

CONFIDENTIAL

Applicant Perception Report
prepared for
The Rhode Island Foundation
May 2010



THE CENTER FOR
EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY

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Executive Summary – Key Findings

The Rhode Island Foundation (“RIF”) is rated positively throughout its 2010 Applicant Perception Report, both on an absolute scale and compared to other funders in CEP’s dataset. Declined applicant ratings also show substantial improvements on most measures of the report over 2008 applicant ratings. Applicants indicate having “great experiences” with the Foundation, and that “Foundation staff are very encouraging and supportive.”

Declined applicants describe improvements in their interactions and communications with the Foundation, but request additional and clearer information during the selection process. RIF is rated higher than the median funder on the responsiveness of staff, fairness of treatment of declined applicants, and the clarity of communication of its goals and strategy. One applicant explains, “The application guidelines are well defined and the staff is easy to access for questions.” The consistency of the Foundation’s communication resources remains rated similarly to the median funder, however, and other grantees comment that, “[It] seems that there was a huge disconnect between what we were told by the program officer and what the board actually thought.” The greatest proportion of suggestions for improvement for the Foundation center around the need to further clarify the selection process.

Impressions of the selection process overall and the equality of access to funding also receive high ratings from most declined applicants. Declined applicants describe improvements to the selection process, saying “The Foundation has improved light years since I began applying to them. It used to be completely opaque – now the staff is very accessible and informative. I am glad to see that they are shortening their response time.” Indeed, the amount of time between submission of the proposal and the decision not to fund has decreased considerably since 2008. Applicant ratings of the equality of access to funding have also improved since the 2008 survey and RIF is rated close to the top of the range of funders in the dataset on this measure. Yet, declined applicants do feel more pressure on average than typical to modify their proposals so they are more likely to receive funding. A few still report feeling that “there still remains a faint air of condescension toward grant applicants.”

Overall ratings around the RIF’s feedback on declined applications remain closer to the median funder. Although a greater than typical proportion of declined applicants report receiving feedback from the Foundation on their applications, the helpfulness of this feedback and advice in strengthening future proposals to RIF is rated similarly to the typical funder. One applicant explains, “We had been vigorously encouraged to reapply [yet]...as the Foundation’s decision date drew nearer, the feedback from the Foundation dried up.” Declined applicants rate the honesty of the reason given for decline similarly to the median funder. Over 90 percent of declined applicants report that they would consider reapplying to RIF, a higher proportion than typical.

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Background

- ◆ Since February 2003, the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) has conducted surveys of grantees on their perceptions of their philanthropic funders both on behalf of individual funders and independently. The purpose of these surveys is two-fold: to gather data that is useful to individual funders and to form the basis for broadly applicable research reports.¹
- ◆ CEP developed the Applicant Perception Report (APR) as a complement to the Grantee Perception Report.[®] Based on a separate, shorter survey, the APR allows philanthropic funders to understand the candid perspectives of declined applicants on a number of important dimensions. The APR shows an individual funder the perceptions of its applicants relative to a set of perceptions of 35 funders whose declined applicants were surveyed by CEP.
 - Declined applicant perceptions must be interpreted in light of the particular strategy of the funder.
 - The survey covers many areas in which declined applicants' perceptions might be useful to a philanthropic funder. Each funder should place emphasis on the areas covered according to the funder's specific priorities.
 - Low ratings in an area that is not core to a philanthropic funder's strategy may not be concerning.

Methodology

- ♦ The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) surveyed the declined applicants of The Rhode Island Foundation (“RIF”) during February and March 2010. CEP surveyed RIF’s declined applicants in 2008. Where possible, ratings from that survey are also shown in the report. The details of RIF’s surveys are:

Survey	Survey Period	Fiscal Year of Surveyed Declined Applicants	Number of Declined Applicants Surveyed	Number of Responses Received	Survey Response Rate ¹
RIF 2010 Declined Applicant Survey	February and March 2010	2008 and 2009	293	121	41%
RIF 2008 Declined Applicant Survey	March and April 2008	2007	62	24	39%

- ♦ Throughout this report, selected declined applicant comments are shown. This group of comments was selected to be representative of the comments CEP received about RIF. These selected comments over-represent negative comments about the Foundation in order to offer a wide range of perspectives.
- ♦ RIF’s average and/or median declined applicant ratings are compared to the average and/or median ratings from declined applicants in CEP’s dataset, which contains data collected over the last six years.

Full Comparative Set	
Declined Applicant Responses	3,717 declined applicants
Philanthropic Funders	35 funders

Note: Please see Appendix A for a full list of funders whose declined applicants CEP has surveyed.
1: The median response rate for individual funders over the last six years of surveys is 42 percent.

Grant Application Characteristics

- ◆ This table is intended to provide context to the Foundation in thinking about the characteristics of its declined applications. The information is based on self-reported data from declined applicants about the size and types of grants that they requested.
- ◆ RIF declined applicants request similar size grants compared to declined applicants of the typical funder.

Survey Item	RIF 2010	RIF 2008	Full Dataset Median
Grant Request			
Median size of grant request	\$50K	\$45K	\$50K
Type of Support¹			
Percent of declined applicants requesting operating support	5%	0%	9%
Percent of declined applicants requesting program/project support	79%	67%	68%
Percent of declined applicants requesting other types of support	16%	33%	24%

Note: For the full range of data on these survey items refer to part A of the Appendix. Proportions may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

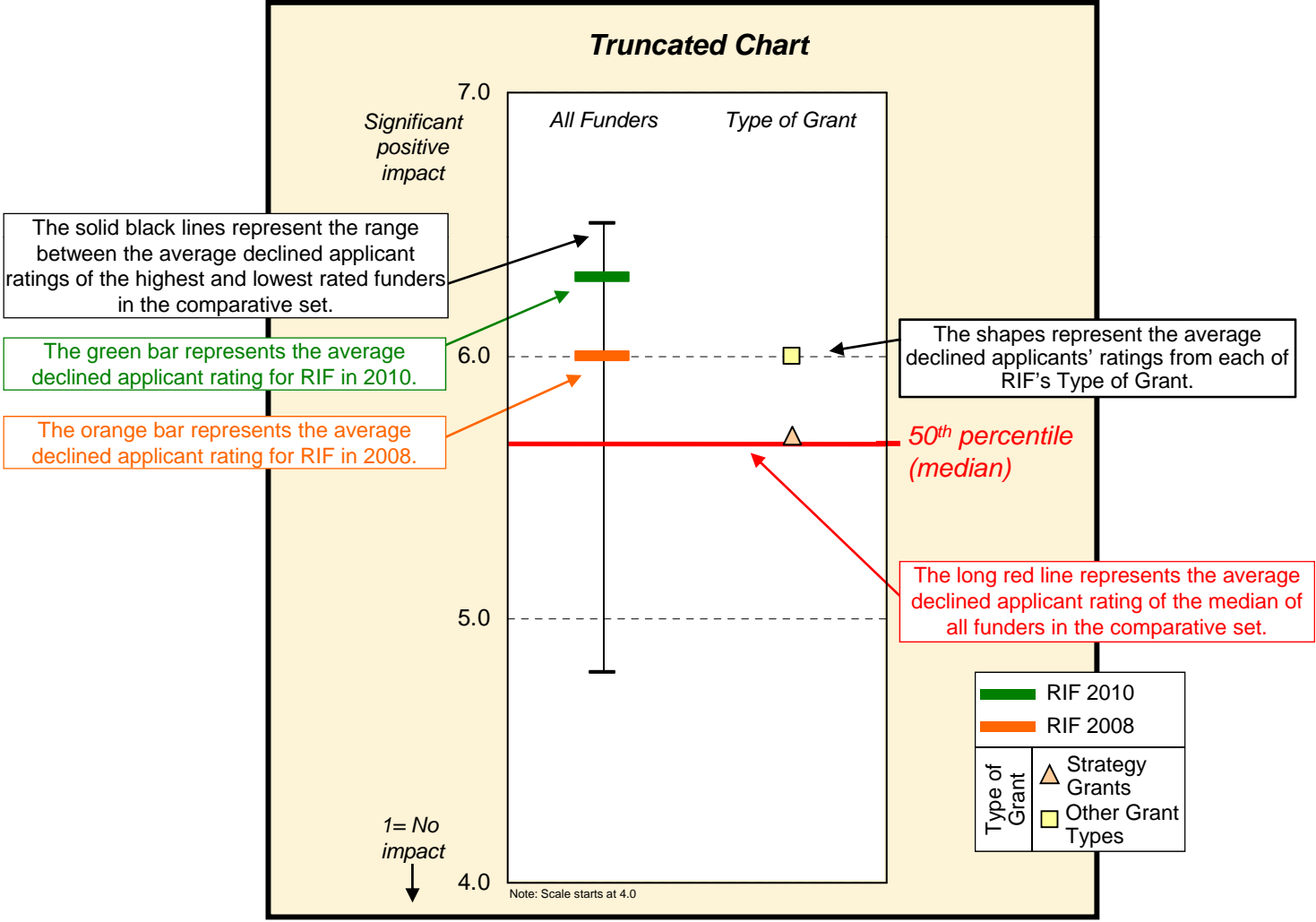
Structural Characteristics of Declined Applicants

- ◆ This table is intended to provide context to the Foundation in thinking about the demographic makeup of its declined applicants. The information is based on self-reported data from declined applicants about the characteristics of their organizations.
- ◆ Compared to the typical funder, RIF declined applicants tend to be younger organizations that have fewer programs conducted for 6 years or more.

Survey Item	RIF 2010	RIF 2008	Full Dataset Median
Budget of Declined Applicant Organizations			
Median organizational budget	\$0.7MM	\$0.6MM	\$0.7MM
Duration of Requested Program and Declined Applicant Organization¹			
Programs conducted 6 years or more	18%	29%	30%
Median length of establishment of declined applicant organizations	19 years	24 years	20 years

Reading APR Charts

Much of the declined applicant perception data in the APR is presented in the format below. These graphs show the average of declined applicants responses for RIF in 2010 and 2008 against the average ratings of the full comparative set of 35 philanthropic funders. **Throughout the report, charts in this format are truncated from the full scale because funder averages fall within the top half of the range.**



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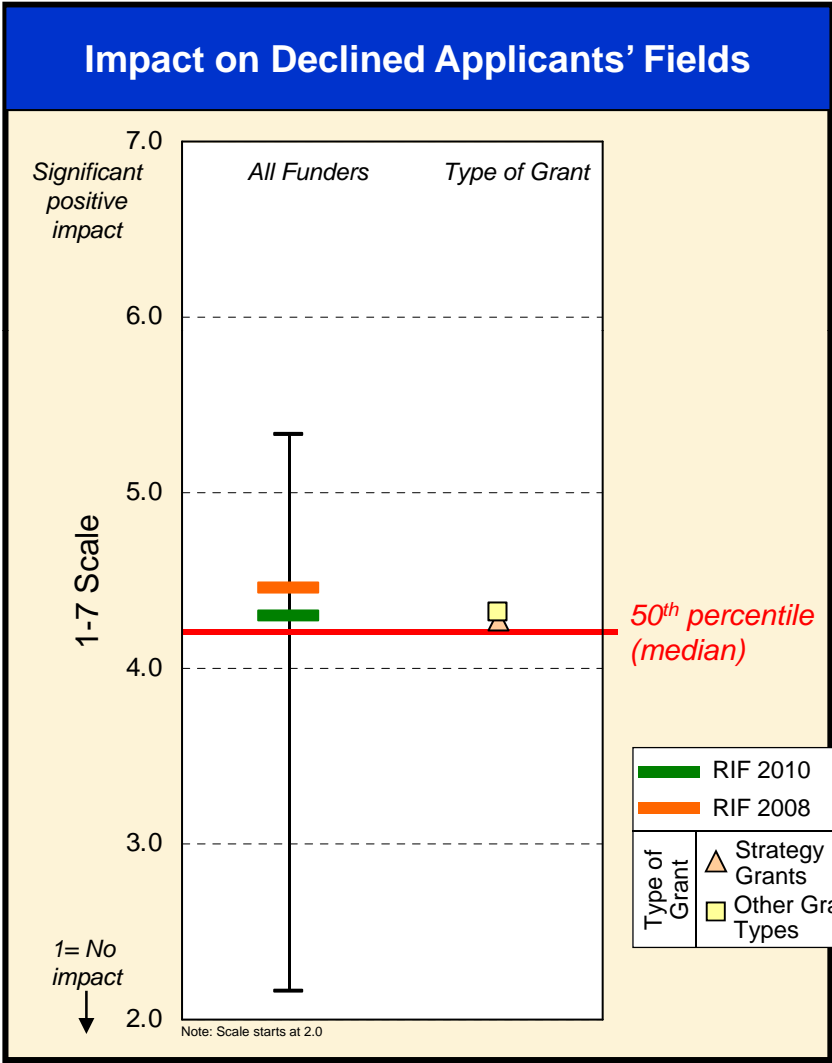
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Impact on Declined Applicants' Fields

On impact on declined applicants' fields, RIF is rated:

- similarly to the median funder

III. Impact on Declined Applicant Fields and Local Communities

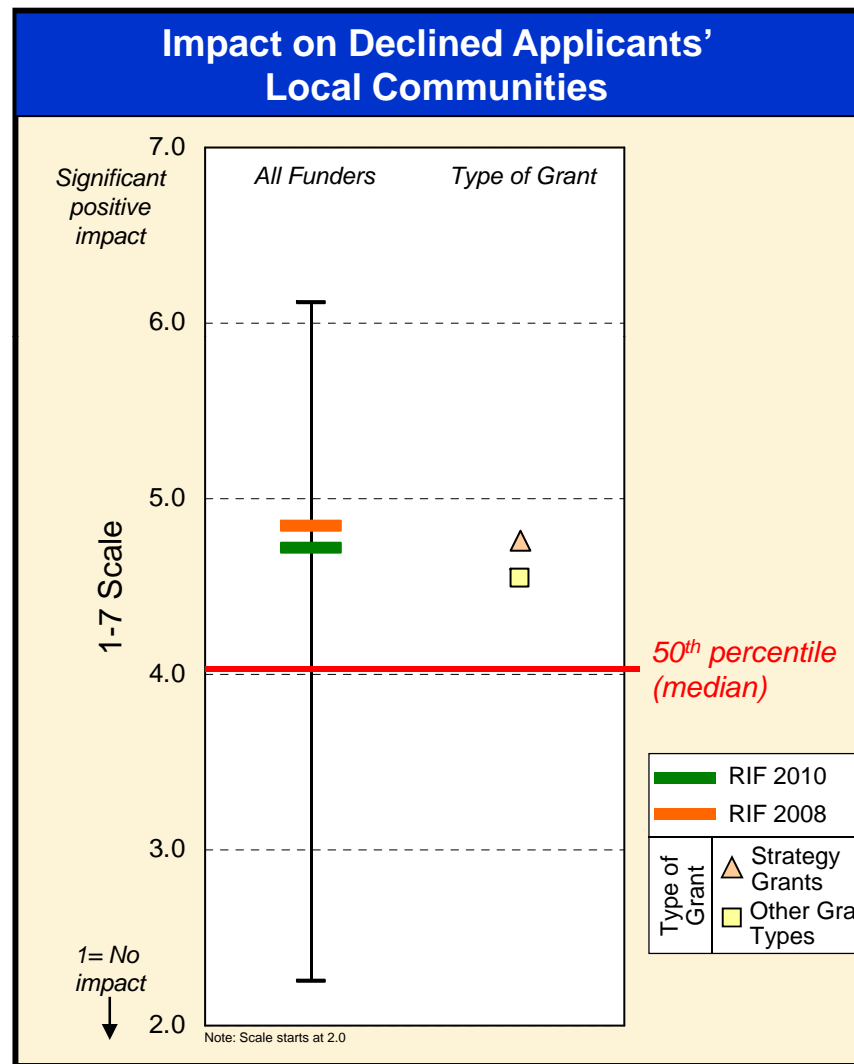


Note: This question includes a "don't know" response option; 2 percent of RIF 2010 respondents answered "don't know," compared to 17 percent at the median funder and 8 percent of RIF 2008 respondents.

Impact on Declined Applicants' Local Communities

On impact on declined applicants' local communities, RIF is rated:

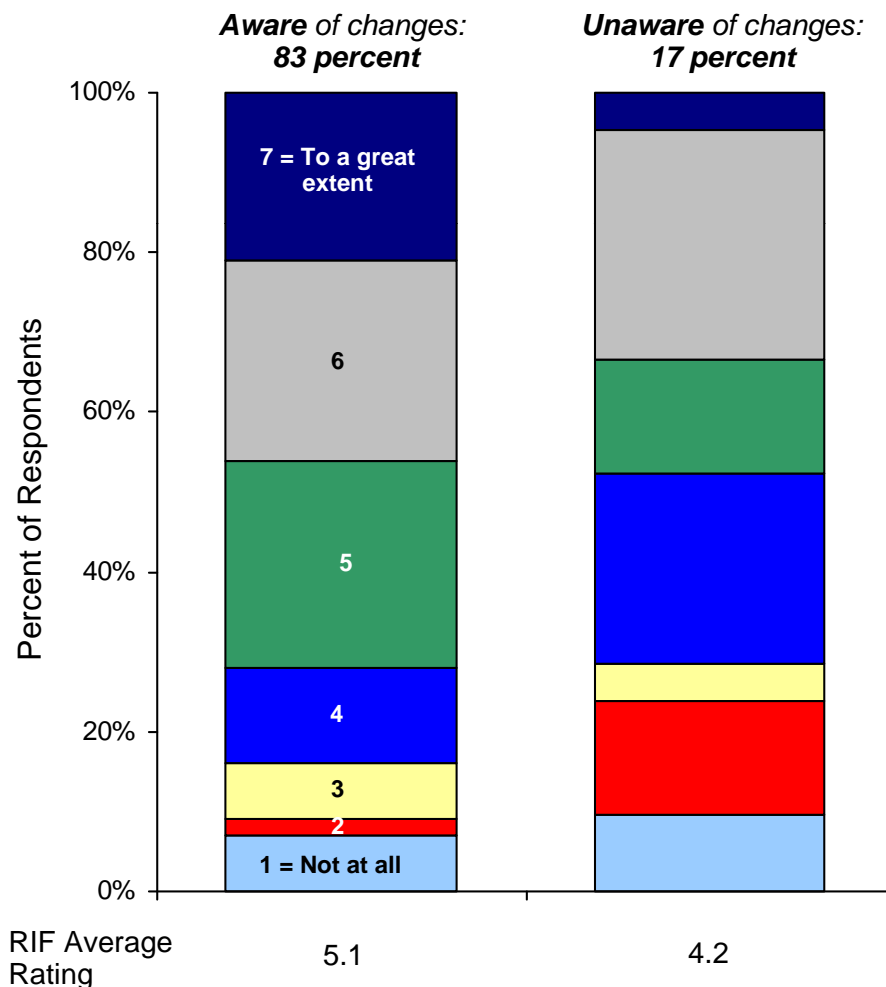
- above the median funder



Changes to Strategic Priorities

RIF declined applicants were asked whether they were aware of changes in the Foundation’s strategic priorities and grant programs in education and primary health as well as to rate the extent to which the Foundation’s new initiatives in education and primary health care will affect their organization, with 1 = “Not at all” and 7 = “To a great extent.” Lastly, they were asked to comment on any effects, positive or negative, of these changes on their organization and/or view of the Foundation’s grant programs.

