

Rocky Mountain Health Foundation

2023 Survey of Grant Partner and Applicant Perceptions and Satisfaction

Executive Summary and Scored Responses

**Presented by
Third Sector Innovations, Inc.
February 2023**

Rocky Mountain Health Foundation (RMHF) contracted with Third Sector Innovations, Inc. (Grand Junction, CO) in February 2023 to conduct a survey of satisfaction among those who work with RMHF. Information was gathered from:

- Current RMHF Grant Partners (received funding in the last two years)
- Past RMHF Grant Applicants (applied but did not receive funding in the past year).

Methodology

An online survey was conducted to gather feedback of the Grant Partner/Applicant experience working with RMHF, allowing for confidential participation. Respondents were asked to provide feedback using a Likert scale/descriptive options:

6 (highest score) – 1 (lowest score); e.g. Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree

Don't Know

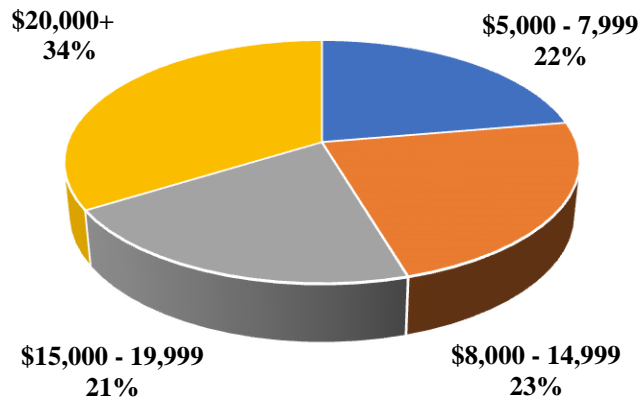
Not Applicable

Survey links were sent via email by Third Sector Innovations to 295 Grant Partner and 81 Grant Applicant contacts, with some organizations receiving more than one invitation to participate (based on multiple RMHF contacts).

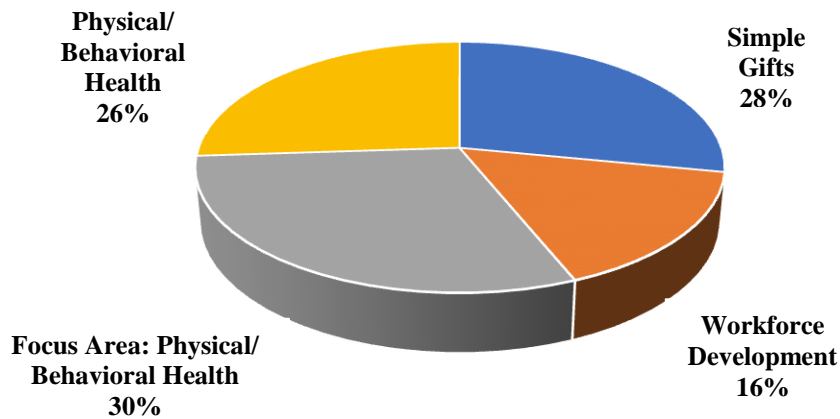
The data contained in this report summary is based on information gathered from 131 Grant Partner and 26 Grant Applicant survey participants, marking a 41.8% overall rate of response (44.4% response rate from Grant Partners, 32.1% response rate from Grant Applicants). Respondent comments (totaling 25 pages) are not included herein, but can be found in the full study report.

The following charts illustrate respondent interface with RMHF:

Amount of Most Recent Grant Award from Rocky Mountain Health Foundation (among 131 Grant Partners):



Grant Cycle Funded by RMHF in the Past Year (among 131 Grant Partners):



Counties Report as Served by Organizations Receiving RMHF Funds:

32	Mesa	13	Dolores, Routt, Summit
30	Eagle	12	Grand
26	Garfield	11	Moffat
23	Montrose	10	Rio Blanco
20	Gunnison, La Plata, Pitkin	9	Archuleta, Ouray
18	Delta	8	Hinsdale, Lake, San Juan
17	Montezuma	4	Jackson
14	San Miguel		

Findings

The survey realized strong and diversified participation, with respondents providing highly positive feedback. Particularly RMHF Grant Partners are eager to report:

- A strong sense of being in partnership with RMHF, including resounding appreciation for the Foundation’s trust-based approach to granting, funds utilization and reporting.
- A deep belief that RMHF is genuinely committed to effecting impact in communities and on health/wellness outcomes.
- Delight in working with RMHF’s knowledgeable staff, who repeatedly demonstrate understanding of the region’s communities and people served; and who maintain quality relationships and conversations with, support for and confidence in the organizations providing these services.
- Gratitude for access to helpful, flexible and effective systems and information, communications and personnel that “make it easy” to work with RMHF.
- High regard for RMHF’s multi-year funding, staff wellness awards, Simple Gifts and Focus Area opportunities.

Survey findings indicate the most highly-regarded attributes of RMHF include:

- Staff compassion, responsiveness, and willingness to engage open and respectful exchange.
- Engaging with Grant Partners and Applicants in an equitable manner.
- Providing helpful and consistent information verbally and via printed/web-based materials.

Respondents’ “one word” to describe RMHF results in the following word cloud:



With a more critical eye, Grant Applicants overall and consistently rate RMHF less positively – and feel their communities, organizations/projects and clients/patients are less well understood – than do Grant Partners. Numerous comments offered by Grant Applicants illustrate specific incidents, perceptions and (mis)understandings that fully/partially explain less-than optimal feedback: e.g. “We didn’t get funding because we don’t serve enough minorities in our county,” “I believe there is a disconnect between RMHF staff and Board as regards grant review criteria and interpretation of financials,” etc. No other population group (i.e. based on geographic area served, type or size of grant awarded) shows significant variance in reported levels of survey respondent satisfaction.

Additional survey respondent insights, which may provide opportunity for growth/improvement, include the following:

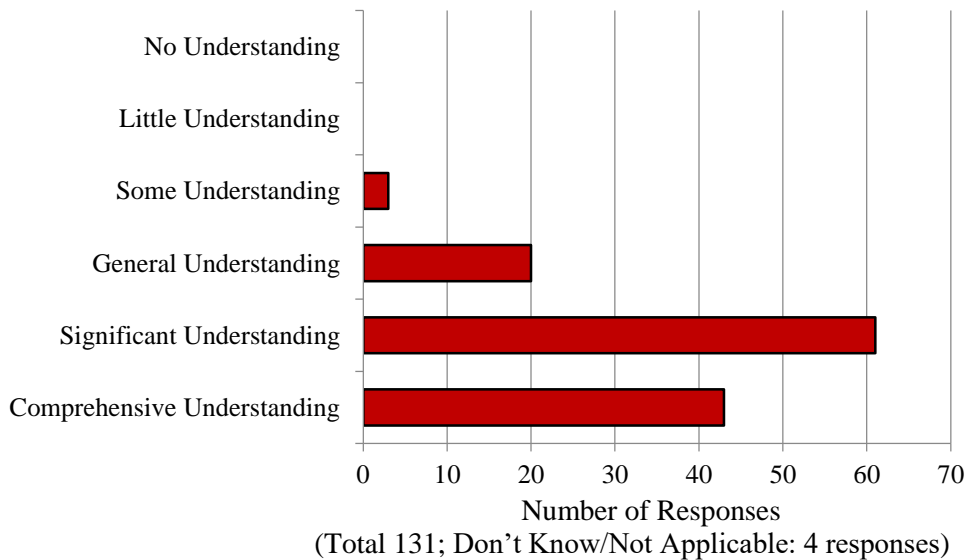
- Several respondents’ comments note the fluid and unpredictable nature of RMHF funding priorities, application cycles, process details and related communications during the organization’s recent years of unprecedented growth and reorganization. There is desire/hope by both current and hopeful Grant Partners that this situation now is settling out.
- While current staff are viewed as highly competent and even beloved, one survey participant points out that no personnel have strong professional backgrounds in delivery of traditional healthcare services. While this may be an unnecessary credentialing consideration, it can be assumed that the Foundation desires to be seen as foremost in its field/role, and perhaps can benefit from review of the professional experiences and industries of organizational leadership (staff and Board) to ensure favorable perception as an institution involving those who have attained the highest levels of applicable experience, knowledge and excellence.
- As with most organizations, communications-based challenges are ever-present and require vigilant attention.
 - While “grievances” regarding award eligibility, application and reporting procedures, and similar “finer points” may seem – at a glance – critical of RMHF policy/operations, it is highly likely that many of these criticisms may be allayed via improved communications. It is advised that specific comments of a negative nature noted in the survey report first be explored with an eye to communications shortcomings, with secondary consideration given to possible “flaws” or inconsistency in RMHF policies/operations.
 - While much favorable feedback has been received regarding the RMHF website, application instructions and website, numerous “Don’t Know” responses were received when asking survey respondents about use of these aids. Efforts to further promote and remind Grant Partners/Applicants of these resources should be considered a worthwhile long-term activity/commitment of RMHF.
 - Opportunities for additional RMHF communications with Grant Partners/Applicants throughout the funds allocation cycle (including post-award/denial), and for bringing together Grant Partner representatives (e.g. retreat, social time with the RMHF Board, etc.) are suggested actions for RMHF attention, per survey participants.
- In consideration of overwhelming evidence that RMHF currently benefits from a highly-effective staff, an eye to succession planning and preparation seems an imperative activity as the organization continues forward as a premiere funding institution to the region.

Third Sector Innovations, Inc. appreciates the opportunity to provide this report to the Rocky Mountain Health Foundation and gives a special thank you to all staff members assisting with the survey process.

QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS AND RESPONSES

Key: **Grant Partners** **Grant Applicants**

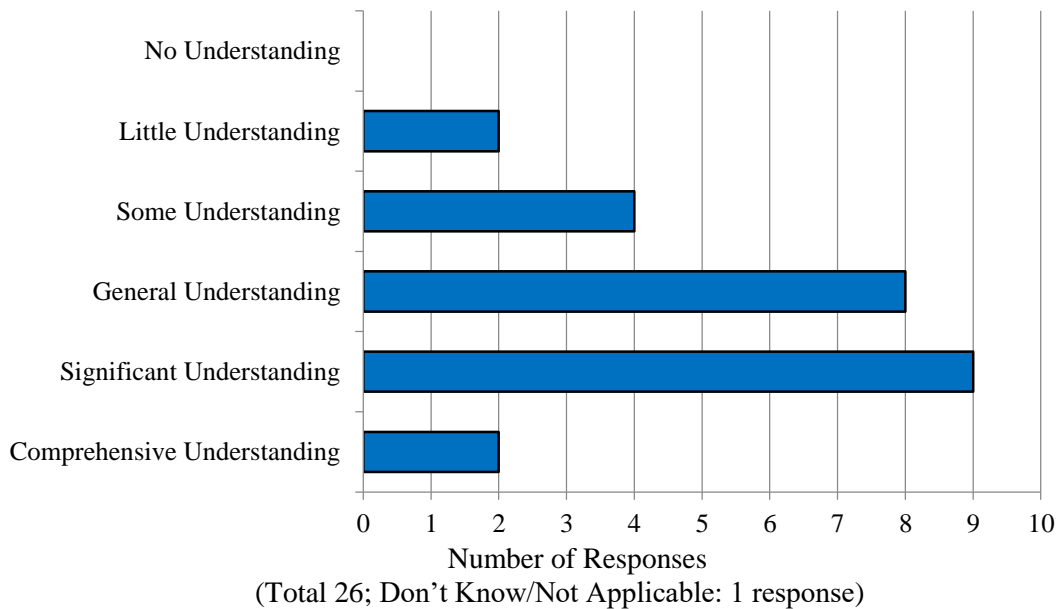
How well does RMHF understand the field in which you work?



Select Comments:

“RMHF has a great understanding of the work that nonprofits do in our community, and the challenges – as well as the importance – of our work.”

“RMHF understands what we do generally. They may need help understanding our organizational budget or operations. Specific feedback on our application would help us know what they believe about how we work.”

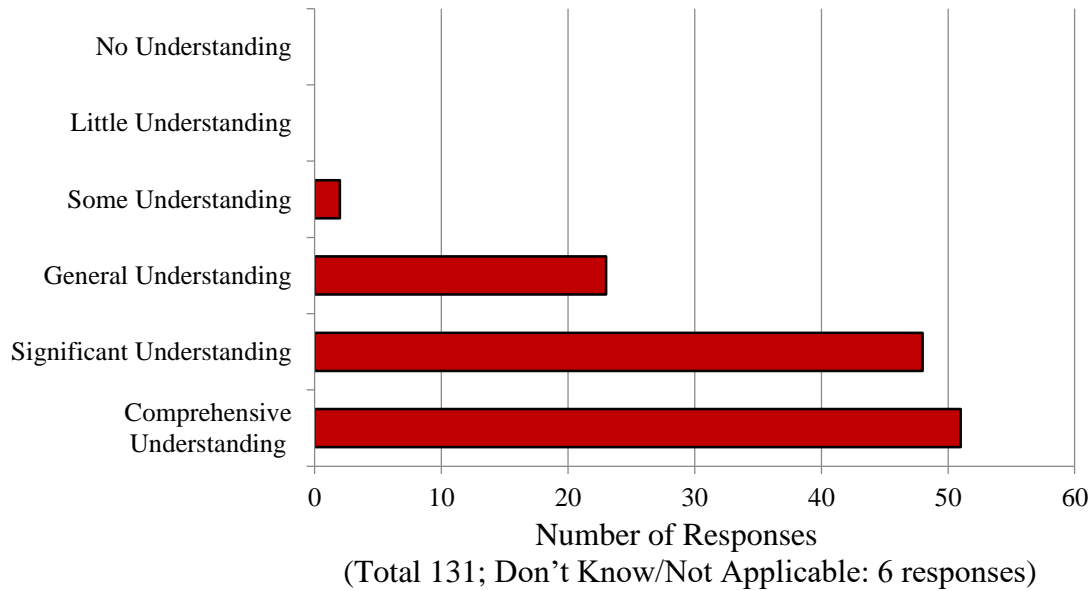


Select Comments:

“Efforts are always made to ask questions and understand what our mission is and who we serve.”

“RMHF staff need more education in health in general.”

