



## GRANTEE FEEDBACK SURVEY November 2021

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### Introduction

Established in 2003, the mission of the Foundation for Community Health (FCH) is to *work together with people and organizations to improve the health and well-being of residents in the community, especially those who have historically been under-resourced*. In 2020, the Foundation provided over \$950,000 in grant funding to 42 different organizations.

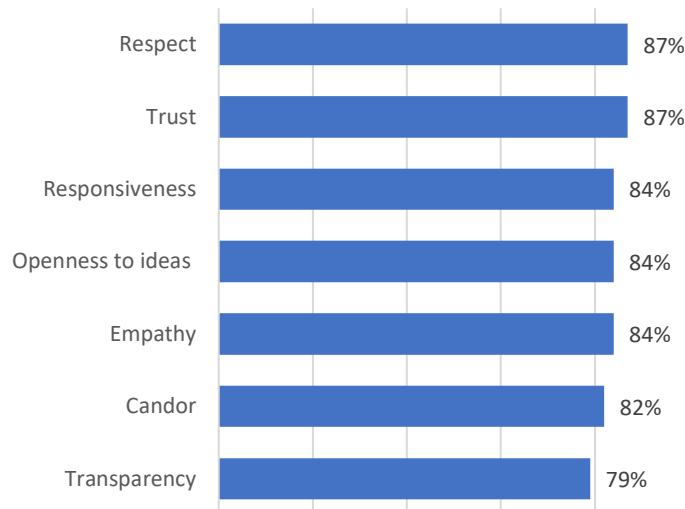
Collaboration with nonprofit partners is critical to meeting FCH’s mission. [Research](#) has shown that good funder–grantee relationships are those in which grantees feel positively about their interactions with foundation staff and about the foundation’s communications. For FCH, attention to the quality of funder-grantee relationships fits into a broader commitment to [trust-based philanthropy](#), an approach to addressing historical inequities in the foundation-grantee relationships that seeks to advance equity, shift power, and build mutually accountable relationships.

In 2021, FCH commissioned a survey to gather grantee feedback about its work with and support of grantee partners, with the goal of identifying what is working well and what the Foundation can do to improve. Thirty-eight individuals responded to the on-line survey, an 86% response rate. Key findings for all survey respondents are shared below; where appropriate, differences in grantee responses by grant size, grant type, and duration of grant funding are discussed.<sup>1</sup>

### Foundation-Grantee Relationships

Overwhelmingly, FCH grantees have a positive view of the Foundation and grantee-Foundation interactions, citing high levels of trust, respect, candor, transparency, empathy, openness, and responsiveness.<sup>2</sup> Over three-quarters of survey respondents indicated that they “strongly agree” that Foundation staff practices these values. Grantees

**Grantees overwhelmingly strongly agree that FCH staff demonstrates key characteristics supportive of positive grantee-funder relationships<sup>1</sup>**

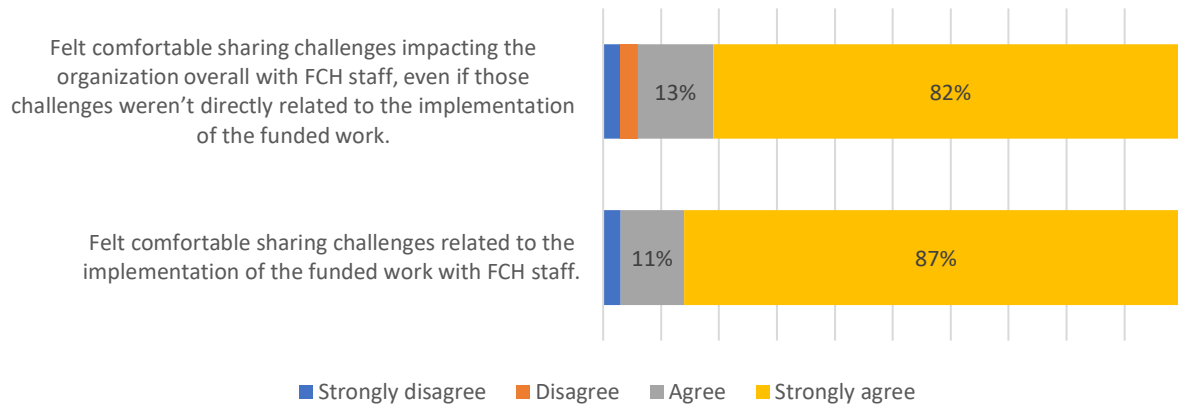


<sup>1</sup> Grant size: Small (\$15,000 or less) and Large (\$15,001+). Grant type: Program Restricted and Unrestricted (Program or Non-program). Duration of FCH grant funding: Less than five years of funding and Five or more years of funding or multi-year grants.