Extent to which you think the Foundation’s new initiatives will affect your organization



Declined Applicant Comments

- “Narrows the scope considerably for eligibility.”
- “I am highly supportive of the new focus on health and education. This concentration of resources can have a significant impact on these core issues that affect Rhode Islanders from many walks of life, and should also help rebuild our economy and strengthen our communities.”
- “Because our nonprofits’ services, however vital and important, do not ‘fit’ into the new structuring we feel it will hurt our chances for getting the future funding we need.”
- “Arts and Culture are already taking a back seat to other funding priorities in the regional philanthropic community. I believe that the pool of RI Foundation grant money awarded to my sector of non-profit organizations in Rhode Island will diminish as a result of these changes.”
- “Unfortunately, the Foundation does not appear to hold a comprehensive view of primary healthcare that treats the whole person.”
- “I am pleased that the Foundation is really focusing in on two priorities – and attempting to make significant change in these areas. Because education reform is my top priority – this lines up perfectly with my own priority (and the agencies I serve).”
- “Unless the Foundation plans to greatly increase their total granting, we don’t understand how they can focus on education and primary health care without impacting their commitment (i.e., funding) to other sectors.”

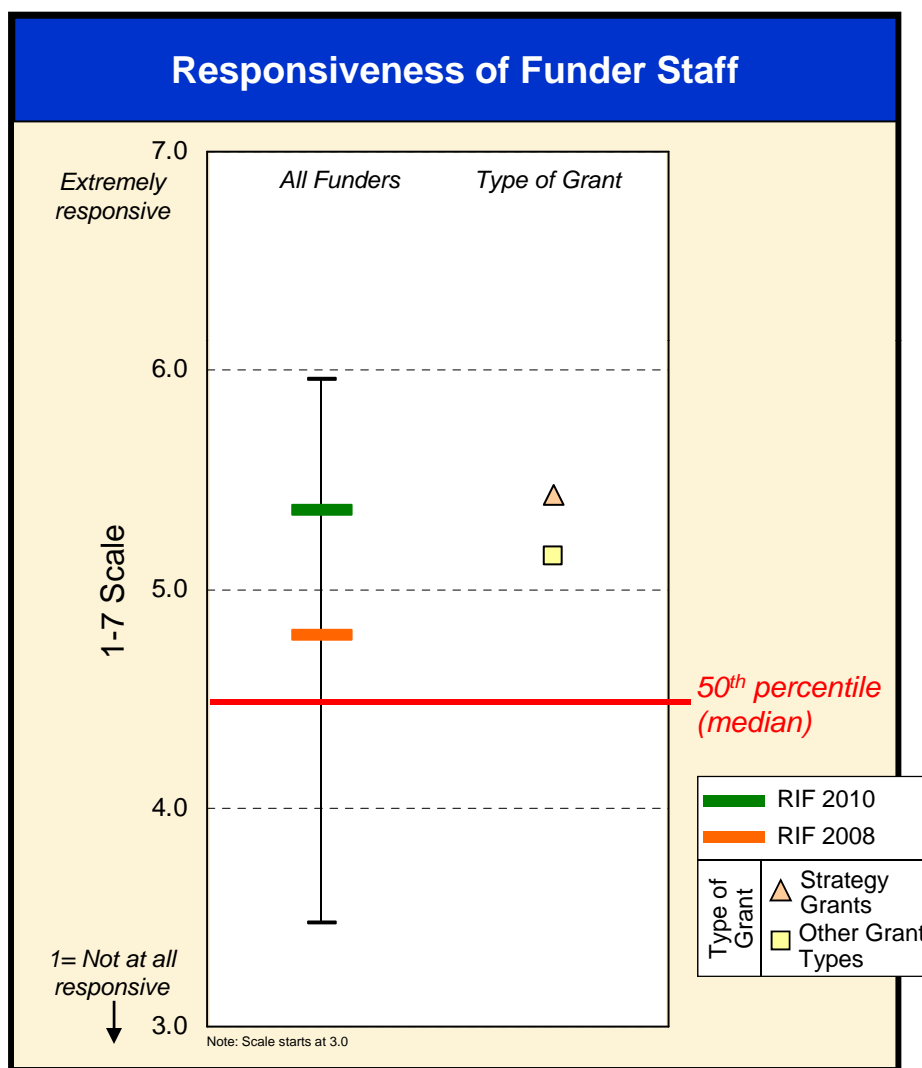
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Responsiveness of Funder Staff

On responsiveness of funder staff to declined applicants, RIF is rated:

- above the median funder



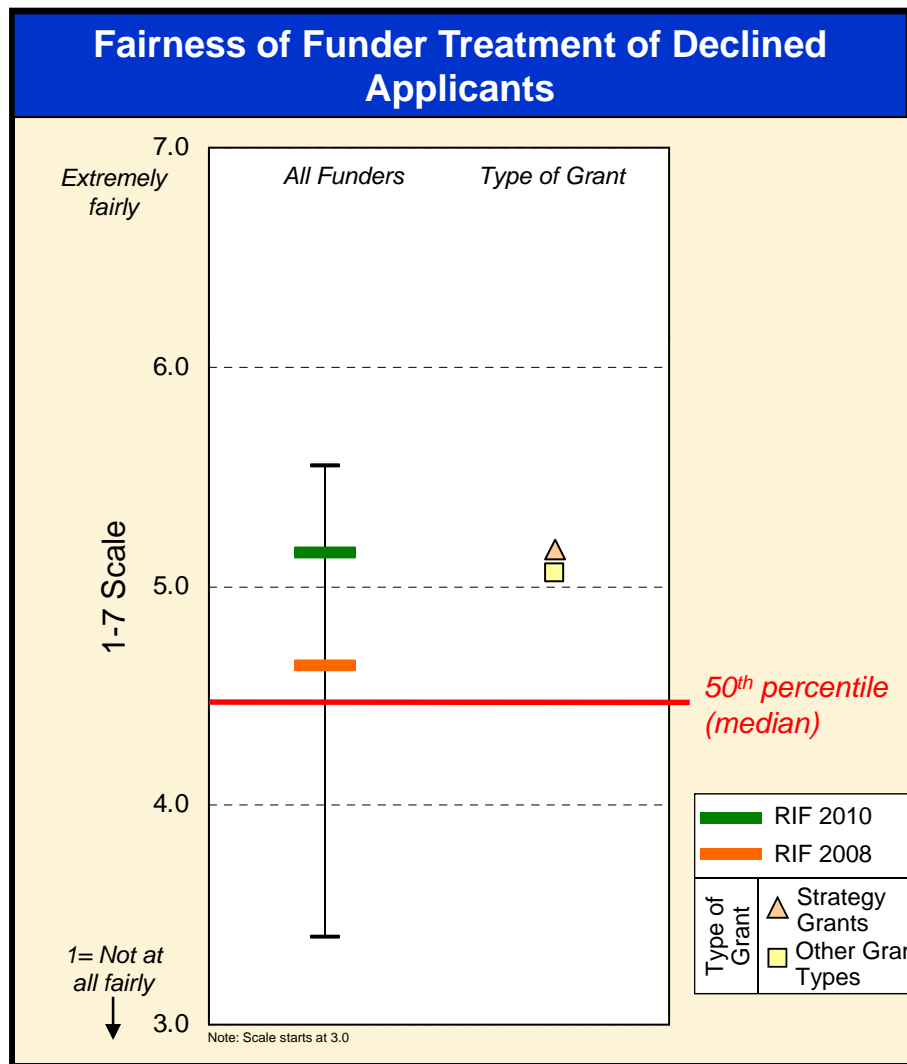
Selected Declined Applicant Comments

- ♦ *“There were a few challenges in receiving timely feedback/responses to our questions, but we did get good information.”*
- ♦ *“Some of the staff are extremely accessible; it would be helpful to get more regular updates from the Foundation on what is going on in the world of philanthropy internally, in the state, and nationally.”*
- ♦ *“The Foundation has improved light years since I began applying to them. It used to be completely opaque – now the staff is very accessible and informative. I am glad to see that they are shortening their response time – it was a mystery what they were doing with the proposals after the intensive round of writing, talking, responding to questions, etc. that characterized the grant process.”*
- ♦ *“Communication varies according to program officer. I have had GREAT experiences with [some program officers]. Another program officer – I cannot receive a return call or email.”*
- ♦ *“They are always open to talk about projects and provide constructive advice as to the whether the proposal falls into a...priority category. They also are responsive to questions during the entire process and after notification.”*

Fairness of Treatment

On fairness of treatment of declined applicants, RIF is rated:

- above the median funder



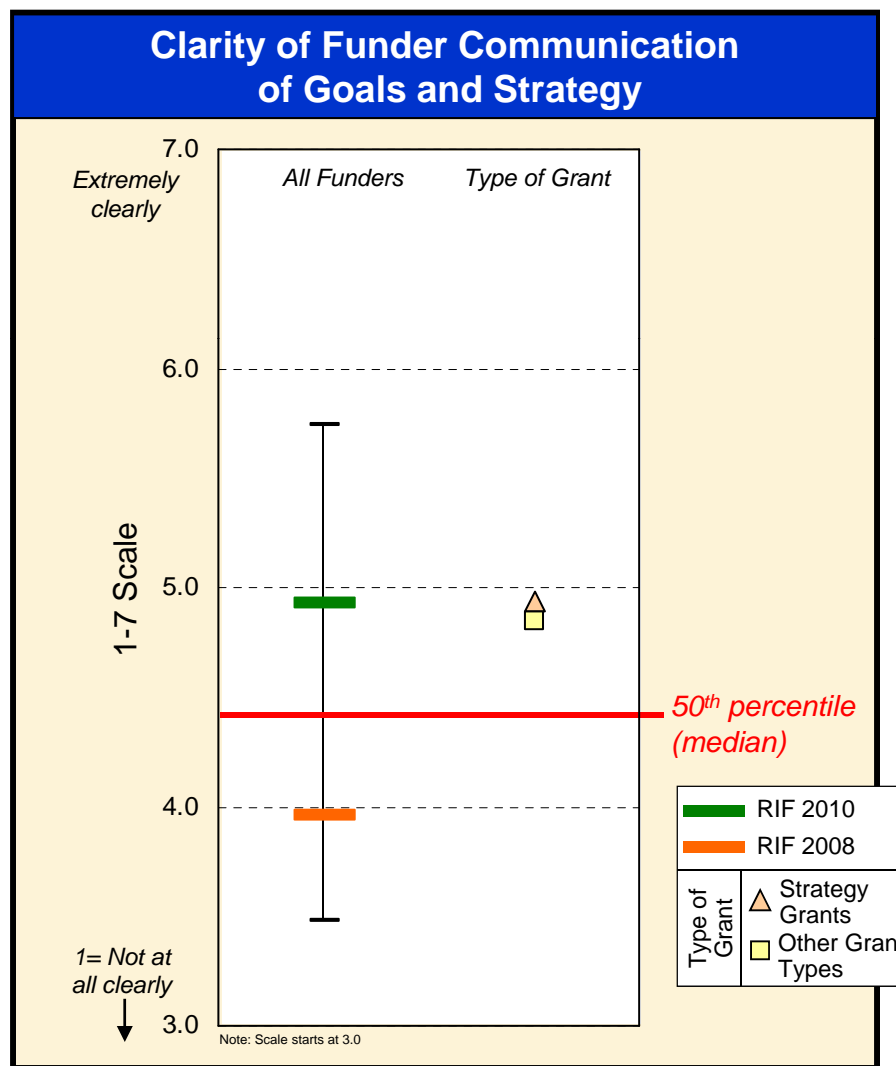
Selected Declined Applicant Comments

- ♦ *“I deeply value [our program officer’s] honest communication about RIF’s grant process and priorities, as well as her open discussions of the program content as a colleague who understands and supports our work in the community.”*
- ♦ *“The staff obviously spends a lot of time becoming familiar with the projects that they fund. They are very approachable and informative.”*
- ♦ *“We feel as though we had a good, honest relationship with our program officer, but were very much led astray in this past round of grantmaking. Our proposed project fit their guidelines as described by their website and their staff, but it was rejected and written off as ‘bad,’ with no real explanation as to why.”*

Communication of Goals and Strategy

On clarity of the Foundation's communication of its goals and strategy, RIF is rated:

- above the median funder



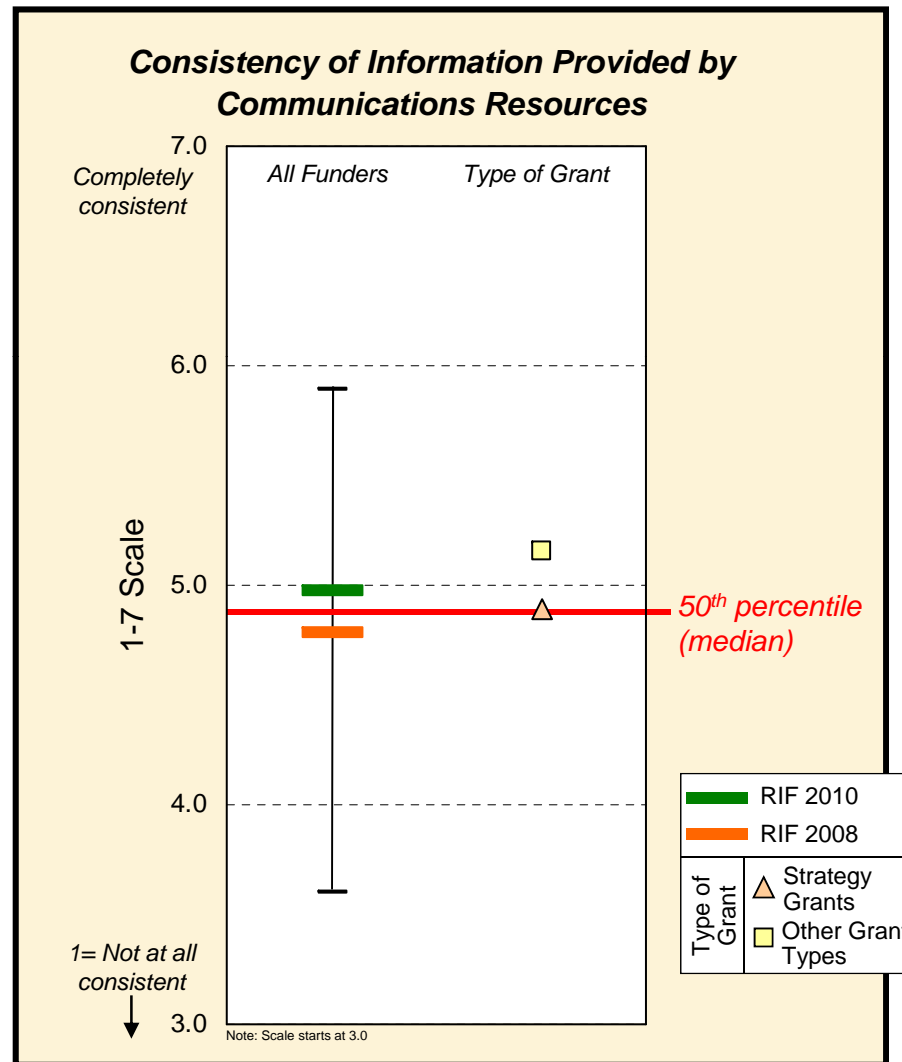
Selected Declined Applicant Comments

- ♦ *“RIF has always been very accessible, open, and honest regarding priorities and the process. The new 6 key sectors as read on the RIF website are very specific and are not a strong fit for our agency. We knew applying would be a long shot but that there was a place for interests outside those very specific 6 key sectors.”*
- ♦ *“Foundation staff are very encouraging and supportive. However, it can lead to a false sense of future funding. I don't think that they should change their approach, but perhaps be clearer on what a good proposal looks like.”*
- ♦ *“The application guidelines are well defined and the staff is easy to access for questions.”*
- ♦ *“The feedback from one person about why we didn't get the grant was inconsistent with the reasons we were originally given when encouraged to apply from another person.”*
- ♦ *“Was encouraged quite a bit to apply, was told repeatedly the project was something the Foundation would be willing to fund, was told that it was a great idea, great fit, etc. When it was not funded, almost no information was provided as to why. Seems that there was a huge disconnect between what we were told by the program officer and what the board actually thought re priorities, goodness of fit, etc.”*

Consistency of Communications

On consistency of the Foundation's communications resources, both personal and written, RIF is rated:

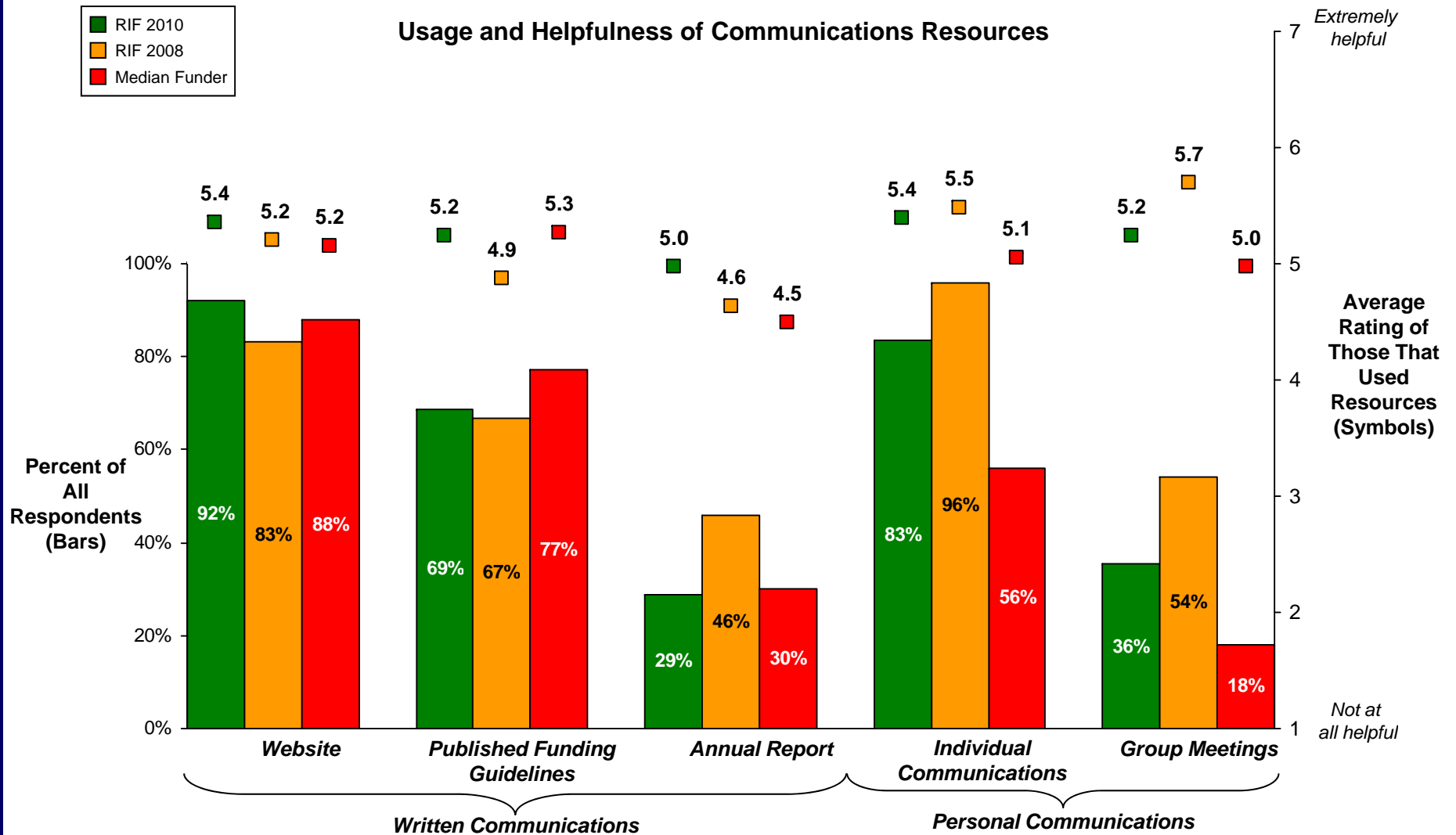
- similarly to the median funder



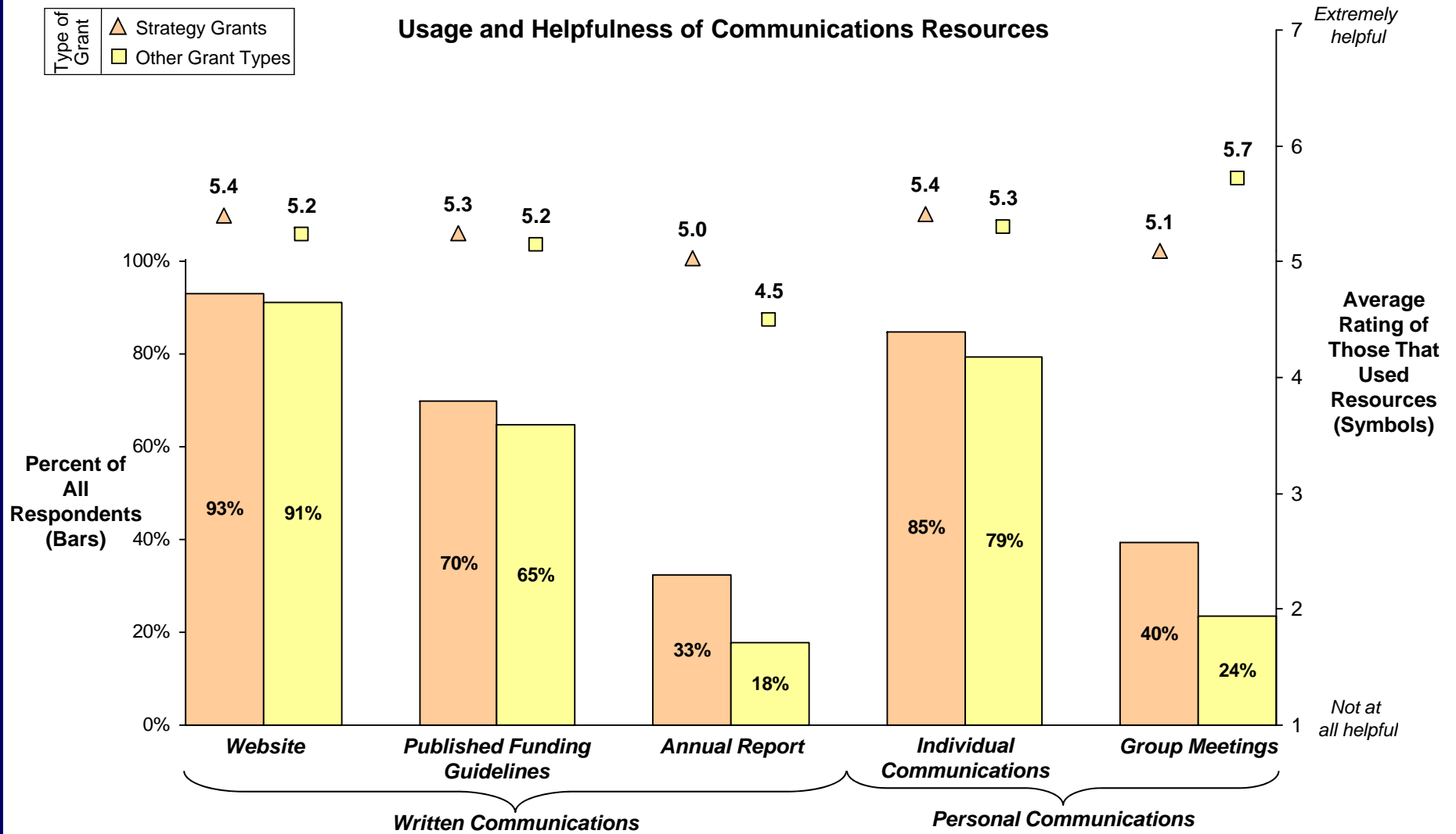
Note: This question includes a "used one or no resources" response option; 2 percent of RIF 2010 respondents indicated they use one or no resources, compared to 10 percent at the median funder and 4 percent at RIF 2008.

Communication Resources (1)

RIF declined applicants rate the helpfulness of communications resources similarly or above those of the median funder.



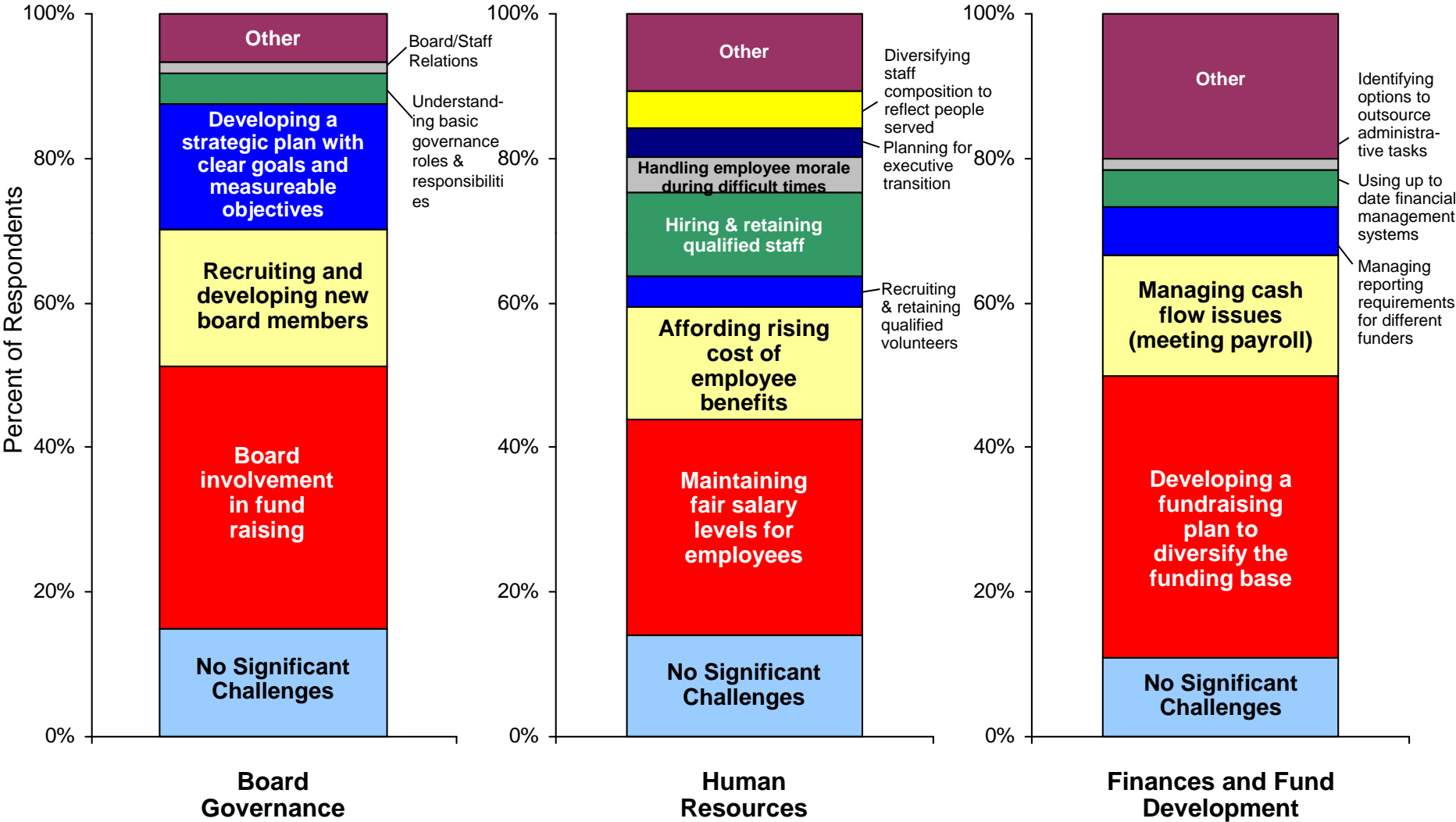
Communication Resources (2)



FY 2010 Challenges (1)

RIF declined applicants were asked the biggest challenges their organization will face in Fiscal Year 2010 in various capacity areas.

“What are the biggest challenges your organization will face in Fiscal Year 2010 in each of the following capacity areas?”



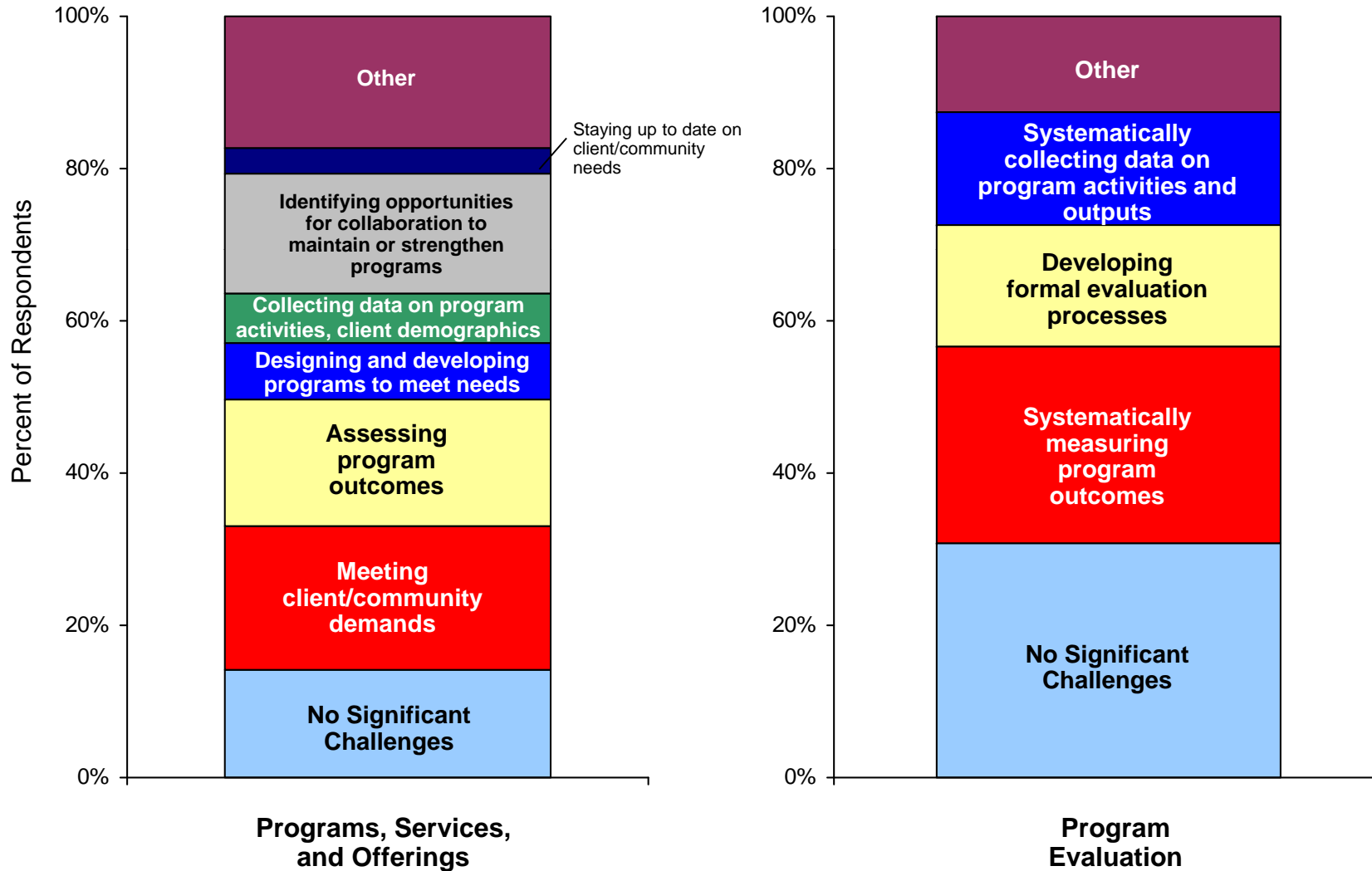
IV. Aspects of the Declined Applicant Experience

Note: No comparative data is available because the question was only asked of RIF declined applicants.

FY 2010 Challenges (2)

RIF declined applicants were asked the biggest challenges their organization will face in Fiscal Year 2010 in various capacity areas.

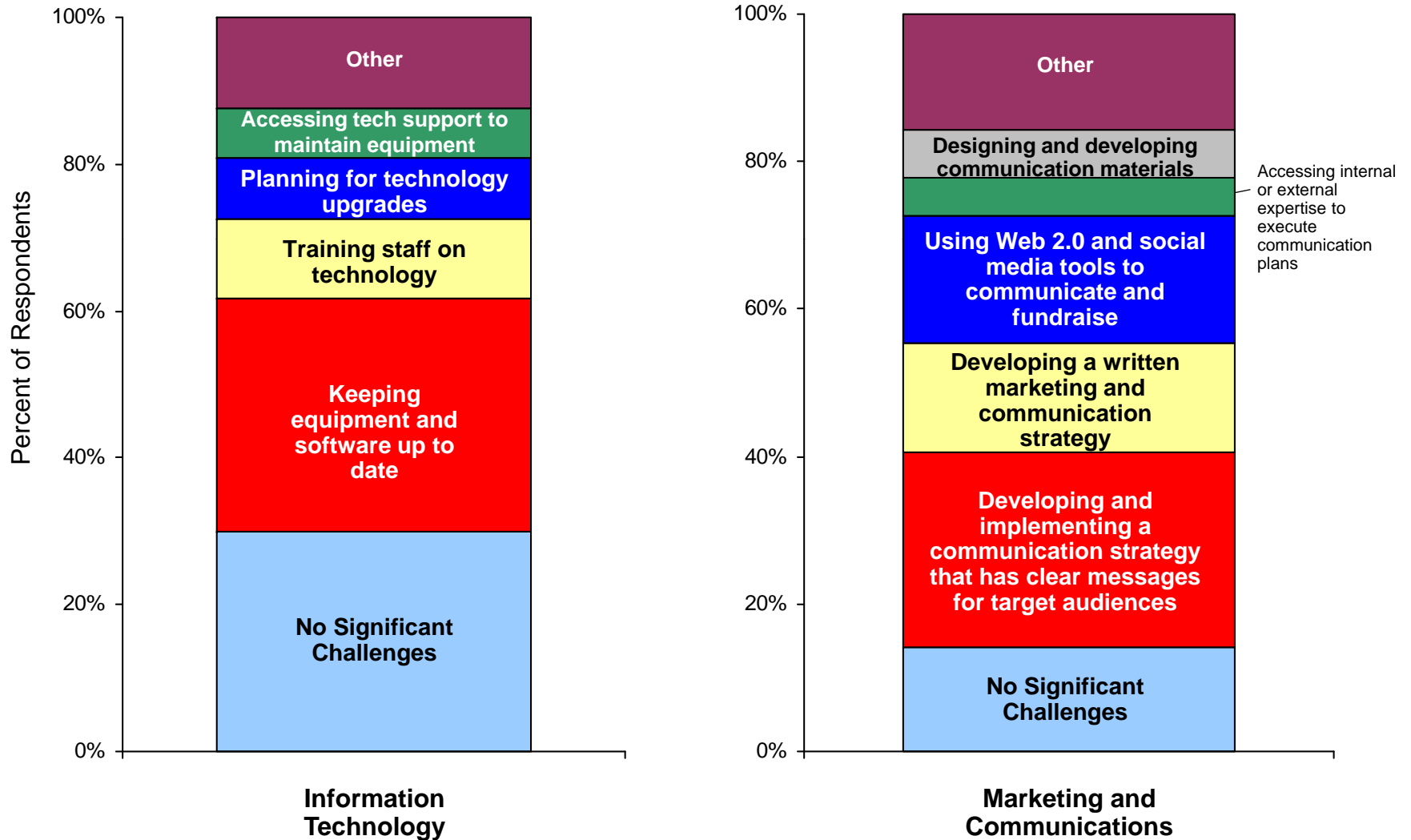
“What are the biggest challenges your organization will face in Fiscal Year 2010 in each of the following capacity areas?”



