



Tools for Change: Measuring Factors that Shape Support for Transgender Rights

Borealis Philanthropy, Gill Foundation, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund



Session Goals

- **To share the research findings from the first-ever Transgender Acceptance Index (TAI).**
- **To discuss the strategic use of the TAI for local, state, and national advocacy efforts for transgender rights.**
- **To provide opportunities for LGBTQ funders to weigh in on the use of the TAI in 2018 and beyond.**



Session Format

- Introductions, Session Overview [5 min]
- Brief Presentation on Research Findings [10 min]
- Brief Panel Comments [10 min]
- Table Talks [15 min]
- Table Talk Summaries, Group Discussion [15 min]
- Closing - TAI Next Steps, Getting Involved [5 min]



The Transgender Acceptance Index: An Exploration of Public Views of Transgender People and their Rights

Gary Langer
Langer Research Associates



Our Assignment

- Review literature and assess past measures
- Design optimal questions in content and scope, in consultation with project Advisory Committee
- Conduct representative studies nationally and in AZ, FL, MA
- Produce an Index of Transgender Attitudes
- Measure views on related issues of current interest/concern
- Conduct predictive modeling



Lit Review Summary

Reaching across the literature, these likely factors in attitudes toward transgender people and their rights emerged:

- Exposure/contact
- Knowledge/familiarity
- Essentialist gender perceptions
- Adherence to gender stereotypes
- Causal attributions (“choice”)
- Social distancing
- Egalitarian concerns
- Attitudes toward gay men & lesbian women
- Religious/political/ideological/demographic factors



Lit Limitations

However, the literature presents significant limitations...

- Few surveys have focused specifically on transgender people & issues (as opposed to “LGBT”)
- Almost all in-depth research on the topic makes use of non-generalizable convenience samples
- Existing representative, random-sample research is largely superficial
- Most studies employ suboptimal, potentially biasing questions



The Borealis Philanthropy Study



Attributes of the Study

- Pulls together key constructs drawn from the lit review in a single comprehensive study
- Measures these constructs and related topics of interest using new, optimal questionnaire design
- Employs representative, random-sample survey research and rigorous statistical modeling



Methodology

- National RDD telephone survey
- 60% cell phone
- 50-state
- English/Spanish
- Multistage weighting to Census norms
- Used by leading news, academic, foundation and corporate researchers



Key Findings

- General support for transgender rights is broad but less deep than is desirable
- Strength of sentiment often lags
- Attitudes are more divided as competing considerations come into play
- Knowledge and contact are low
- A quarter of Americans appear fundamentally ill-disposed; a quarter in the middle; a slim majority generally supportive, but situationally and often not strongly