<sup>2</sup> Proportion of respondents who reported they “strongly agree” FCH staff demonstrated this during the grant funding period.

also reported feeling very comfortable approaching FCH staff with concerns, including those related to their organizations that were not connected to their grants. There were no notable differences in responses by grant size, grant type, or duration of FCH grant funding.

**Grantees are comfortable sharing information about organizational challenges with FCH staff**



Grantee’s open-ended comments were overwhelmingly positive – the themes from the quantitative results emerged in these comments as did the view that working with FCH was a partnership. For example:

*“I consider FCH a partner.”*

*“Direct contacts at FCH were without fail helpful and compassionate in all modes of communication.”*

*“Working with the Foundation for Community Health has been a breath of fresh air. Often, the demands of funders can feel so overwhelming that it takes away from the project and getting the important work done. That was never the experience with FCH. They were flexible and understanding of our various changing circumstances!”*

*“FCH staff were very communicative and respectful partners. They are a funder, but the dynamic feels like a partnership where there is mutual respect and investment in the work.”*

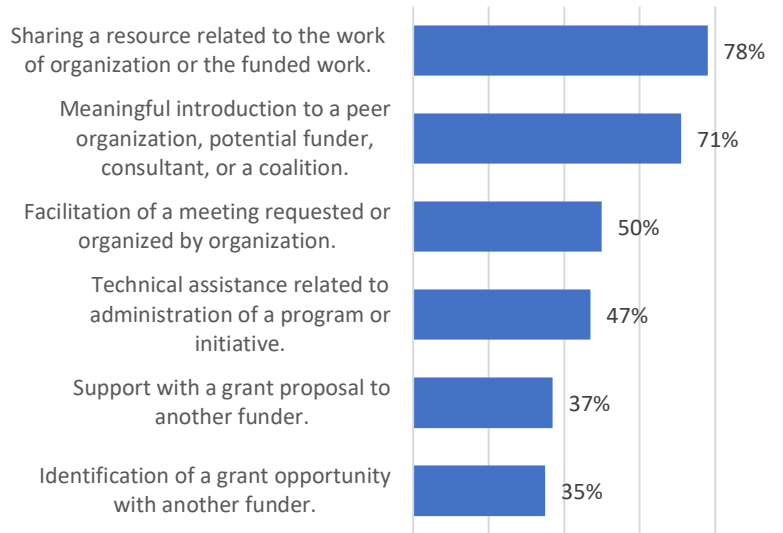
*“FCH has always supported all grantees in all aspects of a grant. They are one of the best foundations which do this 100%.”*

*“I appreciate the relationship with FCH, which feels like a true partnership. I value the expertise and attitudes of the staff--ALWAYS get the sense that they are willing and eager to be helpful--and the flexibility that the organization demonstrates.”*

The non-grant support that foundations provide can also be valuable to positive foundation-grantee relationships. FCH grantees reported that they most often received support from FCH in the form of resources and introduction to peer organizations, potential funders, consultants or coalitions. They were

least likely to report receiving support related to a grant opportunity. There were some patterns in receipt of non-grant support among different types of grantees. Newer grantees were less likely to report receiving various types of non-grant support (introductions, support with a grant proposal, technical assistance) than long-standing grantees. Recipients of unrestricted grants were less likely to report receiving introductions, resources, facilitation of meetings, and technical assistance than those who received restricted program grants. Those who received small grants were less likely to report receiving all types of non-grant assistance than those who received large grants. Grantees who received non-grant support rated it highly.

