

## 2019 Community Health Grant Survey Overview and Key Findings

In September 2019, the Greater Rochester Health Foundation (GRHF) distributed a confidential electronic survey to past applicants and partners in an effort to obtain feedback on our Community Health Grant program.

We'd first like to thank all who took the time to complete the survey and provide your thoughtful insights. We were extremely grateful to receive 125 responses. Your feedback on our grantmaking is crucial to ensure we are clear with our goals and we are receptive to your efforts. Second, your feedback will be used to improve the applicant experience with GRHF through the Community Health Grant program with an emphasis on the amount of time and effort that goes into applying for a grant. Finally, we are, and will continue to share what we are learning as much as possible.

As we reviewed your responses to the survey, it's clear we are doing some things well but have room for improvement. The following sections describe areas we will be working to improve within the Community Health Grant program based on your feedback:

***Community Health Grant Cycles:*** Most survey respondents were satisfied at the availability of Community Health Grants, with 2 cycles offered each year. Some suggested that the timing of our current open cycles, March and July, could be improved to better evenly space cycles offered and better fit applications for projects starting at different times of the year.

*Following up on this suggestion, future Community Health Grant cycles will be offered six months apart, in March and September, to accommodate project start times in the summer, the school year or the calendar year.*

***Application Resources:*** Respondents told us they used each of the tools and resources we offer to help organizations prepare Community Health Grant applications: information on our website, step-by-step guides to our online grant system and application format, a detailed Request for Proposals (RFP), application workshops, and meetings and phone calls with Health Foundation staff. Most frequently used were phone calls with staff, the RFP and the application workshops.

*The Community Health Grant application **workshops** offered with each grant cycle consistently receive positive feedback from participants. However, several survey respondents were unclear about the value of attending these sessions or saw the location and timing of workshops as barriers. To address these concerns, future communications regarding the workshops will more clearly describe session content and the specific focus of developing a competitive Community Health Grant application. Also, 2020 application workshops will be offered in locations more accessible to the whole GRHF region and will include a variety of days/times to accommodate applicant schedules.*

***Completing the Grant Application:*** While over 75% of survey respondents said that completing the project description and non-profit documentation sections of Community Health Grant application were very or somewhat easy, almost a third reported difficulty with the budget requirements and forms. With this level of feedback, it is clear the budget sections need significant improvement. We will review the Community Health Grant budget requirements, instructions and forms and revise them to both clarify what is needed and simplify the forms.

***Staff Interaction:*** Survey respondents saw the quality of their interactions with foundation staff as a significant strength of the program. 82% of respondents who sought help during their application found staff to be “very helpful” and another 16% said they were “somewhat helpful.” 98% of respondents felt they were treated with respect during the Community Health Grant application process.

The Foundation will continue to prioritize approachable, supportive and respectful staffing as a hallmark of foundation grant programs. We will continue to be open to feedback and welcome it from all our partners. In addition, from time to time we will formally survey our applicants for additional feedback to ensure we are making positive improvements to this program.

***Feedback:*** Feedback is available for applications that have not been funded. Several respondents noted that this information helped to improve their applications and get funding in future rounds. However, less than half of the survey respondents took this opportunity to learn why their proposal was not funded and areas for improvement. We currently invite applicants to receive feedback when we are notifying them by phone that their application has been declined. These are necessarily short phone conversations so the feedback offer may not be heard or understood.

Going forward, we will add written information on feedback availability to our application materials and grant correspondence.

***Grant Eligibility:*** A handful of respondents were unclear about the what types of projects or programs would be a fit for the Community Health Grant program. Others questioned whether our definition of “community health” might be too narrow thus eliminating applications that address important social determinants. Prospective applicants have also asked for additional clarifications of organizational eligibility; e.g. How is the \$5 Million cap for eligibility determined? Which government and educational organizations are eligible to apply? Can a non-profit act as a fiscal sponsor or fiduciary for very small applicants who do not have non-profit status?

To respond to these concerns, we will develop a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Community Health Grant section of our website. These FAQs will provide additional detail on both organization and project eligibility, as well as key definitions (e.g. “health benefitting programs” and “small agency”) used to determine grant eligibility. We will also be clear about our responsive grantmaking strategies and how we view health, and what contributes to a healthy community as part of our FAQ and other materials. Community Health Grant FAQs will be routinely updated as new questions emerge.

Thank you again to all who took the time to complete the survey. We will continue to share on our progress as we modify the Community Health Grant program. The next Community Health Grant cycle will open in February 2020.

As always, if you have questions, additional thoughts or feedback, please do let us know.

Sincerely,

Hannah Stark, Associate Program Officer