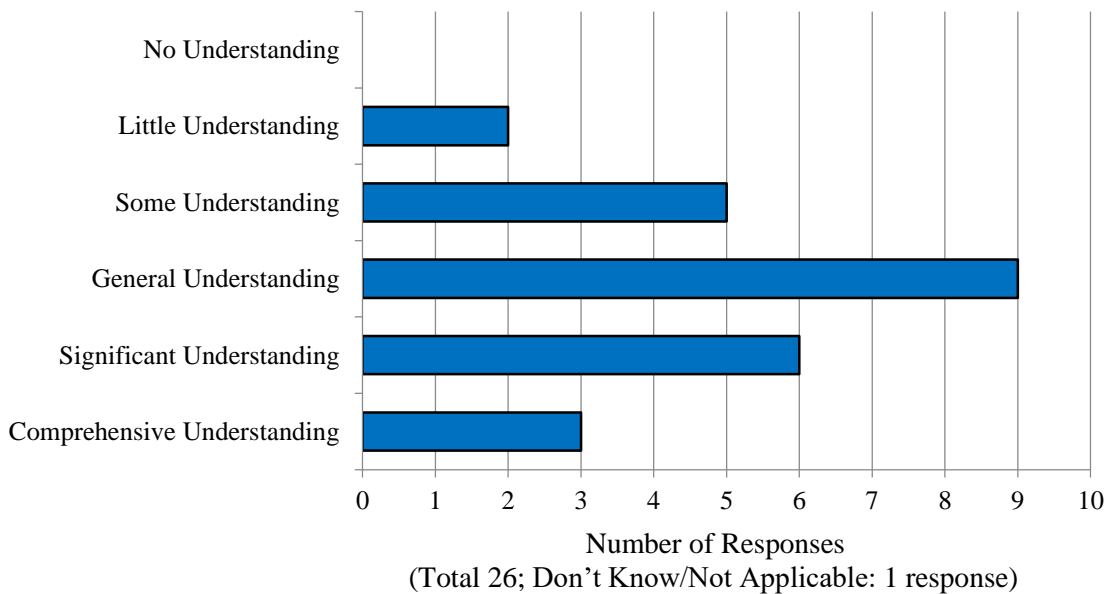
How well does RMHF understand the population you serve?



Select Comments:

“RMHF seems to understand our population very well. Southwest Colorado is overall underserved regarding health care, and RMHF recognizes this.”

“Our organization serves multiple populations. I believe RMHF has a comprehensive understanding of some of the populations we serve and perhaps less comprehensive understanding of others.”

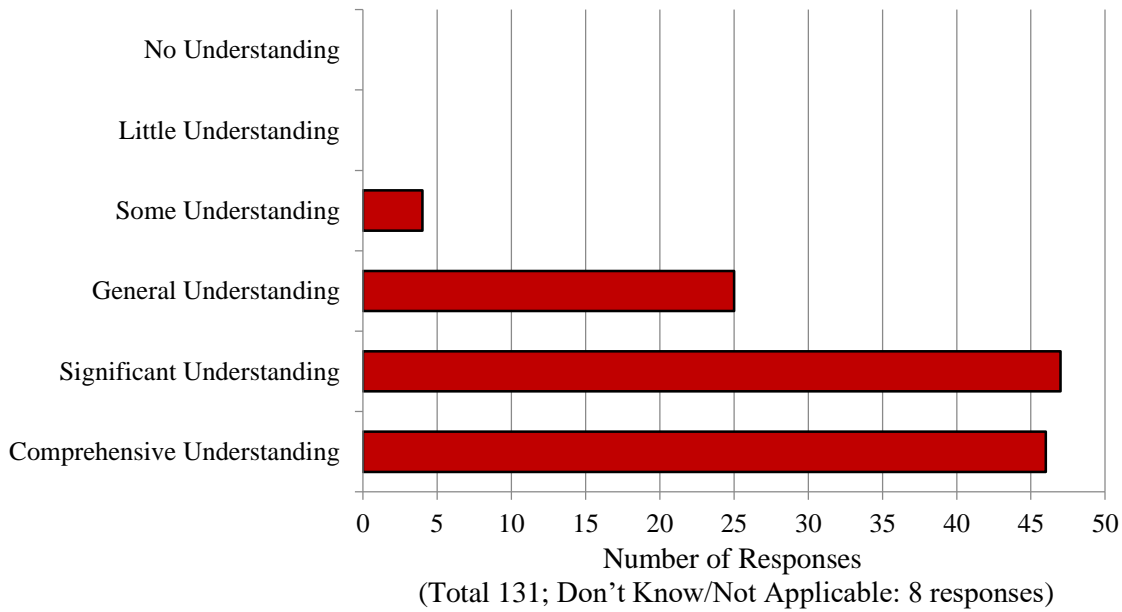


Select Comments:

“It was disappointing that our health and Social Determinants of Health efforts were discounted by switching us to the other grant process.”

“They ask a lot of questions about diversity. However, we don't live in a very diverse area. We can't make it more diverse.”

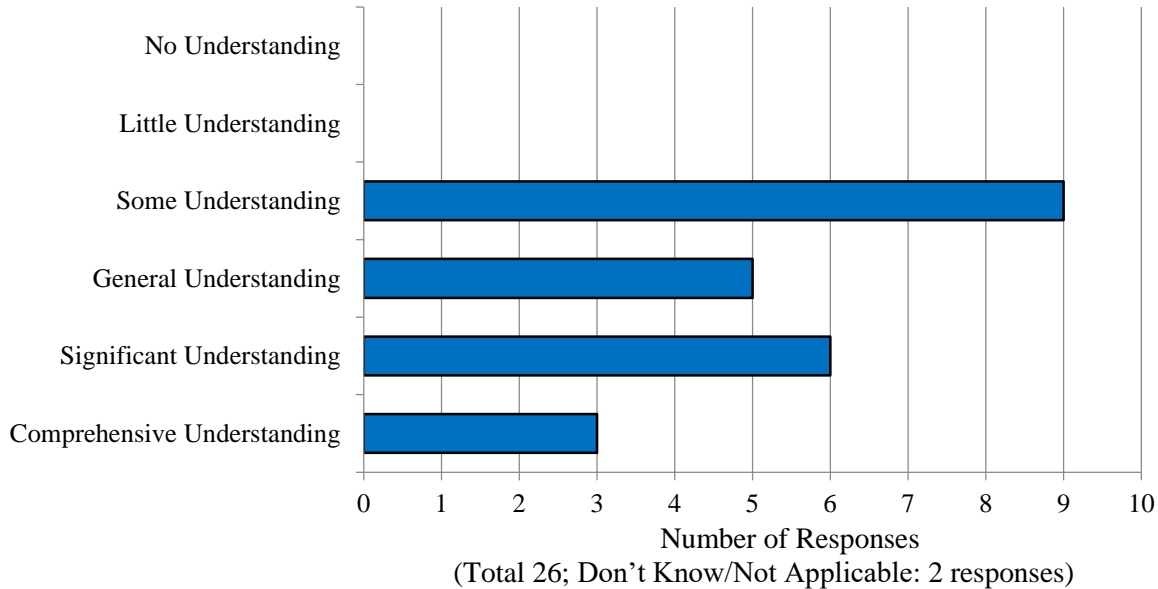
How well does RMHF understand the local community in which you work?



Select Comments:

“RMHF makes a concerted effort to speak directly with local nonprofits and community leaders to fully understand unique community challenges and how we’re working together to address them.”

“Relatively familiar; however, perhaps not familiar with all of the more local/grassroots organizations, or with some of the gaps or issues of the well-funded organizations.”

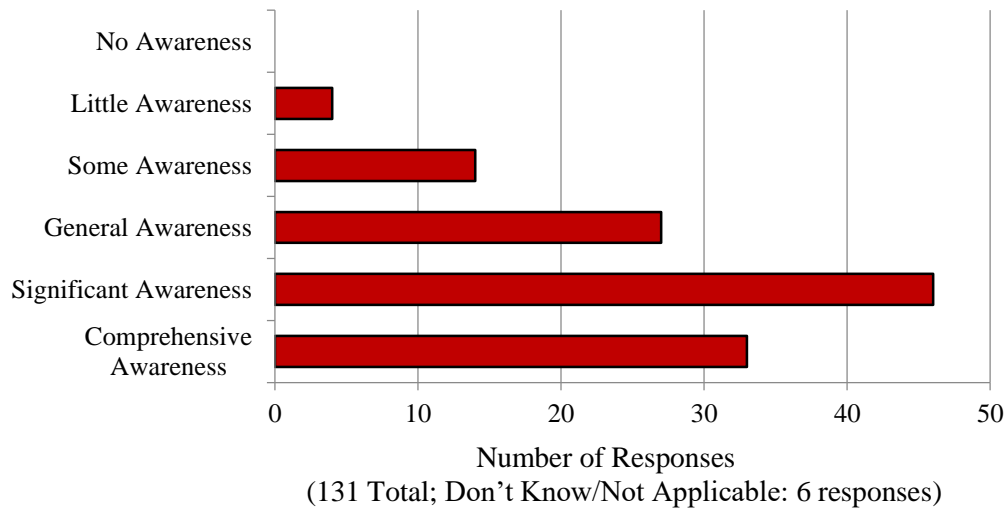


Select Comments:

“RMHF does understand mountain region healthcare needs. I do believe their Board does not understand the makeup of some more complex organizations, especially those under Centura Health and the regional hospital foundations.”

“I think that RMHF does not realize the limited diversity we have here, and therefore might assume we are ignoring those who might otherwise need our assistance.”

**How aware is RMHF of the challenges your organization is facing?
(Inquiry not included in Grant Applicant survey)**

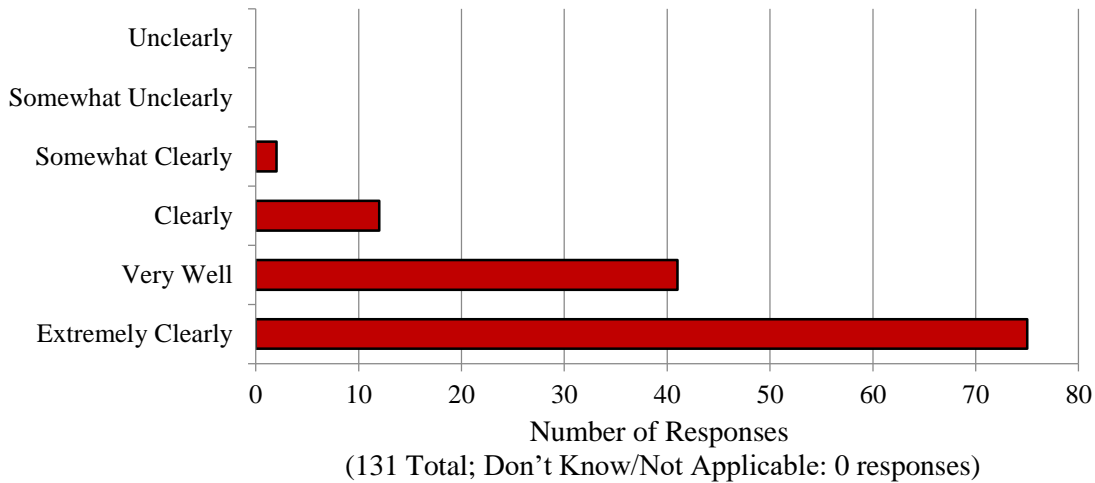


Select Comments:

“RMHF has a strong understanding of the challenges organizations such as ours face, as well as the needs of the staff working for our organization.”

“RMHF staff know what was shared in our meeting and application, but not much more. We are new to them; I have confidence they will get to know us over time, as they know other organizations due to prior funding.”

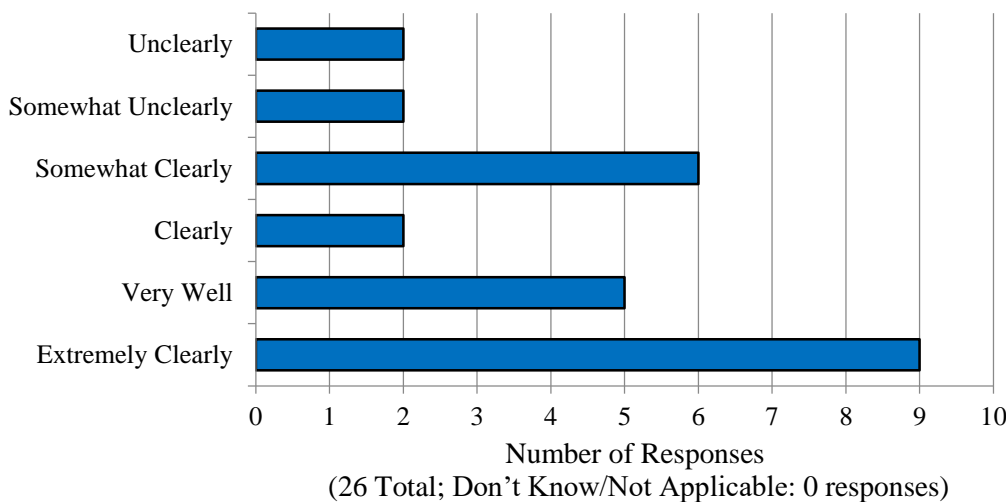
How clearly does RMHF communicate its priorities and funding strategies to you?



Select Comments:

“There were a couple of years where it seemed like priorities were an arcade game you could not win and, if you did, the prize wasn't going to be much of anything. The past two years have shown greater focus: clearer priorities, award size something we can work with, reporting burdens friendly, and relationships warm and authentic. Things went from fuzzy to dialed in!”

“In the last few cycles, it seems like priorities changed from cycle to cycle; we aren't entirely sure of the current direction.”