**Grantees most often received informational resources and introductions from FCH staff**



**Grantees report that non-grant support is helpful**

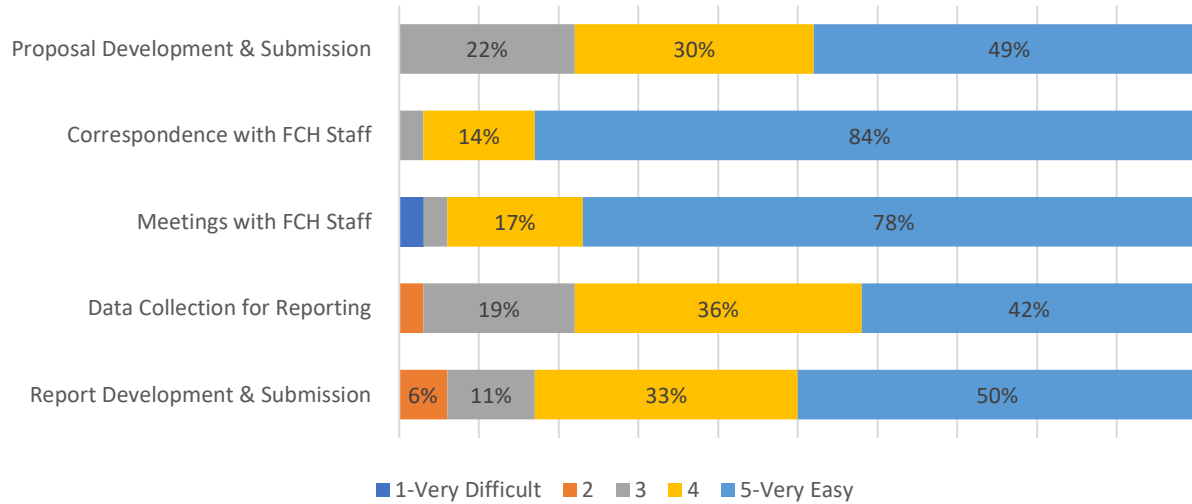


**Experience with FCH’s Processes and Grantee Portal**

Grantees rated FCH’s application, management, and reporting processes as relatively easy, with over 75% reporting that meetings and correspondence with FCH was “very easy.” For a few, report development and submission and data collection was difficult. Ratings of correspondence and meetings with FCH staff were similar across grantees of all types. However, experiences with proposal development and submission, data collection, and report development and submission differed across different types of

grantees: newer grantees were more likely to report these processes were easy than long-standing grantees; those receiving unrestricted grants were more likely to report these processes were easy than those receiving program restricted grants; and grantees receiving smaller grants were more likely to report these processes were easy than those who received larger grants.

### Grantees see FCH processes and communication as easy overall



Open-ended comments about processes and requirements were overwhelmingly positive. For example:

*“The FCH requests were completely reasonable in order for us to inform them of our needs and mission. “*

*“I think when FCH suggested a new model for reporting our grant outcomes it greatly improved the way we evaluate our progress.”*

*“We greatly appreciate that the application process is tailored for the organization applying. The portal makes so much sense and the communications that the portal is preloaded for us was wonderful.”*

One concern of FCH staff was ensuring that the information asked for during application and reporting processes was related to the funded work, rather than extraneous. Grantees’ survey responses indicate that the information asked for is relevant.

	Information requested <b>was not</b> relevant to funded work	Information requested <b>was</b> relevant to the funded work	NA
Application – Program or initiative’s <b>budget</b>	3%	84%	13%
Reporting – Program or initiative’s <b>expenditures</b>	3%	87%	11%
Application – <b>Details</b> that were requested about program or initiative	0	87%	13%
Reporting – <b>Details</b> that shared about progress or results	0	89%	11%