FY 2010 Challenges (3)

RIF declined applicants were asked the biggest challenges their organization will face in Fiscal Year 2010 in various capacity areas.

“What are the biggest challenges your organization will face in Fiscal Year 2010 in each of the following capacity areas?”



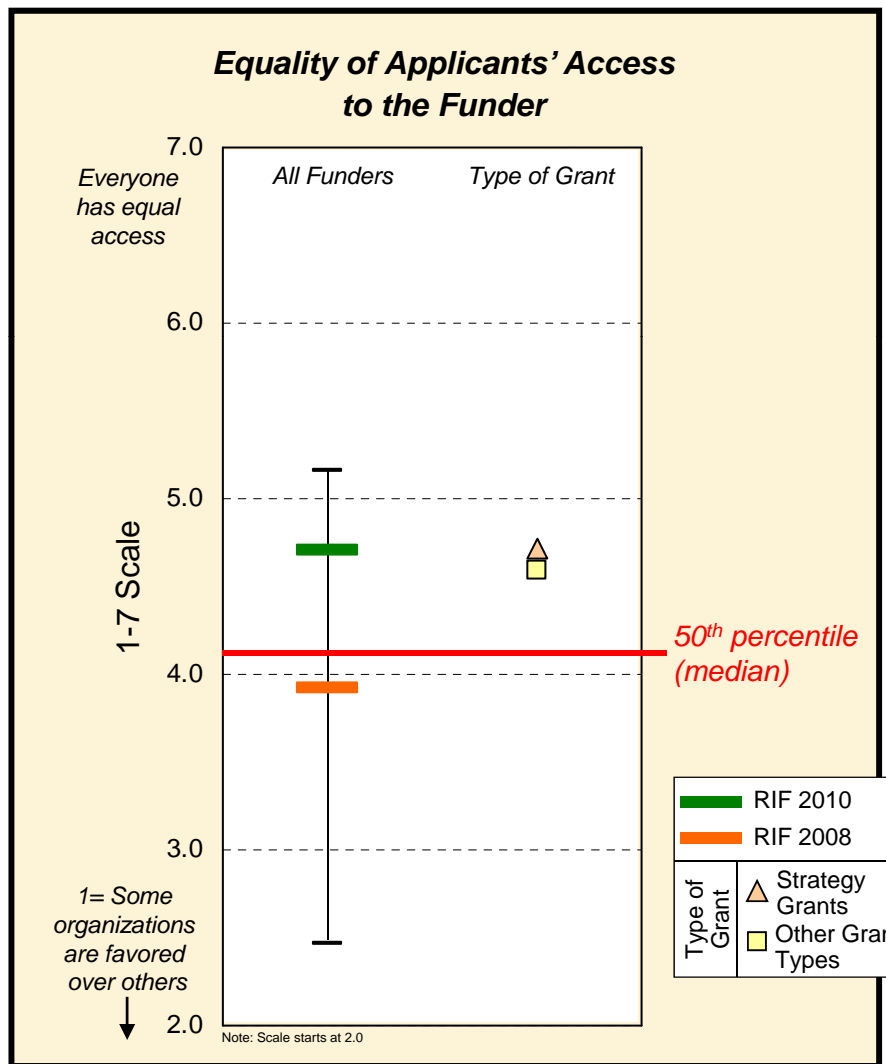
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Accessibility of the Foundation to Applicants

On equality of access to funding, RIF is rated:

- above the median funder



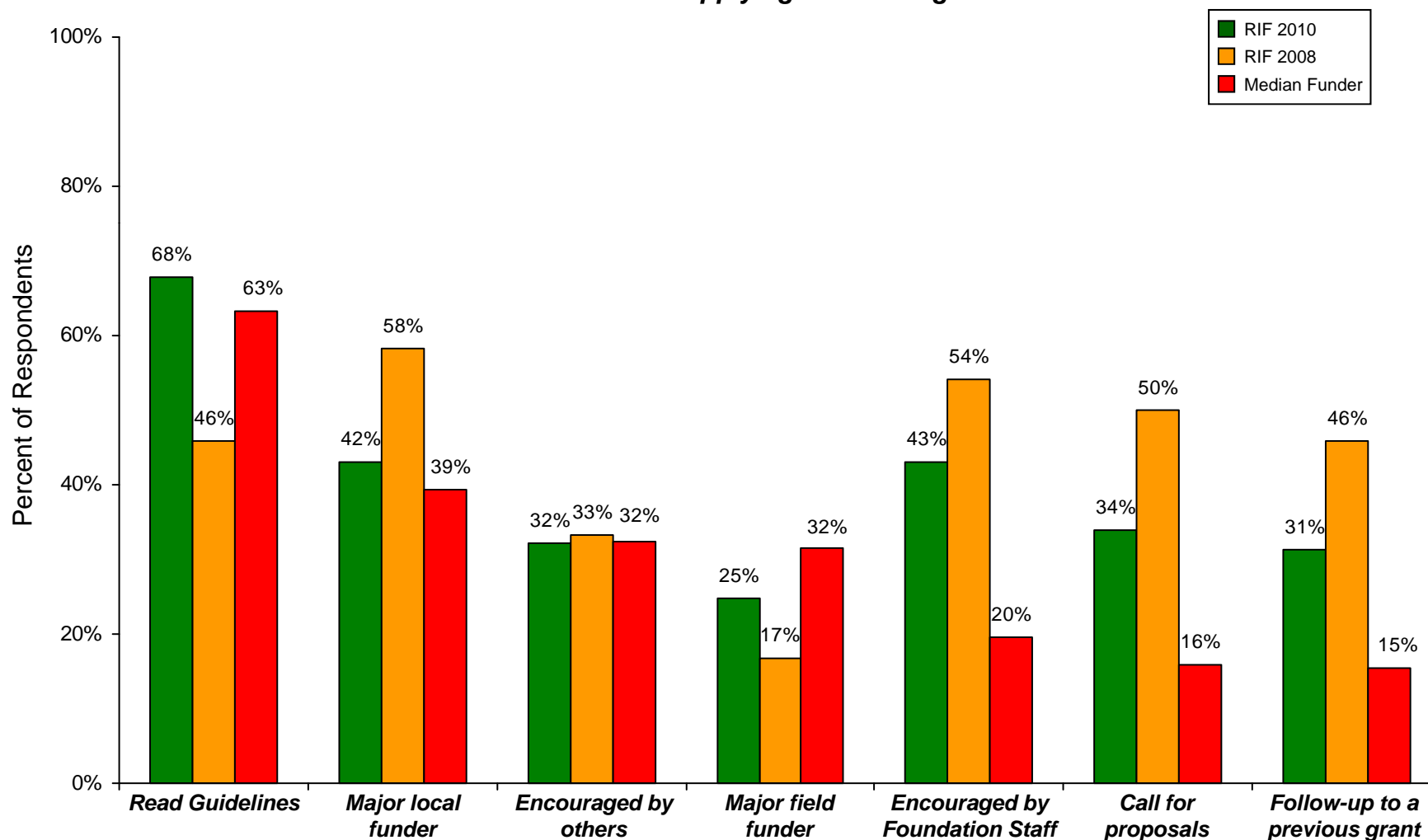
Selected Declined Applicant Comments

- ♦ *“Working with the Foundation is great...now. There were many years when non-profits hated working with them as everything seemed secretive and marked by favoritism.”*
- ♦ *“We felt that the money had already been designated – for programs funded in the previous year or that the only the ‘newest’ innovations were considered.”*
- ♦ *“I have had the feeling for some time that the Foundation supports the arts as a social service rather than as arts, an intrinsically important part of individual lives and communities. Its statement of support for the arts is clear but in practice it seems a bit disingenuous. Recent changes, however, appear to be promising.”*
- ♦ *“Over the past few years, the processes have improved and provided more opportunities for grant seekers to benefit from the Foundation’s guidance during the grant preparation period. The Foundation has made efforts to become more accessible and to familiarize grant seekers with staff and officers, which is helpful.”*

Reasons for Application (1)

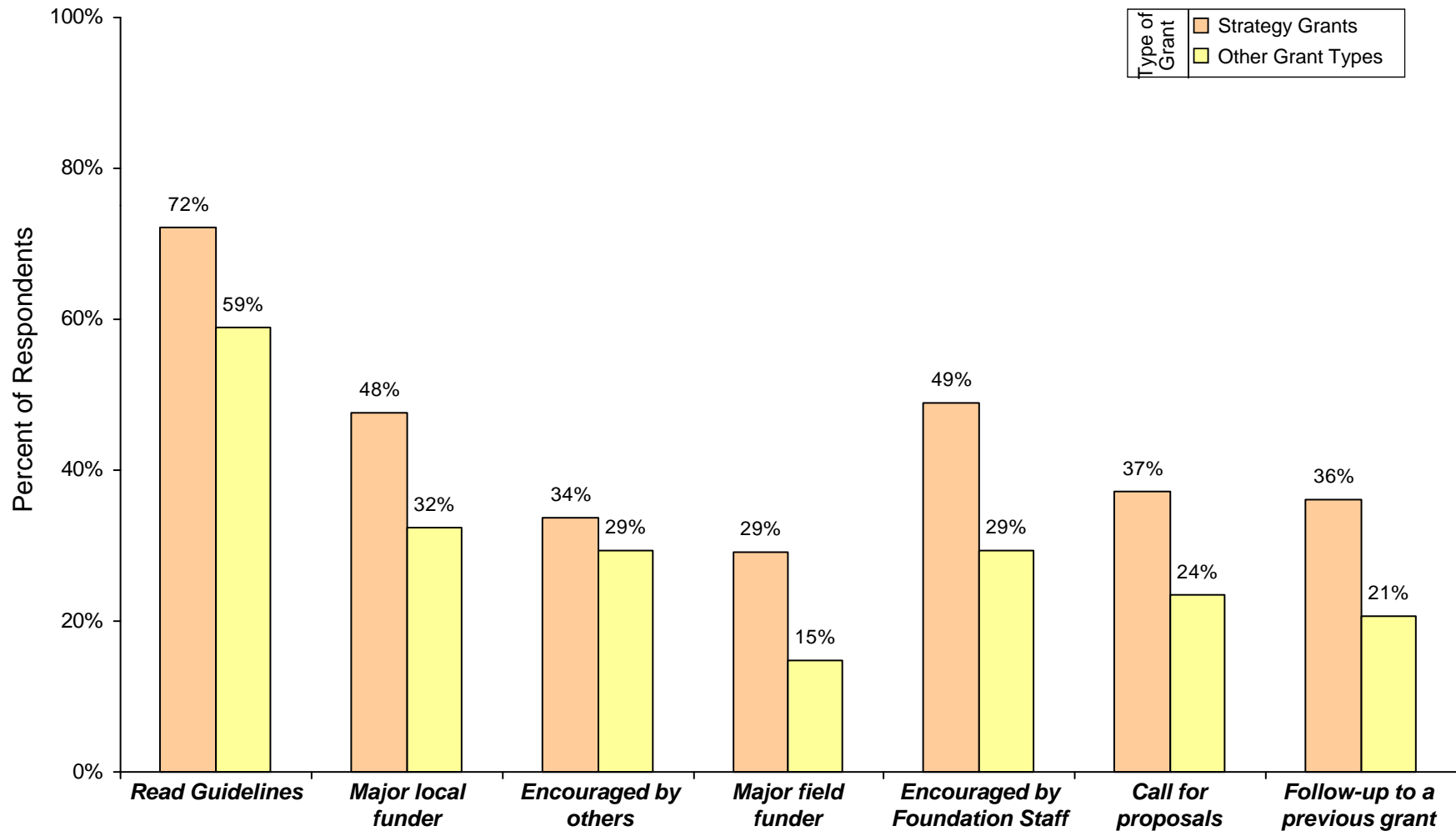
A larger than typical proportion of RIF declined applicants report applying for a grant because they were encouraged by Foundation staff, as a response to a call for proposals, or as a follow-up to a previous grant.

Reasons for Applying for Funding



Reasons for Application (2)

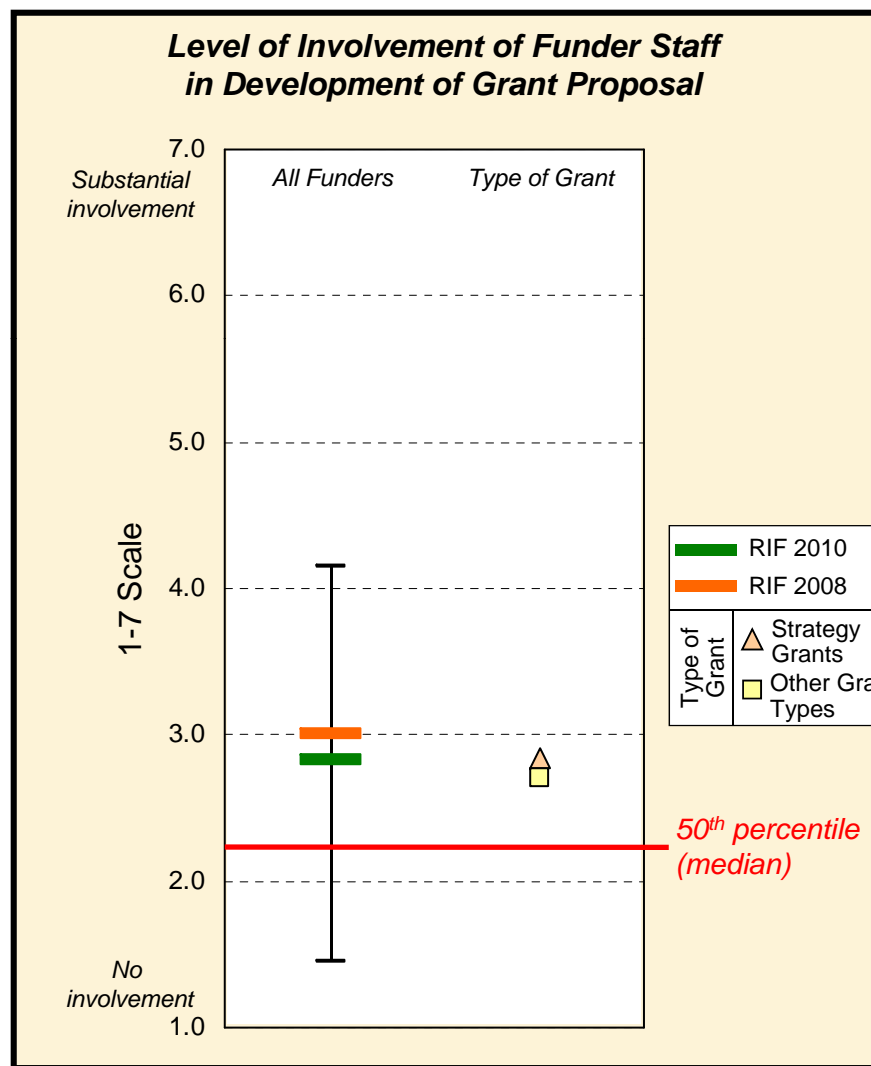
Reasons for Applying for Funding



Funder Involvement in Proposal Development (1)

On the level of staff involvement in the development of declined applicants' proposals, RIF is rated:

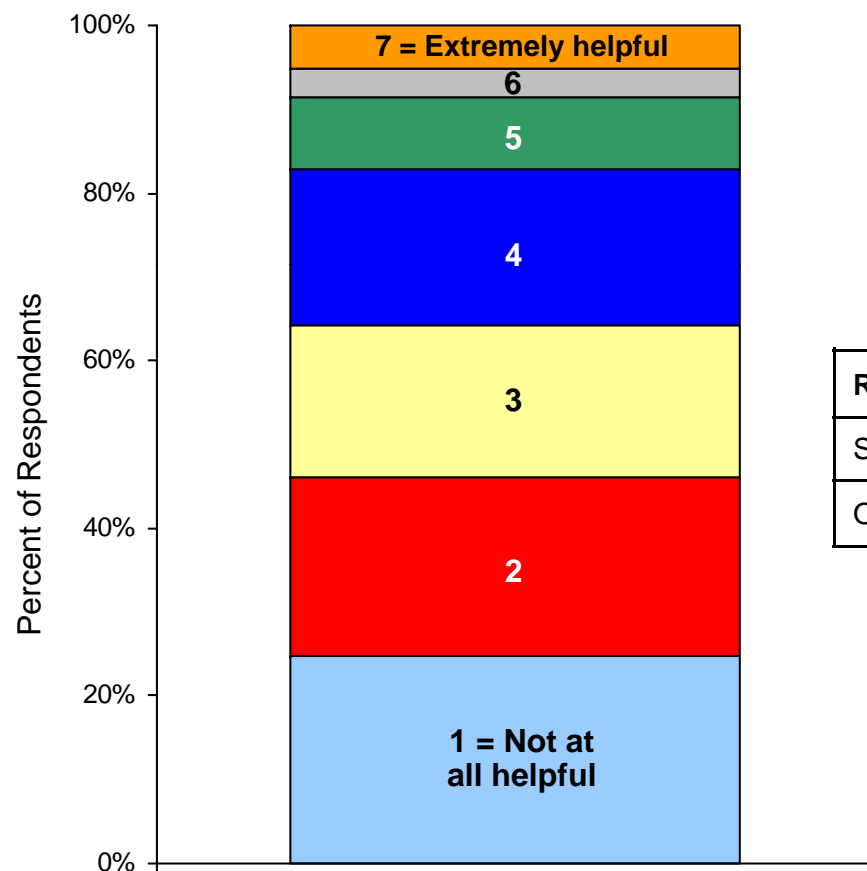
- above the median funder



Helpfulness of the Selection Process

Nine percent of declined applicants rate the helpfulness of the Foundation’s selection process a 6 or 7 where 1 is “Not at all helpful” and 7 is “Extremely helpful.”