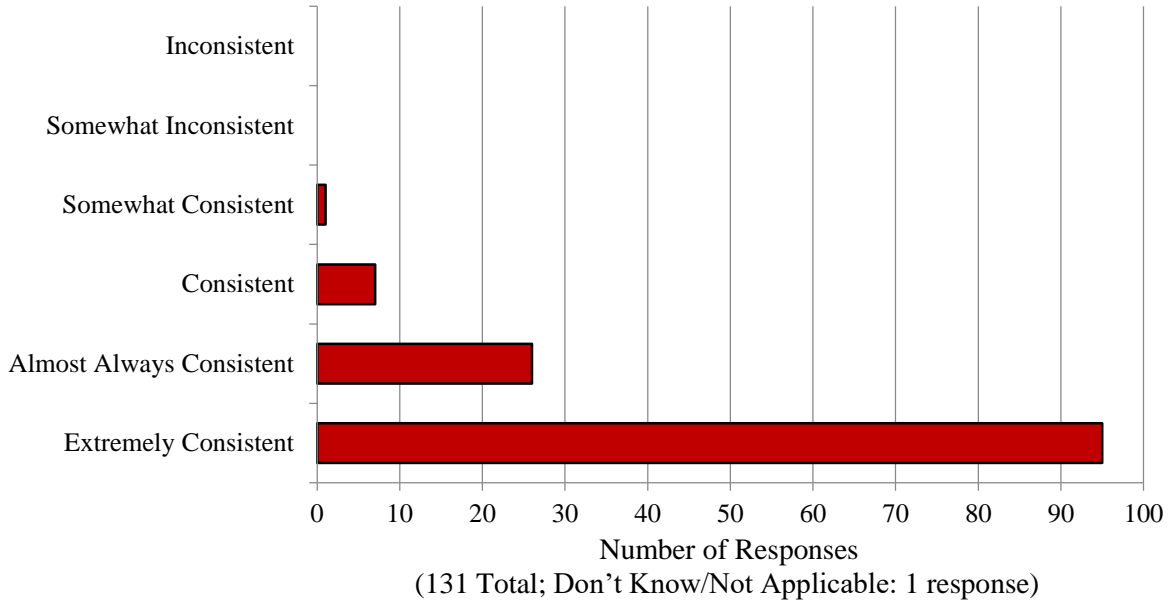


Select Comments:

“Sometimes it seems an initiative would seem to work, but then when the request reaches the RMHF Board for review, they are confused and we are frustrated. I wish RMHF grantees could have a virtual roundtable with the Foundation Board and Review Committee members, as sometimes our organizations are more complex than they seem on paper.”

“It seems that it changes too often. RMHF has been in existence awhile now. They need to standardize; it seems like they are shifting on whims.”

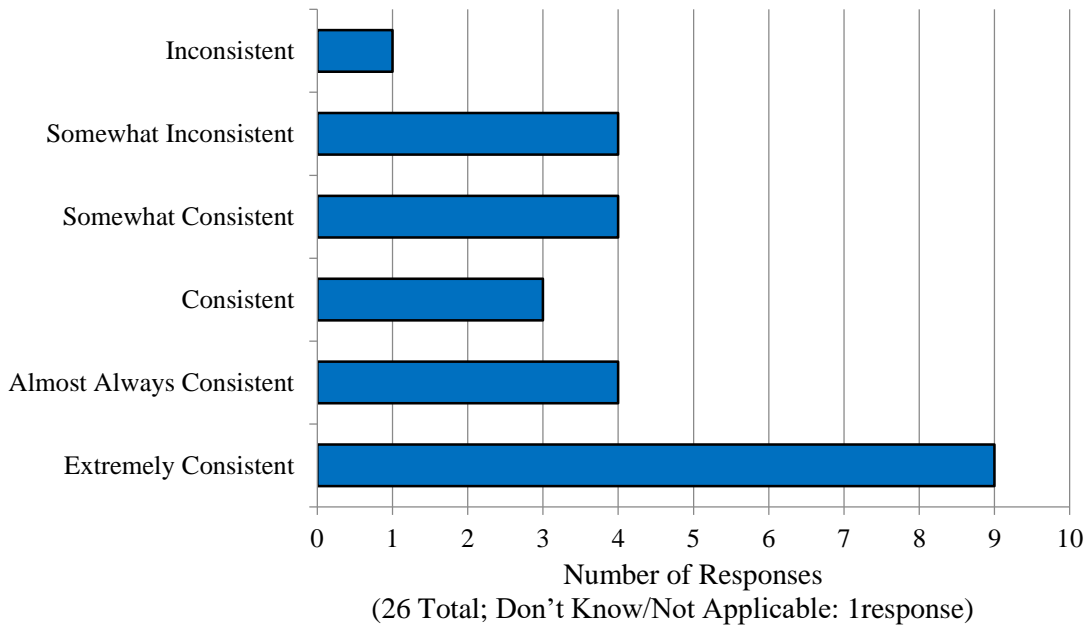
In learning about/understanding RMHF, how consistent is the information acquired from staff (e.g. conversations, inquiries) and RMHF-provided documentation (e.g. website, written instructions)?



Select Comments:

“RMHF is very well organized, gives clear/steady guidance, and is genuine in its interest and support.”

“The Grantor Forum indicated how much more RMHF funds beyond what is on the website/in the RFP.”

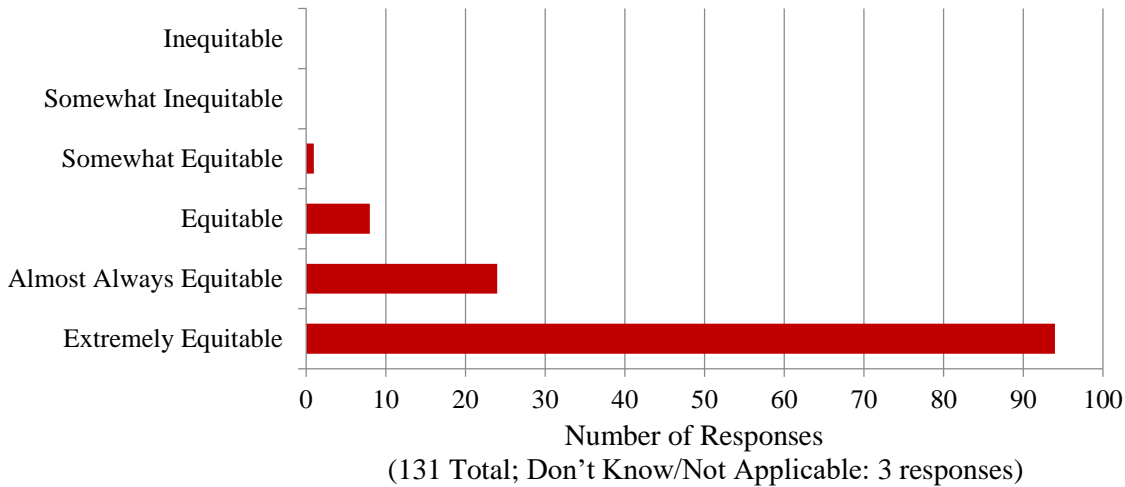


Select Comments:

“I appreciate always having the same/one person as our representative.”

“The person I worked with did not provide important information about this grant’s focus.”

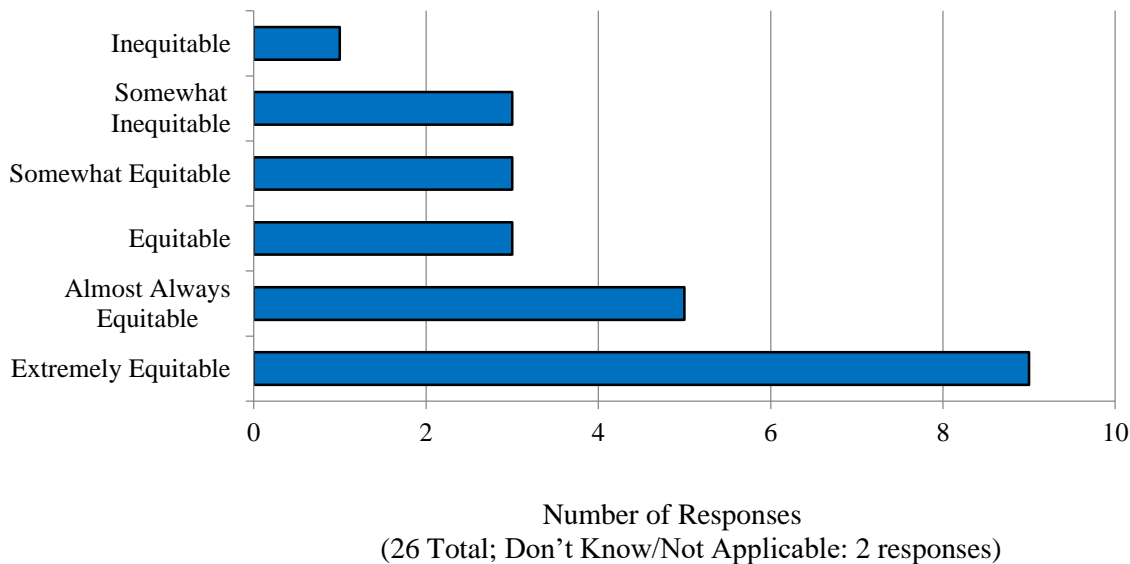
Overall, how equitable is RMHF in its treatment of you?



Select Comments:

“RMHF has been very equitable and supportive of our organization and our mission.”

“The staff is always helpful. However, without a reviewer scorecard, it is not possible to understand funding decisions or if they are equitable.”

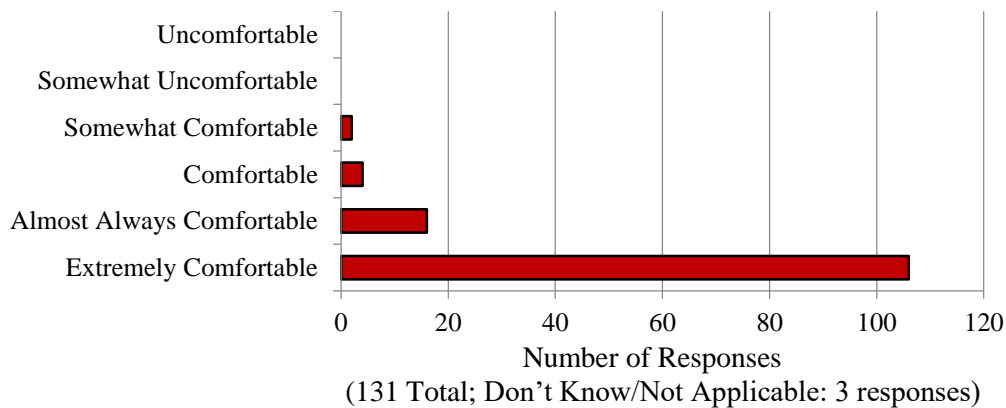


Select Comments:

“We wish to communicate to RMHF that our lack of diversity in numbers served simply reflects the lack of diversity in our area. We serve ALL.”

“In initial conversations with the RMHF staff, it seems clear, but then confusion sets in after the Board meets. It’s been frustrating the last two times our organization has applied, even though we give the green light to apply for a grant.”

**How comfortable are you in approaching RMHF staff if/when a problem arises?
(Inquiry not included in Grant Applicant survey)**

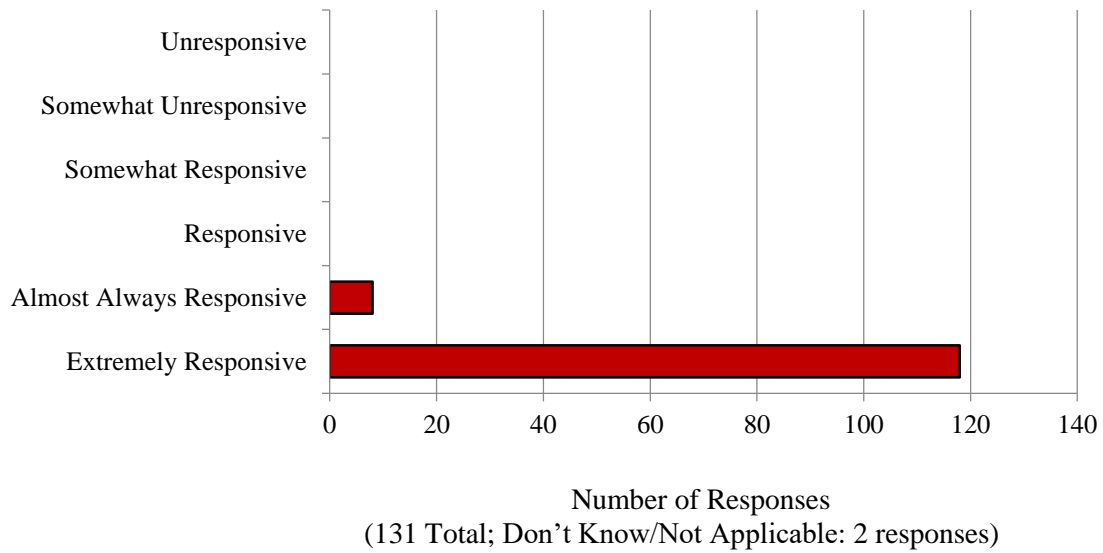


Select Comments:

“As a granting organization, RMHF is one of the most approachable I have worked with. Congratulations on your incredible dedication to this aspect of grant making; we need more like you.”

“We have not been in that situation, but there’s no reason to believe we would not be able to.”

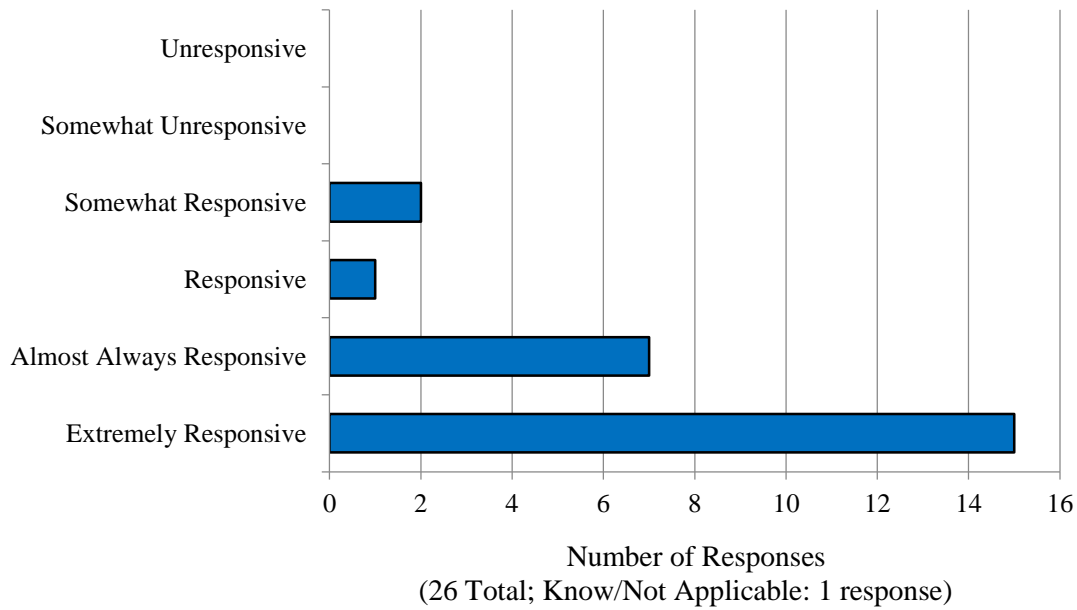
Overall, how responsive is RMHF staff?



