

Applicant Perception Report

prepared for

Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Spring 2010



THE CENTER FOR
EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY

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Executive Summary – Key Findings

Rockefeller Brothers Fund (“RBF”) is rated positively on an absolute scale throughout this Applicant Perception Report, and ratings have improved since 2004. Nonetheless, the Fund is rated similarly to or below the typical funder on most measures. Although some declined applicants indicate having “a very positive experience” with the “accessible [and] considerate” staff, others consider RBF to be “impersonal” and “intimidating.”

There have been notable improvements since 2004 in declined applicants’ perceptions of the Fund. Declined applicants rate RBF more positively than in 2004 on most measures within the report, including the Fund’s impact on declined applicants’ fields, where the Fund is now rated above the typical funder. Declined applicants rate the Fund significantly higher than in 2004 on the responsiveness of Fund staff and the clarity of the Fund’s communication of its goals and strategy.

RBF staff is less involved in the development of declined applicants’ proposals than typical, and many declined applicants do not find the application process helpful in strengthening their own organizations. Forty-four percent of declined applicants rate the helpfulness of the Fund’s selection process as “Not at all helpful,” and these declined applicants also tend to rate low on the Fund’s understanding of declined applicants’ organizations’ goals and strategy. Both groups rate significantly lower on most measures within this report. Declined applicants less frequently have personal communication with Fund staff when learning about the Fund than is typical and often ask for more staff interaction during the proposal process. One typical declined applicant comments that “it would be helpful to have more access to decision-making staff for assistance in developing the proposal, and/or advice as to whether or not to even apply.” On average, declined applicants rate the responsiveness of Fund staff below typical and less frequently participate in phone calls and in-person conversations with Fund staff during the selection process.

A smaller than typical proportion of declined applicants indicate they have previously received funding from RBF, but a larger than typical proportion indicate they would consider reapplying. More than three-fourths of RBF declined applicants report receiving no feedback on their grant applications and these declined applicants rate the Fund significantly lower on many dimensions within the report, including the Fund’s understanding of their organizations’ goals and strategies. More than half of RBF declined applicants indicate that the reason provided by the Fund for declination was something non-specific, such as “not enough funds to go around” or “too many good proposals.” Applicants generally rate the honesty of the reason for their declination to be less honest than those provided by the typical funder in CEP’s dataset. Although the application feedback received is perceived to be typically helpful in strengthening future proposals to the Fund, declined applicants express the need for “further feedback after the proposal is sent.” Declined applicants most frequently report applying for funding from RBF because they read the funding guidelines and thought that their organization’s proposal fit. When asked for suggestions for improvement, they frequently suggest that RBF clarify the public articulation of its funding guidelines and priorities, which they sometimes see as in tension with a different RBF staff articulation of what RBF is looking for in applications.

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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 Rockefeller Brothers Fund (“RBF”) during February and March 2010. CEP surveyed Rockefeller Brothers Fund’s declined applicants in 2004. Where possible, ratings from that survey are also shown in the report. The details of Rockefeller Brothers Fund’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
RBF 2010 Declined Applicant Survey	February and March 2010	2009	479	186	39%
RBF 2004 Declined Applicant Survey	September and October 2004	2003	141	54	38%

- ◆ Throughout this report, selected declined applicant comments are shown. This group of comments was selected to be representative of the comments CEP received about RBF.
- ◆ Rockefeller Brothers Fund’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 Fund in thinking about its APR results relative to its grant application practices. The information is based on self-reported data from declined applicants about the size and types of grants that they requested.
- ◆ RBF declined applicants request larger grants than declined applicants of the typical funder.

Survey Item	RBF 2010	RBF 2004	Full Dataset Median
Grant Request			
Median size of grant request	\$75K	\$60K	\$50K
Type of Support¹			
Percent of declined applicants requesting operating support	8%	N/A	9%
Percent of declined applicants requesting program/project support	70%	N/A	67%
Percent of declined applicants requesting other types of support	22%	N/A	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.

1: RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

Structural Characteristics of Declined Applicants

- ♦ This table is intended to provide context to the Fund in thinking about its APR results relative to 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, RBF declined applicants tend to be smaller, younger organizations.

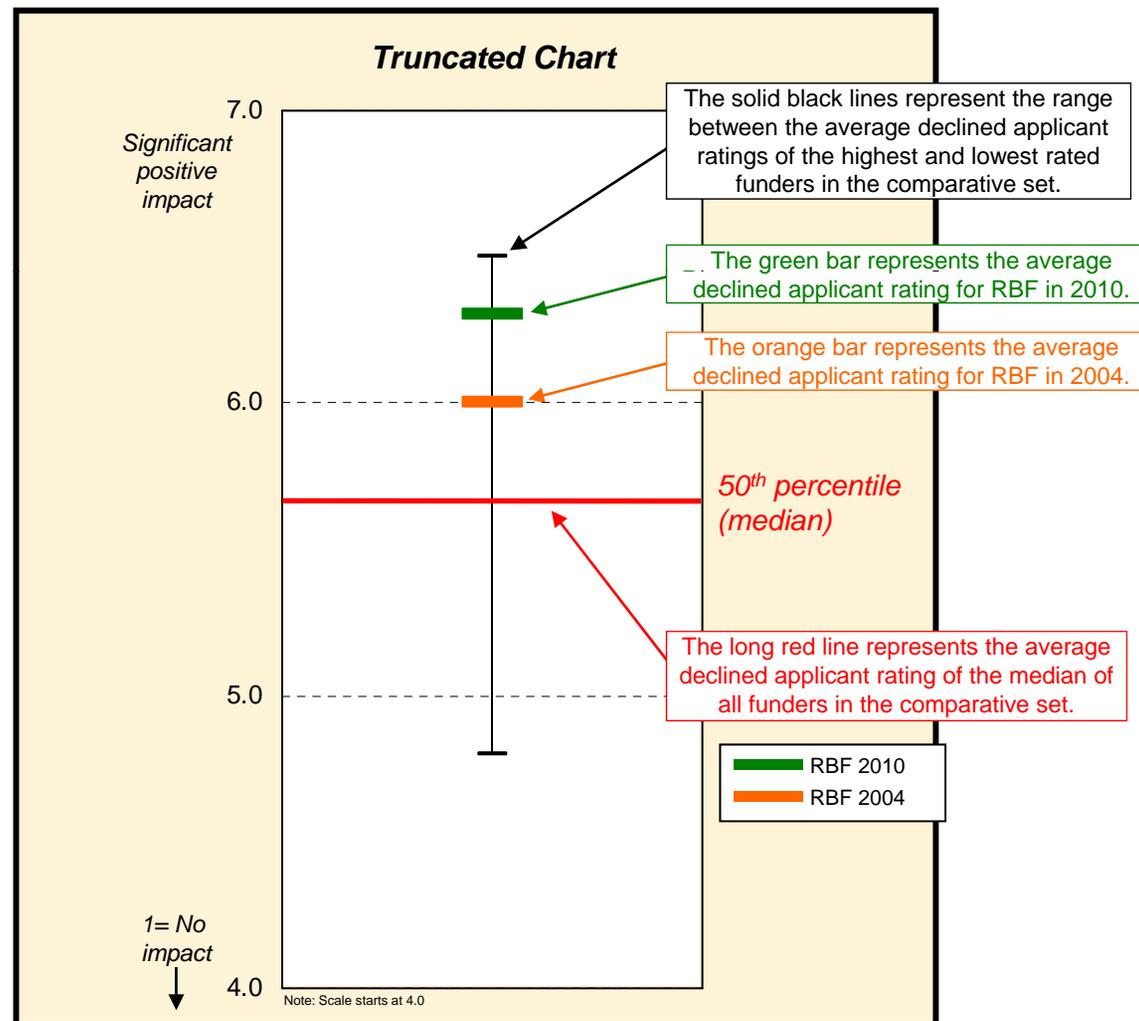
Survey Item	RBF 2010	RBF 2004	Full Dataset Median
Budget of Declined Applicant Organizations			
Median organizational budget	\$0.5MM	\$0.7MM	\$0.7MM
Duration of Requested Program and Declined Applicant Organization¹			
Programs conducted 6 years or more	30%	N/A	30%
Median length of establishment of declined applicant organizations	15 years	17 years	20 years

Note: For additional information on declined applicant characteristics related to these survey items refer to part A of the Appendix.

1: RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

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 RBF in 2010 and 2004 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.**



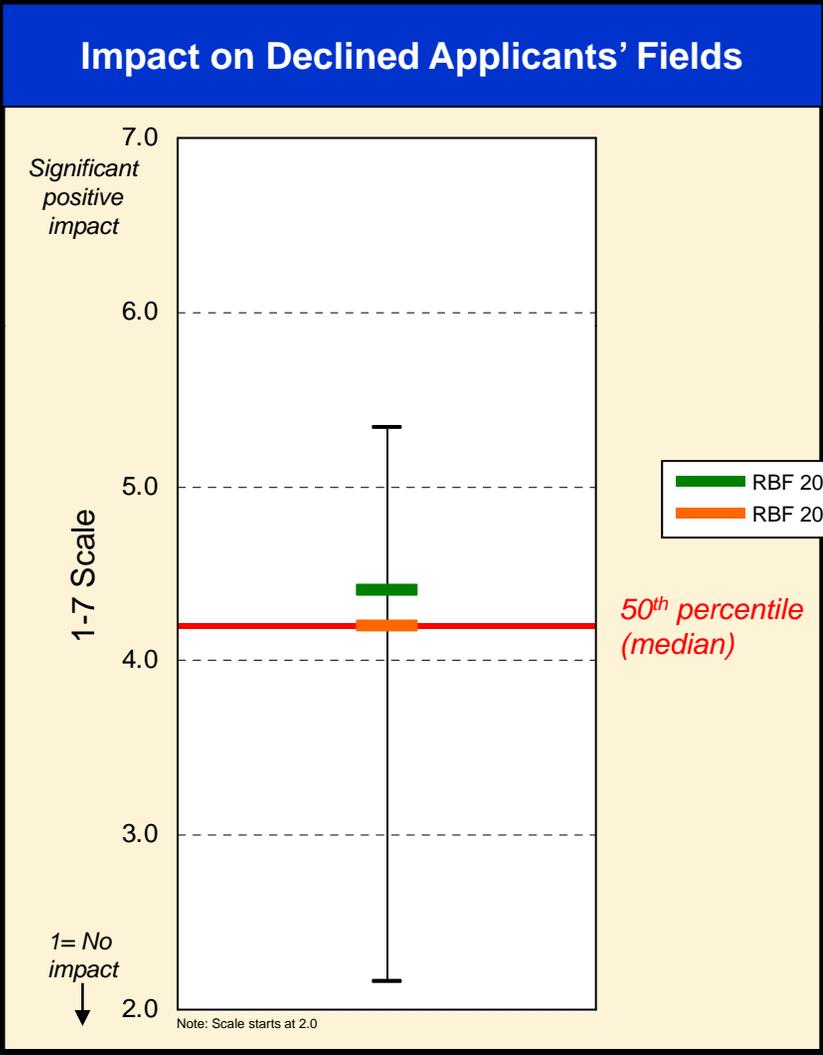
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Impact on Declined Applicants' Fields

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

- above the median funder

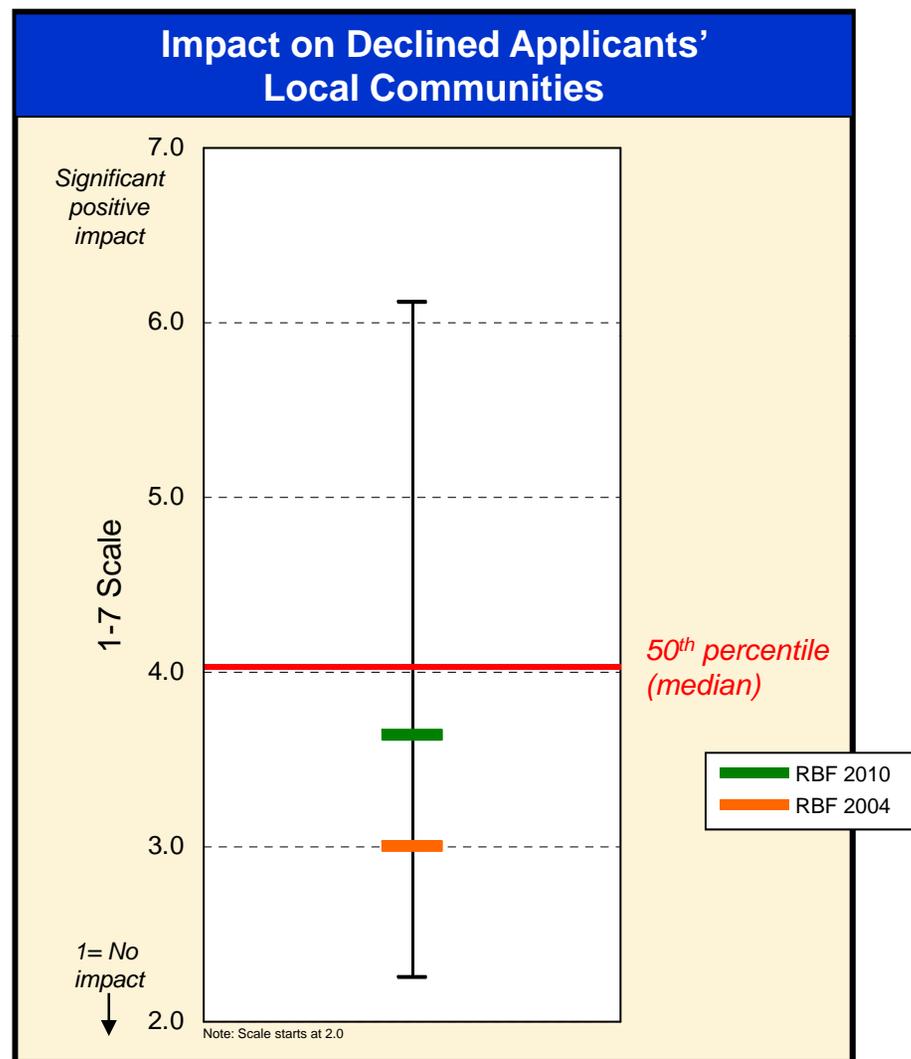


Note: This question includes a "don't know" response option; 15 percent of RBF 2010 respondents answered "don't know," compared to 17 percent at the median funder and 51 percent of RBF 2004 respondents.