Helpfulness of the Selection Process to Declined Applicants

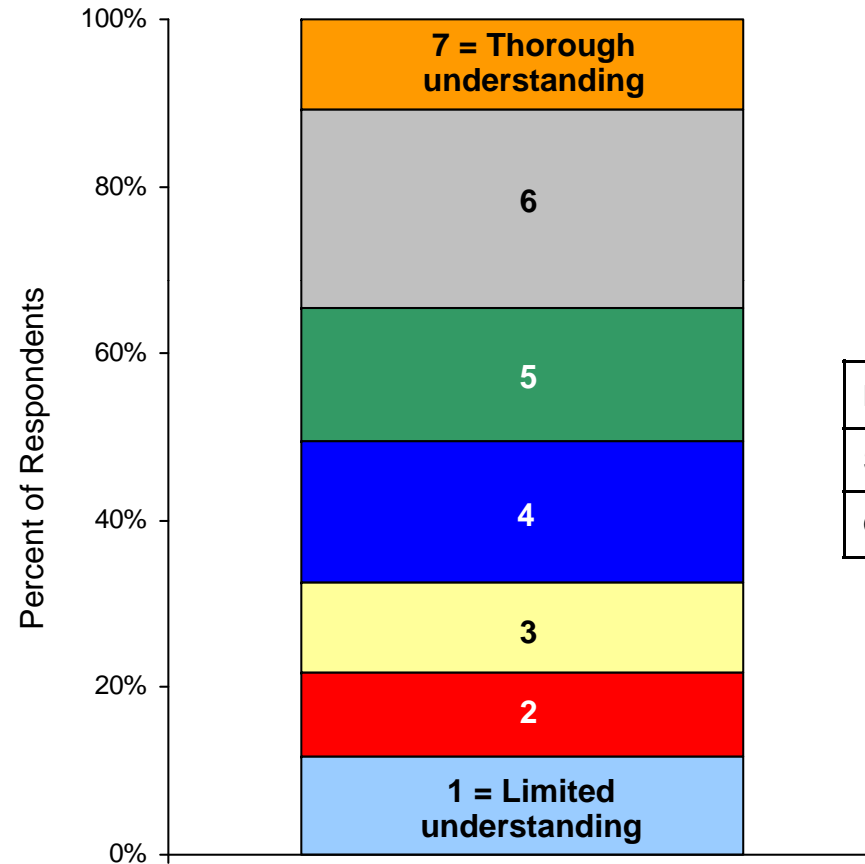


	Average Rating
RIF 2010	3.0
Strategy Grants	3.2
Other Grant Types	2.8

Understanding of Declined Applicants' Goals and Strategies

35 percent of stakeholders rate the Foundation's understanding of declined applicants goals and strategy a 6 or 7 where 1 is "Limited understanding" and 7 is "Thorough understanding."

Foundation Understanding of Declined Applicants' Goals and Strategies

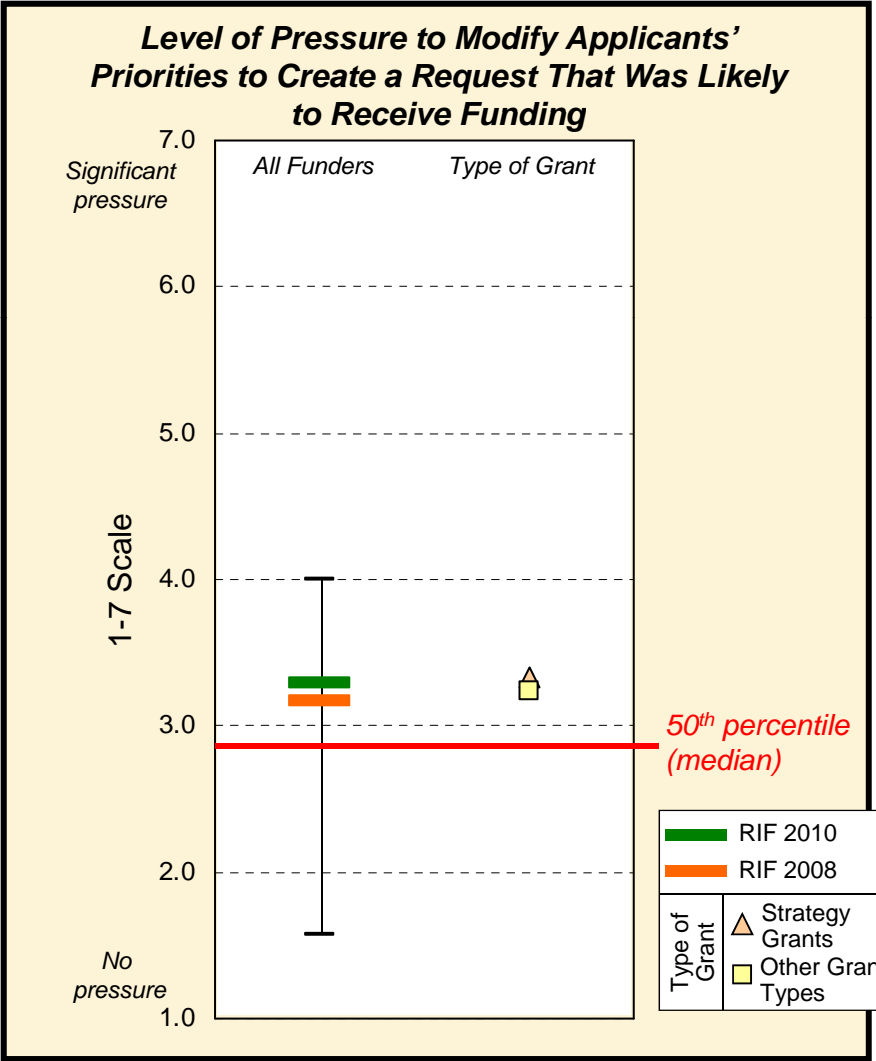


	Average Rating
RIF 2010	4.3
Strategy Grants	4.3
Other Grant Types	4.1

Pressure in Selection Process

On the level of pressure declined applicants felt to modify their priorities to create a proposal that was likely to receive funding, RIF is rated:

- above the median funder

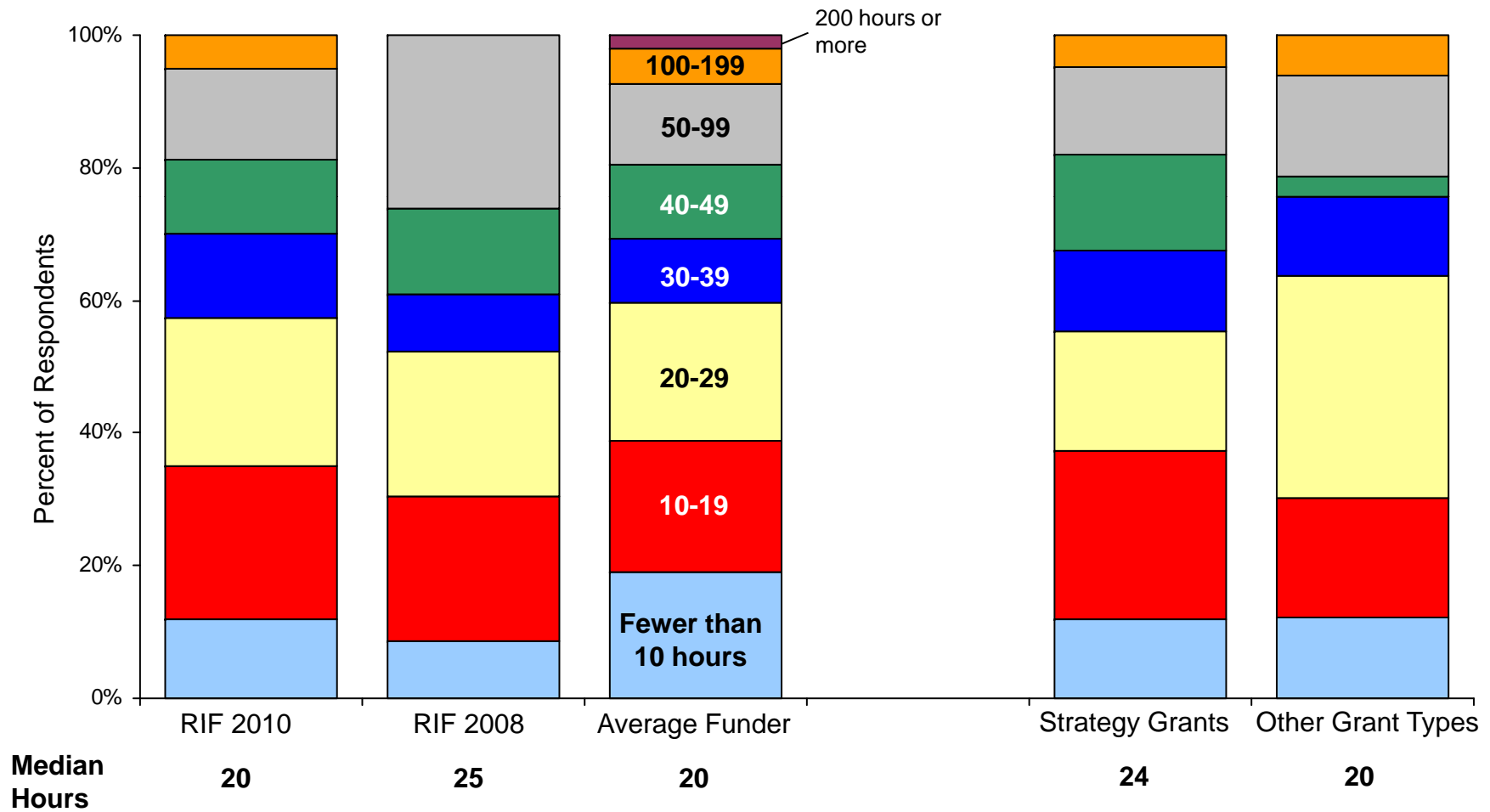


Administrative Time (1)

At the median, the number of hours of administrative time spent by RIF declined applicants during the selection process is:

- similar to the time spent by declined applicants of the median funder

Median Administrative Hours Spent by Declined Applicants on Proposal and Selection Process

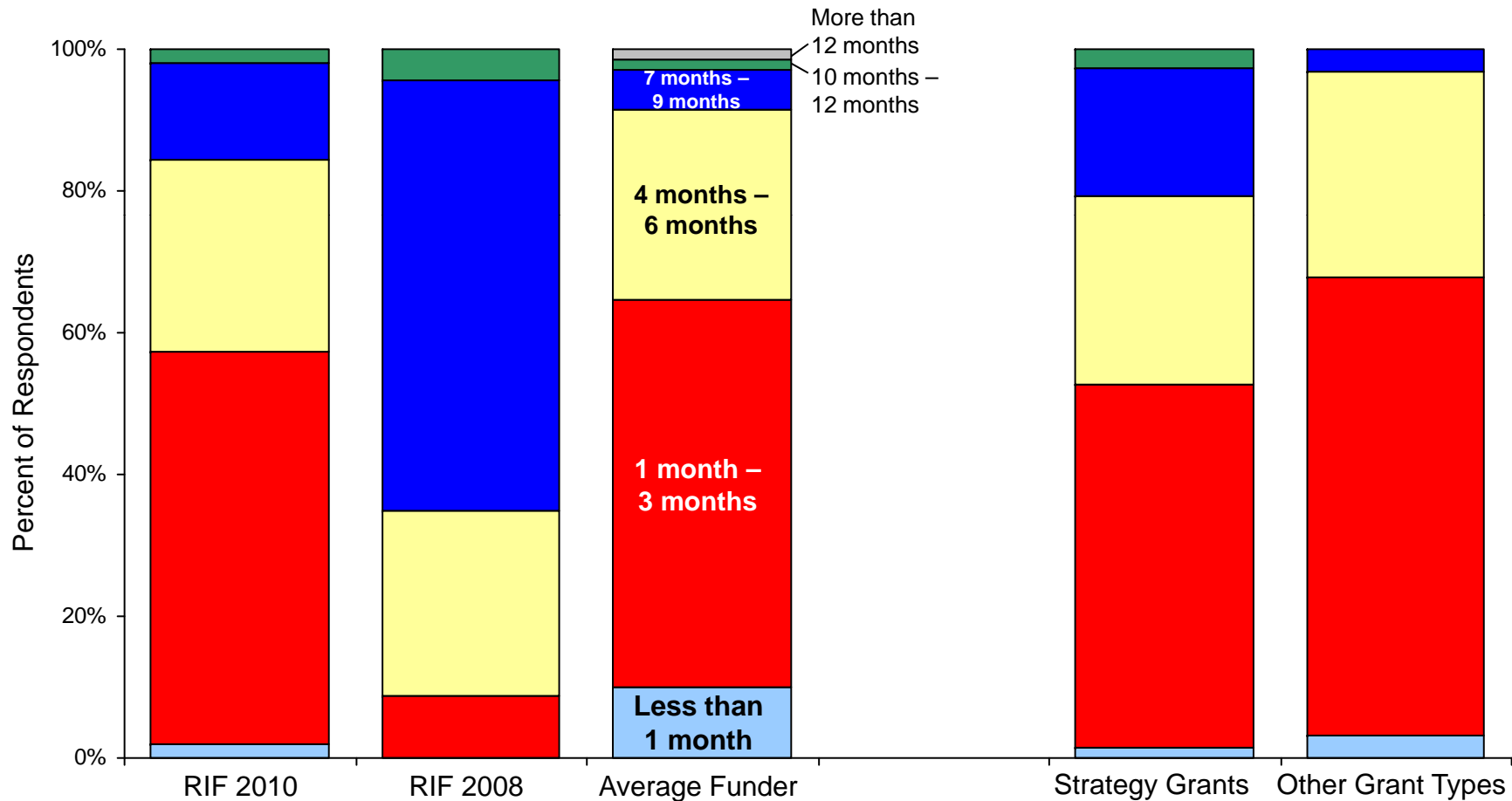


Time Between Submission and Funding Decision (1)

The proportion of RIF declined applicants that reports that three months or more elapsed between submission of proposal and the decision not to fund the proposal is:

- similar to the average funder

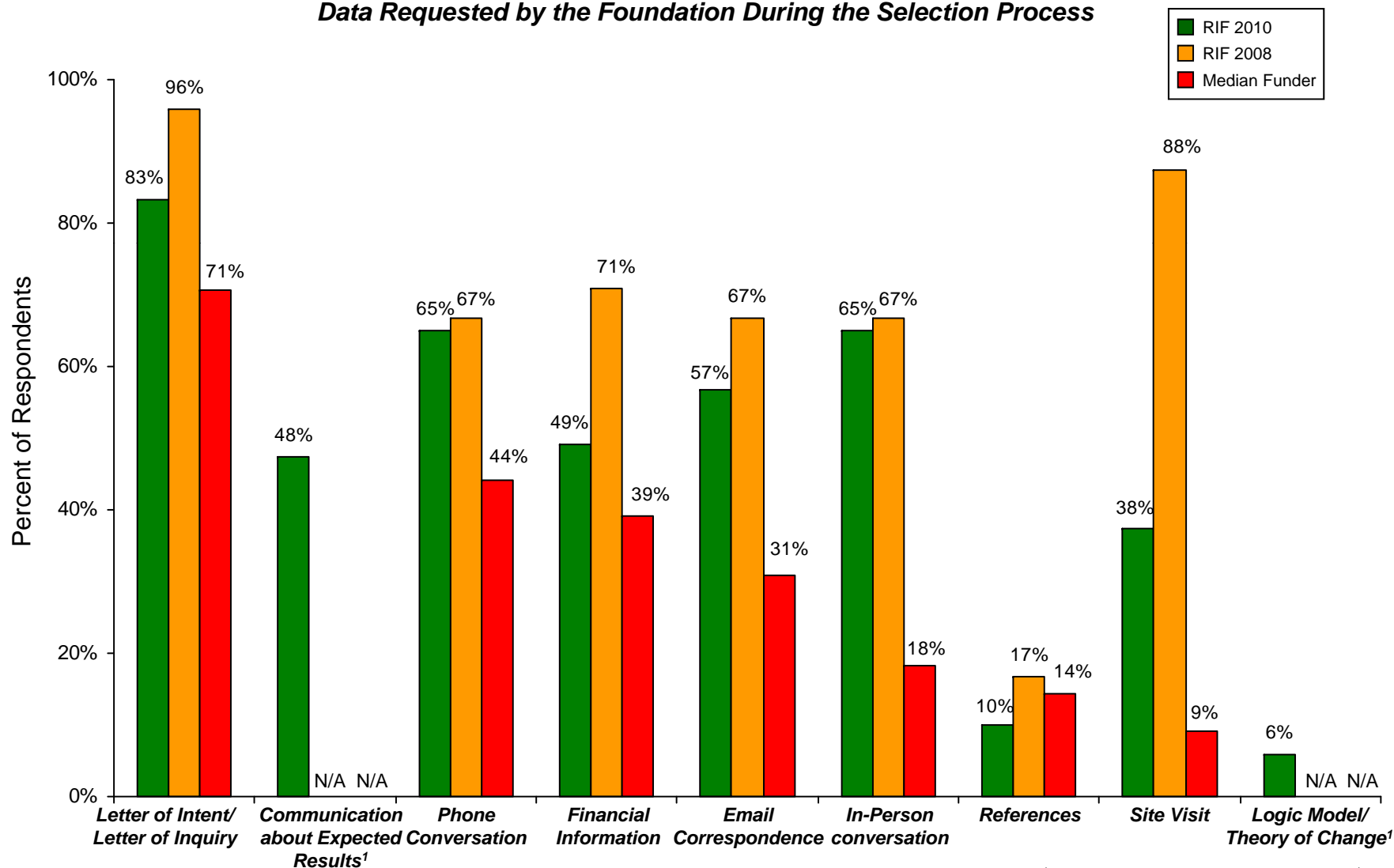
Time Elapsed Between Proposal Submission and Final Decision Not to Fund Request



Selection Process Activities (1)

Compared to declined applicants of the median funder, RIF declined applicants more frequently participate in most selection process activities – including email correspondence, phone and in-person conversations, and site visits.