Key Findings

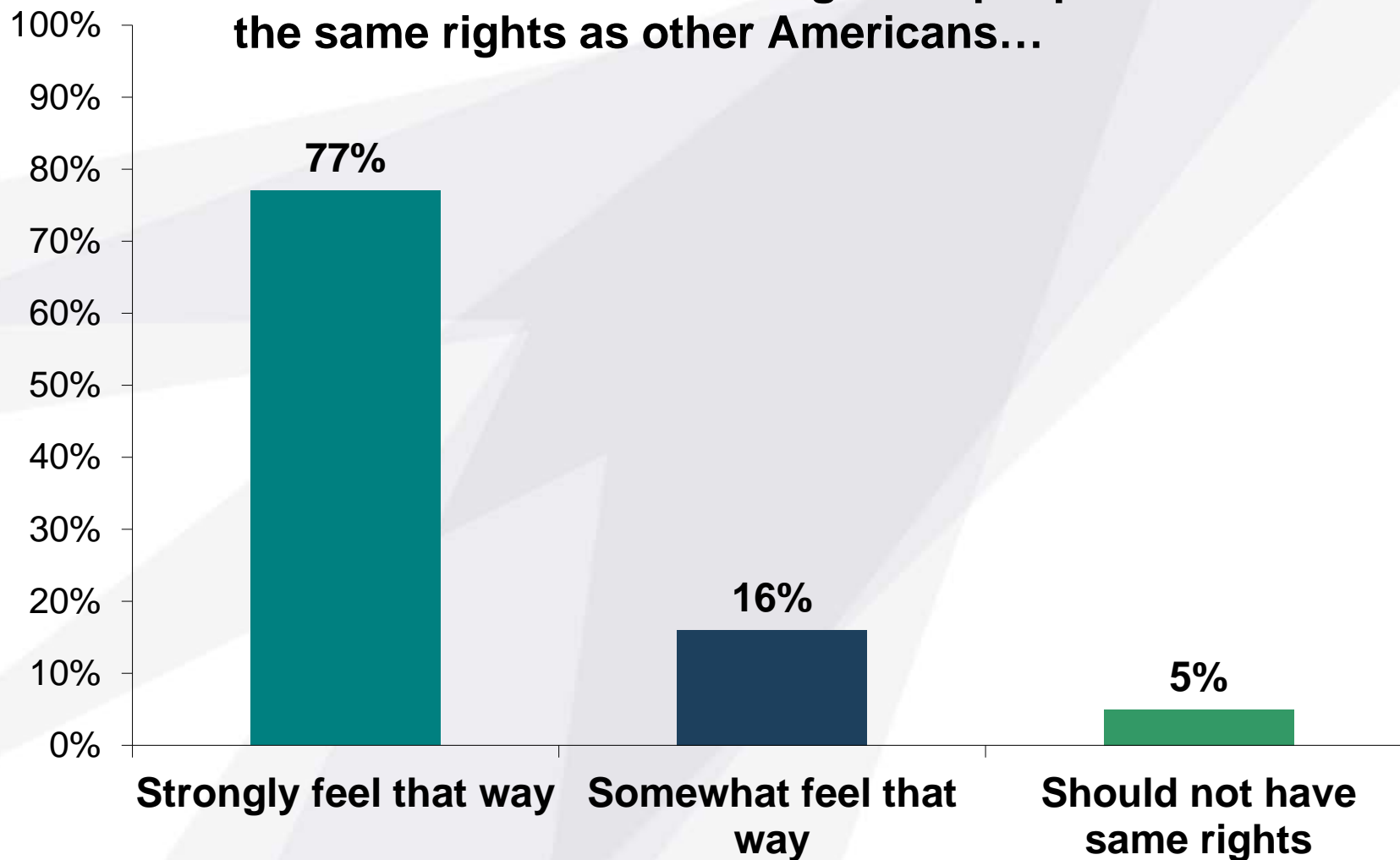
Factors in acceptance (allowing for bi-directionality):

- Knowing a transgender person
- Seeing being transgender as not “a choice”
- Seeing gender as a continuum rather than as binary
- Being informed on transgender issues
- Awareness of discrimination
- Contact/comfort with gay men & lesbian women
- Acceptance of non-conforming appearances
- Recognizing universality of transgender identity
- Favorable awareness of a transgender celebrity

