

Response to 2023 Rocky Mountain Health Foundation Perception Survey May 2023

We are excited to have feedback to allow us to continue our journey to live our values throughout our processes. Below are actions we are taking to respond to the results of the Perception Survey.

Continue to focus on the quality of our relationships and strive to always be a trustworthy philanthropic partner.

Survey results showed that we have made good progress in living our values around how we are in relationship with the people and organizations doing the hard work. We will continue this focus and seek to refine and improve the experience of working with Rocky Mountain Health Foundation (RMHF). Many people have invited us to visit, and we have plans to be out and about summer of 2023.

January of 2023 was our first Zoom call regarding activities from 2022. It included staff and board members presenting to our grant partners. We will make this an annual event to aid in transparency for our grant partners.

Provide more information regarding the experience and expertise of staff and board particularly related to health.

RMHF defines health much more broadly than the traditional health care delivery system. We believe that the conditions and culture in which people are born, grow, work, live and age shape the quality of a person's life. Health is physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Staff of the organization have broad experience in health – spanning prenatal services to end of life care, nonprofit management, health insurance access, case management and philanthropy.

The Board members of Rocky Mountain Health Foundation are from communities across the Western Slope and represent the diversity of our area in age, gender, ethnicity, experience and expertise. Their expertise includes health care administration, physicians, nurses, behavioral health, finance, the law, immigrant advocacy and support, and nonprofit management.

Increase the usefulness of the RMHF website

Too many survey respondents were not familiar with various aids to successful application to RMHF such as the sample grant and funder guidelines. Staff will be sure to point people to these aids in preapplication phone calls and emails.

- The website is being refreshed to be more user friendly and videos to aid in grant writing will be added before the fall grant cycle.
- The criteria we use for reviewing applications and making funding decisions will be added to the website and shared with potential applicants.

- Dashboards that provide information on the details of approved grants in each funding cycle will also be added to the website following decisions to assist grant seekers in learning about RMHF.
- Finally, language will be added about the range of requests – many applicants seek the highest amount and are disappointed when they are awarded less than their request. Because of the strong competition among applicants very rarely is the maximum amount awarded.

****Due to unforeseen circumstances the website is being rebuilt – we have been unable to add all the things in this section before 8-1-23. We anticipate the new website will be up and operating sometime this fall. All of these improvements will be present at that time. We will let you all know when the new site is operational.*

Be more predictable in funding priorities and application processes

As a new grantmaking entity, RMHF just completed 5 years of grant making, there has been a lot of change and experimentation and comments noting this accurately reflect the reality of the last 5 years. Much thought has gone into the current funding priorities and grant cycles, and we expect to continue in the current direction for the near future. That being said, we are committed to being a dynamic and responsive funder and as a result will always be adjusting to respond to the needs of organizations on the Western Slope. We will work hard to communicate clearly and in a timely manner any future changes that affect applicants.

Increase the clarity of communication with applicants who are not funded

Every grant cycle has many more requests than there are dollars available, resulting in organizations who are not funded. Our practice has been to make phone calls to people in organizations who are not receiving funding and to discuss the reasons for the decline. In addition to the calls, we are now putting the reasons for the decline in writing in the decline letter.

Our application process includes a requirement for a pre-application phone call. The purpose of the call is to talk about the proposed request and provide guidance as to fit and advice on applying. In the future we will follow up phone calls that result in a decline with an email putting the reasons in writing to ensure clarity. Some ideas are a long shot and staff are genuinely not sure whether the request will be funded. Following these kinds of calls an email will be sent as a follow-up making clear our uncertainty so people can make an informed decision about submitting a request.

Continue to explain our racial demographic requirement. Assist people in thinking about and reporting the racial demographics of people served by their organization.

The survey showed that there is still confusion regarding the position of RMHF regarding racial equity. Equity is one of the Foundation's core values. We support equity by identifying and helping to eliminate disparities that keep people from a healthy life. One indicator we consider is the demographic profile of the people served and especially how it compares to the ethnicity/racial profile of counties in which services are being provided.

Beginning in 2023, funding preference is given to organizations that serve people of color at least proportional to the percentages of people of color in the county where services are provided. We use Colorado Department of Local Affairs data to determine the percentages of people of color in a variety of age groups – 0-4 yrs., 5-17 yrs., 18-59 yrs., 60+ yrs. Detailed charts showing information by county are available on the RMHF website. The age matters a lot – as an example: for the entire Western Slope combined the racial demographic for children 0-4 years is 37% people of color. Adults 60+ is 10% people of color. Those percentages vary widely from county to county.

Organizations located in communities with a low percentage of people of color are only required to serve people of color in proportion to their population. We require that funded organizations have a credible system for collecting and reporting age, gender and race/ethnicity. It does not have to be an expensive software system – it can be a yellow pad or an excel sheet.

RMHF staff are 33% people of color and the board are 26% people of color - proportional to the statistics for the entire Western Slope.

If the racial demographic requirement is a challenge for you, please talk with RMHF staff about the intricacies of your organization and client population. We will help as much as we can and can connect you to organizations like yours who are successfully collecting data and outreaching to people of color.

We respect that serving people proportional to county demographics will not be a fit for every organization. It is not our intent to ask people to change just for us. RMHF may not be the right funder if the racial demographic requirement does not work for your organization.

Facilitate networking and information sharing among RMHF grant partners

Many respondents expressed a desire to meet with and learn from colleagues around the region. In 2023 we will be hosting a few Zoom meetings of organizations doing similar kinds of services. This is our first year and we hope to learn how to offer this service in a way that is helpful to all.

When we are talking with grant partners, staff will be listening for matters that it may be helpful to connect you with colleagues who have expertise and experience to offer.

Given the size of the Western Slope and our priority to fund direct services it is unlikely that we will be directing resources to in-person gatherings in the near future.