Select Comments:

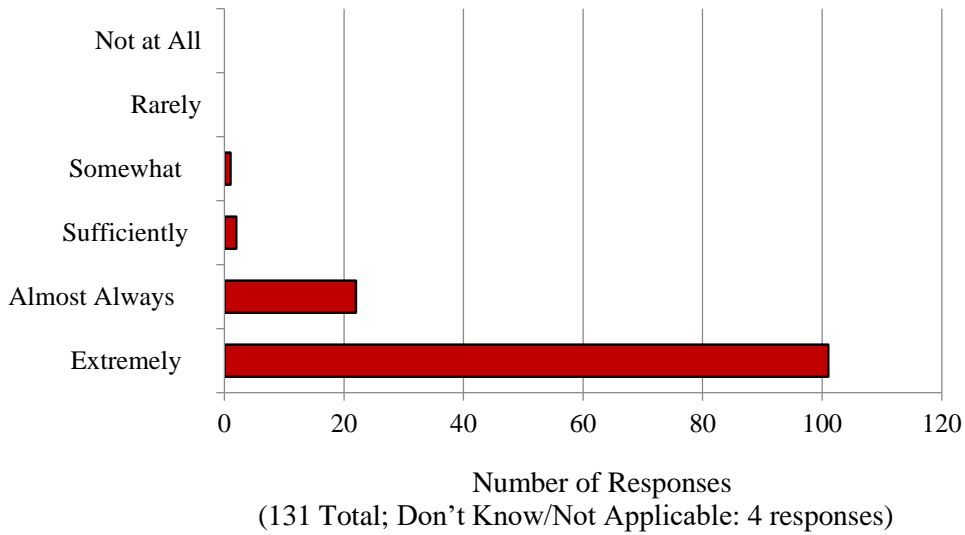
“Very responsive!” (5 comments)

“I am new-ish to this position and haven't yet needed to reach out to staff to help me solve a problem.”

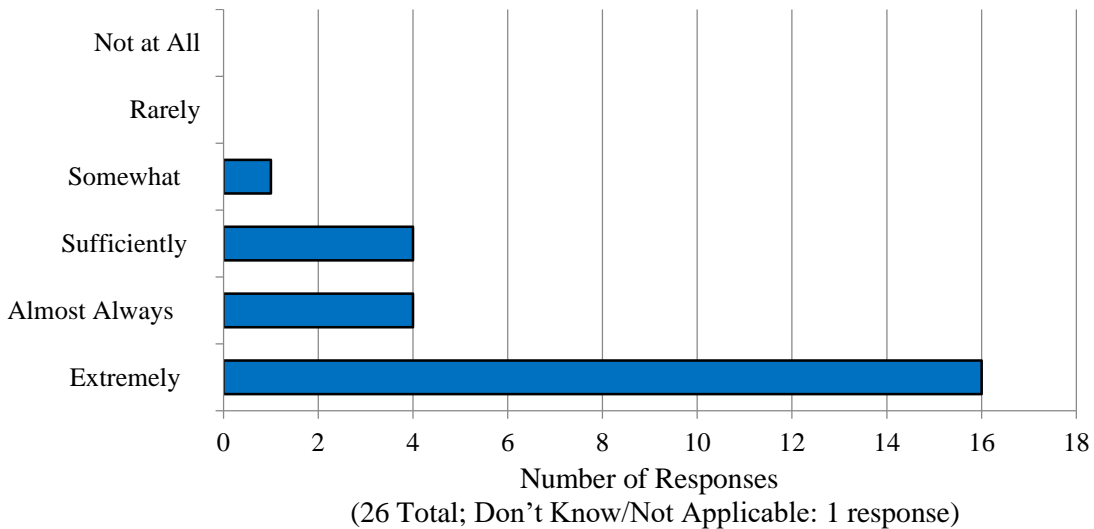
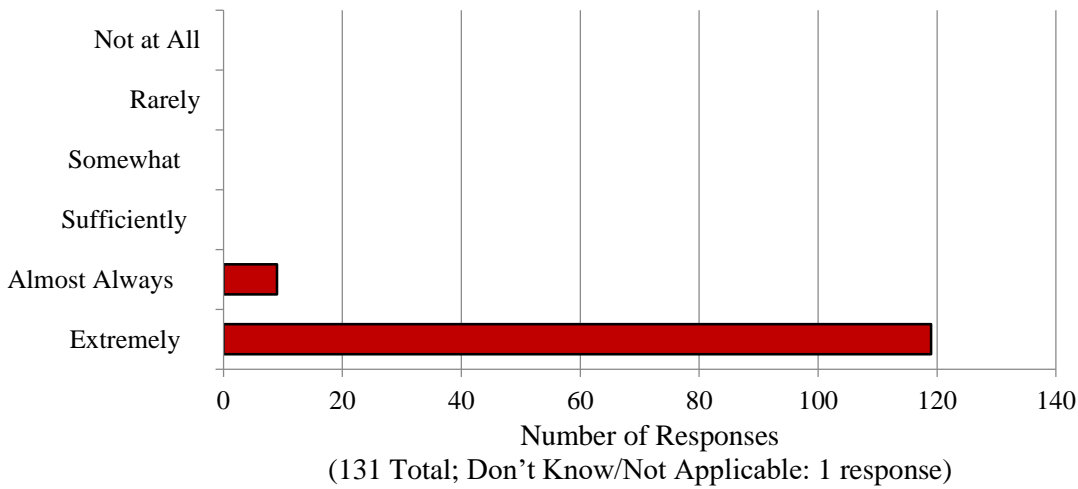


No Grant Applicant comments provided.

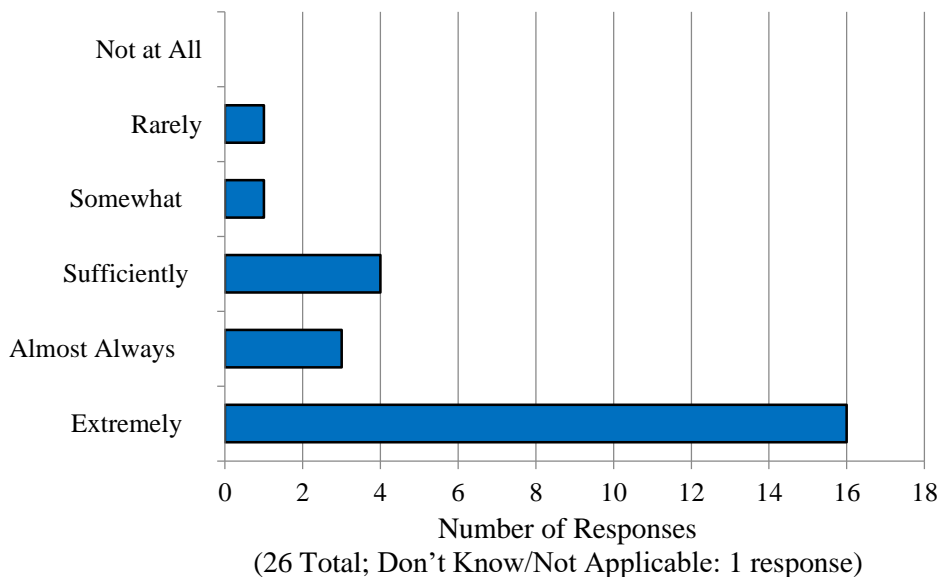
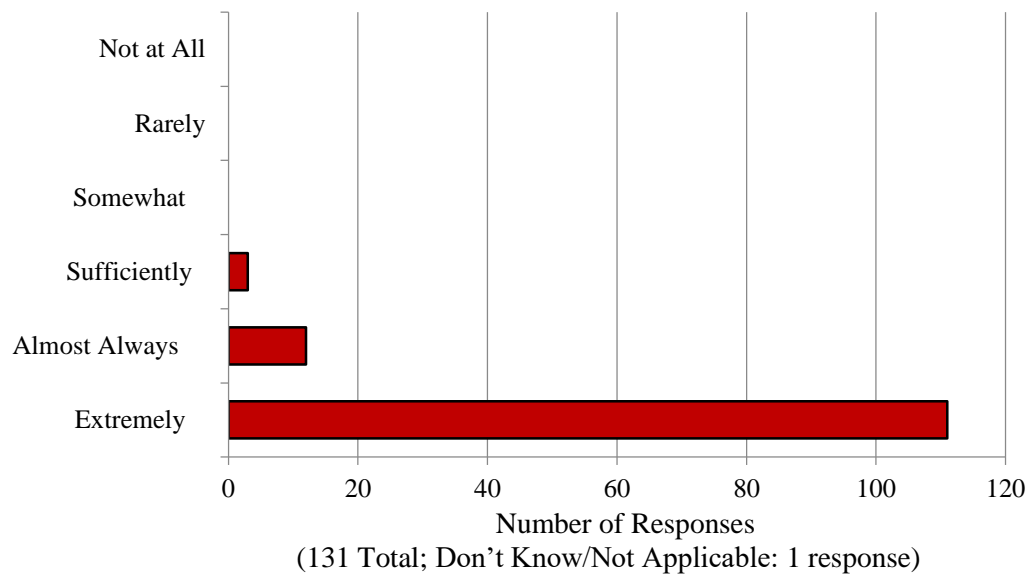
To what extent does RMHF staff exhibit the following:
Trust in your organization’s staff. (Inquiry not included in Grant Applicant survey)



Open and respectful interactions.



Compassion for those affected by your work.



Select Comments:

“Unlike most other foundations, RMHF staff truly exhibit these values in their work with us.”

“The additional support to our staff’s health and wellness really shows the understanding of our work and being on the front lines. I’ve never had a funder look at that and give additional funding to support this as a value! Thank you.”

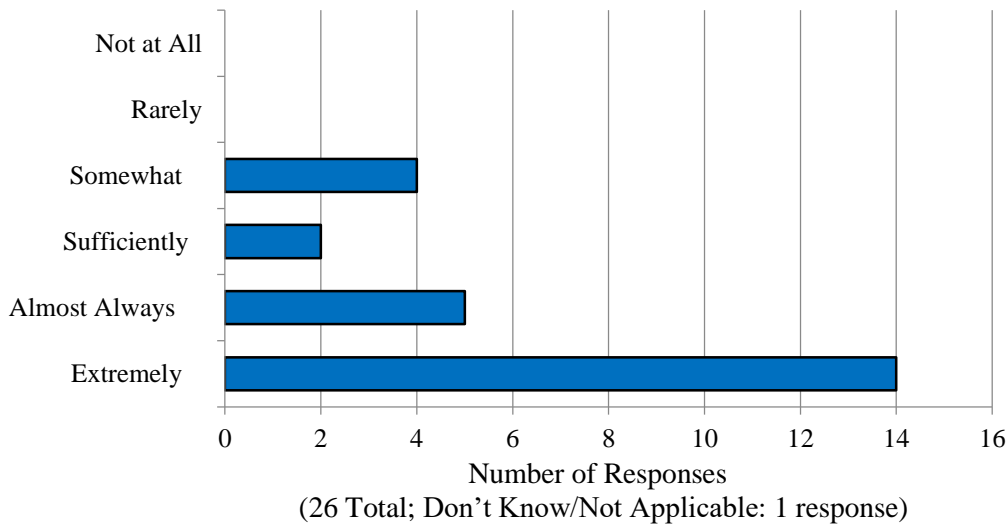
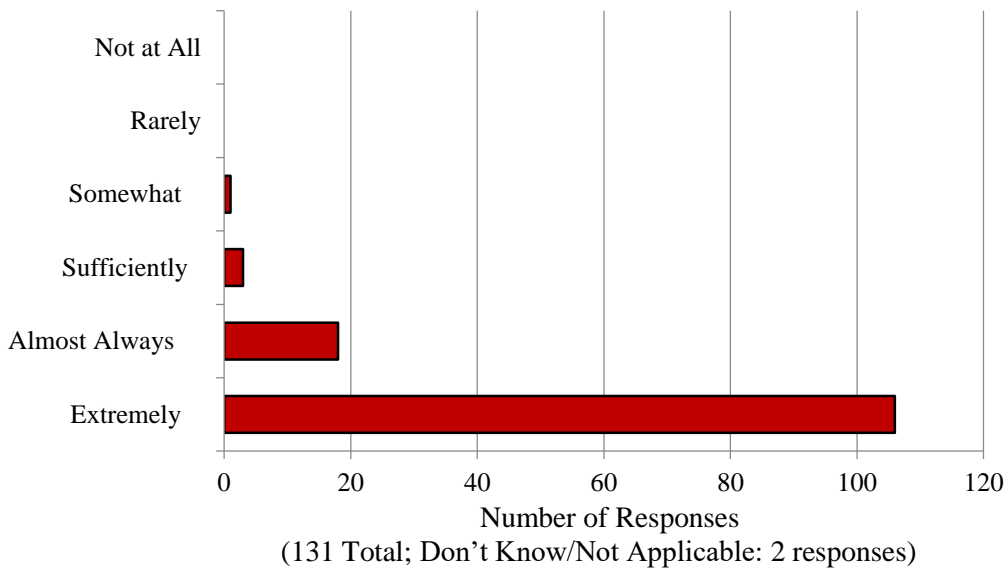
Select Comments:

“RMHF staff is wonderful, and Grant Partners appreciate their efforts. But I feel there is a disconnect between the staff and the grant review criteria and interpretation of financials.”

