What do Funders Hope for in Grantee Relationships?

A variety of available publications, reports, and surveys very clearly demonstrate that the key to good stewardship is providing timely and thoughtful communication.

Summarizing the wealth of information that is available on the topic, grantmakers want:

**Engagement**—Open lines of communication make the relationship great. Those interviewed enjoyed hearing that grantees had breakthroughs or received accolades. Sharing a news article about the project or a quick e-mail mentioning an achievement is usually very welcome.

**Communication in good times and in bad**—Foundation representatives are open to discussing revised deadlines and reporting requirements with just cause—if you've already built a relationship.

**Respect**—Program officers and board members take great pains to select the best grant recipients. By failing to meet reporting requirements, we imply that we do not value or respect their work.

**Reporting**—Requirements can range from none, to a few simple questions, to elaborately written documents. Program officers and board members are disappointed when grantees fail to meet the minimum expectations established before awarding the grant.

**In their own words:**

“Be honest if you can’t meet a deadline and explain the reasons why. In this case bad news is better than no news!”
—The David & Lucile Packard Foundation

“Foundations talk to one another, both locally and nationally. [A foundation] can work as a brokerage firm to connect a project to other funders.”
—The Research Corporation

“When it comes to evaluation, show how people’s lives were affected [by your project].”
—Anonymous director of multiple foundations