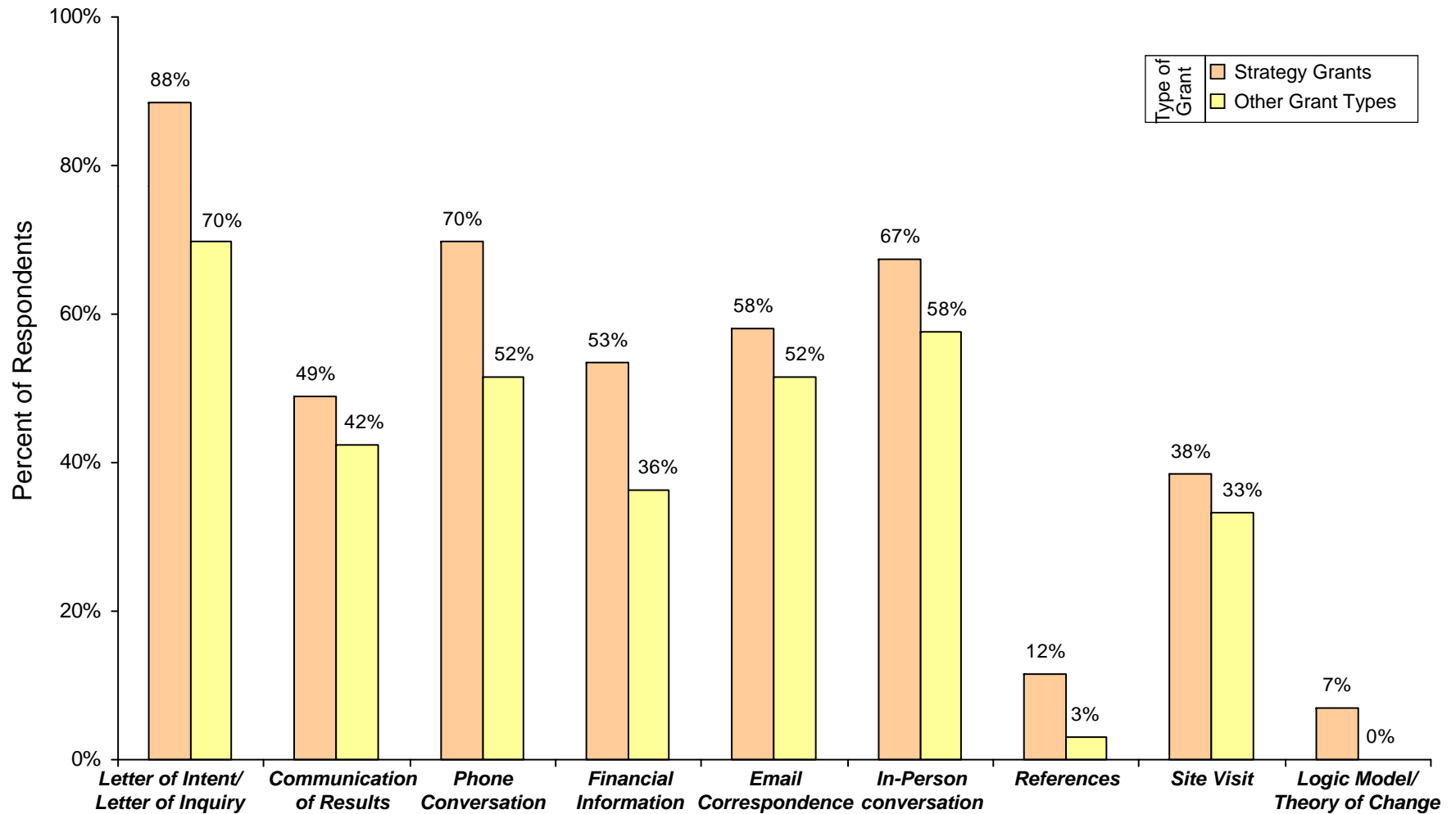
Data Requested by the Foundation During the Selection Process



1: RIF 2008 and median funder data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

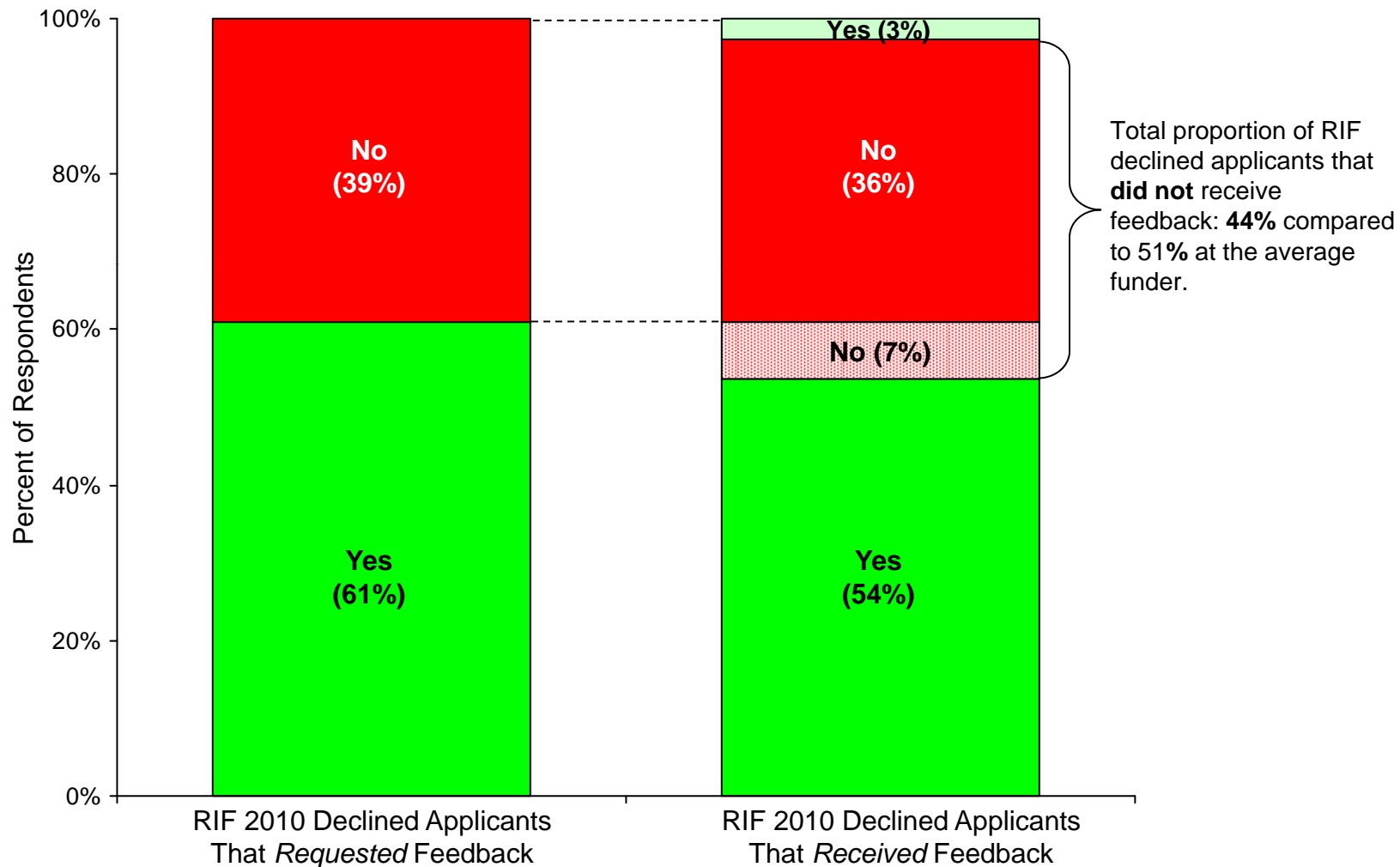
Selection Process Activities (2)

Data Requested by the Foundation During the Selection Process



Feedback on Declined Applications

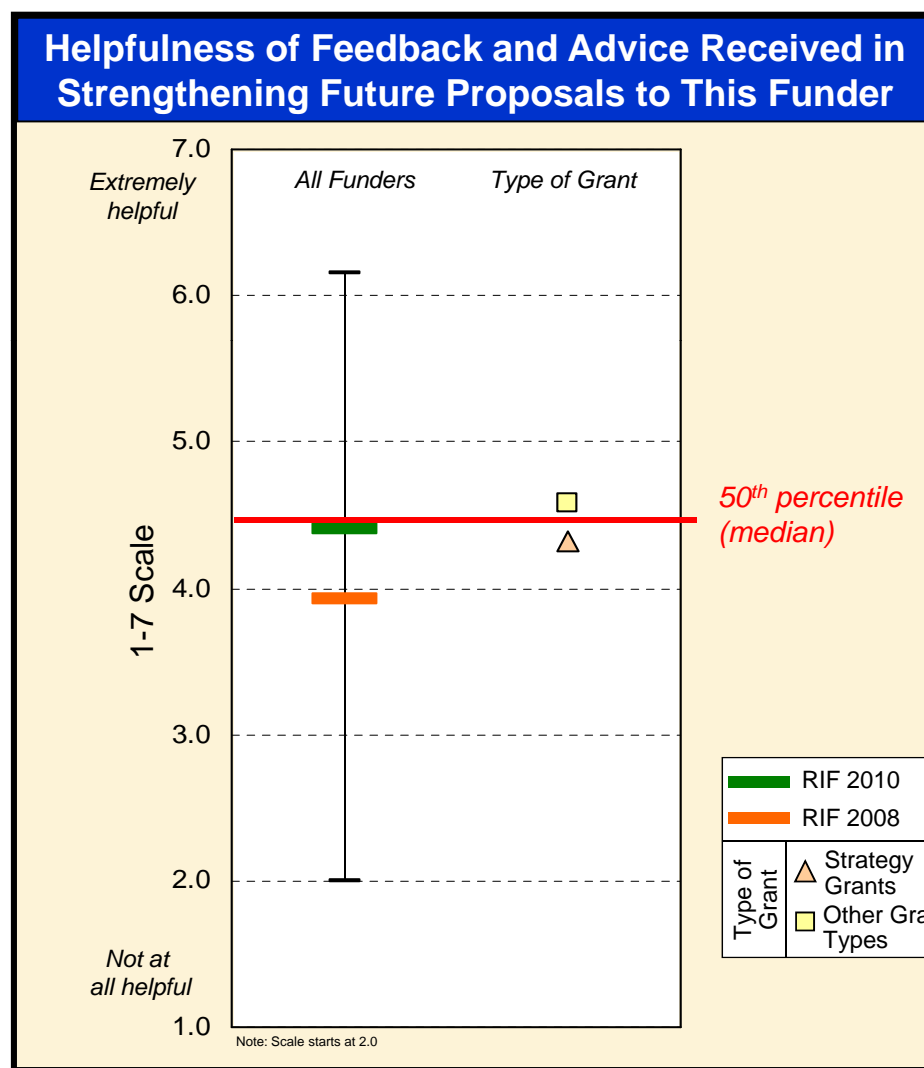
Fifty-six percent of all RIF declined applicants received feedback on their applications.



Helpfulness of Feedback Received

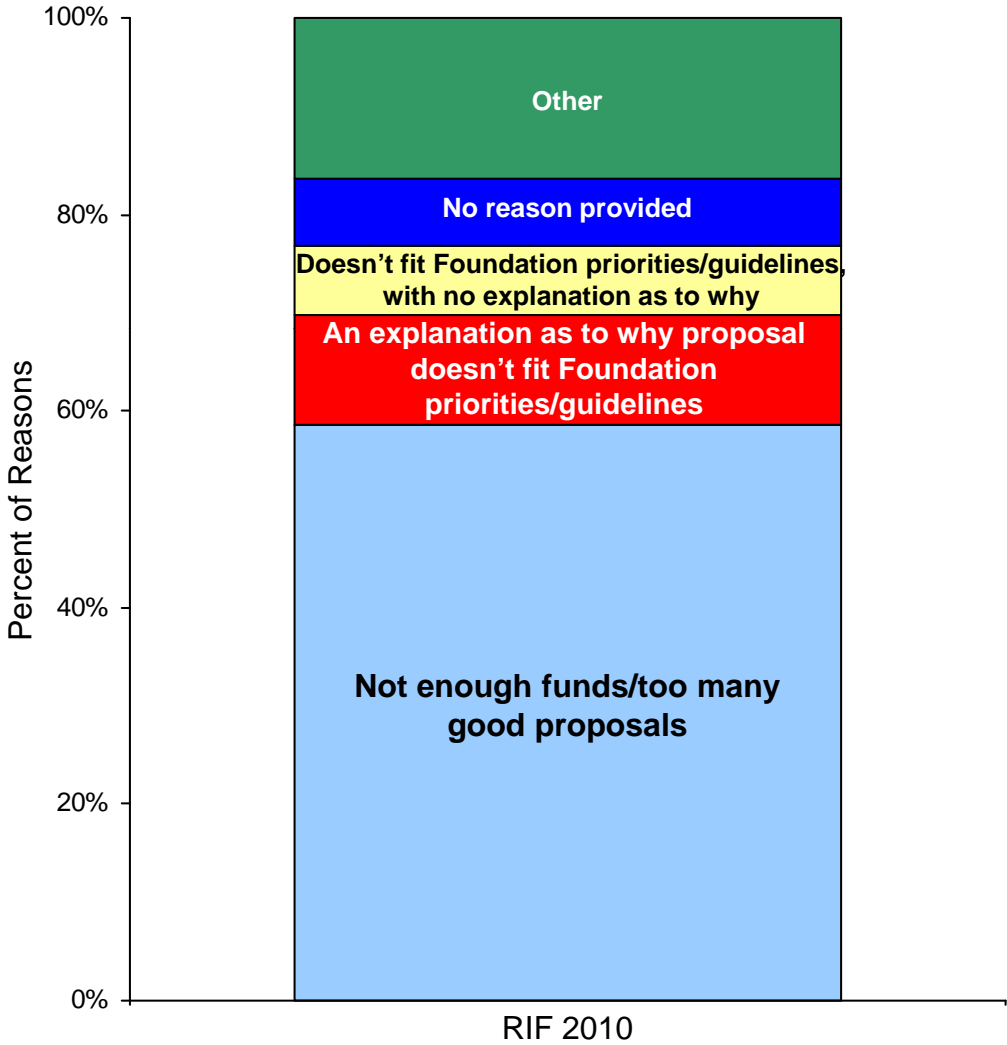
On the helpfulness of feedback and advice received in strengthening future proposals to the Foundation, RIF applicants who received feedback and advice rate RIF:

- similarly to median funder



Reasons Provided for Declining Proposal

Declined applicants were asked to indicate the reason the Foundation gave when it declined to fund their proposal. The most frequently mentioned reason was that there was not enough funds/too many good proposals.



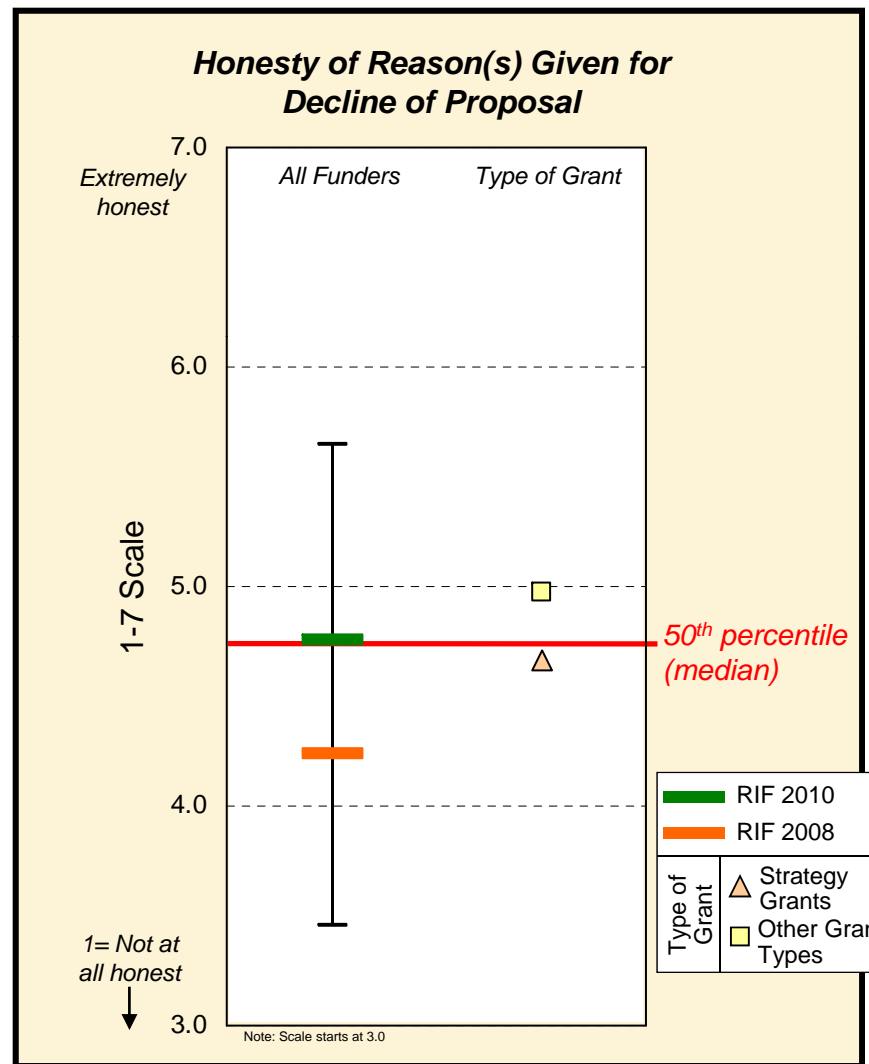
Note: No comparative data is available due to changes to the survey instrument.