Impact on Declined Applicants' Local Communities

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

- below the median funder



11 Note: This question includes a "don't know" response option; 20 percent of RBF 2010 respondents answered "don't know," compared to 18 percent at the median funder and 53 percent of RBF 2004 respondents.

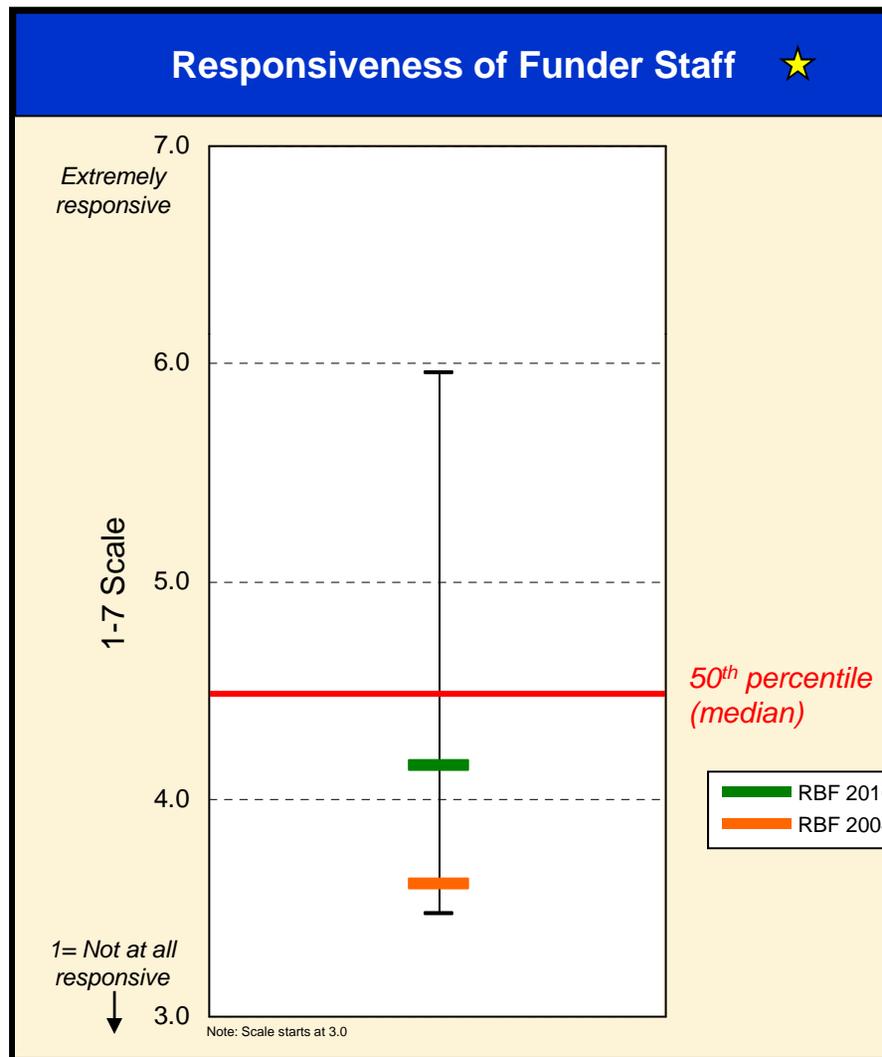
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Responsiveness of Funder Staff

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

- below the median funder



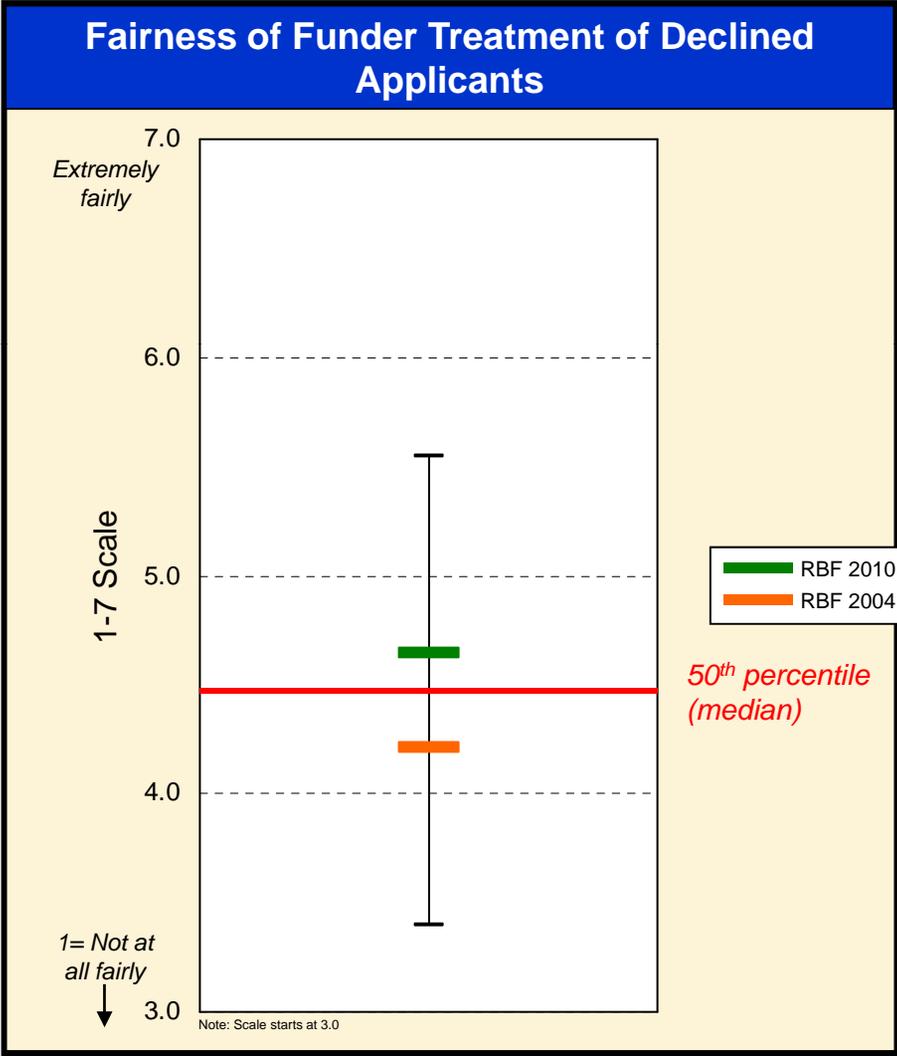
Selected Declined Applicant Comments

- ♦ *“It was hard to get the program director to respond. I tried through email, through the regular mail and when I did get a call back, the conversations were brief and severe.”*
- ♦ *“The Foundation staff is very prompt in their response, and I have always gotten my calls and emails returned. This is really helpful and fosters a sense of openness and transparency.”*
- ♦ *“[Our] contact person in front of the Foundation for [our region] did not answer to our e-mails.”*
- ♦ *“Communication with the Foundation has been helpful and accessible. The program officer I spoke with...always got back to me promptly and was very helpful in answering my questions and offering further assistance.”*
- ♦ *“A return call from program officers [would really have been helpful] – are they SO busy? – rather than secretaries and assistants.”*
- ♦ *“Even with our proposal being declined I have always had very positive interactions with the Foundation.... A real pleasure to work with.”*

Fairness of Treatment

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

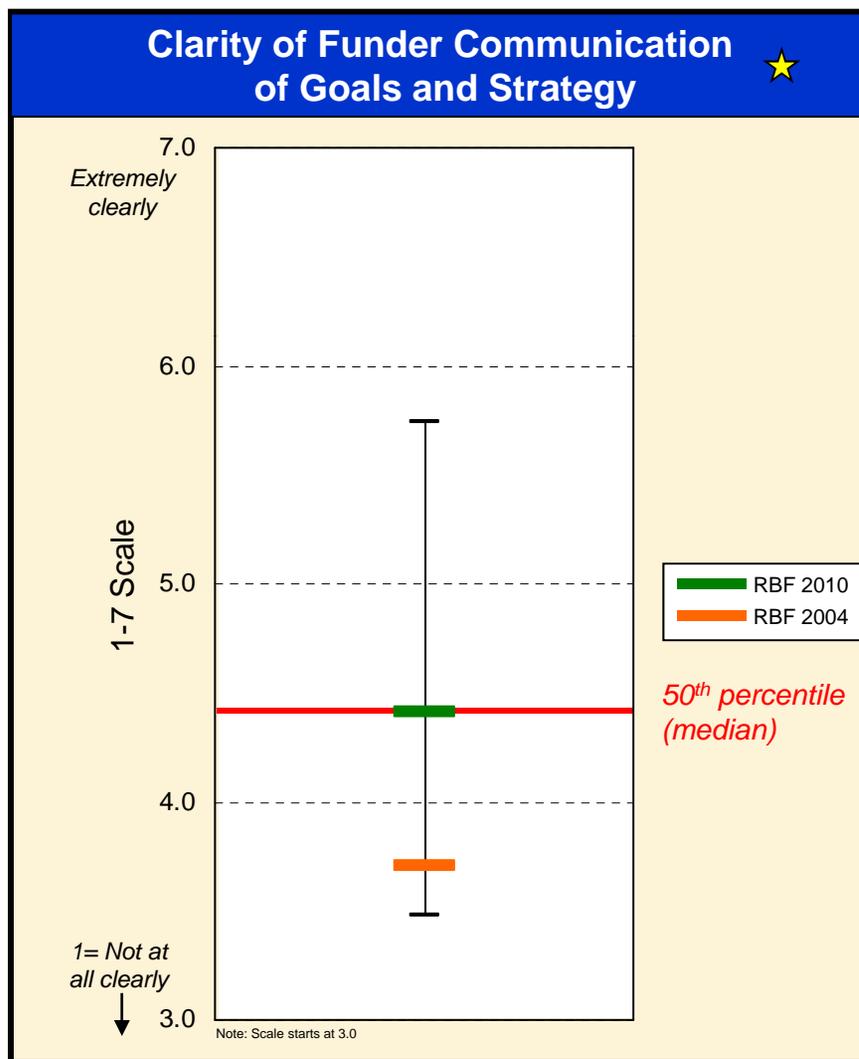
- similarly to the median funder



Communication of Goals and Strategy

On clarity of the Fund's communication of its goals and strategy, RBF is rated:

- similarly to the median funder



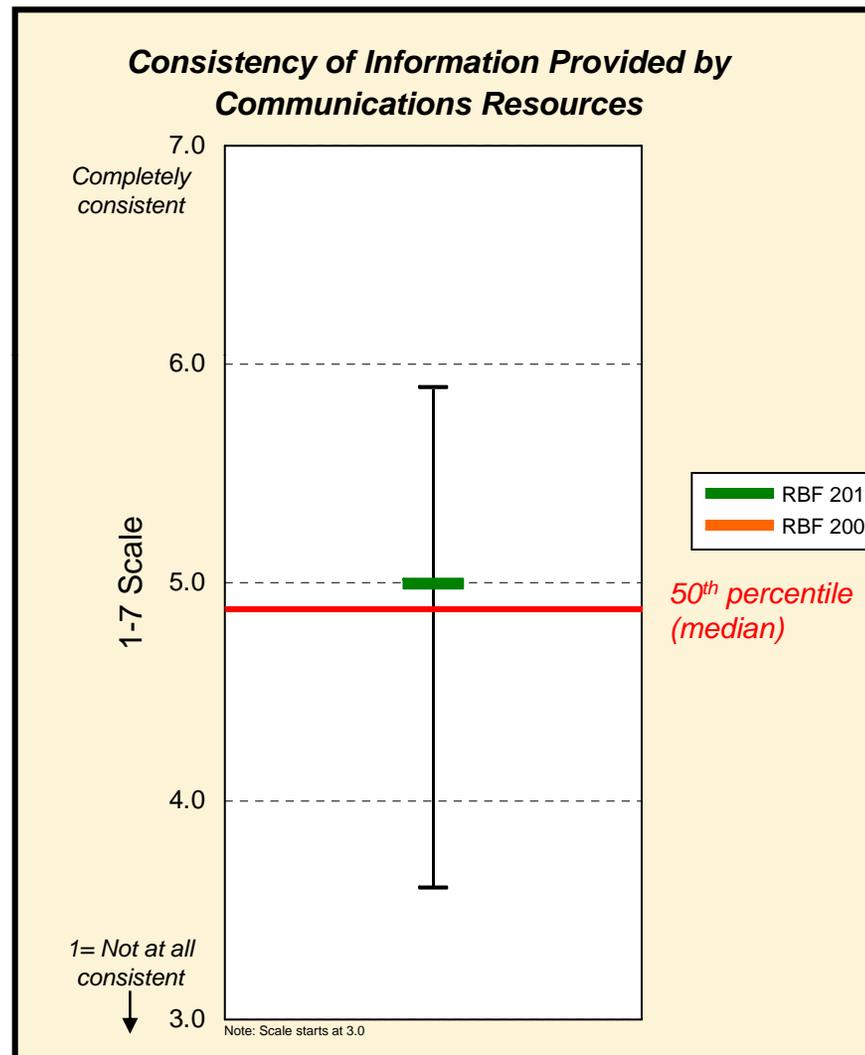
Selected Declined Applicant Comments

- ♦ *"The Peace and Security section had one set of guidelines on the website – but it turns out they had completely changed the guidelines without updating the website. The staff didn't take time to communicate this with me. It was a huge waste of time."*
- ♦ *"I found the Foundation's guidelines easy to understand and complete."*
- ♦ *"While the process seems straightforward, there appears to be a disconnect between conversations with the Foundation's program staff and the 'formal application' process."*
- ♦ *"The Foundation website, materials, and staff were very clear and consistent."*
- ♦ *"Disjunction between overall Foundation intent and program officer viewpoints."*
- ♦ *"Some more clarity on the website as to the specifics of funded proposals would be very helpful."*