And: Equal rights for all holds fundamental appeal

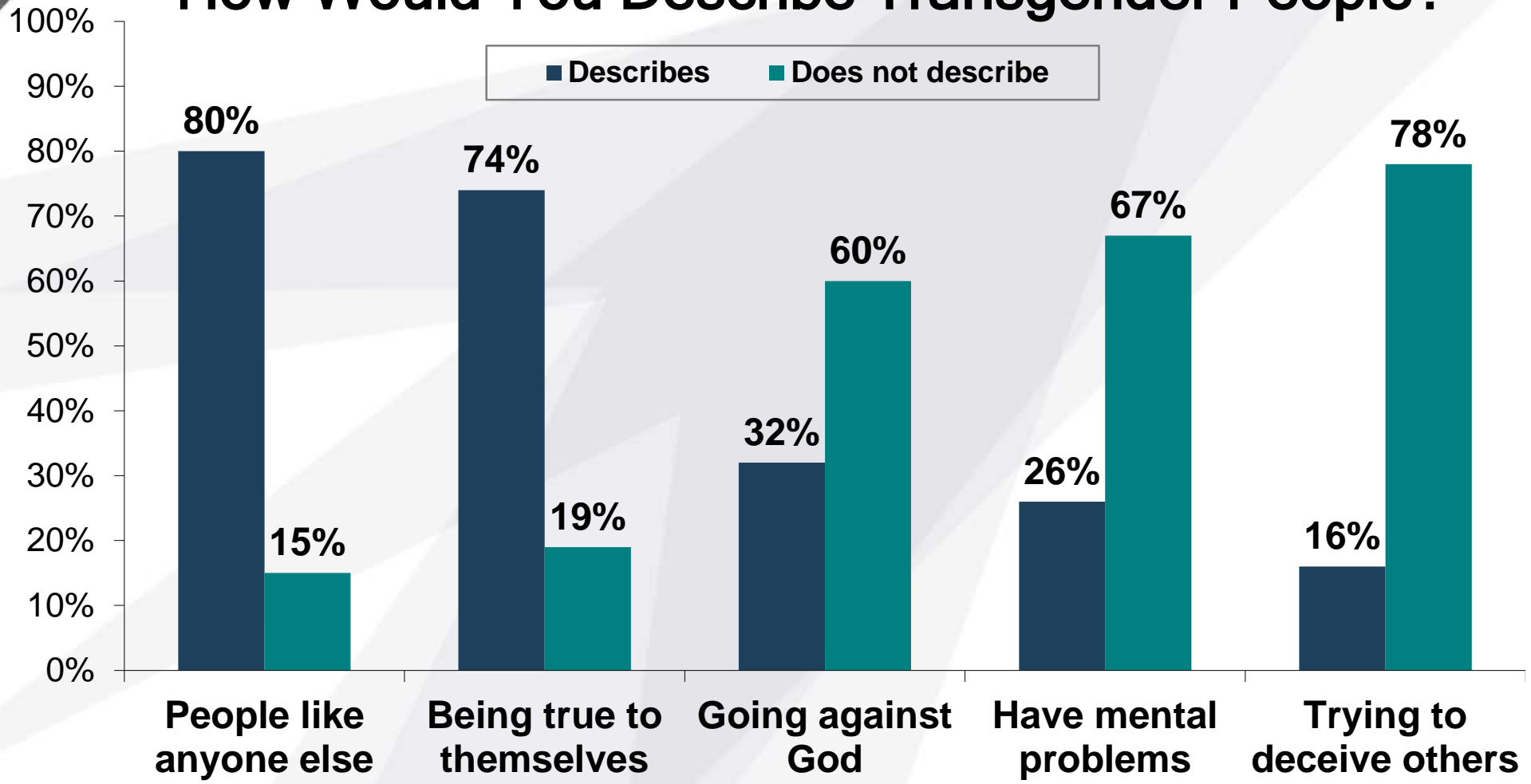


Percent who feel that transgender people should have the same rights as other Americans...





How Would You Describe Transgender People?