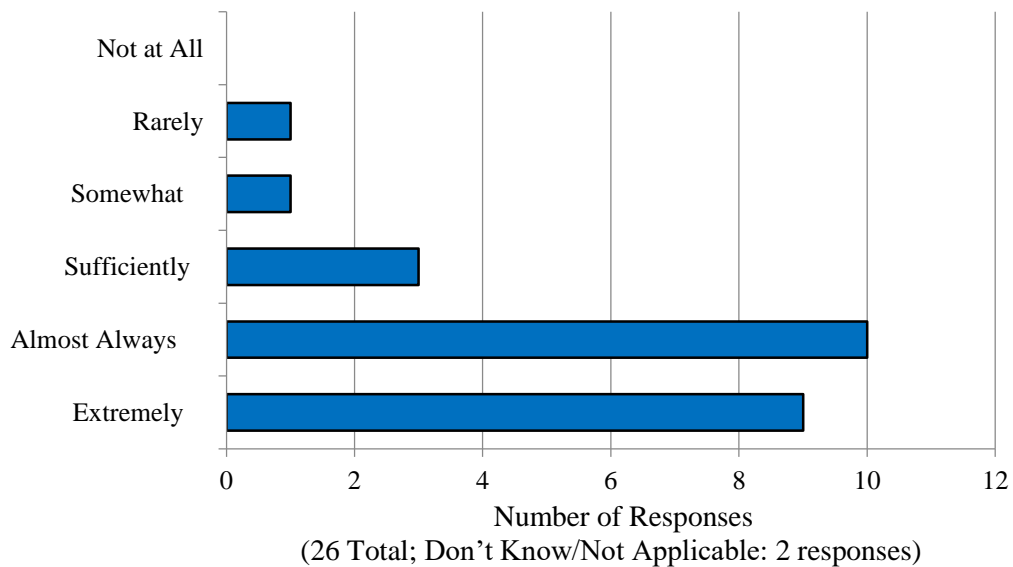
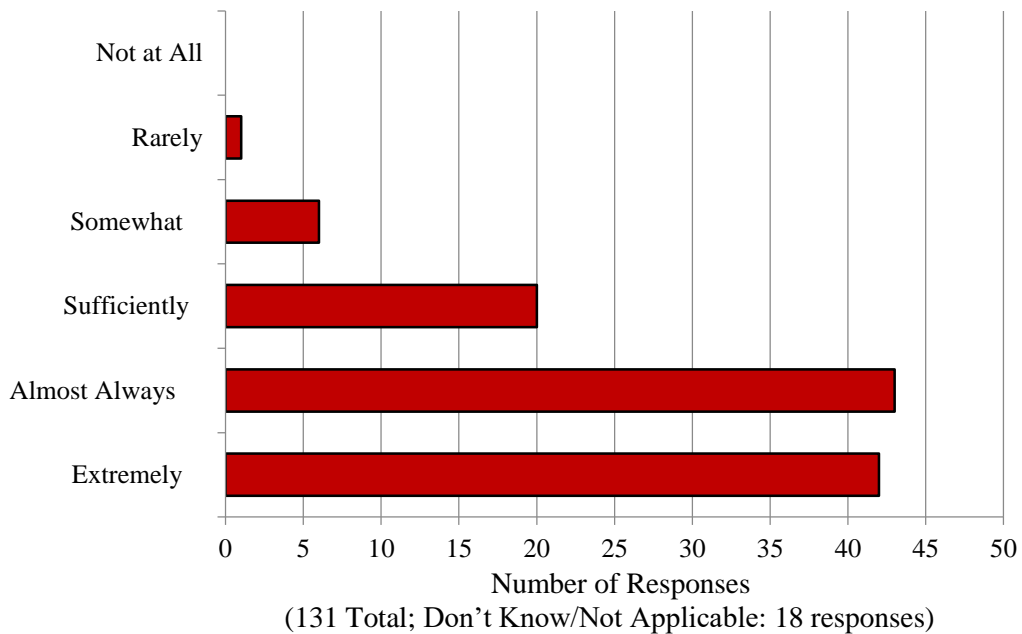
“We feel that, due to our lack of a diverse population (thereby not able to meet quotas), we are being marginalized. We are small and need help, and get absolutely zero monetary support from local government, which fully acknowledges what we accomplish but is unable/unwilling to help via funding.”

Please indicate how helpful the following RMHF resources have been to you:

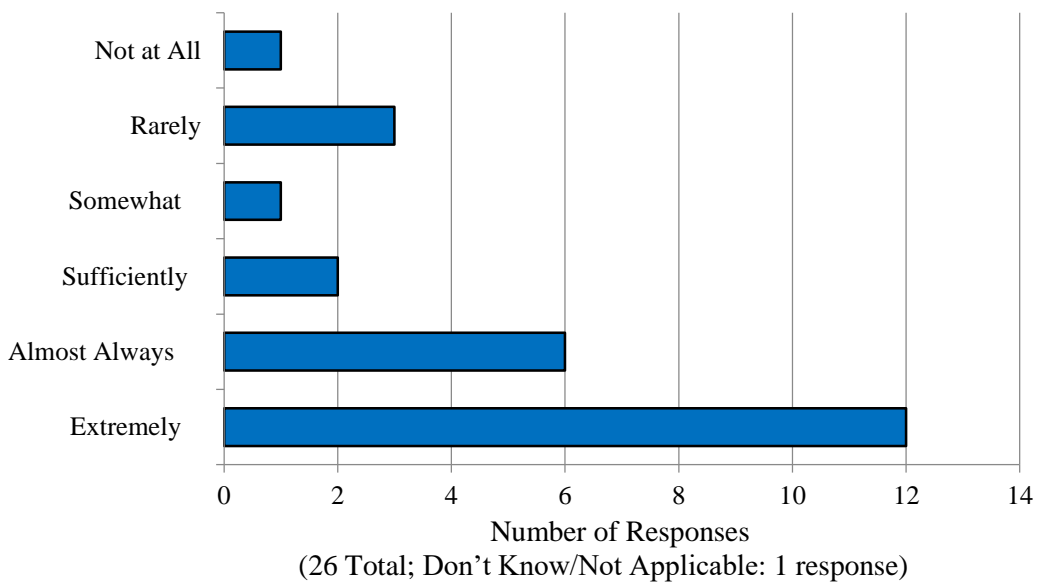
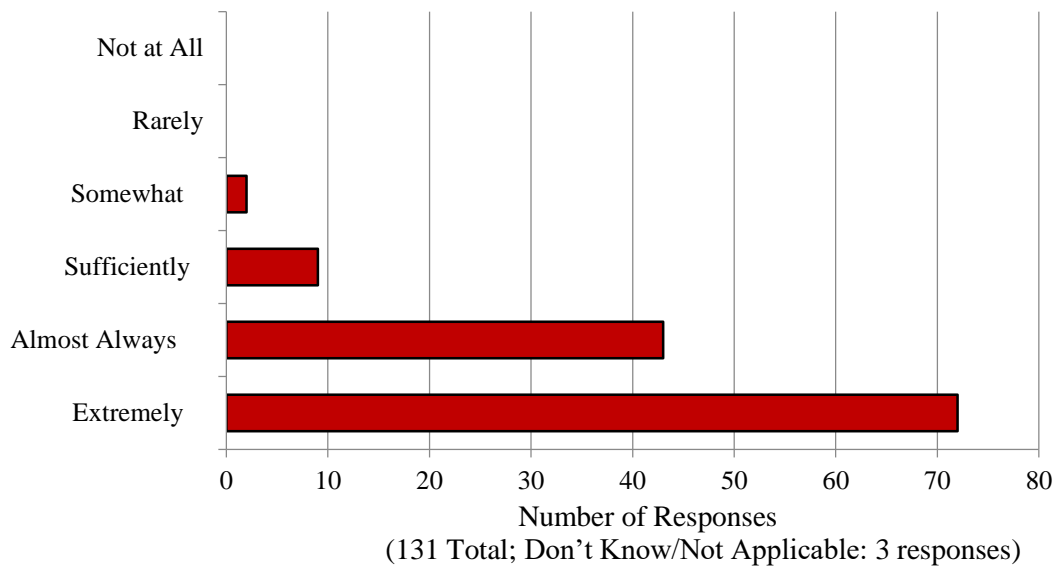
Direct communications (e.g., one-on-one calls, emails) with individual RMHF staff.



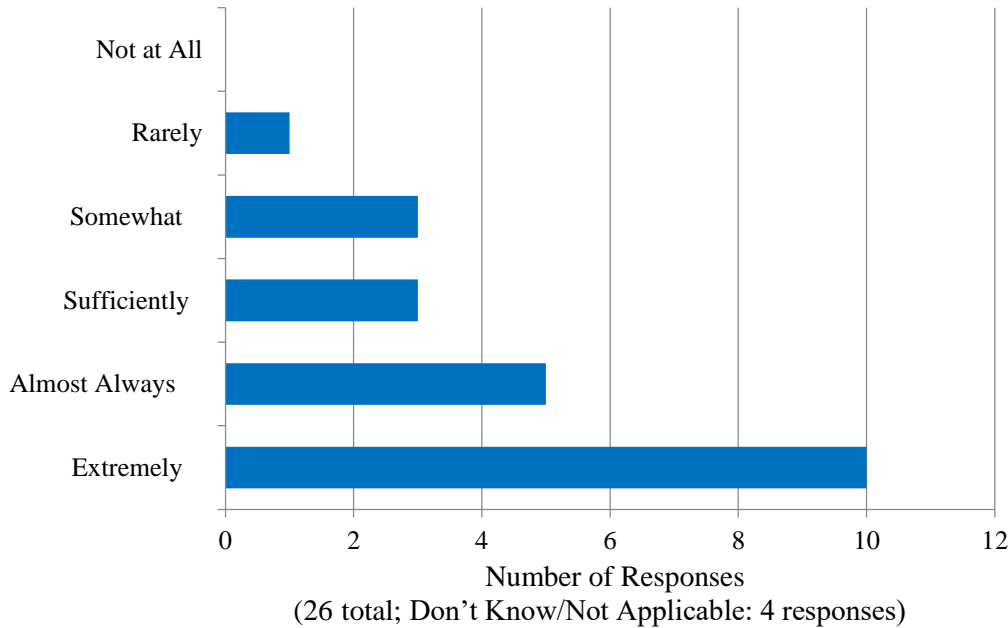
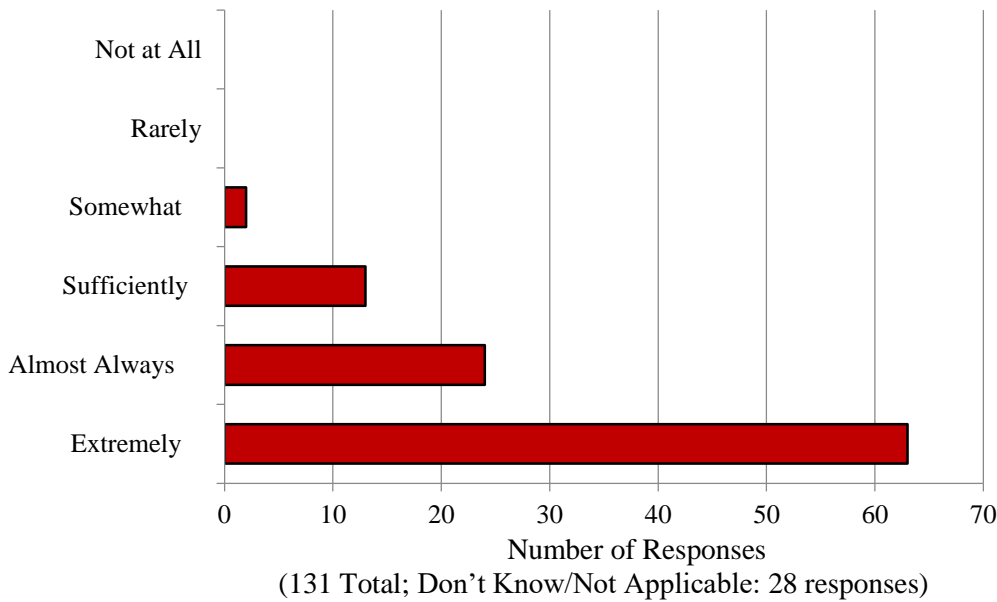
How helpful has the RMHF website been to you?



How helpful have the RMHF funder guidelines been to you?



How helpful has the sample grant proposal provided by RMHF been to you?



Select Comments:

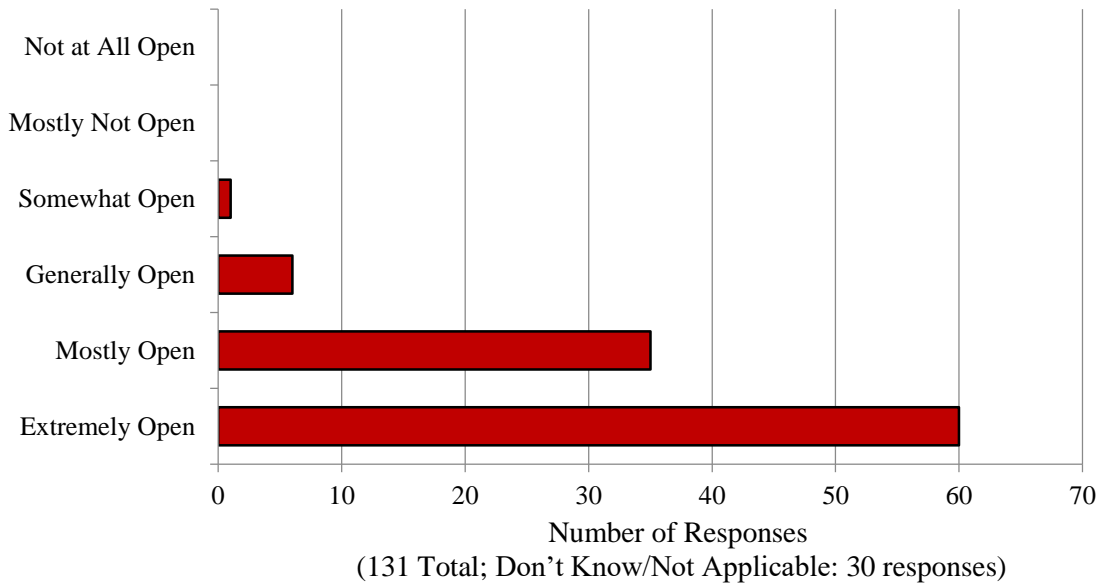
“I really love having access to the sample grant. It is so helpful to understanding what RMHF is looking for with each question and demonstrates how much thought RMHF has put into the application.” (5 comments)

“Staff have improved the process over time.”

Comment (only 1 provided):

“While word/character counts have improved, it still is difficult to hit the marks. Seems like the actual application does not align with the samples.”