Consistency of Communications

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

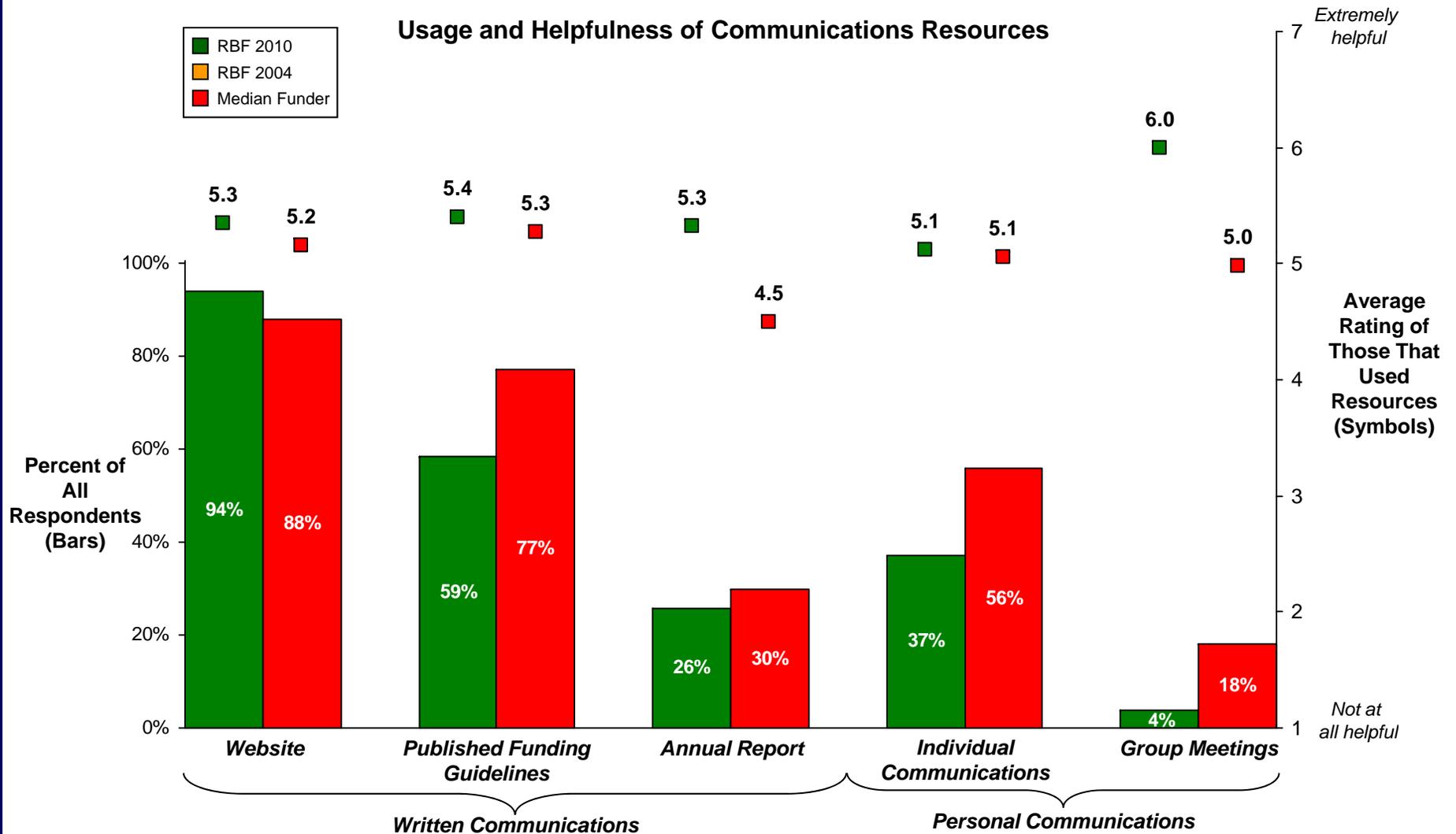
- similarly to the median funder



Note: This question includes a “used one or no resources” response option; 12 percent of RBF 2010 respondents indicated they use one or no resources, compared to 10 percent at the median funder. RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

Communication Resources

RBF declined applicants report less frequently using the Fund's published funding guidelines and having personal communications with the Fund's staff when learning about the Fund than is typical.



Note: RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

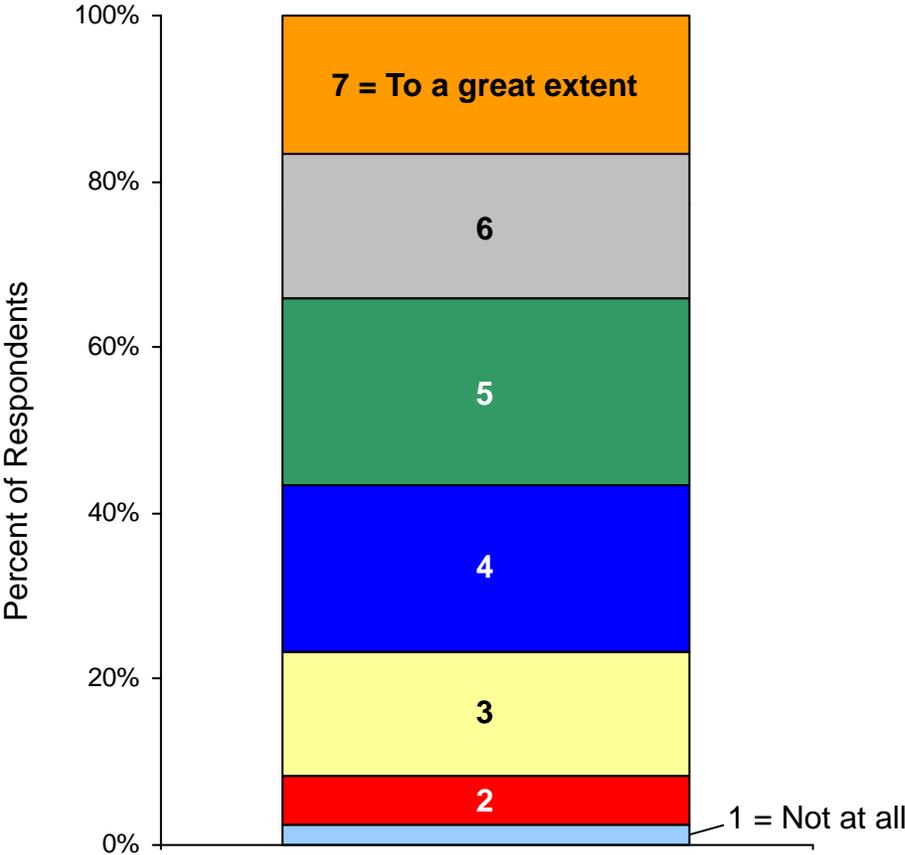


Array of Expertise and Ideas/Cultures and People

RBF declined applicants were asked to rate the extent to which RBF ensures a wide array of expertise and ideas shape the work of the Fund, with 1 = “Not at all” and 7 = “To a great extent.” Thirty-four percent of RBF declined applicants rate a 6 or a 7. RBF declined applicants were also asked to rate the extent to which RBF ensures a wide array of cultures and people shape the work of the Fund, with 1 = “Not at all” and 7 = “To a great extent.” Thirty-four percent of RBF declined applicants rate a 6 or a 7.

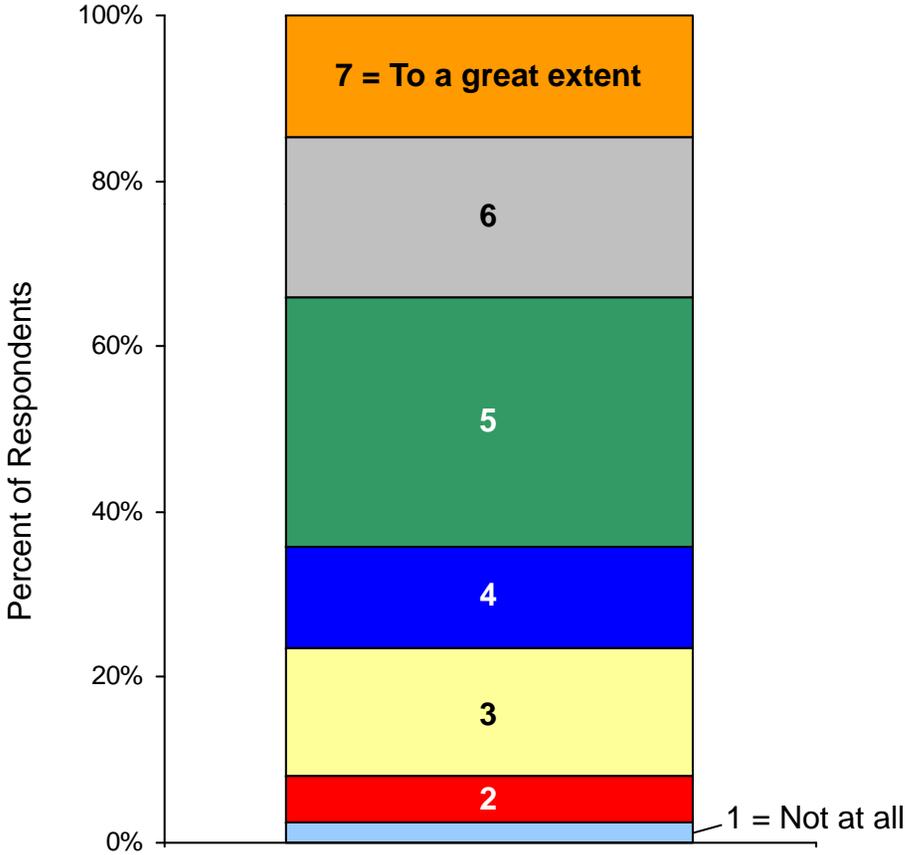
“To what extent do you think that the RBF ensures a wide array of expertise and ideas shape the work of the Foundation?”

“To what extent do you think that the RBF ensures a wide array of cultures and people shape the work of the Foundation?”



RBF Average Rating 4.7

Percent of Respondents that Answered “Don’t know” 34%



RBF Average Rating 4.8

Percent of Respondents that Answered “Don’t know” 32%

Note: No comparative data is available because this question was only asked of RBF 2010 applicants.

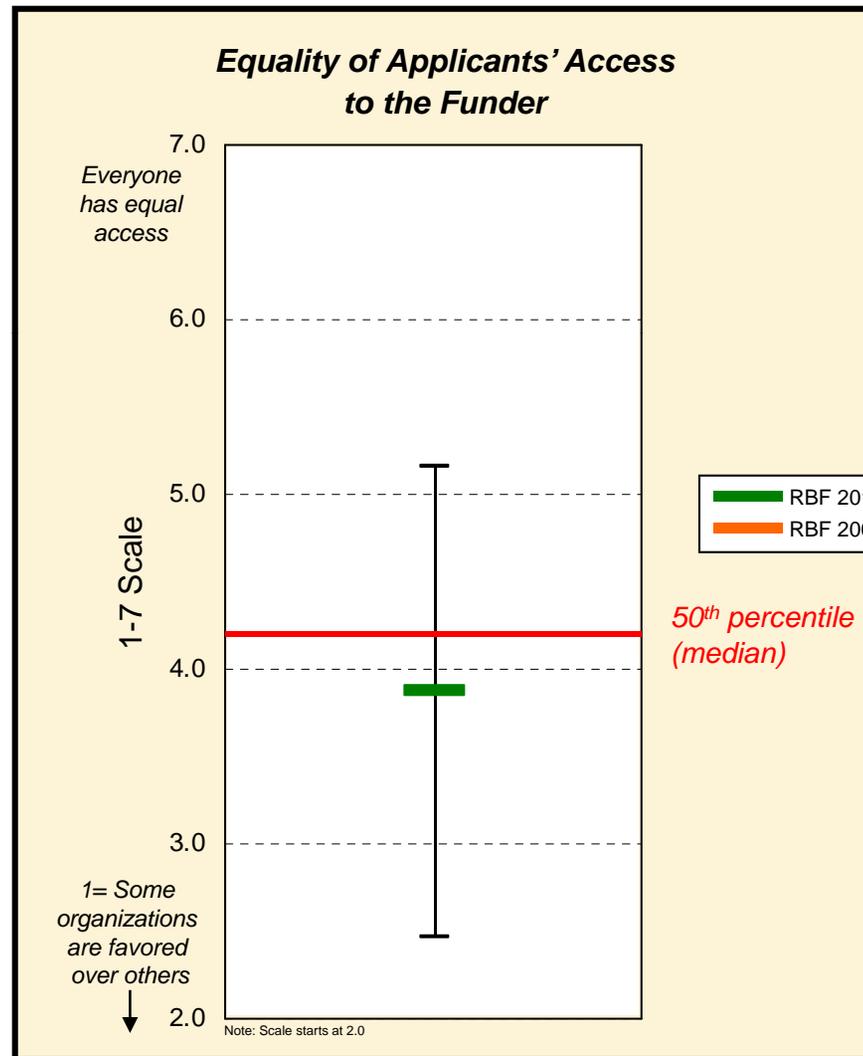
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Accessibility of the Fund to Applicants