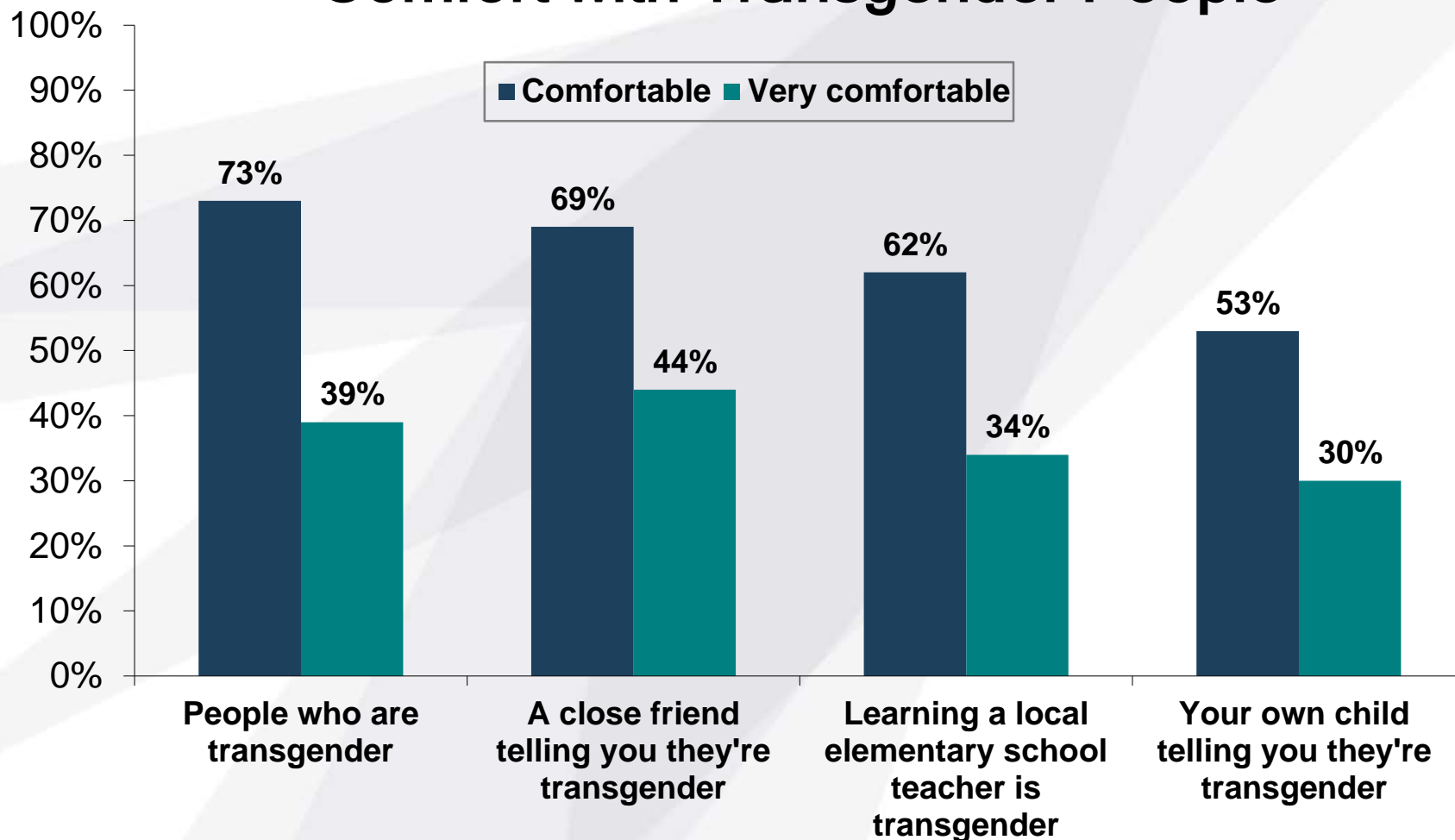




	Should be	
	Allowed	Prohibited
An employer turns someone down for a job because they're transgender	25%	70%
A landlord refuses to rent to someone because they're transgender	25%	69%
A business refuses to service to someone because they're transgender	27%	68%
A business refusing service because its owner has a religious objection	39%	53%



Comfort with Transgender People





<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transgender people are present in all cultures❖ Are present only in cultures like ours	85% 12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being transgender is the way people are❖ The way they choose to be	62% 29%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be difference between sex and gender identity❖ Sex and gender identity have to be the same	59% 34%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be a range of possible gender identities❖ Two possible gender identities	38% 57%



The Index of Transgender Attitudes



Indexing

By combining similar questions across relevant constructs, empirically based indexing is an especially robust way to measure attitudes overall and among groups and to track them over time

- Measures are more reliable
- Confidence in differences among groups is stronger
- Confidence in change over time is stronger
- Results are contextualized by time trends



Index Details

Three subindices, suggested by the literature, emerged from the data:

Social distance, how comfortable people would be:

- having a close friend of theirs tell them they're transgender
- learning that a teacher in their local elementary school is transgender
- having their own child tell them they're transgender

Gender perceptions:

- comfort with people who are transgender
- seeing gender as non-binary
- differentiating between gender and sex



Index Details

Views of transgender attributes; the extent to which transgender people:

- |
- should have the same rights as other Americans
- are being true to themselves
- are going against God
- have mental problems
- are just people like anyone else
- are trying to deceive others

Subindex scores are computed on a 0-100 scale and averaged.