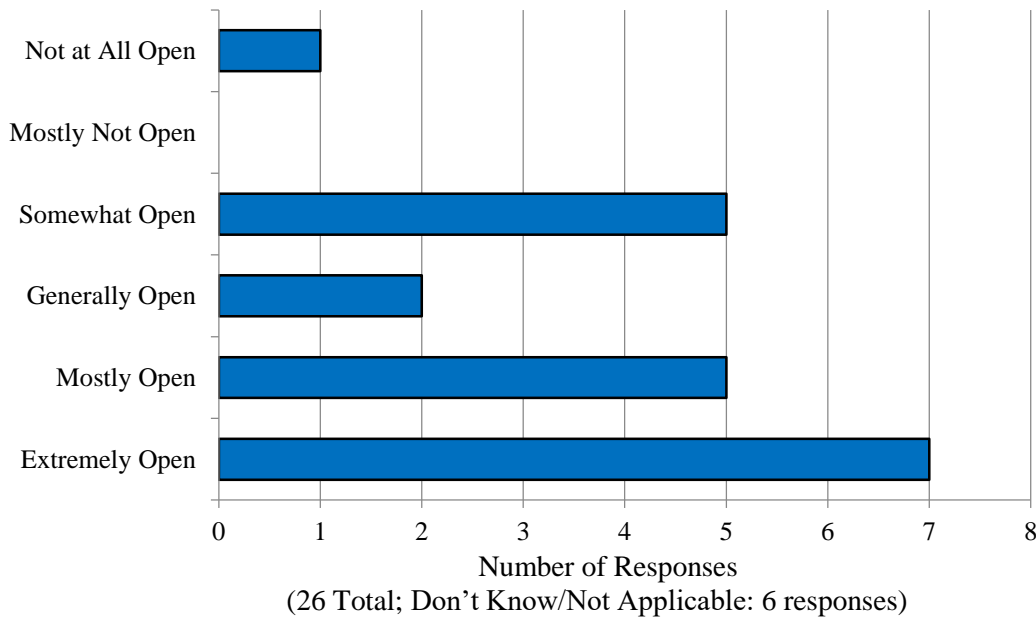
How open is RMHF to ideas from its grant partners?



Select Comments:

“While RMHF understands our community and the people we serve, it is even better that they trust our organization to know and do what is best for our community.”

“We haven't yet provided any ideas, though we have been prompted by the RMHF team regarding how they can better support us, so the opportunity is being presented.”

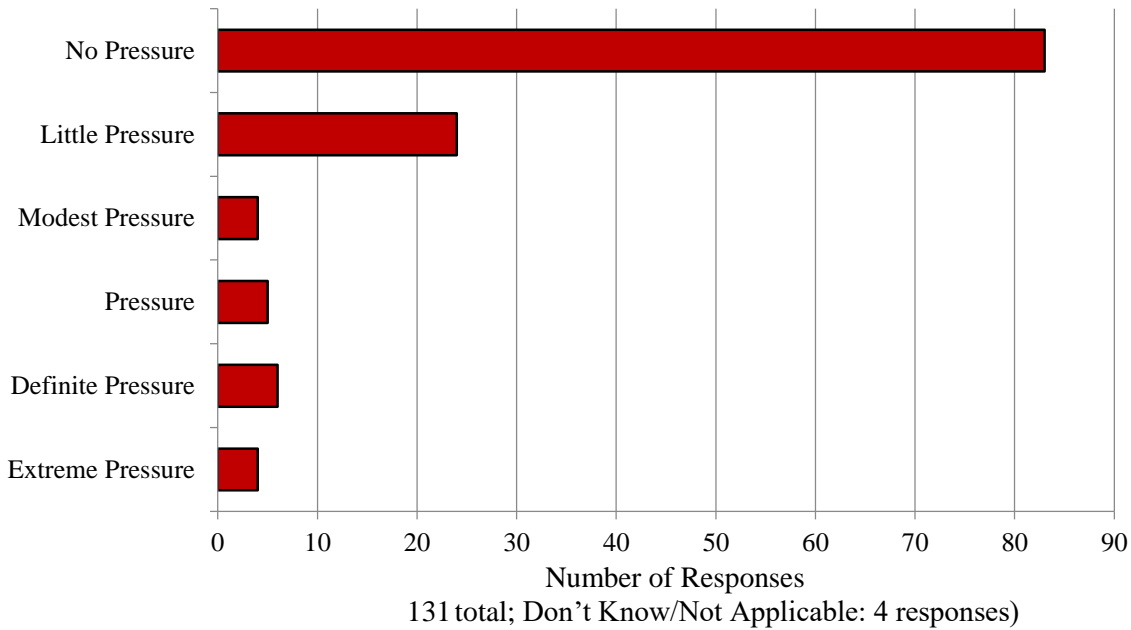


Select Comments:

“Not sure. It would be nice to learn more about how RMHF creates its granting priorities.”

“There doesn't seem to be any two-way communication. Seems like a huge top-down approach.”

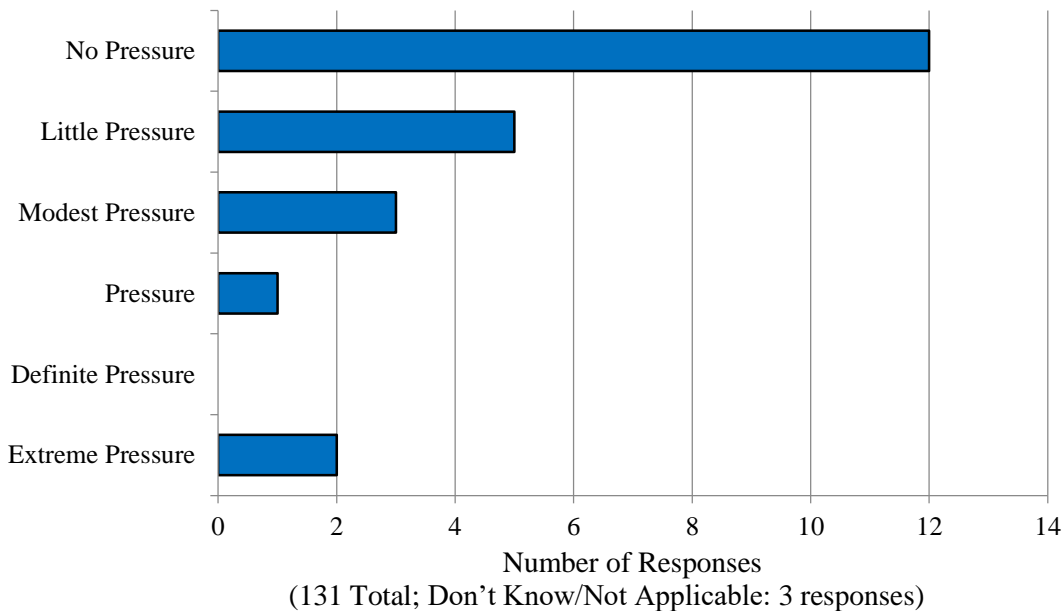
As you worked on your most recent grant proposal to RMHF, how pressured did you feel to modify organizational priorities to receive grant funding?



Select Comments:

“Our services are well-aligned with RMHF priorities, so there’s little pressure to modify.” (2 responses)

“There have been stresses involved in gathering specific data from our guests on age, gender and ethnicity, but the staff at RMHF have also made excellent suggestions for accomplishing this goal.”

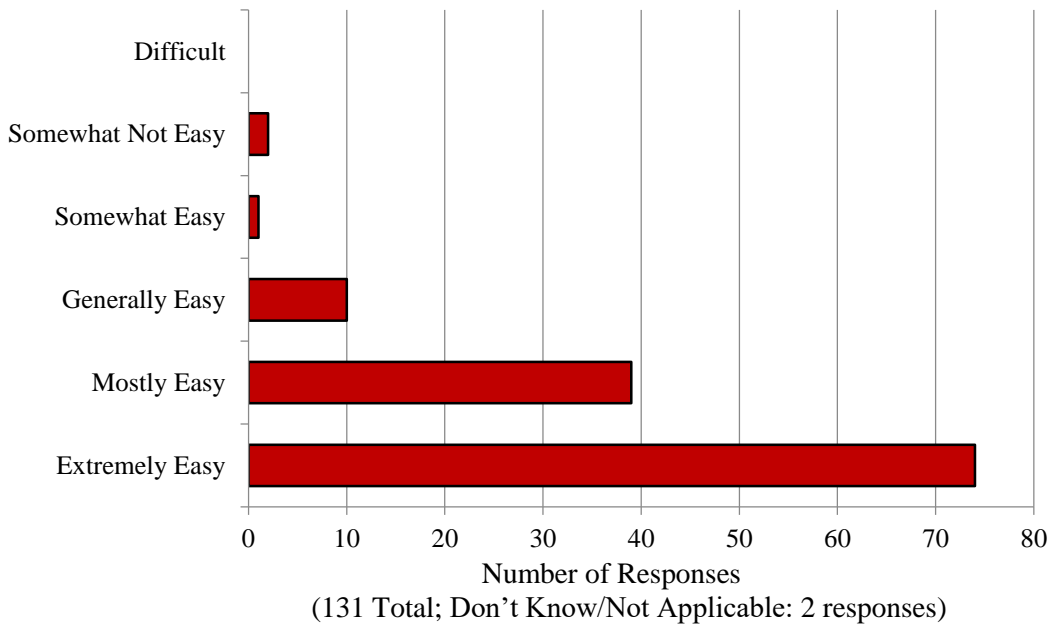


Select Comments:

“I think the gift officers put pressure on themselves to make sure there could be a viable fit for us to receive RMHF grant funds.”

“Don't know that they understand the whole picture, so I did not change; just not sure they understood.”

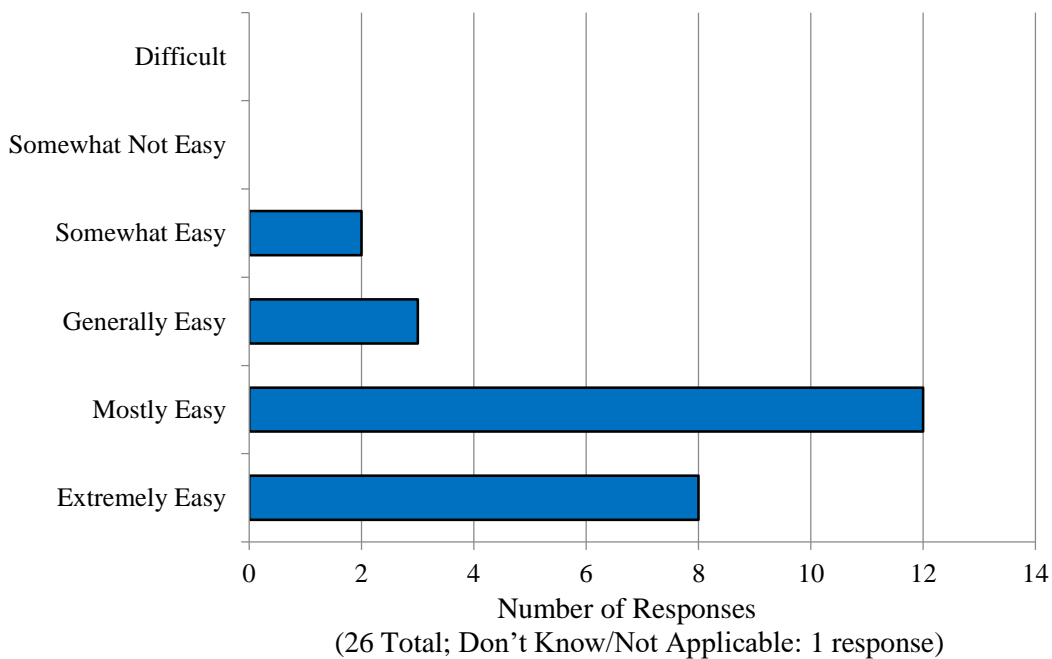
How easy to understand was the grant application process?



Select Comments:

“I so appreciate how simple the application is. I actually thought I must have missed something because it didn't take me weeks to complete.”

“It was a straightforward application and concise, but it was quite difficult to get the necessary information into the smaller word count allowances.”

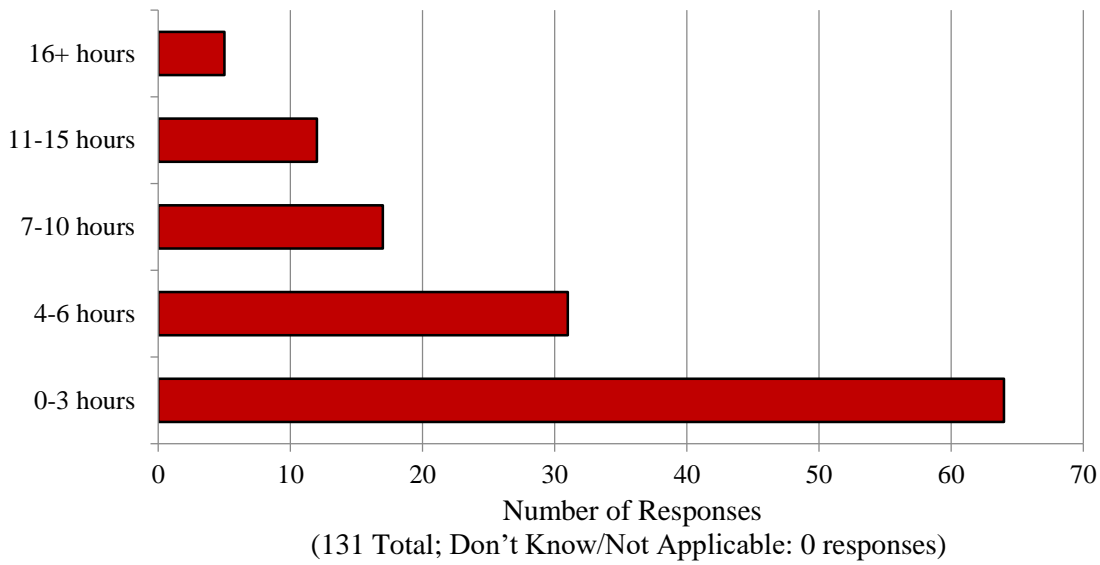


Select Comments:

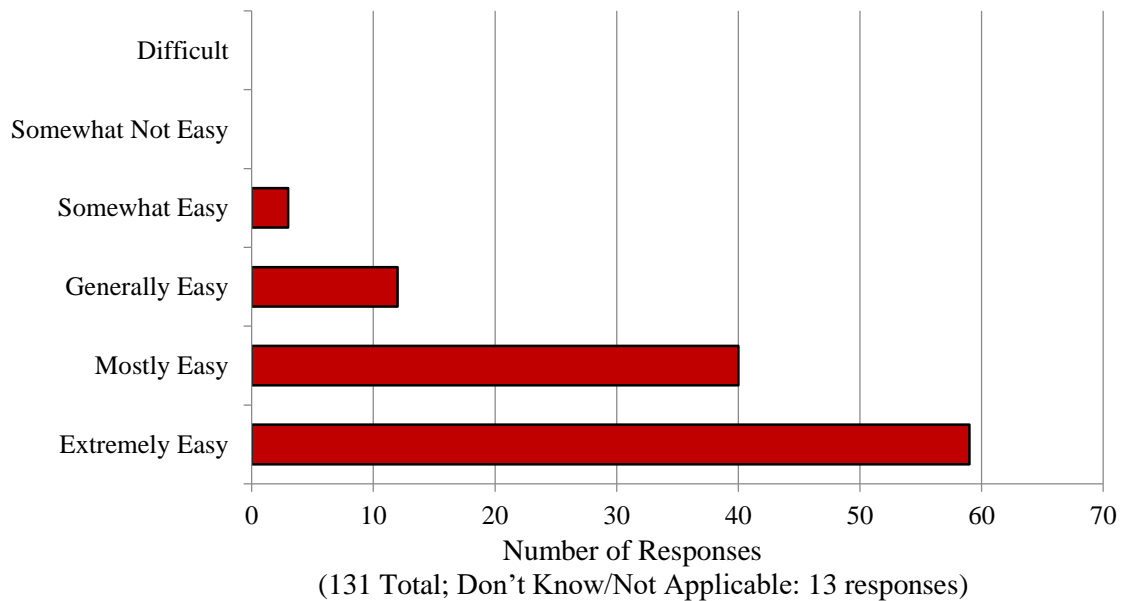
“Word counts are always challenging.”