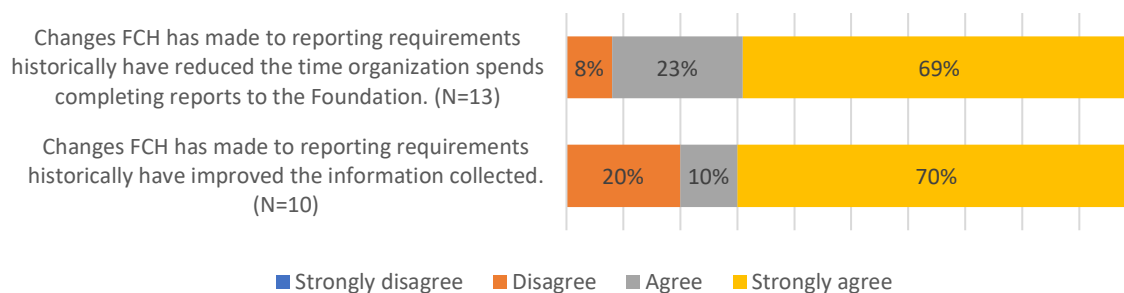
Grantees rated FCH’s application and reporting processes highly. Over three-quarters of survey respondents stated that they “strongly agreed” that FCH provided clear and relevant information regarding its application process and requirements and that once established, FCH’s expectations regarding reporting did not change.

### Grantees see FCH's application and reporting processes as supportive



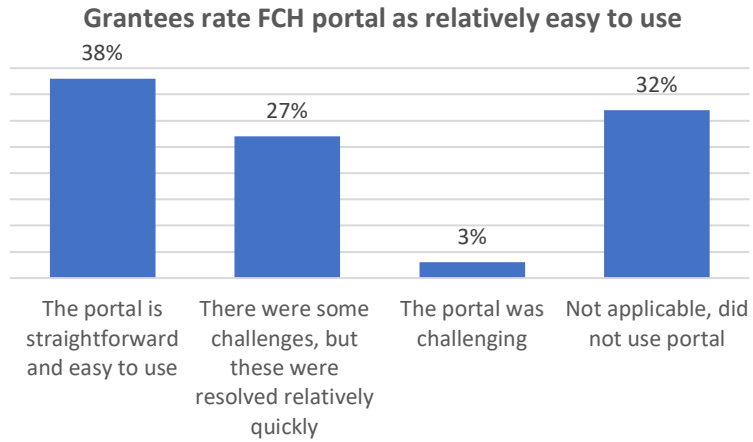
Grantees who were funded for five or more years or who received multi-year grants were asked their about the impact of FCH’s changes to reporting requirements on their organizations. Overall, grantees reported that these changes have reduced time spent on completing reports to the Foundation and improved the information that is collected.

### FCH processes have made things easier for grantees over time



About one third of grantee survey respondents reported that they had not used the FCH grantee portal. Given that the portal was launched in April 2020, this is not surprising as a good number of grantees received their grants prior to this. Grantees who used the portal rated its use as relatively easy. Long-

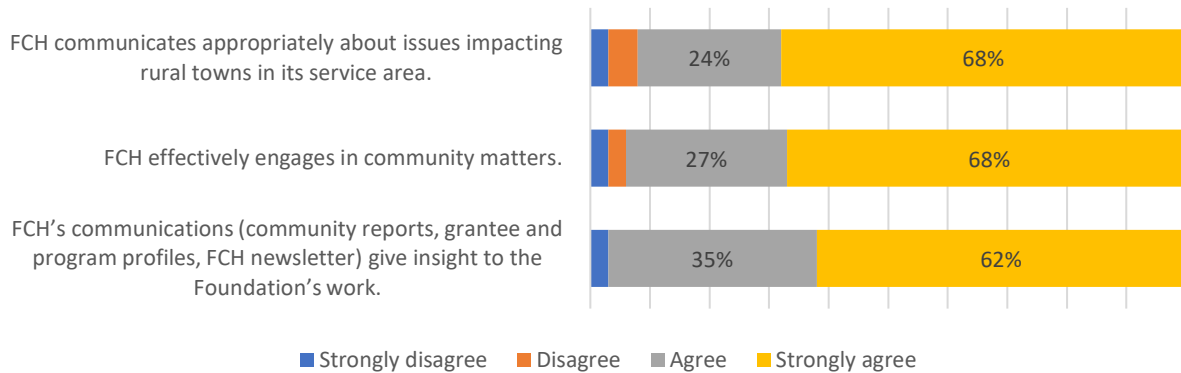
standing grantees were less likely to report using the portal than newer grantees, grantees who received program restricted grants were less likely to report using the portal than those who received unrestricted grants, and those who received larger grants were less likely to report using the portal than those who received smaller grants.