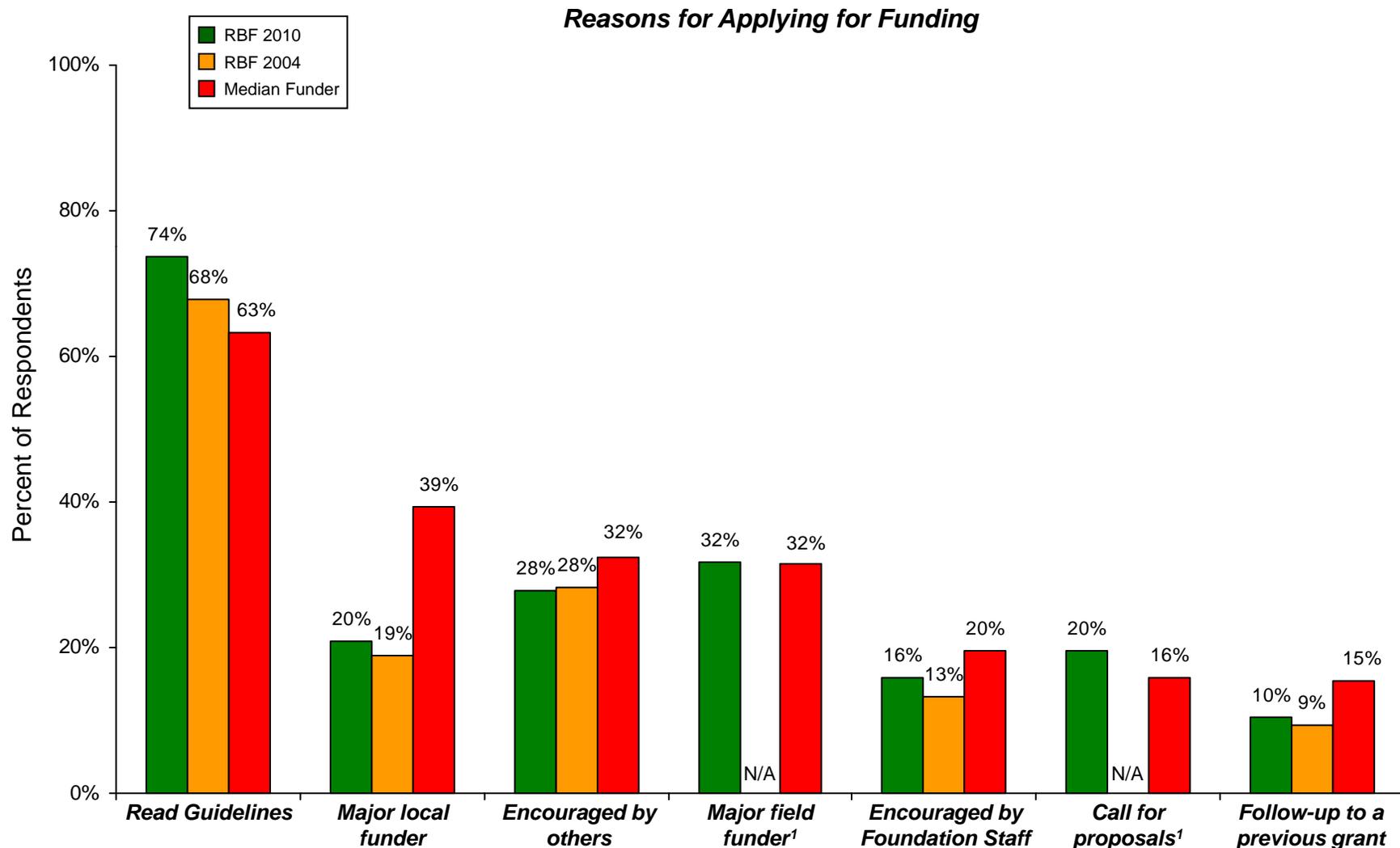
On equality of access to funding, RBF is rated:

- similarly to the median funder



Reasons for Application

A larger than typical proportion of RBF declined applicants report applying for a grant because they read the funding guidelines and thought that their proposal fit.

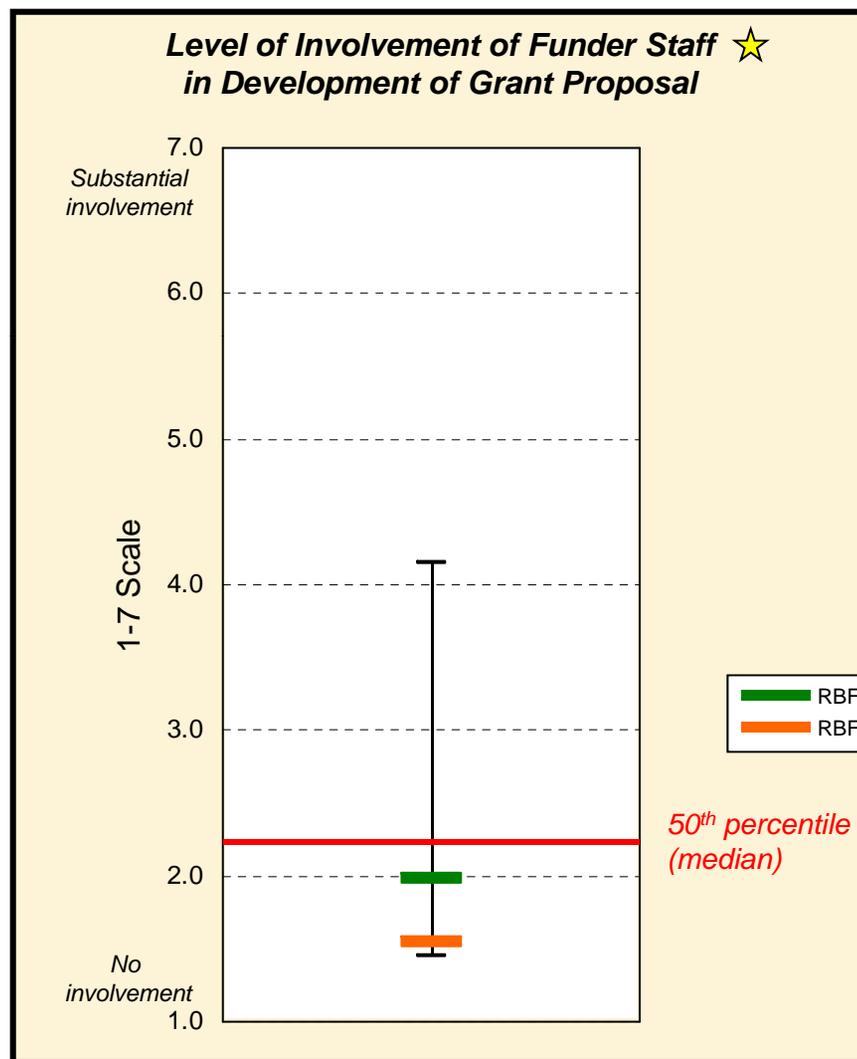


¹: RBF 2004 data not available due to changed to the survey instrument.

Funder Involvement in Proposal Development (1)

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

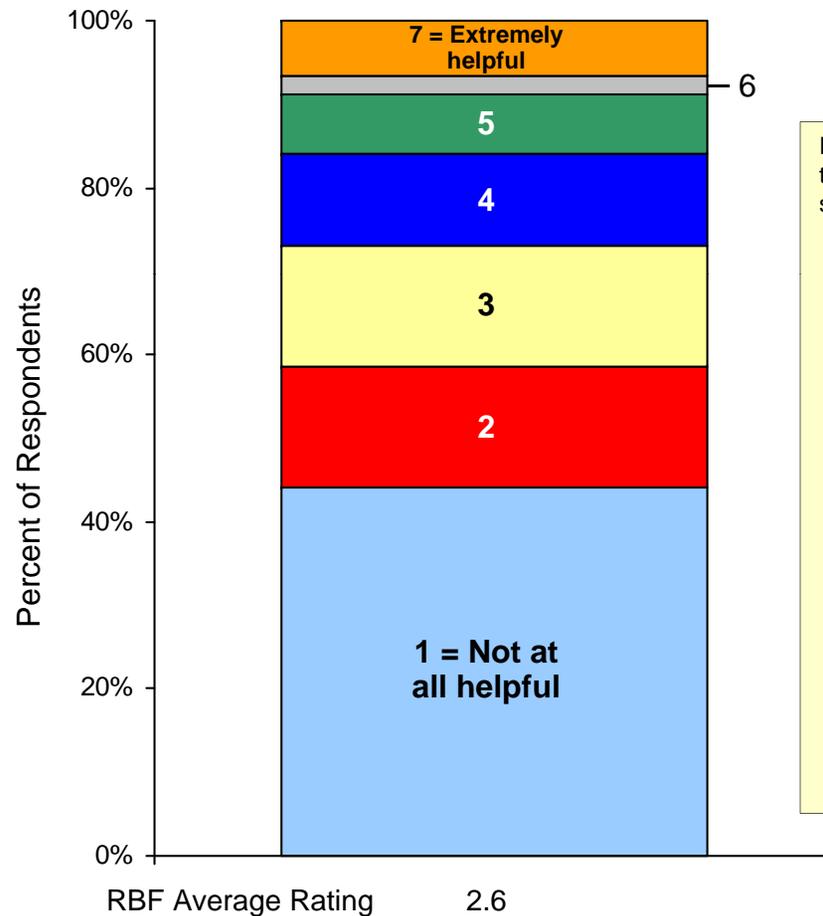
- below the median funder



Helpfulness of Selection Process

Forty-four percent of RBF declined applicants rate the helpfulness of the Fund's selection process in strengthening declined applicants' organizations as "Not at all helpful."

Helpfulness of the Selection Process to Declined Applicants



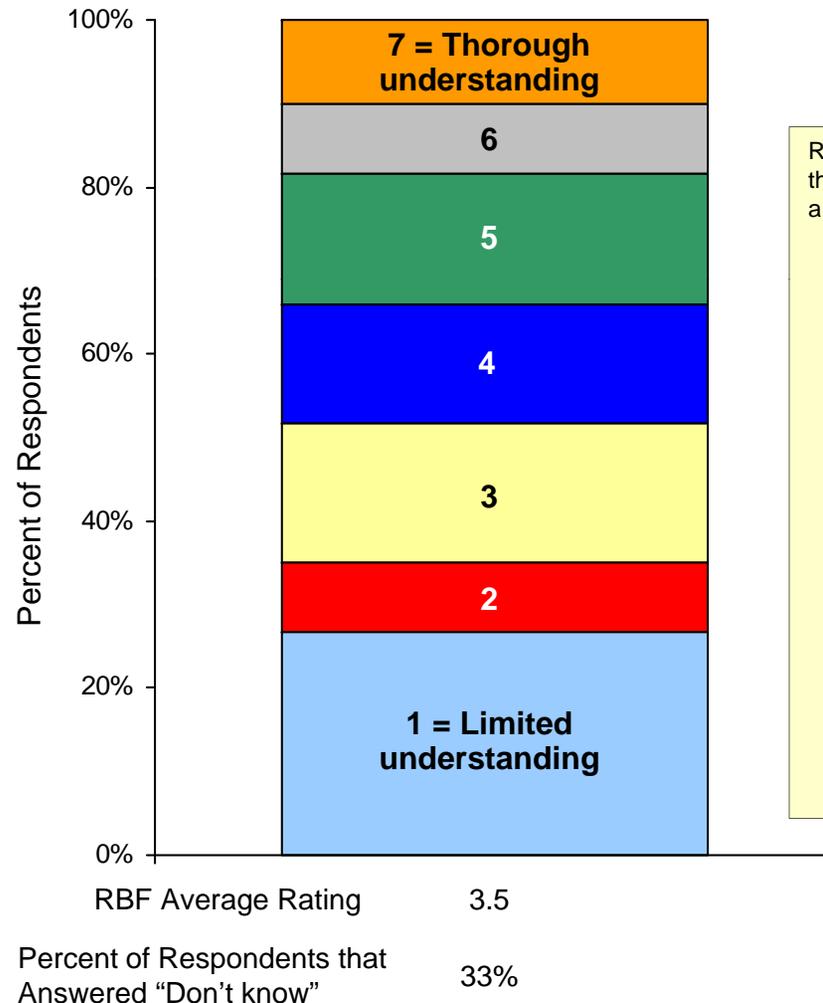
RBF declined applicants that rate the helpfulness of the Fund's selection process as "Not at all helpful" rate significantly lower on:

- ♦ The Fund's impact on declined applicants' fields and local communities
- ♦ Quality of declined applicants' interactions with the Fund
- ♦ Clarity and consistency of the Fund's communication of its goals and strategy
- ♦ The equality of access to the Fund
- ♦ Level of the Fund's staff involvement in the development of declined applicants' grant proposal
- ♦ Helpfulness of the Fund's selection process in strengthening declined applicants' organizations
- ♦ The Fund's understanding of declined applicants' organizations' goals and strategy
- ♦ The helpfulness of feedback received in strengthening future proposals to the Fund
- ♦ The honesty of the Fund's reason for declining declined applicants' proposal

Understanding of Declined Applicants' Goals and Strategies

Thirty-five percent of RBF declined applicants rate the extent to which the Fund understands their goals and strategies a 1 or a 2.

Foundation Understanding of Declined Applicants' Goals and Strategies

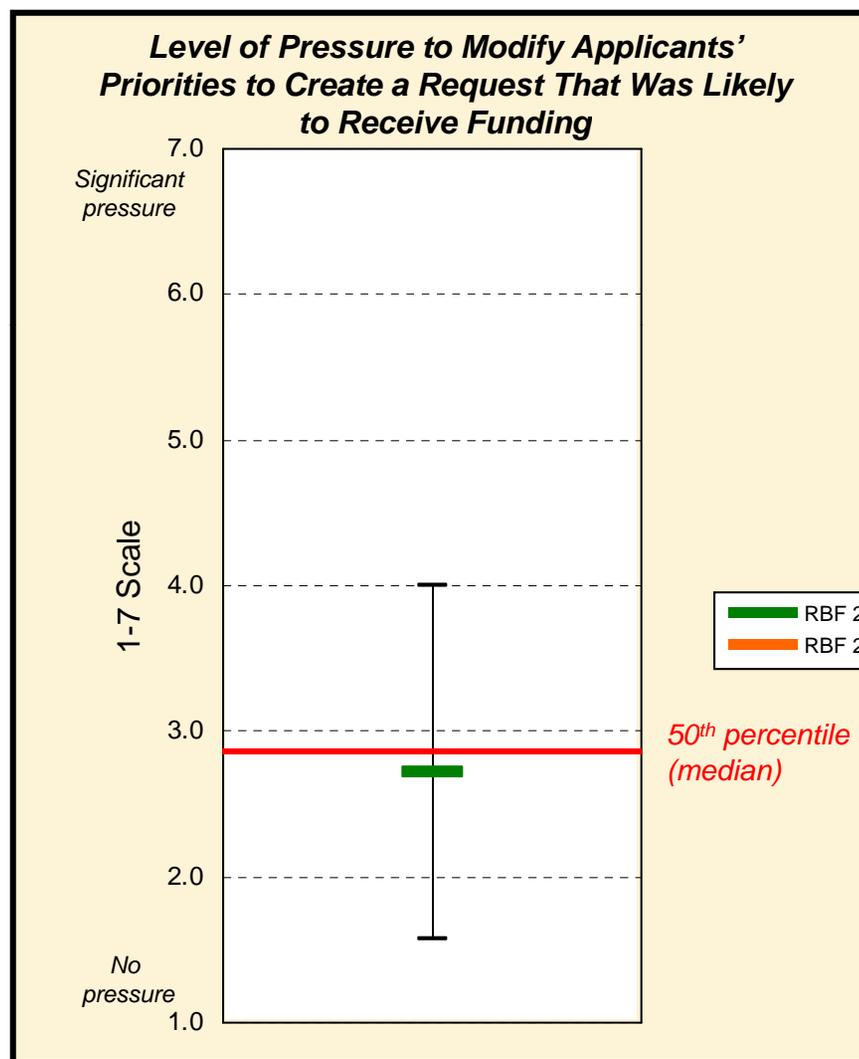


- RBF declined applicants that rate the extent to which the Fund understands their goals and strategies a 1 or a 2 rate significantly lower on:
- ◆ The Fund's impact on declined applicants' fields and local communities
 - ◆ Quality of declined applicants' interactions with the Fund
 - ◆ Clarity and consistency of the Fund's communication of its goals and strategy
 - ◆ The equality of access to the Fund
 - ◆ Level of the Fund's staff involvement in the development of declined applicants' grant proposal
 - ◆ Helpfulness of the Fund's selection process in strengthening declined applicants' organizations
 - ◆ The Fund's understanding of declined applicants' organizations' goals and strategy
 - ◆ The helpfulness of feedback received in strengthening future proposals to the Fund
 - ◆ The honesty of the Fund's reason for declining declined applicants' proposal

