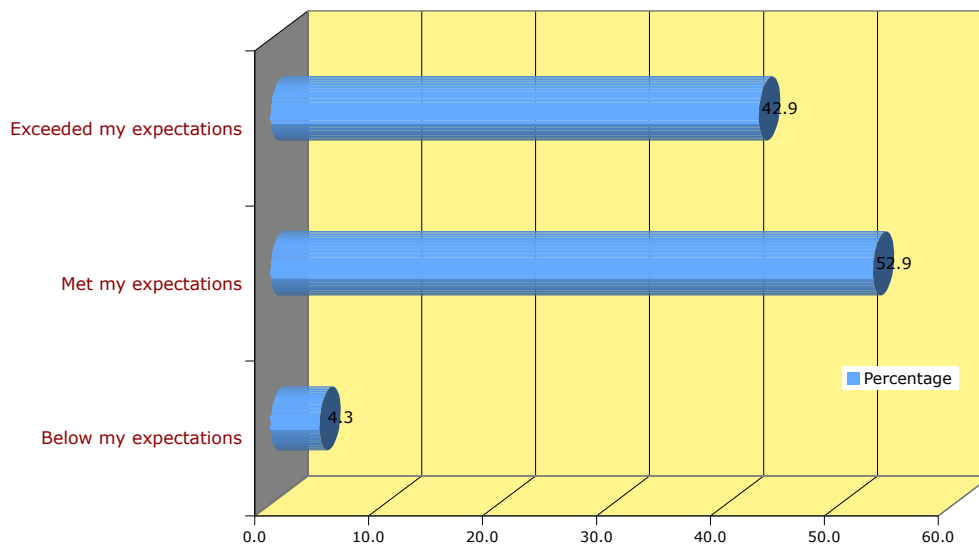
'This was a great platform for several start-ups.'

'The networking was terrific. I was able to solidify ideas for two important pieces of work that will involve other participants.'

Meeting expectations

People were asked to say whether the meeting met their expectations. The answer options were (a) exceeded my expectations, or (b) met my expectations, or (c) below my expectations.

More than 95 per cent of respondents said that the meeting either met or exceeded their expectations. A full breakdown of responses is in Chart 5.

Chart 5: Expectations Met

Save for three participants (4.3 per cent), comments were uniformly favourable. Here are some examples that give a flavour of the types of things people said:

'A wonderful meeting - great diversity of attendees and a really great programme. A challenging place to get to; but at the same time stunning. Wonderful opening and closing ceremonies a real highlight for me. Very helpful to attend a meeting of relevance to those who lead grantmaker associations when many meetings we attend or organise are for those we serve - foundations/trusts, etc.'

'I expected the forum to be more formal and philosophical, but I found many practically useful learnings. Secondly, participants were just excellent, open, and networking opportunities were fantastic!'

'I met colleagues from all over the world, and I learned interesting things about new developments in the field of philanthropy.'

'I found the meeting very interesting and it was great to be with such a wonderful group of people at a conference that was a manageable size.'

'I expected to learn of the latest developments in the field of philanthropy and hear from the best in the practice....that expectation was met.'

'The audience was composed by very qualified and experienced individuals, which strengthened the quality of the debates -- apart from the speakers themselves, which in general were also very good.'

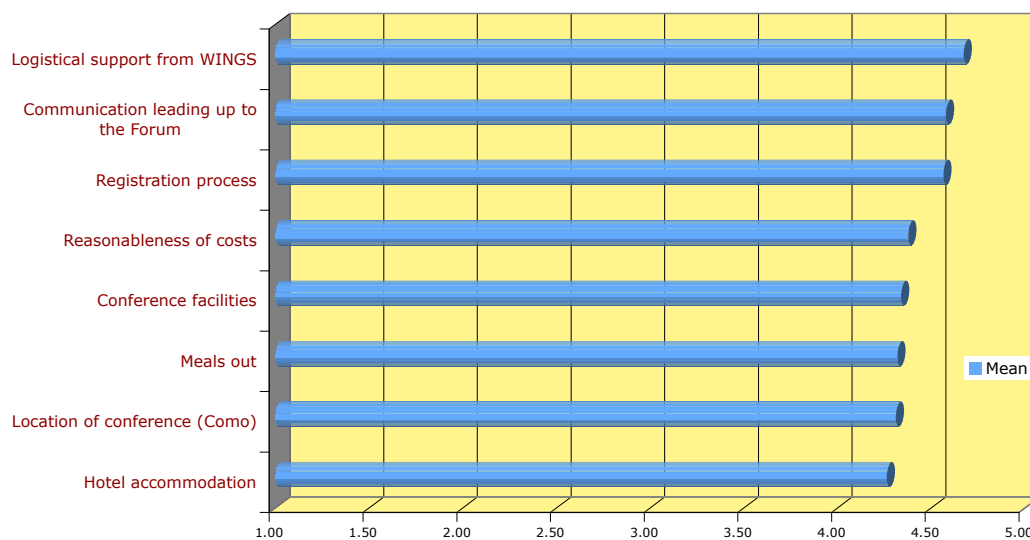
'I came away intellectually and professional enriched - thank you.'