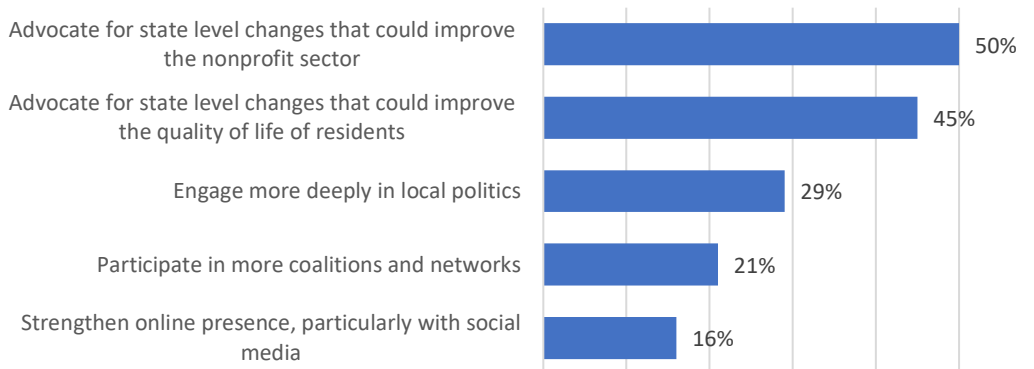
### FCH Community Leadership & Equity

FCH’s communications are seen as effective. Over two thirds of grantee respondents indicated that they believed FCH communicates appropriately about issues impacting rural towns in its service area and that FCH effectively engages in community matters. When asked about other ways the Foundation could deepen its community engagement, the most frequently mentioned was state-level advocacy.

### Grantees rate FCH's communication highly

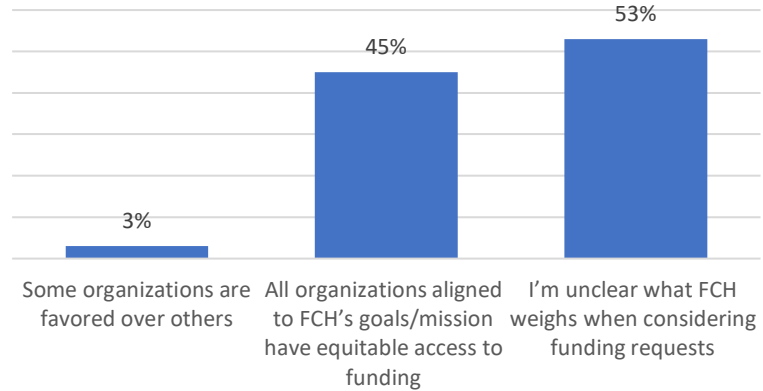


### Grantees see a role for FCH in advocacy



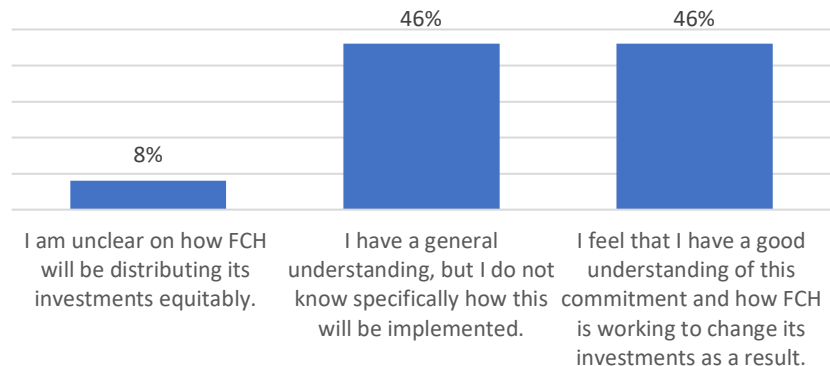
Slightly over half of grantee survey respondents reported that they were unclear about how FCH weighs grant decisions. Among those who did feel they know the process, almost all reported that all organizations aligned to FCH's goals/mission have equitable access to FCH funding. Grantee respondents who received program restricted grants were more likely to report that they were unclear on the criteria FCH weighs than those who received unrestricted grants and recipients receiving larger grants were more likely to be unclear than those receiving smaller grants.