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, RBF is rated:

- similarly to the median funder

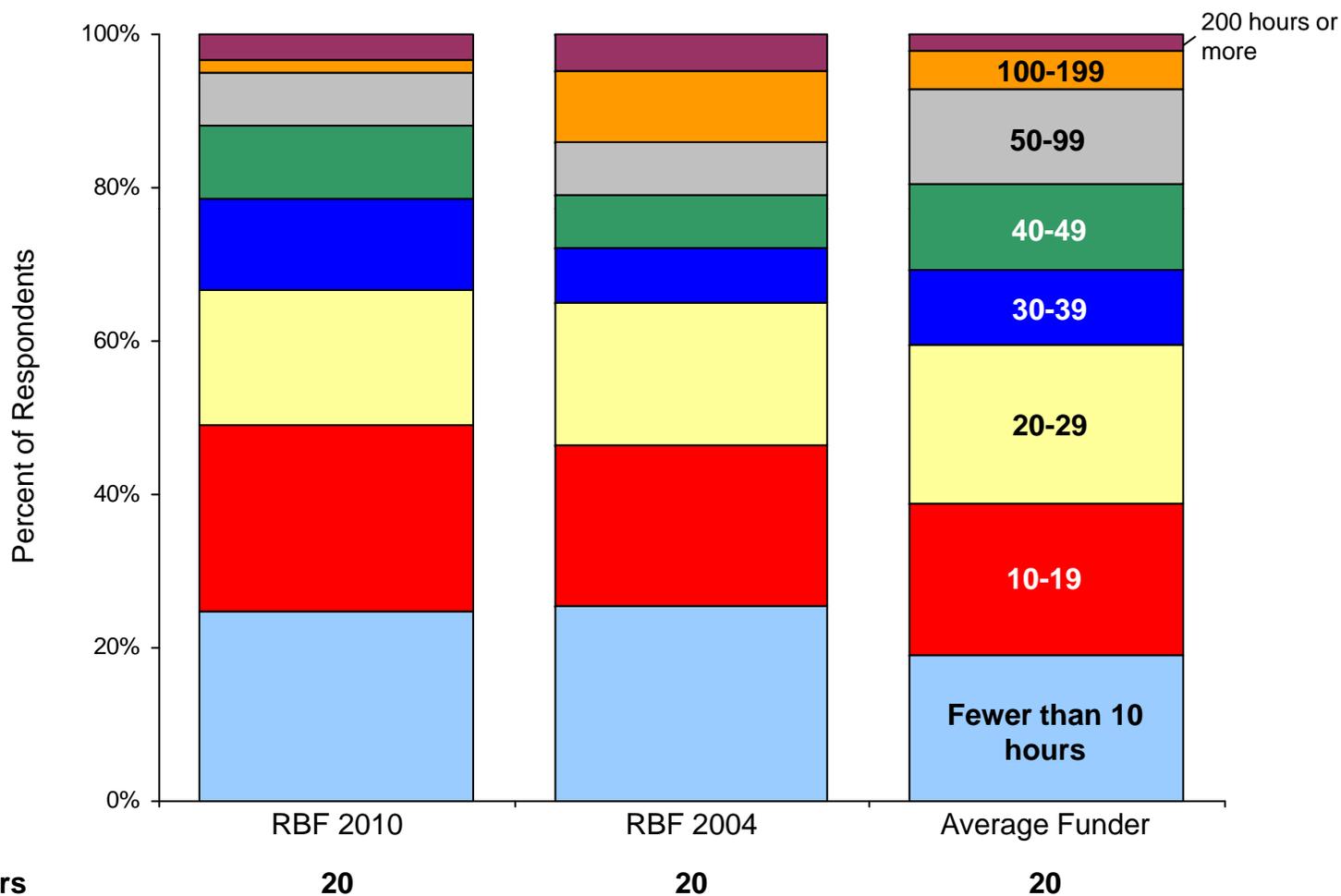


Administrative Time

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

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

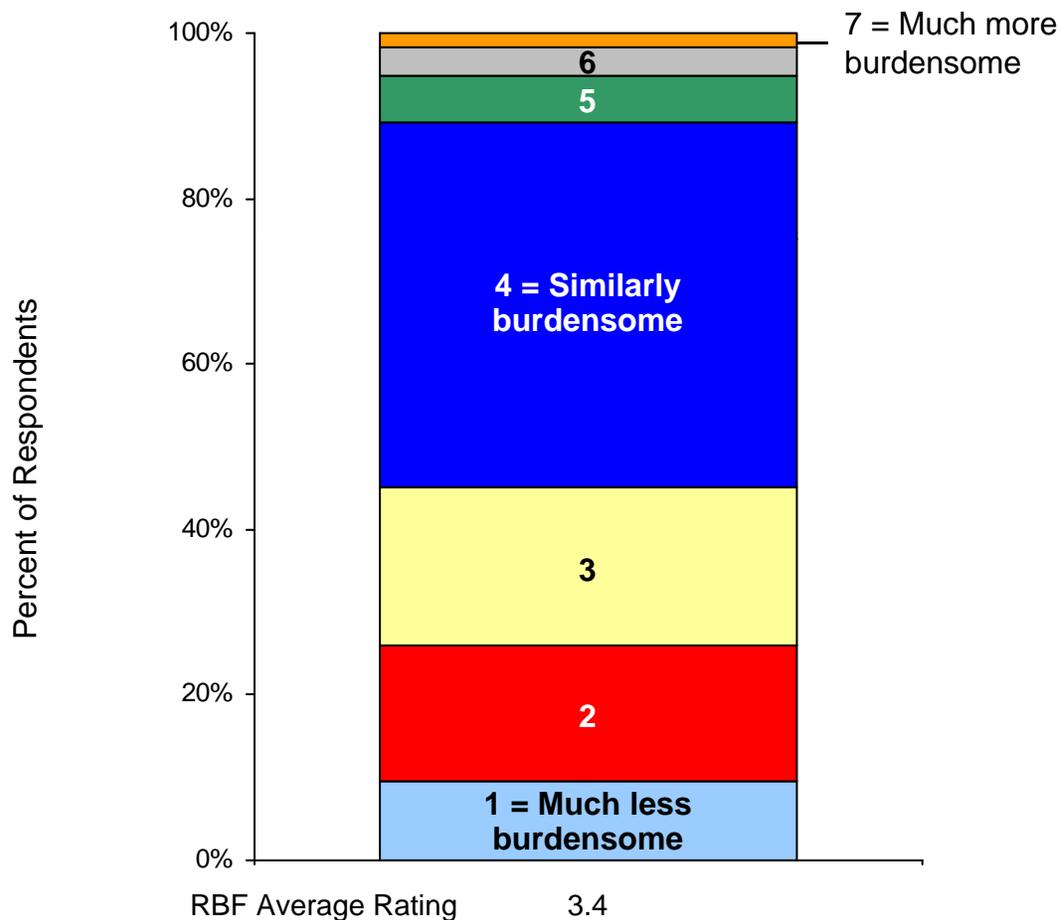
Median Administrative Hours Spent by Declined Applicants on Proposal and Selection Process



Burden of the Fund's Application Process

RBF declined applicants were asked to rate how the burden of the Fund's application process compares to that of other funders, with 1 = "Much less burdensome," 4 = "Similarly burdensome," and 7 = "Much more burdensome." Twenty-six percent of RBF declined applicants rate the burden a 1 or a 2.

"How does the burden of the RBF's application process compare to that of other funders?"

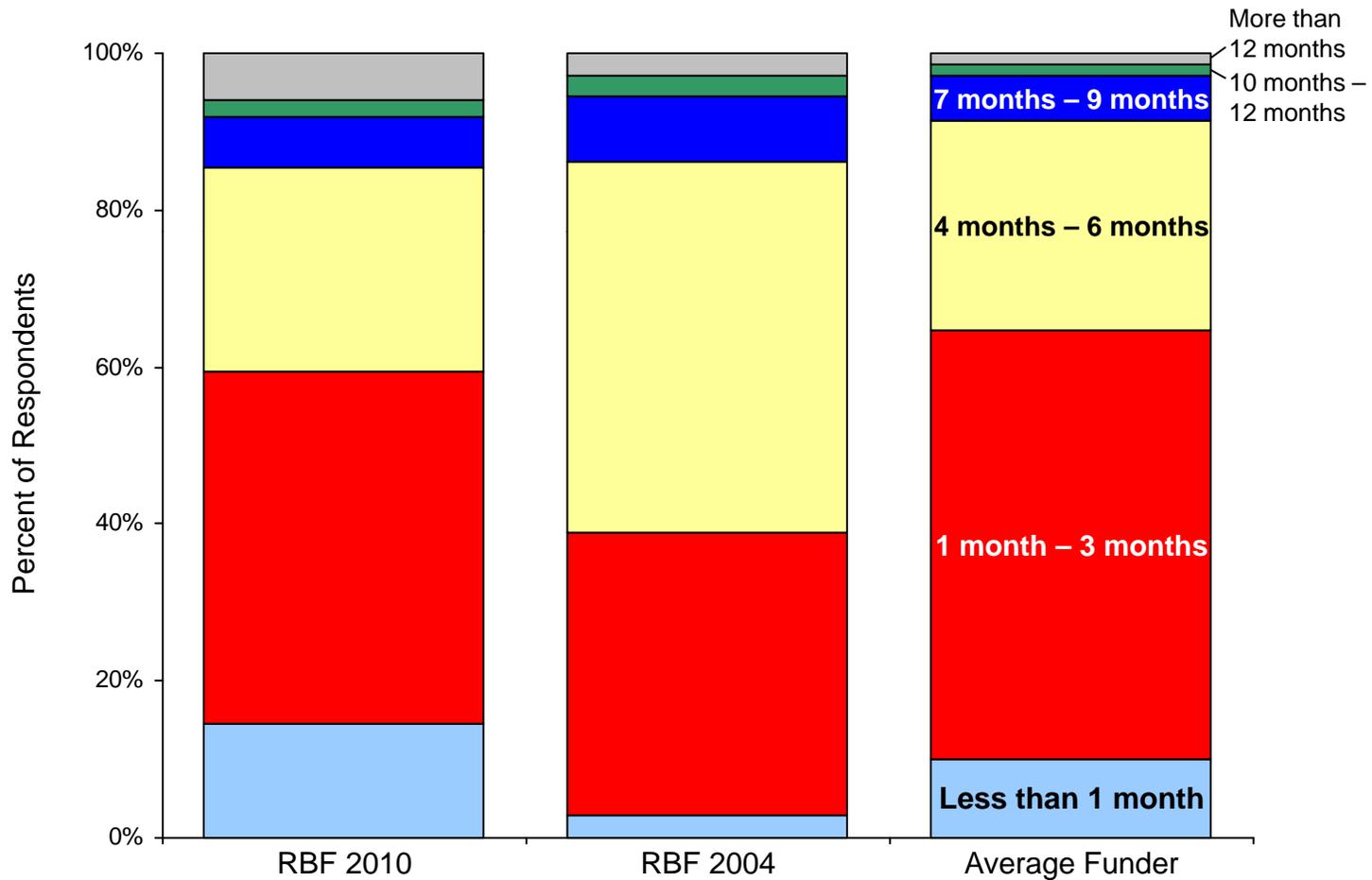


Time Between Submission and Funding Decision

The proportion of RBF 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 that of the average funder