“The award process was a little confusing.”

Approximately how many hours were required of you to complete your most recent RMHF reporting process? (Inquiry not included in Grant Applicant survey)



How easy to understand is the RMHF reporting process? (Inquiry not included in Grant Applicant survey)



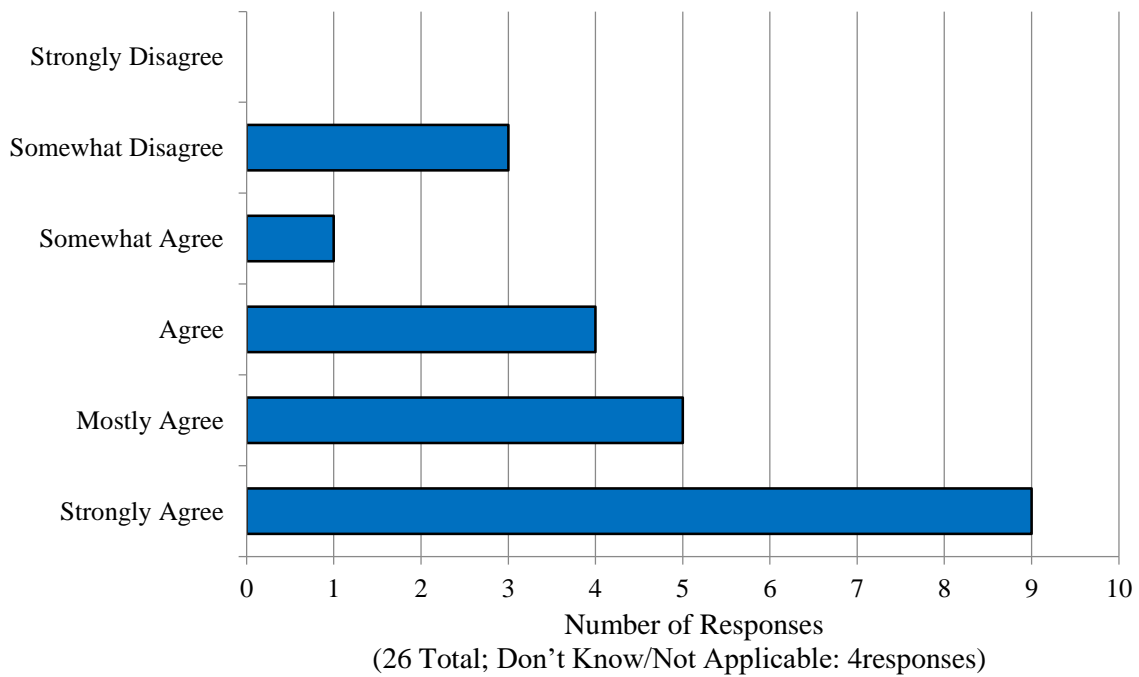
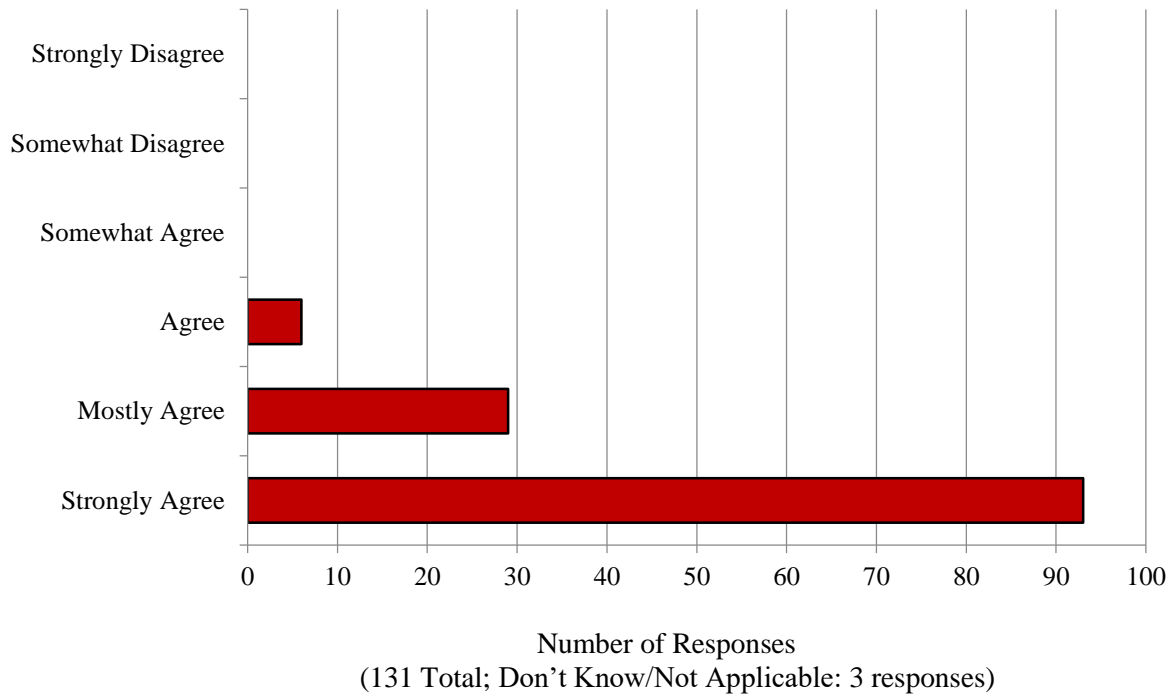
Select Comments:

“Reporting is easy and tailored to the organization.”

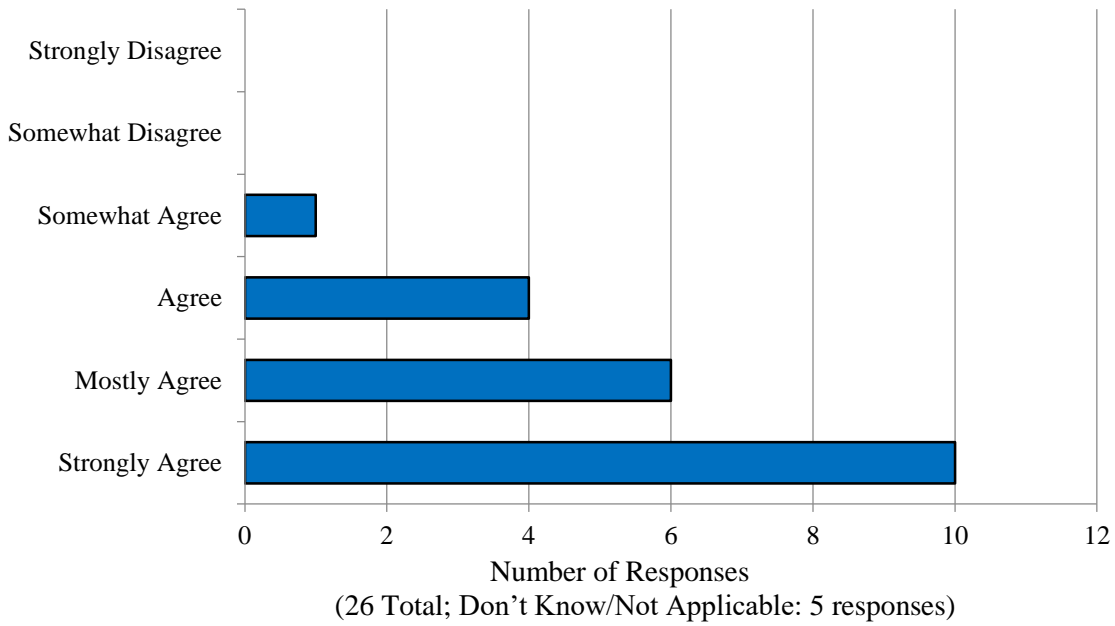
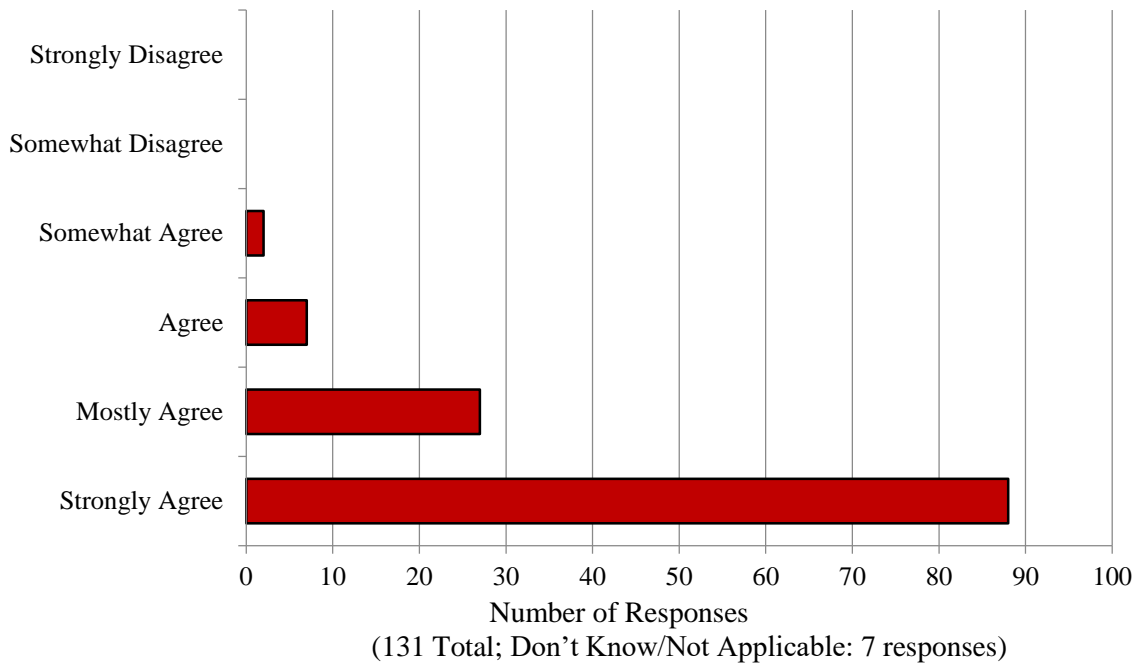
“Sorting everything by county is difficult, as we sort everything by city, state and ZIP.”

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

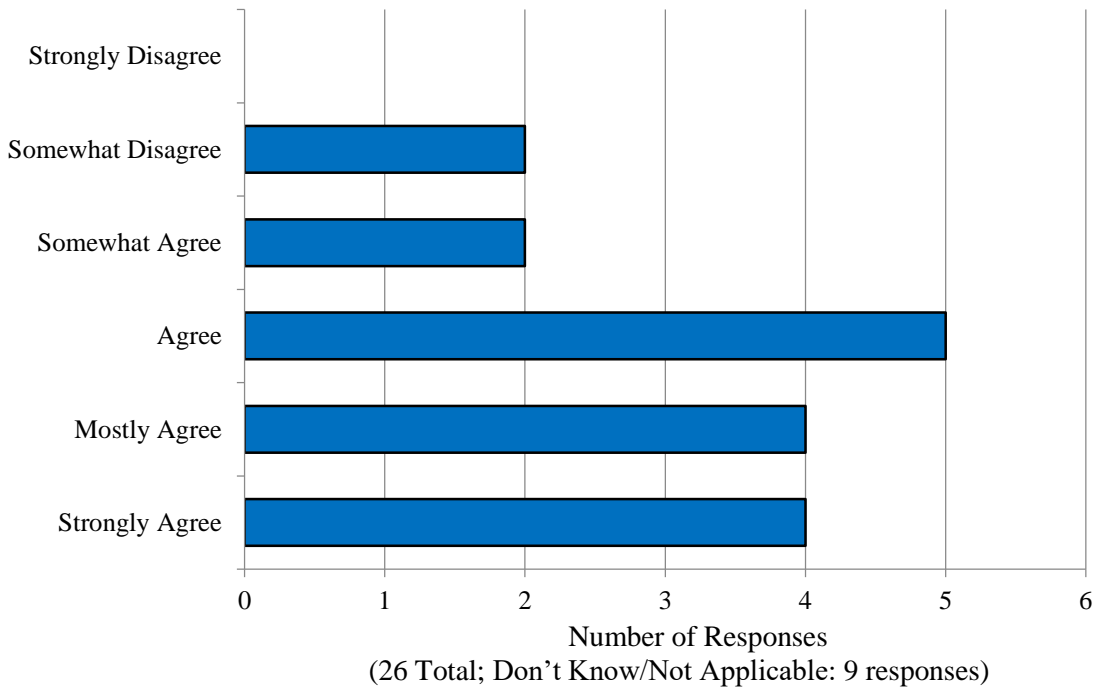
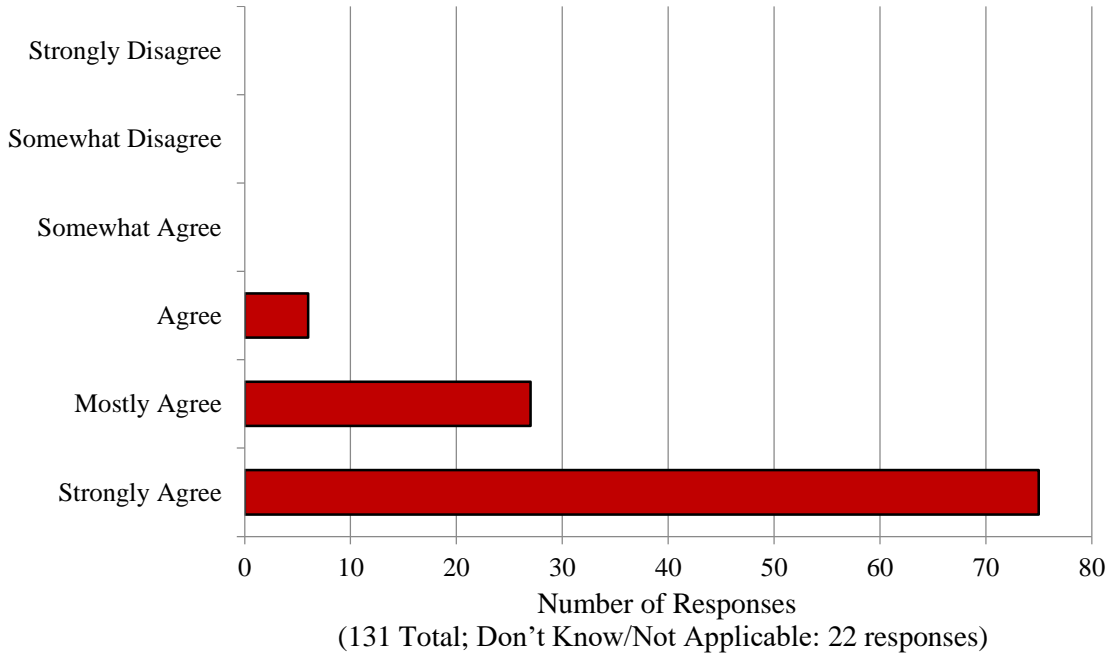
RMHF demonstrates a commitment to equity (“identifying and helping to eliminate disparities that keep people from a healthy life”).