Note: "Other" reasons given include problems with the proposal, concerns about the sustainability of the project, or that the project was too similar to one already being funded.

Honesty of Reason Given for Decline of Proposal

On honesty of the reason(s) the Foundation gave for declining applicants' proposals, RIF is rated:

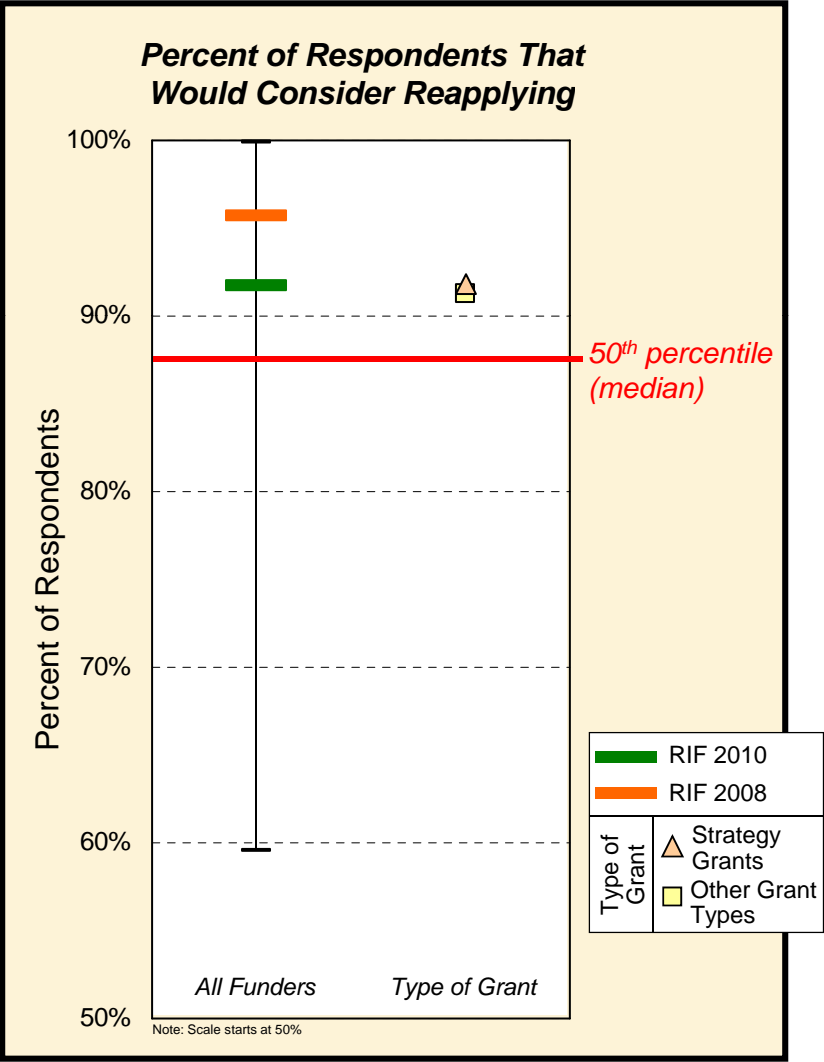
- similarly to the median funder



Implications for Future Applications (1)

The proportion of RIF declined applicants that reports considering reapplying is:

- larger than that of the median funder

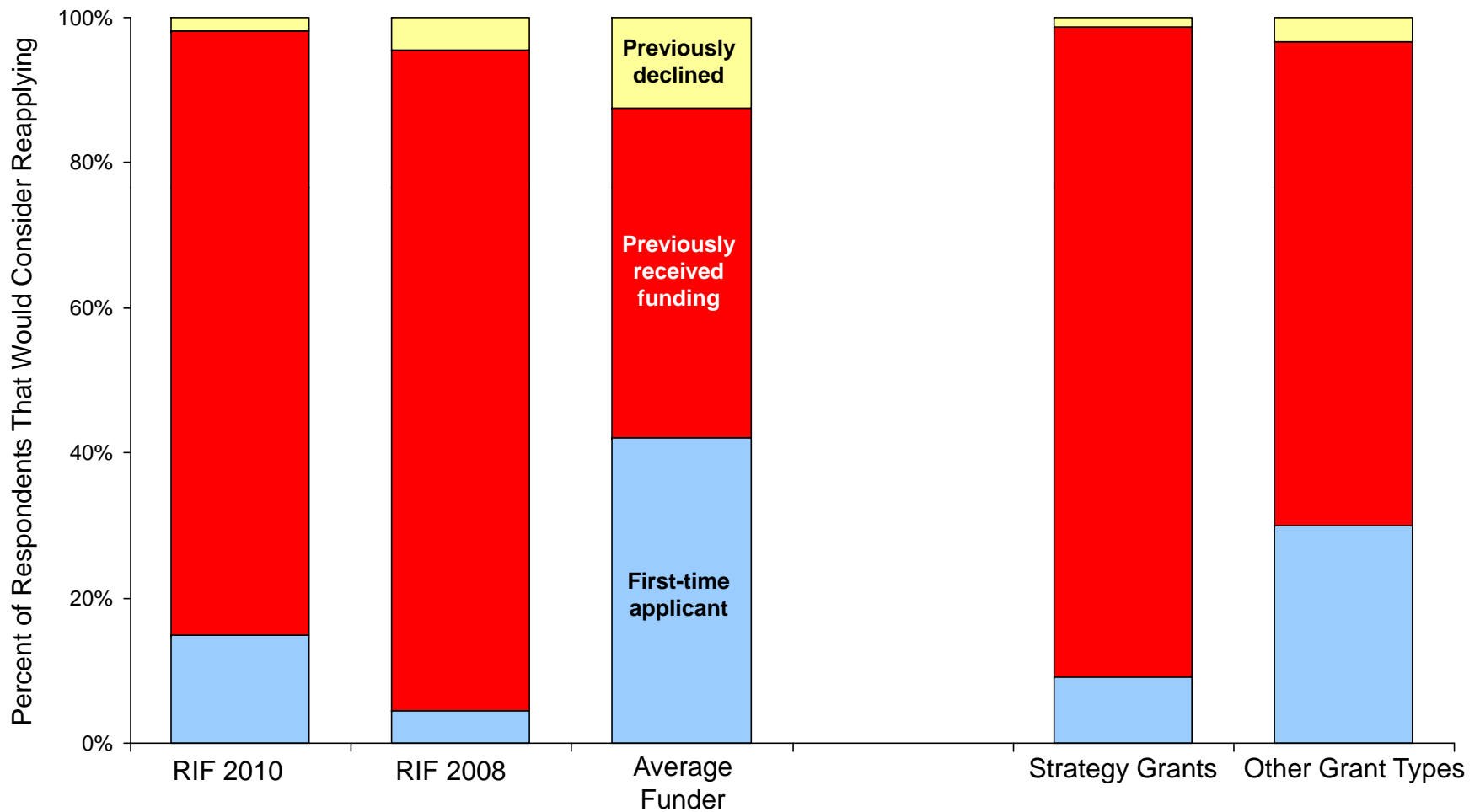


Implications for Future Applications

The proportion of RIF declined applicants that reports considering reapplying and have previously received funding is:

- larger than that of the average funder

History with the Foundation of Respondents That Would Consider Reapplying



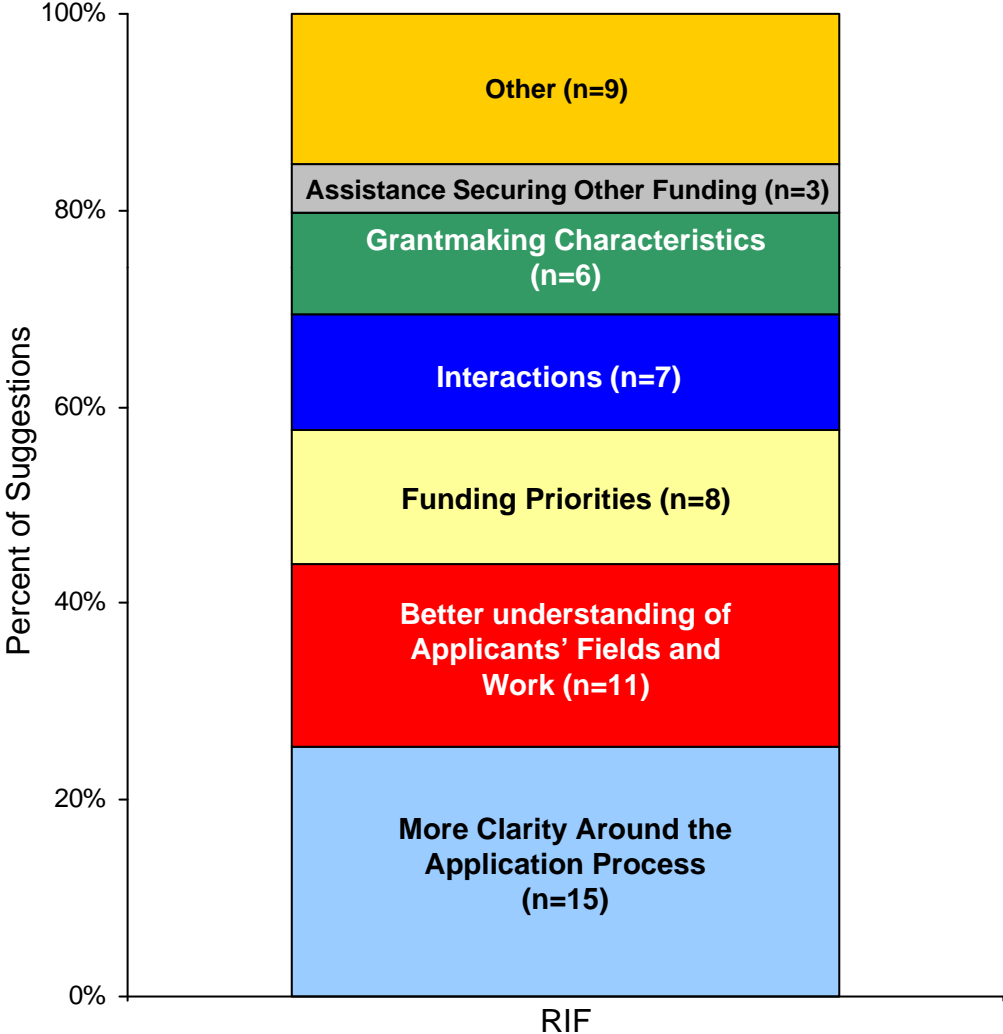
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Applicant Suggestions for the Foundation (1)

Declined applicants were asked to provide any suggestions for how the Foundation could improve. The most frequently mentioned suggestions for RIF relate to clarity around the selection process and getting a better understanding of applicants' fields and work.

Topics of Declined Applicant Suggestions



Note: There were a total of 59 declined applicant suggestions for RIF.

Applicant Suggestions for the Foundation (2)

RIF declined applicants made a total of 59 suggestions for the Foundation’s improvement. A sample, representative by theme is shown below.

Topic of RIF Suggestion	Percent	Sub-Themes and Sample of Comments
More Clarity Around the Application Process	25%	<p>“Give more guidance on what you mean in each area of the application so we can make informed choices. People should not have to explain the written words, they should explain themselves so that the people can talk about the work and solving problems in the community.”</p> <p>“I think that the basis for granting the funds should be more clear....[If] I have no chances of getting the help, I would rather know. I am very busy and cannot waste my time.”</p> <p>“The Foundation has a history of shifting its strategy, priorities, and procedures somewhat frequently. This can make it difficult for prospective applicants. The Foundation might also benefit by establishing clear outcomes for its funding so that expectations about results are known up front by applicants.”</p> <p>“It would be helpful to understand not only the priority initiatives of the Foundation (e.g., education, health) but more detailed criteria for the kinds of proposals being sought. While this might stifle creative ideas to some extent, at least it would give more guidance to potential applicants.”</p>
Better understanding of Applicants’ Field and Work	17%	<p>“Ask questions about the organizations and get to know them.”</p> <p>“It seems to me that the members should expand their knowledge of groups in the local area. They picked some well established groups to give the money to, and they, in my opinion, ended up creating a less than imaginative and useful product.”</p> <p>“My sense is that our Program Officer has a clear understanding of the significance of our work in the community. However, I do not feel that the staff nor trustees as a whole grasp the depth and extent of our impact, nor of the collaborative leadership role we play in the community.”</p>
Funding Priorities	14%	<p>“Less restrictive, more broad focus.”</p> <p>“Provide funding for more community and educationally based programs.”</p>
Interactions	12%	<p>“The office staff was not good about responding to email questions or phone calls.”</p> <p>“More than one grant supervisor and a tool for users to assess these people. To this day, our grant officer does not acknowledge me at meetings, events etc.”</p>
Grantmaking Characteristics	8%	<p>“I would love to see some general operating support. This is the kind of support that facilitates creative planning and broad delivery of programs.”</p>
Assistance Securing Other Funding	5%	<p>“If they could help coordinate funding for projects with one or more other funders, that would make a huge difference.”</p>
Other	19%	<p>“We have always felt the application process was biased in favor of the organizations with larger professional staffs that had the time to devote to a fairly exhaustive application process.”</p> <p>“They have plenty of funding resources available and always will. They should just tell us something other than not enough funding available.”</p>

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Review of Findings (1)

Chart shows RIF's 2010 (◆) and 2008 (◇) percentile rank among all funders in the comparative set.

Indicator	Percentile					Description
	0th	25th	50th	75th	100th	
Impact on the Field						Declined applicants were asked to rate the funder's impact on their fields.
Impact on the Community						Declined applicants were asked to rate the funder's impact on their local communities.
Responsiveness						Declined applicants were asked to rate the responsiveness of funder staff.
Fairness						Declined applicants were asked to rate the fairness of treatment by funder staff.
Clarity of Communication of Goals and Strategy						Declined applicants were asked to rate the clarity of the funder's communication of its goals and strategy.
Helpfulness of Feedback						Declined applicants were asked to rate the helpfulness of the feedback from the funder in strengthening future proposals to the funder.

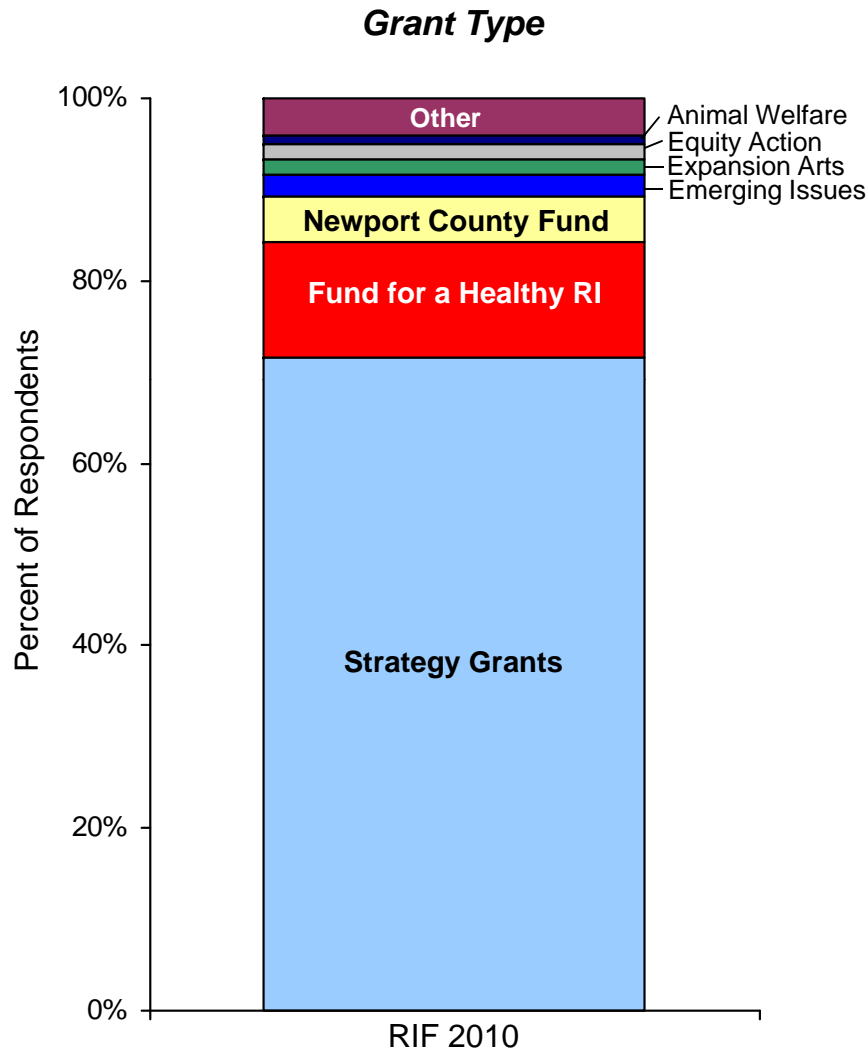
Review of Findings (2)

Chart shows the percentile rank of Strategy Grants (△) and Other Grant Types (□) declined applicants among all funders in the comparative set.

Indicator	Percentile					Description
	0th	25th	50th	75th	100th	
Impact on the Field						Declined applicants were asked to rate the funder's impact on their fields.
Impact on the Community						Declined applicants were asked to rate the funder's impact on their local communities.
Responsiveness						Declined applicants were asked to rate the responsiveness of funder staff.
Fairness						Declined applicants were asked to rate the fairness of treatment by funder staff.
Clarity of Communication of Goals and Strategy						Declined applicants were asked to rate the clarity of the funder's communication of its goals and strategy.
Helpfulness of Feedback						Declined applicants were asked to rate the helpfulness of the feedback from the funder in strengthening future proposals to the funder.