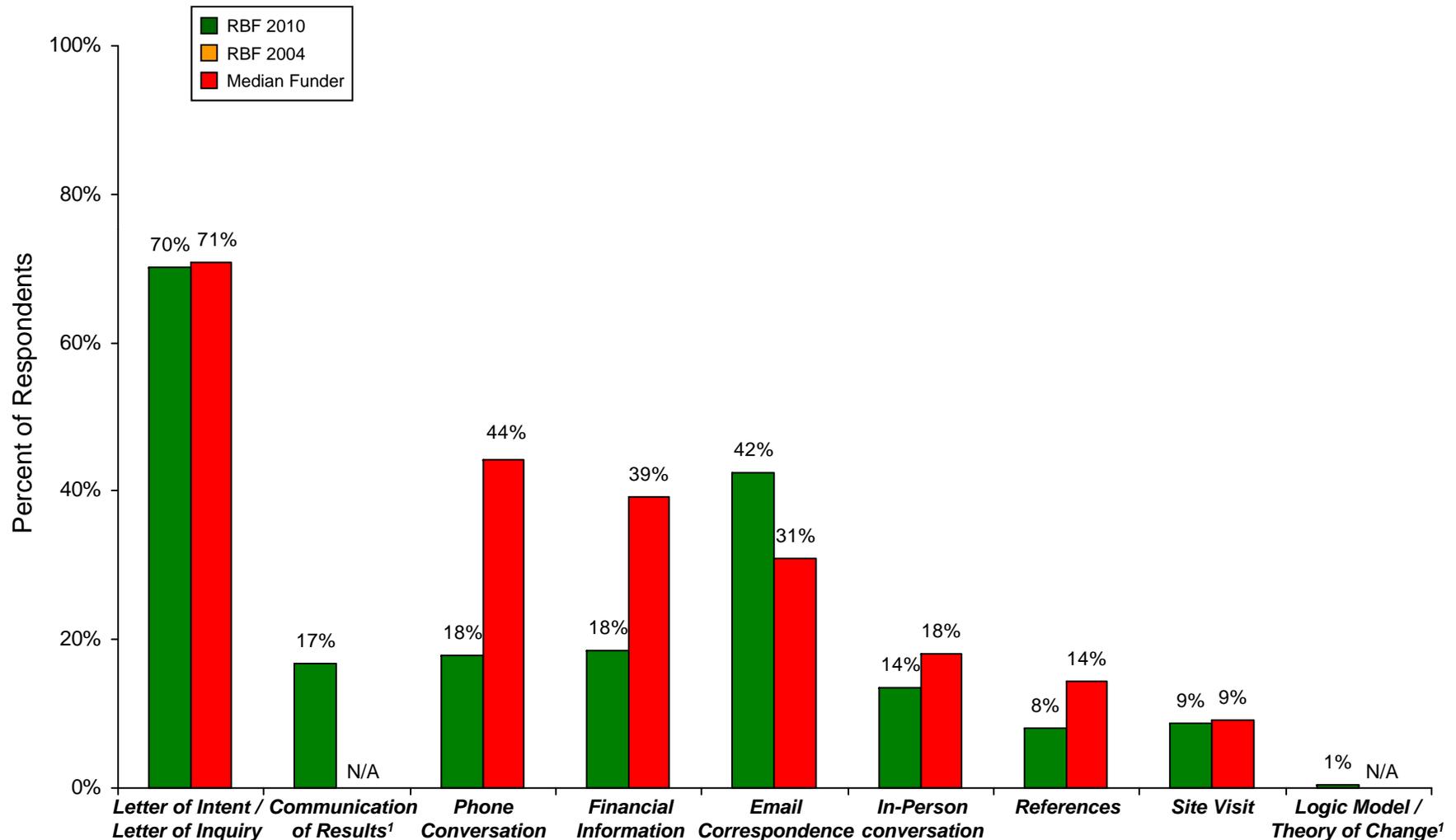
Time Elapsed Between Proposal Submission and Final Decision Not to Fund Request



Selection Process Activities

Compared to declined applicants of the median funder, RBF declined applicants less frequently participate in phone and in-person conversations, and more frequently engage in email correspondence with the Fund.

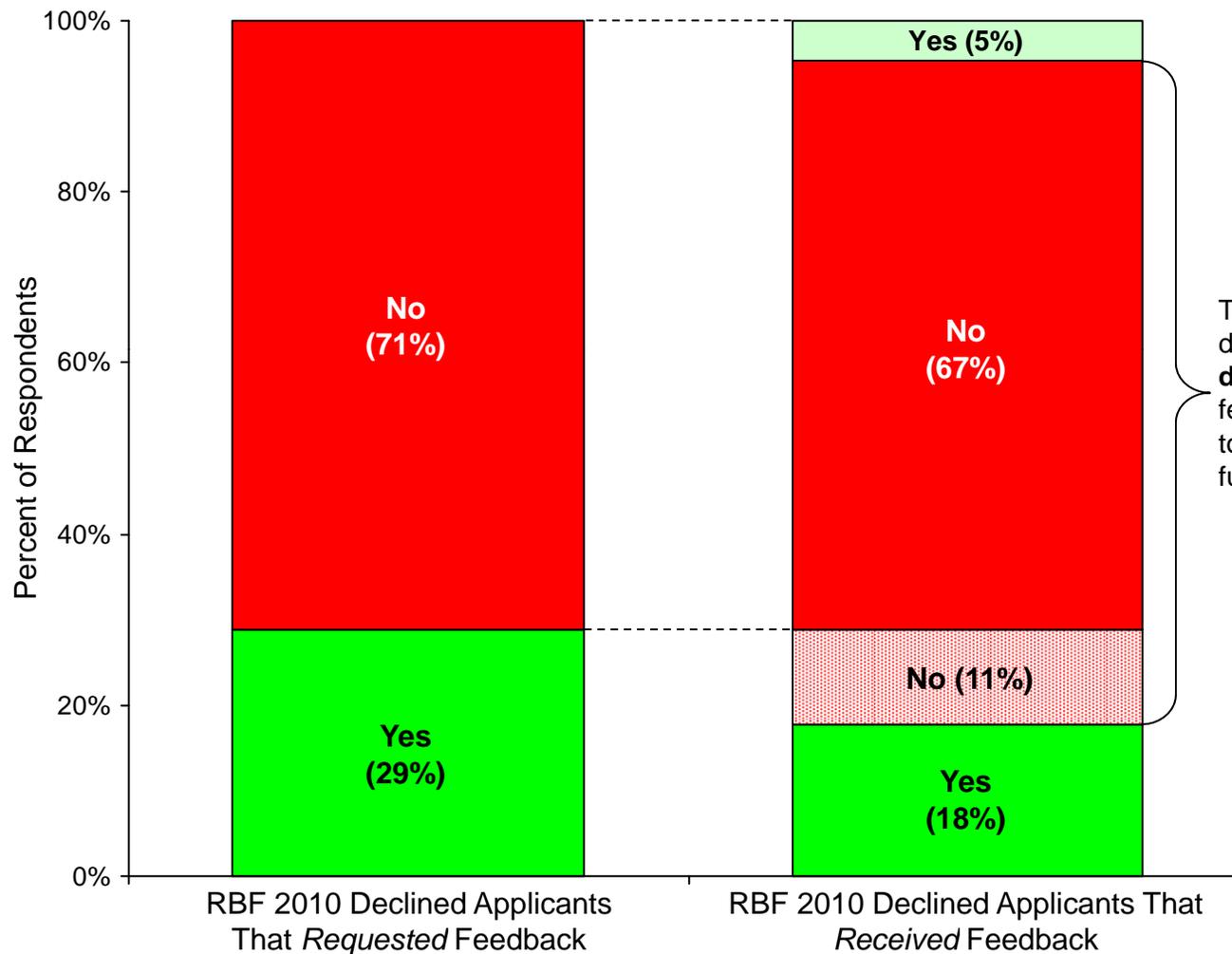
Data Requested by the Fund During the Selection Process



Note: RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.
1: Median funder data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

Feedback on Declined Applications

Seventy-eight percent of all RBF declined applicants did not receive feedback on their applications.



Total proportion of RBF declined applicants that **did not** receive feedback: **78%** compared to 51% at the average funder.

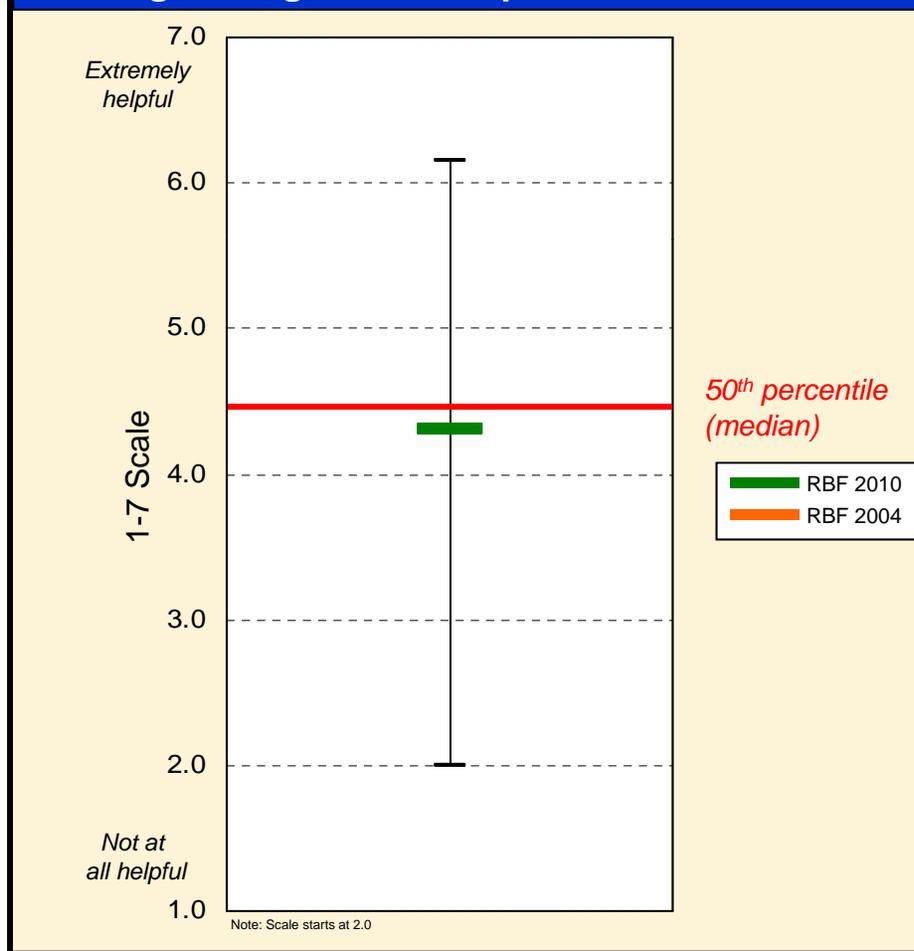
- RBF declined applicants that report they did receive feedback on their applications rate significantly higher on:
- ◆ The Fund's impact on declined applicants' fields
 - ◆ Quality of declined applicants' interactions with the Fund
 - ◆ Clarity of the Fund's communication of its goals and strategy
 - ◆ Level of the Fund's staff involvement in the development of declined applicants' grant proposal
 - ◆ Helpfulness of the Fund's selection process in strengthening declined applicants' organizations
 - ◆ The Fund's understanding of declined applicants' organizations' goals and strategy

Helpfulness of Feedback Received

On the helpfulness of feedback and advice received in strengthening future proposals to the Fund, the 22 percent of RBF applicants who received feedback and advice rate RBF:

- similarly to median funder

Helpfulness of Feedback and Advice Received in Strengthening Future Proposals to This Funder

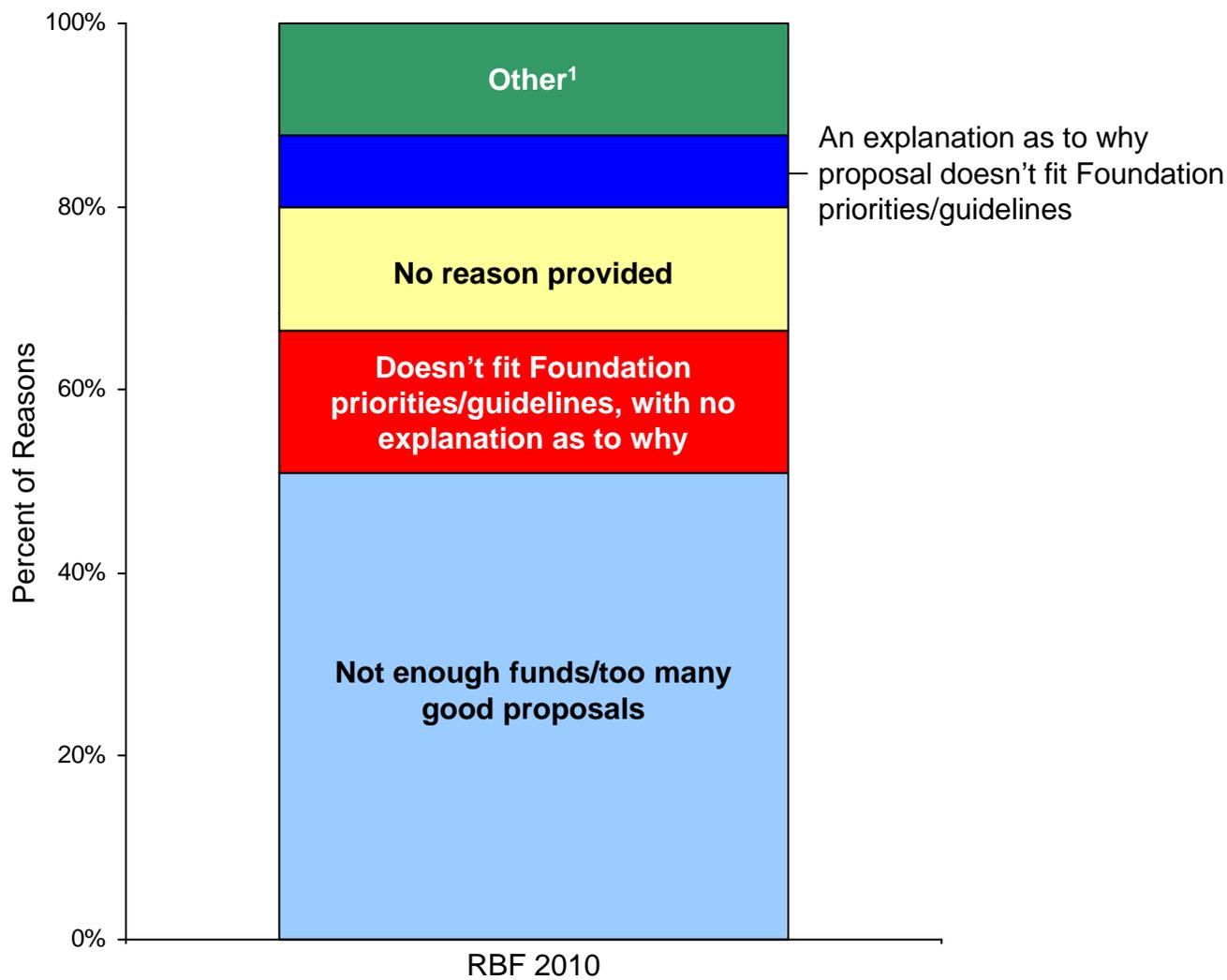


Selected Declined Applicant Comments

- ♦ “My phone conversation was very helpful; however, it would have been more helpful to have had a detailed letter explaining why the proposal was declined.”
- ♦ “We seriously desire feedback so we can know if we are wasting our time and energy by applying and thus would appreciate knowing if we came close or are wasting our time with the process! Any feedback is helpful!”
- ♦ “We would be happy to receive an indication beyond ‘too many good proposals’ as for the actual interest of the Foundation in our work. Too many good proposals but you gave ours special thought and would like to consider us again? Or too many good proposals and our initiative does not stand out for you, so no use in applying again?”
- ♦ “Very brief responses saying just that the project does not meet the Foundation’s funding criteria and then referring one to the website for more information was not helpful at all.”