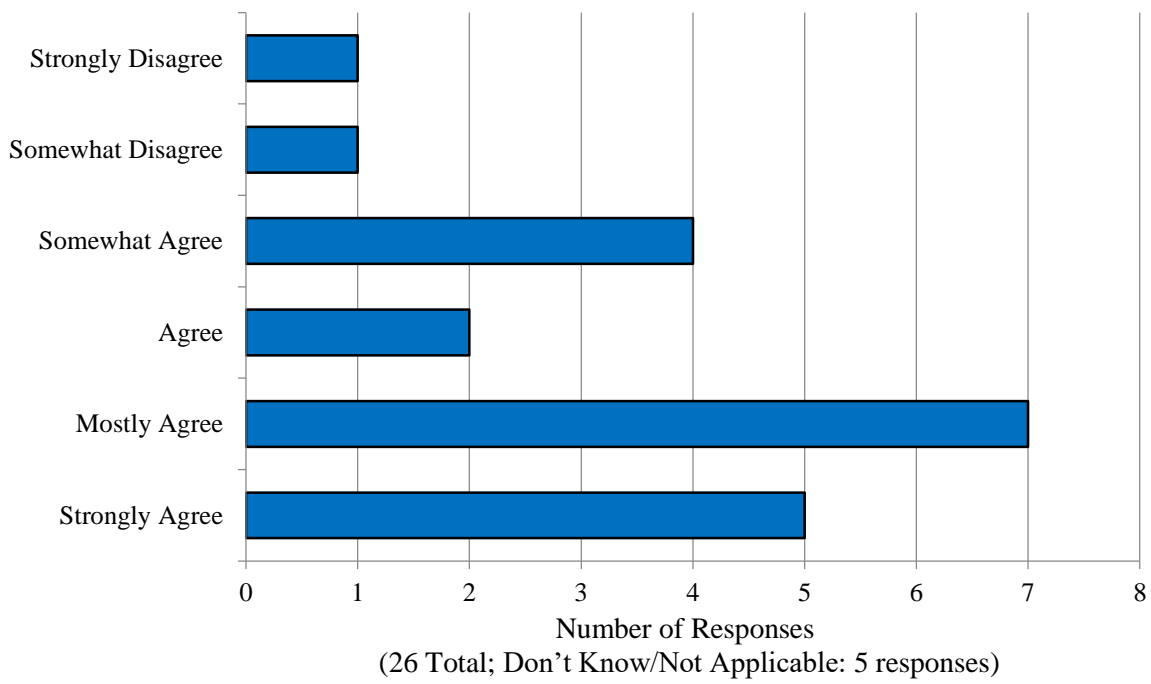
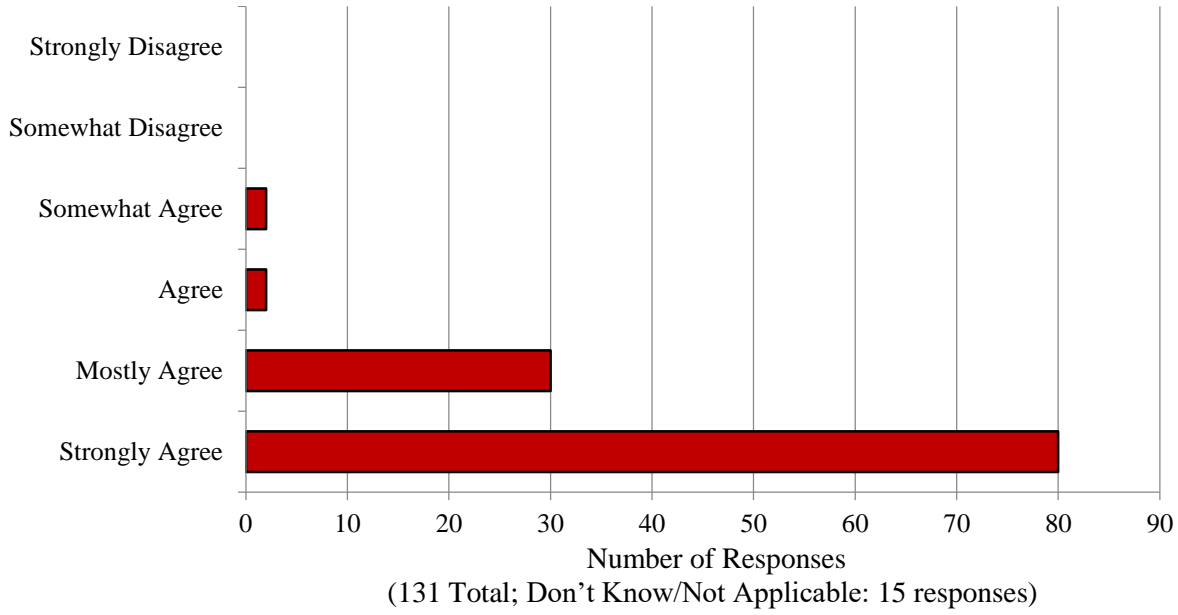
RMHF clearly focuses on serving people of low income.



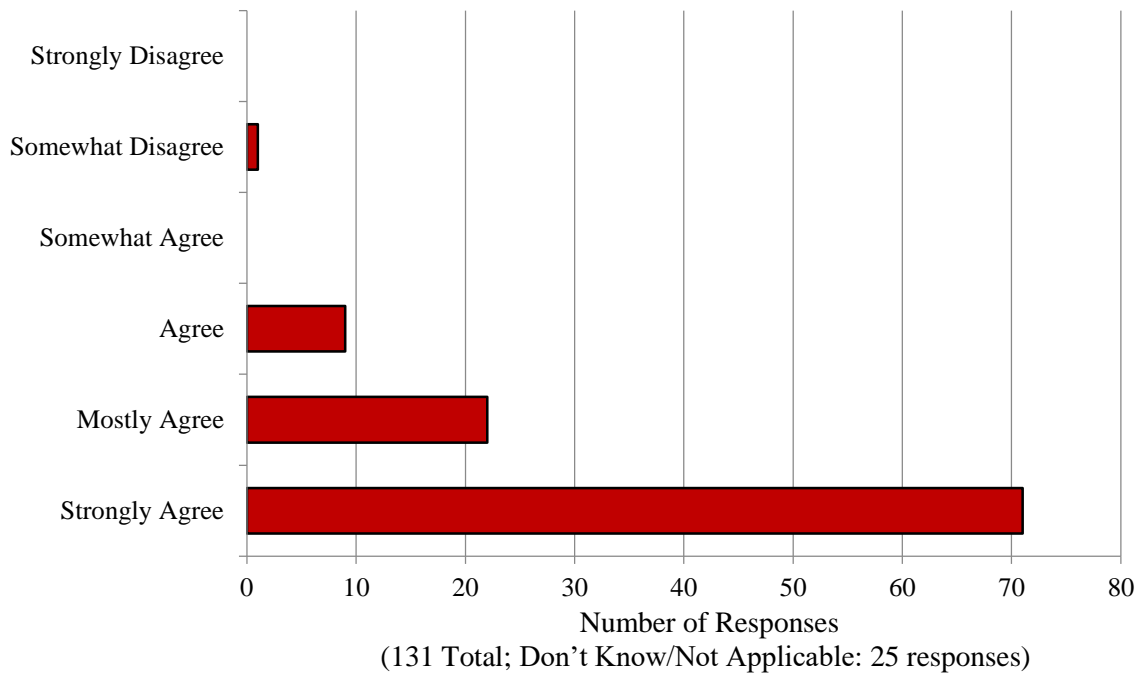
In doing its work, RMHF considers perspectives from the community.



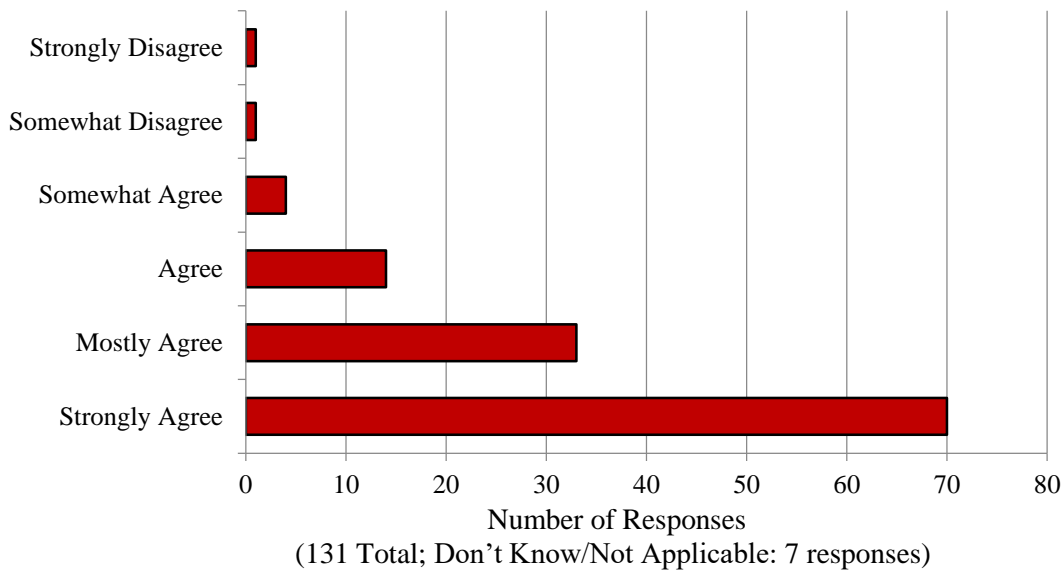
RMHF supports innovative ideas and organizations.



RMHF staff understands that, at times, an organization’s plans don’t always work out and adjustments need to be made. (Inquiry not included in Grant Applicant survey)



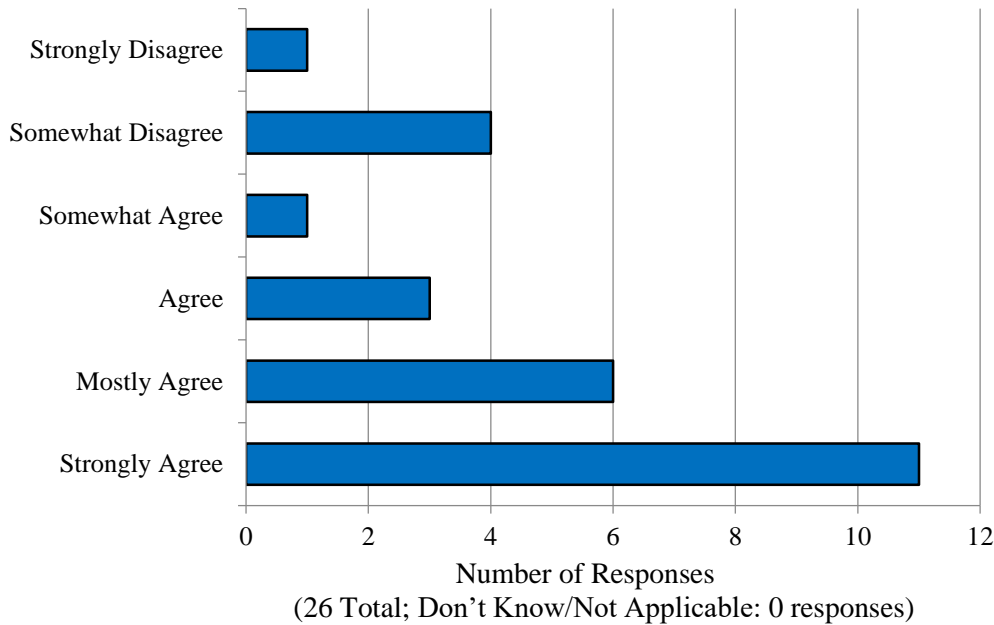
RMHF staff clearly communicate the reasons for specific funding decisions.



Select Comments:

“We are so grateful for RMHF's flexibility! We have had to significantly change the timeline of previous grants due to circumstances outside our control, and RMHF was so understanding and worked with us to create a new timeline.”

“The reason given for award of less funding (generally <50% of request) is always the same: there were so many applications and is not a reflection on our organization.”



Select Comments:

“RMHF is almost too concerned with the low-income brackets, and too focused on the not-quite-health-related nonprofits.”

“After the fact, RMHF told me we were not being funded because we do not serve 10% of minorities in our county. I wish that would have been a clear requirement in the application and interview.”