Index Details

The index is supported by:

- Factor analysis (explanation of variance; 79.5 percent)
- Cronbach's alpha (tests of internal consistency, social distancing $\alpha = .87$; views of transgender attributes, $\alpha = .80$; gender perceptions, $\alpha = .74$)
- Construct and known-groups validity

Predictors...

- Negative: being politically conservative, Republican, attending religious services weekly, being heterosexual, an evangelical Protestant, male
- Positive: thinking that transgender people experience discrimination



Index Scores

Index of Transgender Attitudes	
Overall	65.0
<i>Subindices</i>	
Views of transgender attributes	75.9
Social distancing	61.4
Gender perceptions	55.9



Index Scores

Index of Transgender Attitudes	
Overall	65.0
<i>Political Groups</i>	
Liberals	78.1
Moderates	69.4
Somewhat conservatives	54.4
Strong conservatives	39.3
Democrats	75.0
Independents	67.0
Republicans	47.3

Index of Transgender Attitudes	
Overall	65.0
<i>Religious Groups</i>	
No religion	75.4
Non-evangelical white Protestants	66.0
Evangelical white Protestants	48.1
<i>Know someone transgender:</i>	
Family/close friend	77.2
Someone else	71.2
Don't know anyone	59.7



Index Scores

Index of Transgender Attitudes	
Overall	65.0
<i>Demographic Groups</i>	
Women	68.2
Men	61.0
College graduates	70.6
Non-graduates	62.5
College-educated white women	76.1
Non-college white men	61.4

Index of Transgender Attitudes	
Overall	65.0
<i>Demographic Groups, continued</i>	
18-29	69.2
65+	62.2



Index Scores

Index of Transgender Attitudes	
Overall	65.0
<i>Being transgender...</i>	
Just the way people are	75.6
The way they choose to be	43.8
<i>Transgender people are...</i>	
In all cultures	67.9
Only in cultures like ours	44.8

Index of Transgender Attitudes	
Overall	65.0
<i>Comfort with gays & lesbians</i>	
Comfortable	73.4
Not comfortable	39.4
<i>Transgender people experience discrimination...</i>	
Very/somewhat often	71.3
Never	43.0



Discussion Points

- The appeal of equal treatment and the value of being true to one's self
- Sharp political, ideological, religion-based and gender-binary objections
- Personal, rights-based rather than political/policy-based discussion
- Adoption of more inclusive gender norms
- Focus on human experience, not choice or a cultural phenomenon
- Greater contact, issue knowledge and awareness of discrimination and its impacts
- Understanding of group-level differences (e.g., college-educated white women vs. Hispanics, evangelical Protestants)



What is the significance of the TAI and how is it a useful advocacy tool?

**Masen Davis, CEO
Freedom for All Americans Education Fund**

**Sandy James, Former Research Director
National Center for Transgender Equality**



Table Talks:

Deeper Dives on the TAI from Various Perspectives

Table 1 - How advocates can use the TAI

Masen Davis, FFAAEF & Sandy James, NCTE

Table 2 – How funders can use & support the TAI

Brandie Balken, Gill Foundation & Rebecca Fox, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

Table 3 – TAI Research Methodology & Findings

Gary Langer, Langer Research Associates

- Table Talks will last 15 minutes
- Please identify a person to report back a summary of the key points discussed
- Each table will have 3 minutes to report back



TAI Next Steps

- Repeat TAI in 2018 in 2 waves (compared to only 1 in 2017) in early Spring and late Fall 2018
- Waves will include national and select state oversamples (MA, others TBD)
- Share TAI findings late 2018 / early 2019



THANK YOU!

For a PDF copy of the 2017 TAI report
email TAI@borealisphilanthropy.org

For more information about supporting ongoing and future TAI efforts,
contact Rickke Mananzala at rmananzala@borealisphilanthropy.org