Reasons Provided for Declining Proposal

Declined applicants were asked to indicate the reason the Fund gave when it declined to fund their proposal. The most frequently mentioned reason was that there are “not enough funds to go around” or “too many good proposals.”



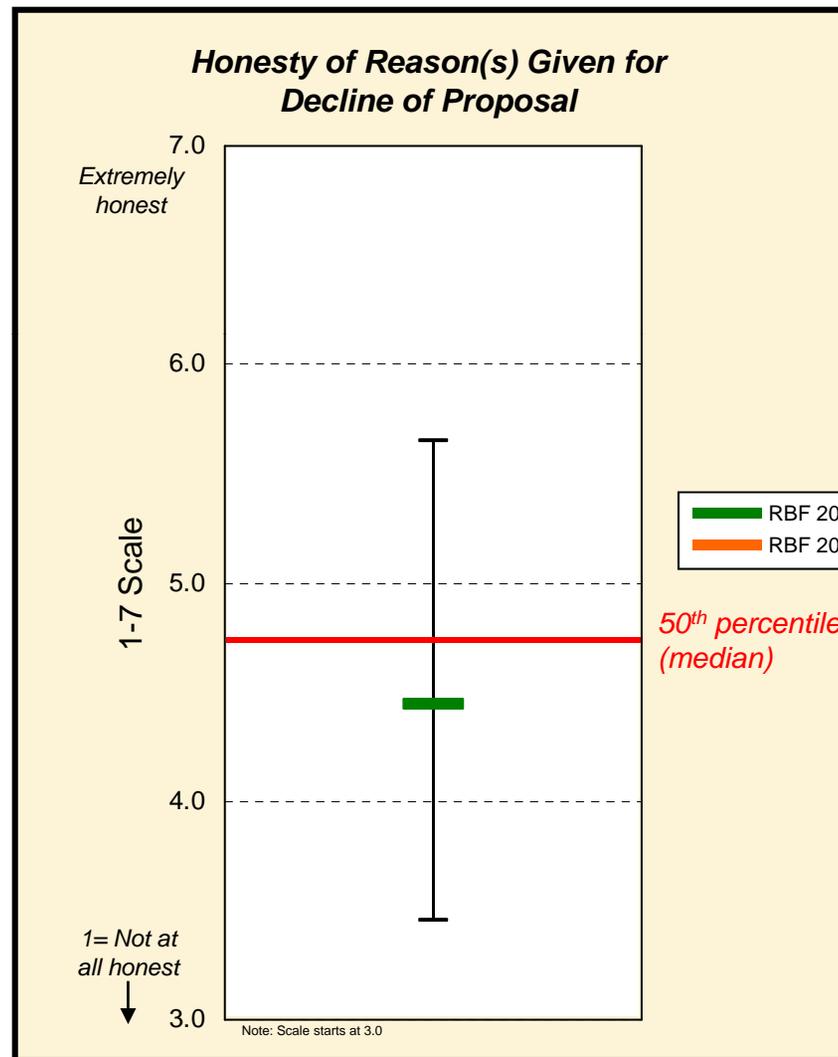
Note: No comparative data is available due to changes to the survey instrument.
RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

1: The most frequently mentioned “Other” reasons for declined include “still waiting for response” and “not sure.”

Honesty of Reason Given for Decline of Proposal

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

- below the median funder



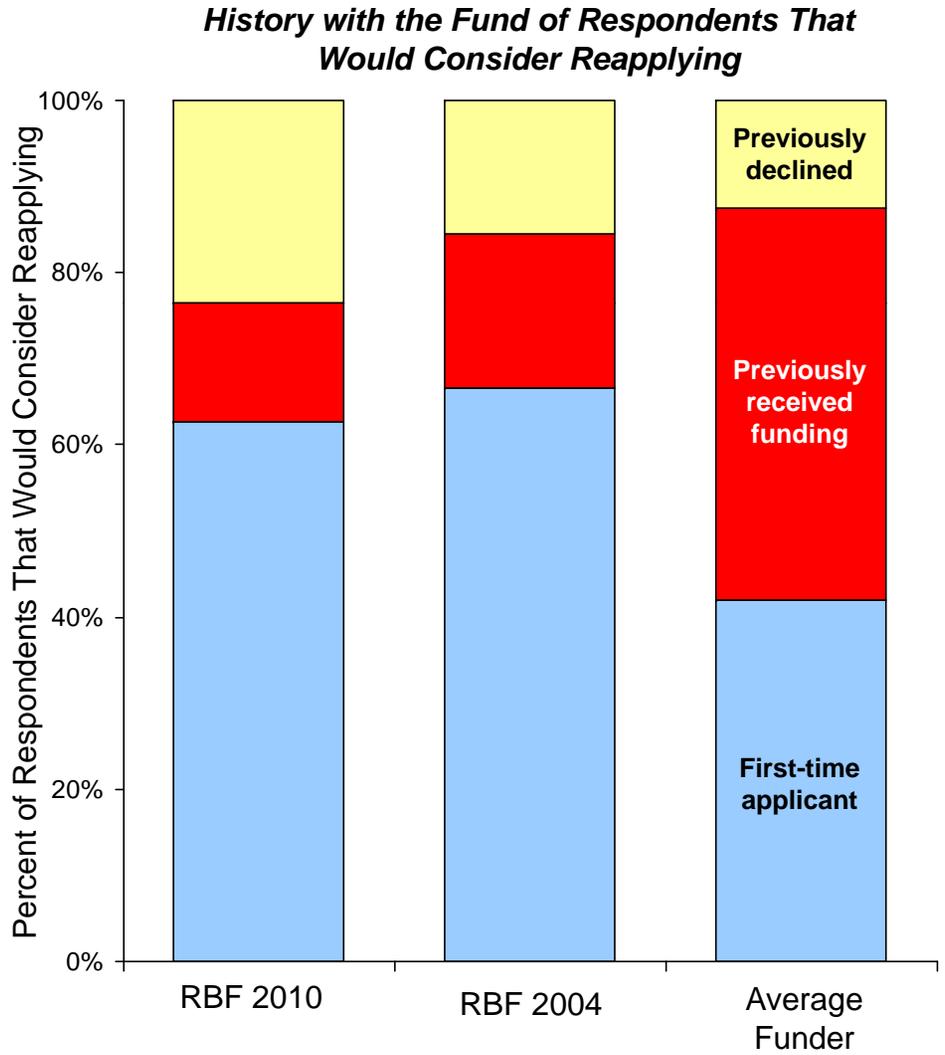
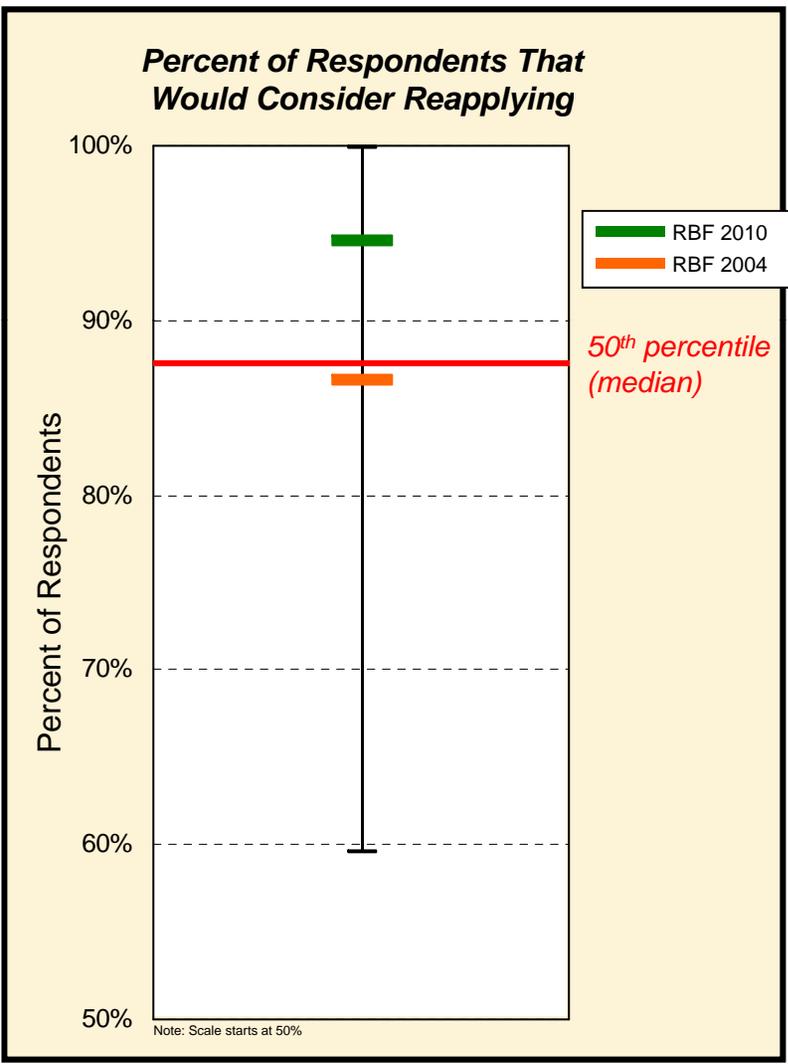
Implications for Future Applications

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

- larger than that of the median funder

The proportion of RBF declined applicants that reports considering reapplying and have also previously been declined funding is:

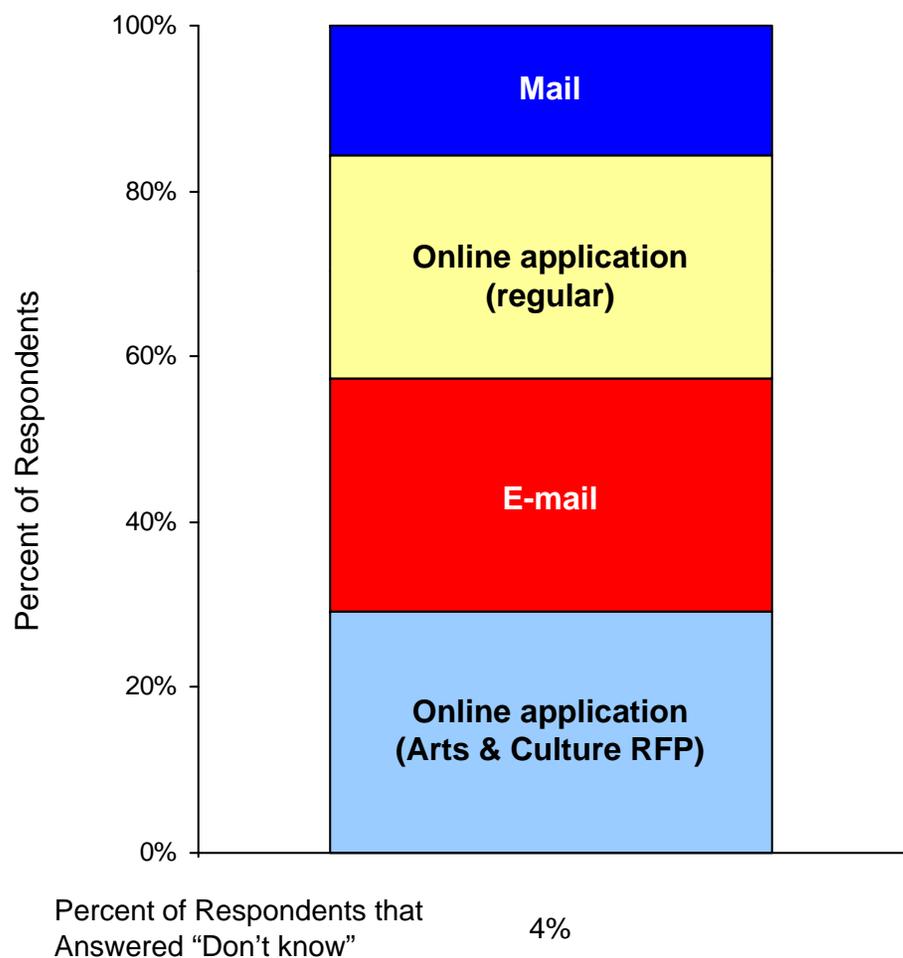
- larger than that of the average funder



Method of Application Submission

RBF declined applicants were asked to indicate how they submitted their application to the Fund. The most frequently used method was the online application (Arts & Culture RFP).

“How did you submit your application to the RBF?”



Note: No comparative data is available because this question was only asked of RBF 2010 applicants. No declined applicant selected the "Fax" option.