Additional Analysis – Grant Type

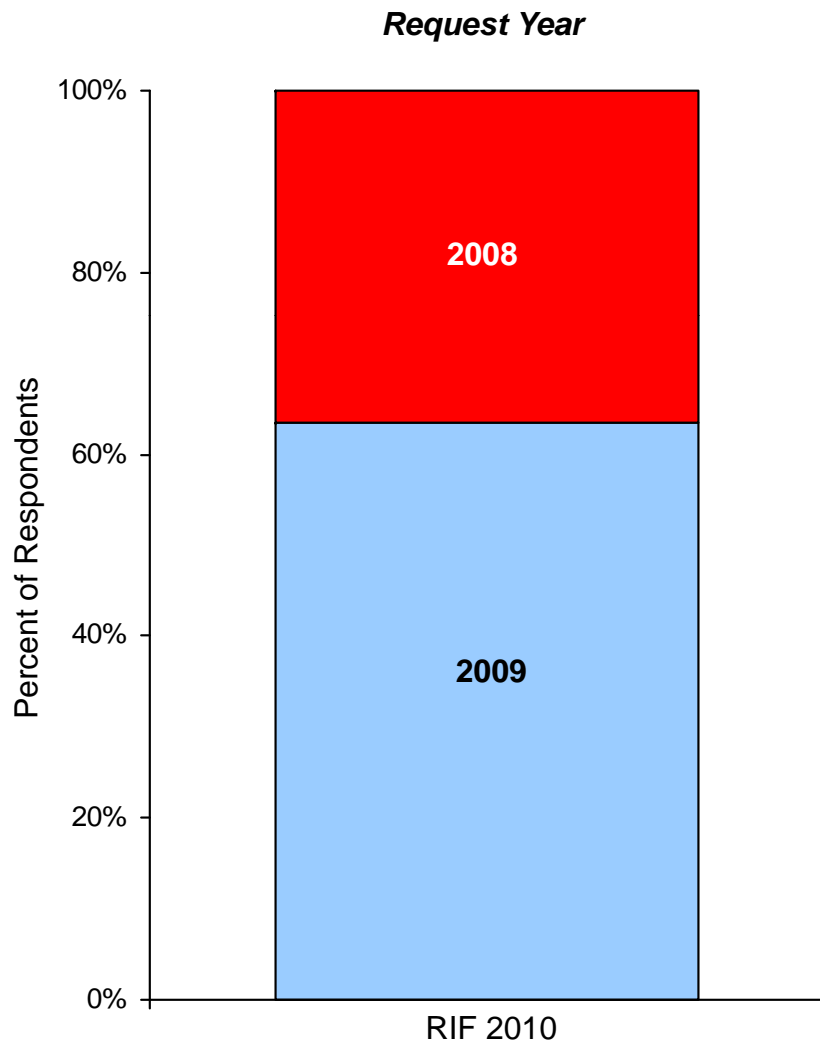
Declined applicants were asked to indicate in which RIF grant type their organization applied for. The majority of declined applicants indicated applying for a strategy grant.



RIF Analysis – Variation by Grant Type
RIF declined applicants do not rate the Foundation differently based on strategy grants vs. other grant types. Statistical testing could not be done on other individual grant types due to small sample size.

Additional Analysis – Grant Year

When asked to indicate in which year the applicant organization applied for its grant. The majority of declined applicants indicated applying for their grant in 2009.



RIF Analysis – Variation by Grant Year

RIF declined applicants rate the Foundation differently based on their grant year.

2009 Declined Applicants: Rate significantly¹ lower than 2008 declined applicants on:

- ◆ Impact on and understanding of RIF's funding on their community.

Note: Comparative data not available because this question was only asked of RIF declined applicants.

Analysis and Discussion (1)

Positive Impressions of RIF's Interactions with Declined Applicants, with Room for Clearer Communication

- ◆ Declined applicants of the Rhode Island Foundation (“RIF”) rate the Foundation positively and substantially higher than those surveyed in 2008 on measures of their relationship with the Foundation. RIF is rated higher than the median funder on the responsiveness of funder staff, fairness of treatment of declined applicants, and the clarity of communication of its goals and strategy.
 - One applicant explains, “The Foundation has improved light years since I began applying to them. It used to be completely opaque – now the staff is very accessible and informative.”
- ◆ Some applicants request additional improvements in the clarity and consistency of the Foundation’s communication to them. “The feedback from one person about why we didn’t get the grant was inconsistent with the reasons we were originally given when encouraged to apply from another person.”
- ◆ Declined applicant ratings of the consistency of the Foundation’s communications resources showed only a marginal improvement over 2008 applicant ratings and the Foundation remains just above the median Foundation in the dataset overall on this measure. Additionally, despite increased applicant ratings of the helpfulness of the Foundation’s written communications since the 2008 survey, the helpfulness and frequency of its personal communication with applicants have decreased.
- ◆ The greatest proportion of suggestions for improvement for the Foundation center around the need to further clarify the selection process.
 - » *What changes has the Foundation implemented since the 2008 survey that may have led to these improvements in impressions of interactions with the Foundation?*
 - » *Where can the Foundation identify opportunities for further improvement in its communications processes to strengthen the clarity and consistency of its messaging to declined applicants?*

Analysis and Discussion (2)

Improvements to the Selection Process Reported by Declined Applicants

- ◆ Declined applicant ratings and comments reflect the improvements to the selection process, similar to those expressed by grantees.
 - Most notably, declined applicant reports of the amount of time between submission of the proposal and the decision not to fund has decreased considerably since the 2008 survey.
- ◆ Like grantees, the Foundation's 2010 declined applicants report feeling more pressure to modify their priorities to create a proposal that is likely to receive funding than its 2008 applicants. However, unlike grantees, 2010 declined applicants report less staff involvement in the development of their proposal than 2008 applicants (although they still rate the Foundation staff as being more involved than applicants at the median funder).
 - Applicants from 2010 also report engaging in fewer email, phone, and in-person conversations with the Foundation than 2008 applicants, as well as receiving fewer site visits.
- ◆ Applicant ratings of the equality of access to funding have also risen significantly¹ from 2008 applicant ratings and RIF is now rated close to the top of the range of funders in the dataset on this measure.
 - One applicant comments, "Working with the Foundation is great...now. There were many years when non-profits hated working with them as everything seemed secretive and marked by favoritism." Some declined applicants, however, continue to report feeling that the process is "cumbersome" and the Foundation "biased."
 - » *How can the Foundation continue to communicate and demonstrate to applicants that it is committed to continuous improvement?*
 - » *Is the Foundation purposely becoming having less engaged relationships with applicants during the selection process? Is the Foundation concerned with applicants higher ratings on the pressure they feel to modify their proposals?*

Analysis and Discussion (3)

Ratings Similar to the Median Funder on Helpfulness of Application Feedback

- ◆ RIF has made progress in the area of feedback received by declined applicants, but on most measures remains similar to the median funder.
 - A greater than typical proportion of declined applicants reports receiving feedback from the Foundation on their applications.
 - The helpfulness of this feedback and advice in strengthening future proposals to RIF is rated similarly to the typical funder.
- ◆ The majority of applicants report that the reason the Foundation gave for declining to fund the proposal was that there was “Not enough funds/Too many good proposals.” Declined applicants rate the honesty of the reason given for decline similarly to the median funder.
 - Some applicants comment about informal feedback received – “While the notification letter indicated that there were too many good proposals for too little money available, we received specific feedback when we met with the program officer about the strengths and weaknesses of our application.”
- ◆ Over 90 percent of declined applicants report that they would consider reapplying to RIF. Though this proportion is greater than that of the typical funder, it is smaller than in 2008. 83 percent of applicants who will consider reapplying have already received funding from the Foundation in the past, compared to 45 percent at the typical funder.
 - » *Given the high proportion of declined applicants who plan to reapply for funding, can the Foundation be clearer in indicating why proposals were declined? Or can the Foundation provide more specific advice to strengthen future applications to more applicants?*
 - » *Does the Foundation expect the recent changes to its strategic priorities will preclude certain applicants from receiving funding in the future? If so, how can the Foundation clearly communicate this as early in the process as possible?*

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Grant Application Characteristics

Measure	RIF 2010	RIF 2008	Full Dataset Median	Strategy Grants	Other Grant Types
Grant Amount Requested					
<i>Median grant request</i>	\$50K	\$45K	\$50K	\$50K	\$25K
Less than \$10K	8%	0%	11%	3%	24%
\$10K - \$24K	13%	13%	22%	9%	24%
\$25K - \$49K	27%	39%	19%	34%	8%
\$50K - \$99K	44%	39%	19%	51%	24%
\$100K - \$149K	3%	9%	10%	3%	4%
\$150K - \$299K	3%	0%	9%	0%	8%
\$300K - \$499K	1%	0%	4%	0%	4%
\$500K - \$999K	1%	0%	3%	0%	4%
\$1MM and above	0%	0%	2%	0%	24%
Type of Grant Requested					
Program/Project Support	79%	67%	67%	81%	74%
General Operating Support	5%	0%	9%	3%	9%
Technical Assistance	9%	21%	4%	9%	9%
Building/Renovation	3%	13%	15%	3%	3%
Other Capital Support	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%
Scholarship/Fellowship	2%	0%	2%	2%	0%
Endowment Support	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Event/Sponsorship Funding ²	2%	0%	N/A	0%	6%

Note: Grant Amount Requested includes a "don't know" response option; 21 percent of RIF 2010 respondents answered "don't know," compared to 12 percent at the median funder and 4 percent of RIF 2008 respondents.

Proportions may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

2: Median funder data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

Declined Applicant Characteristics (1)

Measure	RIF 2010	RIF 2008	Full Dataset Median	Strategy Grants	Other Grant Types
Operating Budget of Declined Applicant Organization					
<i>Median budget</i>	<i>\$0.7MM</i>	<i>\$0.6MM</i>	<i>\$0.7MM</i>	<i>\$0.7MM</i>	<i>\$0.6MM</i>
< \$100K	12%	0%	15%	10%	19%
\$100K - \$499K	28%	38%	27%	29%	26%
\$500K - \$999K	16%	33%	13%	17%	10%
\$1MM - \$4.9MM	23%	17%	24%	21%	29%
\$5MM - \$24.9MM	13%	8%	12%	13%	13%
\$25MM and above	8%	4%	9%	10%	3%
Length of Time Which Applicants Have Regularly Conducted the Program for Which They Applied					
Less than 1 year	38%	21%	23%	35%	43%
1 - 5 years	45%	50%	48%	48%	38%
6 - 10 years	4%	14%	11%	3%	5%
More than 10 years	14%	14%	18%	14%	14%
Length of Establishment of Applicant Organizations					
<i>Median length of establishment</i>	<i>19 years</i>	<i>24 years</i>	<i>20 years</i>	<i>27 years</i>	<i>16 years</i>
Less than 5 years	6%	0%	10%	6%	3%
5 - 9 years	15%	21%	14%	15%	18%
10 -19 years	29%	17%	20%	22%	47%
20 - 49 years	25%	33%	34%	29%	15%
50 - 99 years	14%	25%	14%	17%	6%
100 years or more	11%	4%	8%	11%	12%

Declined Applicant Characteristics (2)

Measure	RIF 2010	RIF 2008	Full Dataset Median	Strategy Grants	Other Grant Types
Job Title of Respondents					
Executive Director	58%	N/A	N/A	60%	55%
Development Director	6%	N/A	N/A	7%	3%
Other Senior Management	14%	N/A	N/A	13%	15%
Project Director	3%	N/A	N/A	5%	0%
Volunteer	3%	N/A	N/A	4%	3%
Other Development Staff	3%	N/A	N/A	4%	0%
Other	13%	N/A	N/A	7%	24%
Gender of Respondents¹					
Male	34%	40%	38%	28%	47%
Female	66%	60%	62%	72%	53%
Race/Ethnicity of Respondents²					
Caucasian/White	90%	80%	82%	91%	90%
African-American/Black	3%	0%	9%	3%	3%
Hispanic/Latino	0%	5%	3%	0%	0%
Asian (incl. Indian subcontinent)	3%	0%	2%	3%	0%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Pacific Islander	2%	0%	1%	0%	6%
Multi-racial	2%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Other	0%	15%	2%	0%	0%

Note: RIF 2008 and median funder job title data not available due to changes to the survey instrument. Proportions may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

1: In Spring of 2010 CEP removed the word "optional" from this question but added an "other" response choice and a "prefer not to say" response choice. Previously this question was only infrequently skipped and so we have maintained comparative data in spite of the question change. In response to this question, a total of 7 percent of RIF 2010 respondents selected "other" or "prefer not to say," compared to 4 percent at the median funder.

2: In Spring of 2010 CEP removed the word "optional" from this question but added a "prefer not to say" response choice. Previously this question was only infrequently skipped and so we have maintained comparative data in spite of the question change. In response to this question, a total of 6 percent of RIF 2010 respondents selected "prefer not to say," compared to 9 percent at the median funder.

Foundations Included in Comparative Set

The 35 philanthropic funders whose declined applicant ratings are included in the comparative set of this Applicant Perception Report are:

Arcus Foundation
 The Assisi Foundation of Memphis
 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – Pacific Northwest Program
 Beldon Fund
 The Boston Foundation
 The California Endowment
 Community Foundation Silicon Valley
 Connecticut Health Foundation
 Danville Regional Foundation
 East Bay Community Foundation
 Endowment for Health
 Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
 The Greater Cincinnati Community Foundation
 The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
 The Harvest Foundation
 The Hyams Foundation
 John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
 Kresge Foundation
 Longwood Foundation
 Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health
 Maine Health Access Foundation
 MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation
 New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
 New York State Health Foundation
 The Ontario Trillium Foundation
 Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, Inc.
 The Rhode Island Foundation
 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 Rockefeller Brothers Fund
 The Rockefeller Foundation
 Saint Luke’s Foundation
 Santa Barbara Foundation
 Susan G. Komen for the Cure®
 Vancouver Foundation
 The Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust

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About the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP)

Mission

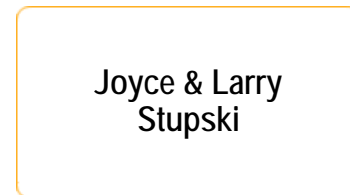
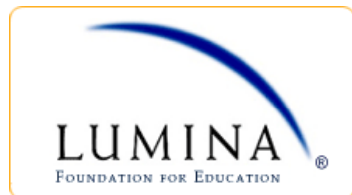
To provide data and create insight so philanthropic funders can better define, assess, and improve their effectiveness and impact.

Vision

We seek a world in which pressing social needs are more effectively addressed. We believe improved effectiveness of philanthropic funders can have a profoundly positive impact on nonprofit organizations and the people and communities they serve.

CEP Funders

CEP is funded through a combination of foundation grants and revenue earned from management tools and seminars. Funders providing support for CEP's work include:



CEP Research

CEP’s research and creation of comparative data sets leads to the development of assessment tools, publications serving the philanthropic funder field, and programming. CEP’s research initiatives focus on several subjects, including:

Research Focus	CEP Publication
Performance Assessment	<i>Toward a Common Language: Listening to Foundation CEOs and Other Experts Talk About Performance Measurement in Philanthropy</i> (2002)
	<i>Indicators of Effectiveness: Understanding and Improving Foundation Performance</i> (2002)
	<i>Assessing Performance at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: A Case Study</i> (2004)
Funder Strategy	<i>Beyond the Rhetoric: Foundation Strategy</i> (2007)
	<i>Lessons from the Field: Becoming Strategic: The Evolution of the Flinn Foundation</i> (2009)
	<i>The Essentials of Foundation Strategy</i> (2009)
	<i>Lessons from the Field: Striving for Transformative Change at the Stuart Foundation</i> (2009)
Funder Governance	<i>Foundation Governance: The CEO Viewpoint</i> (2004)
	<i>Beyond Compliance: The Trustee Viewpoint on Effective Foundation Governance</i> (2005)
Funder-Grantee Relationships	<i>Listening to Grantees: What Nonprofits Value in Their Foundation Funders</i> (2004)
	<i>Foundation Communications: The Grantee Perspective</i> (2006)
	<i>In Search of Impact: Practices and Perceptions in Foundations’ Provision of Program and Operating Grants to Nonprofits</i> (2006)
	<i>Luck of the Draw</i> (2007)
	<i>Working with Grantees: The Keys to Success and Five Program Officers Who Exemplify Them</i> (2010)
Managing Operations	<i>Lessons from the Field: Improving the Experience at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation</i> (2008)
	<i>Lessons from the Field: Aiming for Excellence at the Wallace Foundation</i> (2008)
Non-Monetary Assistance	<i>More than Money: Making a Difference with Assistance Beyond the Grant</i> (2008)

CEP Assessment Tools

CEP provides philanthropic funder leaders with assessment tools – utilizing comparative data – that inform performance assessment:

- **Grantee Perception Report® (GPR):** provides CEOs, boards, and staff with comparative data on grantee perceptions of funder performance on a variety of dimensions
- **Applicant Perception Report (APR):** a companion to the GPR that provides comparative data from surveys of declined grant applicants
- **Comparative Board Report (CBR):** provides data on board structure and trustee perceptions of board effectiveness on a comparative basis
- **Staff Perception Report (SPR):** explores philanthropic funder staff members' perceptions of funder effectiveness and job satisfaction on a comparative basis
- **Operational Benchmarking Report (OBR):** provides comparative data, relative to a selected peer group of funders, on aspects of philanthropic funder operations – including organization staffing, program officer workload, grant processing times, and administrative costs
- **Stakeholder Assessment Report (STAR):** delivers insight about a funder's effectiveness by surveying stakeholders a funder seeks to influence as part of its strategy
- **Multidimensional Assessment Process (MAP):** provides an integrated assessment of performance, assimilating results and data from all of CEP's assessment tools into key findings, implications, and recommended action steps for greater effectiveness
- **Donor Perception Report (DPR):** creates insight, on a comparative basis, about donors' perceptions of the community foundations to and through which they contribute or establish funds
- **Beneficiary Perception Report (BPR):** informs the work of funders and grantees by providing comparative feedback from those whose lives funders seek to improve – the ultimate beneficiaries of funders' philanthropic efforts

Contact Information

- ◆ This report was produced for The Rhode Island Foundation by the Center for Effective Philanthropy in May 2010.

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