**FCH grant decisions are seen as fair among grantees who believe they know the process; over half are unclear about the process**



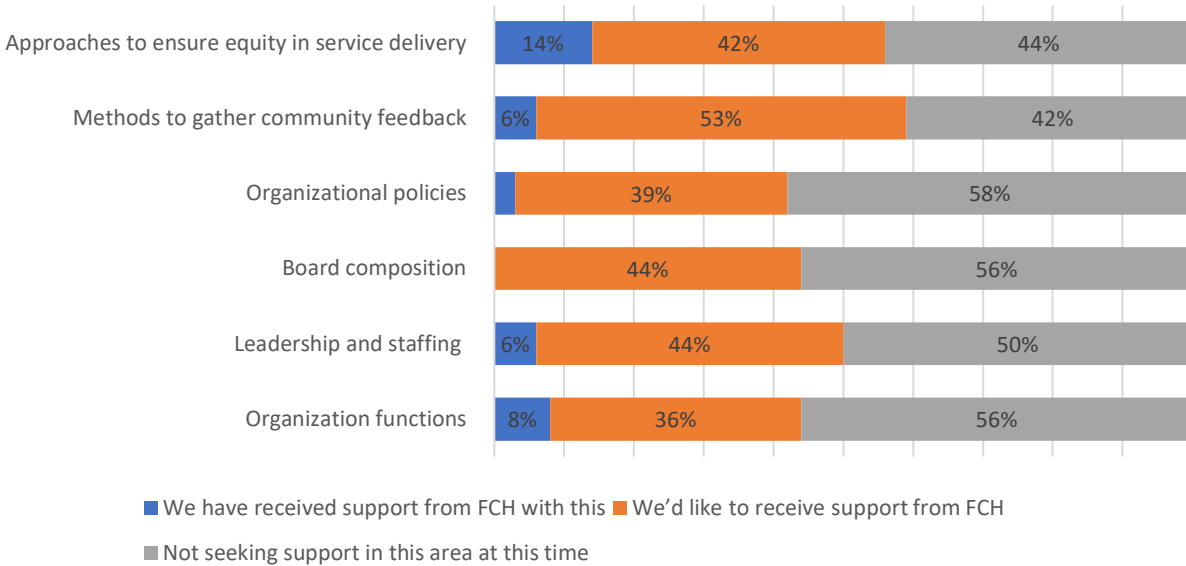
About half of grantee survey respondents reported that they were unclear or did not feel they had very specific understanding of how the Foundation is addressing its commitment to equitable grantmaking. Almost half of respondents reported they had good understanding of this. Long-term grant recipients were more likely to be clear about this than newer grantees.

**Grantees report varying awareness of FCH's approach to equitable grantmaking as outlined in its strategic plan**



When asked specifically about support to grantees with diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), most survey respondents reported that their organizations had not received this support from the Foundation to date; those who have most often received Foundation support relative to equitable service delivery. Overall, a high proportion of grantees (often over half) are not seeking support from FCH in these areas at this time. Those that are seeking some support are most interested in support relative to gathering community feedback. A higher proportion of grantees receiving unrestricted grants reported that they would like to receive support in the areas asked about compared to grantees receiving program restricted grants.

### A large proportion of grantees are not seeking FCH support with DEI initiatives



### Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the 2021 FCH Grantee Survey indicate that FCH is perceived as an excellent partner for grantees, with respectful and supportive processes, helpful non-grant support, and valuable communication. Moving forward, the Foundation should continue to implement the processes that it is currently engaged in. There are no areas identified in the survey requiring immediate or urgent attention. Looking ahead, FCH may wish to consider building on its strong foundation by:

- Examining a possible role in statewide advocacy. Among possible future roles for the Foundation to increase its community engagement, advocacy for state-level changes that could improve the quality of life of residents and that could improve the nonprofit sector were most often cited.
- While few grantees reported that they believed some organizations were favored with funding over others, over half are unclear about how FCH weighs grant decisions. Similarly, a number of grantees did not feel they had very specific understanding of how the Foundation is specifically addressing its commitment to equitable grantmaking. The Foundation may wish to consider more communication about these priorities.
- While a large number of grantees reported that they were not seeking support relative to DEI currently, given the importance of equity to FCH, Foundation staff may wish to consider how to raise awareness about the importance of DEI and begin some support to grantees in a focused way. The greatest need identified by survey respondents was relative to methods for collecting community feedback.