Logistics

Participants were asked to rate each of the various practical aspects of the organization of the meeting, its location, costs, conference facilities, hotel, meals, and logistical support on a five-point scale using one of the following ratings: 'very good' (score 5), 'good' (4), 'average' (3), 'poor' (2) and 'very poor' (1).

The mean scores on the ratings are shown in Chart 6.

Chart 6: Organization of Meeting



As can be seen from the chart, the organization of the meeting was rated as good to very good overall. The mean scores are all '4' or above, which means 'good' or better.

Some of the comments under this section were:

'All was excellent! I was very impressed with the entire meeting.'

'Cultural programming was great.'

'I was amazed at how the WINGS staff of three with Marissa as fourth person, and the help of Gill pulled off a conference of this quality with 150 participants from 39 countries, given the calibre of the speakers in a venue such as Como!'

'The WINGS staff, as always, were incredibly helpful throughout. I am deeply appreciative of the financial support to participate. My expectations for the entire event were exceeded on many levels. Thank you for very much to Marissa and

her team and Gil for the outstanding quality of your work and support for speakers and participants. Really outstanding job.'

'Superbly organised, the only glitch was extended last plenary but that was rather the fault of endless speeches than organisers.'

Logistics and organization are typically unseen unless something goes wrong, so that these ratings and comments should give immense satisfaction to the organizers.

At the same time, participants encountered some problems and 16 (or 21.6 per cent) participants rated one or more of the items on the list as 2 or worse, that is 'poor' or 'very poor'.

There were four adverse comments raised by a number of different participants. These were:

- Complicated place to get to
- Price of meals for partners
- Time management of the sessions
- Lack of guidance in travelling to restaurants

Problems mentioned once included:

- No natural light in conference rooms
- Poor Internet connection
- Registration process

The problem when logistics go wrong is that people tend to remember the incident. The evaluation forms contained a number of stories in which people wrote quite lengthy accounts of things that had gone wrong. Here is one of them:

'Logistical support was quite poor. I was unaware that I needed to be downstairs at 6:15 to go to dinner on the first night. It said 6:30 in my program, so I missed the boat. On the second night, there was zero communication once we arrived at the venue about what was happening. Some people missed seeing the opera house because they were told they could do it later, which they could not. At the end of the meeting, it was only because I went next door, where the organizers were sitting, that I was able to find out that buses were waiting to take us back to the hotel.'

Factors driving the success of the meeting

What were the factors that tended to drive up ratings of the meeting, and conversely those that tended to drive it down?

To answer this question, we intercorrelated ratings from the meeting and found five factors that tended to be significantly associated with ratings of expectations having been exceeded, met, or not met.²

Table 1: Correlations between ratings and expectations reached

Factor	Correlation Coefficient
Meals out	0.44
One logistical rating 'poor'	-0.42
Learning	0.41
Networking	0.31
Opening plenary	0.30

It is evident that factors such as learning and networking increase the likelihood of meeting or exceeding the expectations of the meeting, while people rating issues of organisation poorly tends to reduce it.

Future

People were asked to say, on the basis of their attendance at WINGS Forum 2010, what suggestions that they would make for improving the Forum in the future.

There was a clear message from the responses: 'do not change it much, but consider having it more frequently'.

Here is a sample of the responses that suggested that there was no need to make changes:

'Follow the same pattern; it was great.'

'I believe that the WINGS Forum has found the balance between sessions and time for networking. No changes in this regard should be made.'

'Do same, it was just superb.'

'Great job. Congratulations.'

'No change for overall conference since it was really impressive.'

Although people suggested that the format was near perfect, many suggested that the frequency should be changed. Here is a sample of the responses:

'Be sure to put forward a bold plan for the future of WINGS. I worry that a meeting every four years is an opportunity lost to focus on strategic options for the future of WINGS.'

² Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. Scores are on a scale from 0 to 1. The higher the score, the higher the association.

'I would consider the Forum every two years. There is a lot going on and we lose momentum.'

'I think we need to gather before the four years is up.'

There were some smaller suggestions about the organization, contents and process of the meeting, but these did not suggest a fundamental shift in the character of the Forum.

On contents, it was suggested that there should be more on collaboration, advocacy, and a briefing on different countries situations on philanthropy.

On process, it was suggested that there should be longer breakout sessions, more opportunity for individual networking, and coaching of smaller associations.

On the organization of the meeting, it was suggested that there should be more people from the Global South, more people from foundations, a memorandum about how to give cross-cultural presentations. Finally, the Forum should next be held in Brazil.