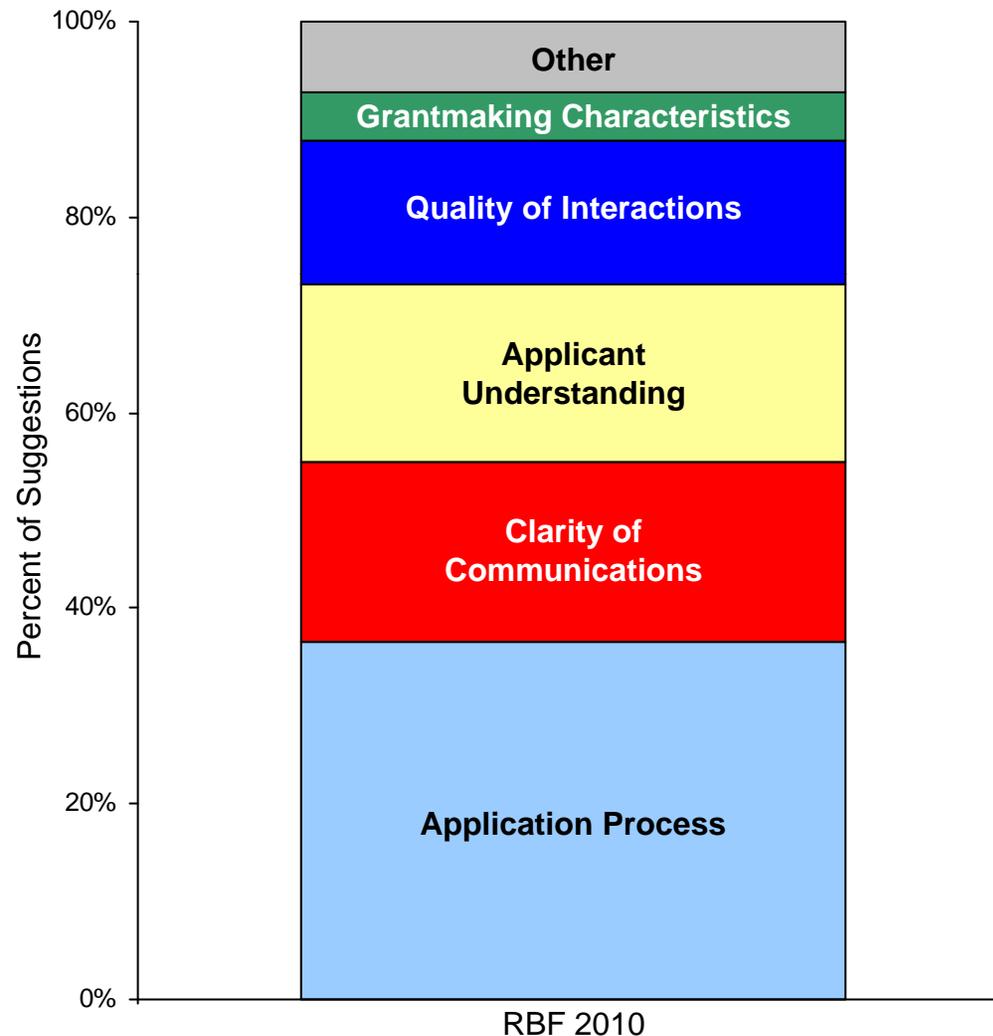
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Applicant Suggestions for the Fund (1)

Declined applicants were asked to provide any suggestions for how the Fund could improve. The most frequently mentioned suggestions for RBF deal with the selection process.

Topics of Declined Applicant Suggestions



Note: There were a total of 82 declined applicant suggestions for RBF.

Applicant Suggestions for the Fund (2)

RBF declined applicants made a total of 82 suggestions for the Fund’s improvement. A sample, representative by theme is shown below.

% Declined Applicant Suggestions		RBF Declined Applicant Suggestions
Topic of Declined Applicant Suggestion	RBF	Sub-Themes and Sample of Comments
Application Process	37%	<p>More application feedback after declination (n = 10)</p> <p>“Clear responses and further advice about the project rejection, including other Foundation partners or donors with similar funding interests.”</p> <p>“Larger answer during the rejecting process. E.g., why and what we did not answer in our proposal. Or if some of the proposals are good...that applicant could be advised how to improve its goals and objectives.”</p> <p>“A little more feedback as to why it didn’t fit or why no interest would have been appreciated.”</p>
		<p>More staff interaction and assistance during proposal development process (n = 9)</p> <p>“It would be helpful if the Foundation held information sessions or made staff available for meetings to assist in explaining guidelines and projects funded.”</p> <p>“Group classes and courses in grant preparation...in order to effectively help assist particularly new nonprofit organizations or organizations applying...for the very first time.”</p> <p>“I would also like the opportunity to meet with program staff in advance of our proposals.”</p>
		<p>Other (n = 11)</p> <p>“Need simple application form and process.”</p> <p>“Make review process more transparent... It was often hard to figure out how the grantees were selected, the selection seems to be a bit eclectic.”</p> <p>“Make the procedure faster because waiting for responses was quite long.”</p>
Clarity of Communications	18%	<p>More clarity of RBF’s funding priorities and guidelines (n = 13)</p> <p>“Be more specific in goals and priorities, especially when declining a project that logically appears to be a good fit for the Foundation’s stated goals and priorities.”</p> <p>“Better and more detailed guidelines stating countries of funding which still are not shown on their Sustainable Development guidelines as of today.”</p> <p>“Greater clarity on the website about Foundation priorities.”</p> <p>“Publish more detailed project descriptions of funded organizations. It would help us to know whether or not our proposal is within the specific scope and interests of the Foundation.”</p>
		<p>Other (n = 2)</p> <p>“Easier website navigation and clearer guidelines.”</p> <p>“More detail on website as to purpose of funded grants.”</p>

Applicant Suggestions for the Fund (3)

% Declined Applicant Suggestions		RBF Declined Applicant Suggestions
Topic of Declined Applicant Suggestion	RBF	Sub-Themes and Sample of Comments
Applicant Understanding	18%	Be more inclusive in funding (n = 10) “Consider more diversity in funding decisions. RBF never funded an immigrant community organization.” “Consider other organizations for funding not just those which have been funded for years.” “The services or processes would be greatly enhanced if smaller, community based organizations...were given more consideration.”
		Other (n = 5) “I’d suggest...a staff with deeper knowledge of the field [and] better understanding of organizations’ goals and performance.” “Each request should require a greater understanding of the impact that it would have. Assign a case worker to work with the requesting agency so that everyone understands the impact.”
Quality of Interactions	15%	Increased responsiveness and personal contact with staff (n = 9) “If possible, it is always best to have a conversation (even over the phone) with a live human being. Online processes are very useful as far as they go, but there is a lack of depth and dimension to the interaction.” “It would be very good if program officers returned calls and were willing to learn more about the organization.” “Pick up the phone – call the people who are submitting grants. Speak to them.”
		Site visits (n = 3) “Periodic site visits to the organization or in-person meetings at the Foundation, if requested.”
Grantmaking Characteristics	5%	“Program or general operating support would have an enormous impact on [small organizations]’ futures. A capacity building grant for these companies is also vital because it could help the transitional phase of an organization, to build their administration and infrastructure.” “The Foundation can improve its services by funding projects related to capacity building.”
Other	7%	Increased communication in applicants’ native languages (n = 3) “For us it would be very good if the Foundation is able to provide the person for communication and email communication in the Serbian language (or language of some of the countries of the Balkans).”
		Other (n = 3) “Improvements must come from the hiring of African-American Program Officers who understand the culture.”

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Review of Findings

Chart shows RBF's 2010 (◆) and 2004 (◇) 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 ¹						Declined applicants were asked to rate the helpfulness of the feedback from the funder in strengthening future proposals to the funder.

¹: RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

Analysis and Discussion (1)

More Positive Declined Applicant Perceptions Since 2004

- Declined applicants rate RBF more positively than in 2004 on measures within the report – both externally oriented measures, such as the Fund’s impact on declined applicants’ fields, and internal measures, such as the fairness of treatment of declined applicants.
- Declined applicants rate the clarity with which the Fund communicates its goals and strategy significantly higher than in 2004.¹ The Fund is rated similarly to the median funder on this measure, an improvement from being rated below 90 percent of funders in 2004.
 - *What policies or procedures has the Fund implemented since 2004 that may have led to these improvements in ratings?*

Interaction with Fund Staff During the Application Process is Limited

- RBF staff is less involved in the development of declined applicant grant proposals than is typical, and applicants suggest a need for more engagement with RBF.
- Declined applicants report less frequently having personal communication when learning about the Fund than is typical, but when it does occur, they find the communication to be as helpful or more helpful than similar communication with other funders. Declined applicants frequently express their desire for more staff interaction and assistance during the development of their grant proposals: “Face to face meetings with the staff to discuss the organization and appropriateness of the proposals” and “facilitate phone calls and meetings with applicants to better understand the proposed project.”
- Additionally, declined applicants rate lower than typical on the responsiveness of Fund staff and report less frequently participating in phone calls and in-person conversations with Fund staff during the selection process. They comment that “it would be very good if program officers returned calls and were willing to learn more about the organization” and “it is always best to have a conversation (even over the phone) with a live human being.... There is a lack of depth and dimension to [online processes] interaction.”
- Forty-four percent of RBF declined applicants rate the helpfulness of the Fund’s selection process in strengthening declined applicants’ organizations as “Not at all helpful.” The group of declined applicants that rates low on this measure also tends to rate low on the Fund’s understanding of declined applicants’ organizations’ goals and strategies. Declined applicants who rate low on either of these rate the Fund significantly lower on most measures within this report, including the Fund’s impact on declined applicants’ fields, responsiveness of Fund staff, and the clarity and consistency with which the Fund communicates its goals and strategy.
 - *Is the Fund interested in and able to increase its level of engagement with grant applicants during the selection process?*
 - *If so, how can RBF devote the resources necessary to strengthen the personal communication and interactions between its staff and applicants seeking to learn more about the Fund and its grant proposal process?*
 - *If not, are there opportunities for RBF to clarify information available online and through impersonal means to more clearly guide applicants?*

Analysis and Discussion (2)

Feedback to Declined Applicants and High Likelihood of Reapplication

- Declined applicants tend to spend 20 hours on the Fund’s proposal and selection process. Nearly all RBF declined applicants indicate that they intend to reapply to RBF in the future, however, a smaller than typical proportion of RBF declined applicants indicate they have previously received funding from RBF (14 percent at RBF versus 45 percent typically). Additionally, 20 percent of applicants in this population have been repeatedly declined funding.
- The most frequently mentioned reason for applying for funding from RBF is reading the funding guidelines and thinking that their organization’s proposal fit. Declined applicants frequently suggest that RBF’s funding guidelines and priorities need to be clearer. One declined applicant says, “Be more specific in goals and priorities, especially when declining a project that logically appears to be a good fit.”
- Seventy-eight percent of RBF declined applicants report not receiving feedback on their applications, a larger than typical proportion. Those applicants who did receive feedback rate the Fund significantly higher on many dimensions within the report, including the helpfulness of the selection process in strengthening declined applicants’ organizations.
- Declined applicants frequently suggest that the Fund provide more feedback on their declined proposals, requesting “clear responses and further advice about the project rejection” and “more detail in [the] denial letter.”
- Beyond any substantive feedback RBF could provide, applicants indicate that it is also not providing any specific reason for their application rejection. More than half of RBF declined applicants indicate that the reason provided by the Fund for declination was “not enough funds to go around” or “too many good proposals.” Declined applicants rate the honesty of the reason(s) given below the typical funder.
 - *Given the high proportion of declined applicants who plan to reapply for funding, can the Fund be clearer in indicating why proposals were declined – beyond stating that there were more proposals than available funds? Or can the Fund provide more specific advice to strengthen future applications?*
 - *If there are applicants who are repeatedly declined funding and that are unlikely to receive funding in the future, can RBF provide a clearer signal that this is the case?*

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Grant Application Characteristics

Measure	RBF 2010	RBF 2004	Full Dataset Median
Grant Amount Requested			
<i>Median grant request</i>	\$75K	\$60K	\$50K
Less than \$10K	4%	3%	11%
\$10K - \$24K	11%	9%	22%
\$25K - \$49K	17%	27%	19%
\$50K - \$99K	23%	27%	19%
\$100K - \$149K	17%	12%	10%
\$150K - \$299K	19%	24%	9%
\$300K - \$499K	2%	0%	4%
\$500K - \$999K	3%	0%	3%
\$1MM and above	3%	0%	2%
Type of Grant Requested¹			
Program/Project Support	70%	N/A	67%
General Operating Support	8%	N/A	9%
Technical Assistance	11%	N/A	4%
Building/Renovation	3%	N/A	15%
Other Capital Support	2%	N/A	3%
Scholarship/Fellowship	1%	N/A	2%
Endowment Support	1%	N/A	0%
Event/Sponsorship Funding ²	5%	N/A	N/A

Note: Grant Amount Requested includes a "don't know" response option; 17 percent of RBF 2010 respondents answered "don't know," compared to 12 percent at the median funder. Proportions may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

1: RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

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

Declined Applicant Characteristics (1)

Measure	RBF 2010	RBF 2004	Full Dataset Median
Operating Budget of Declined Applicant Organization			
<i>Median budget</i>	<i>\$0.5MM</i>	<i>\$0.7MM</i>	<i>\$0.7MM</i>
< \$100K	23%	25%	15%
\$100K - \$499K	25%	15%	27%
\$500K - \$999K	19%	13%	13%
\$1MM - \$4.9MM	24%	23%	24%
\$5MM - \$24.9MM	5%	8%	12%
\$25MM and above	4%	17%	9%
Length of Time Which Applicants Have Regularly Conducted the Program for Which They Applied¹			
Less than 1 year	17%	N/A	23%
1 - 5 years	52%	N/A	48%
6 - 10 years	12%	N/A	11%
More than 10 years	18%	N/A	18%
Length of Establishment of Grantee Organizations			
<i>Median length of establishment</i>	<i>15 years</i>	<i>17 years</i>	<i>20 years</i>
Less than 5 years	23%	25%	10%
5 - 9 years	25%	15%	14%
10 -19 years	19%	13%	20%
20 - 49 years	24%	23%	34%
50 - 99 years	5%	8%	14%
100 years or more	4%	17%	8%

Note: Proportions may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

1: RBF 2004 data not available due to changes to the survey instrument.

Declined Applicant Characteristics (2)

Measure	RBF 2010	RBF 2004	Full Dataset Median
Job Title of Respondents			
Executive Director	43%	N/A	N/A
Development Director	16%	N/A	N/A
Other Senior Management	11%	N/A	N/A
Project Director	11%	N/A	N/A
Volunteer	2%	N/A	N/A
Other Development Staff	11%	N/A	N/A
Other	8%	N/A	N/A
Gender of Respondents¹			
Male	49%	N/A	38%
Female	51%	N/A	62%
Race/Ethnicity of Respondents²			
Caucasian/White	75%	N/A	82%
African-American/Black	10%	N/A	9%
Hispanic/Latino	2%	N/A	3%
Asian (incl. Indian subcontinent)	3%	N/A	2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	N/A	1%
Multi-racial	4%	N/A	1%
Pacific Islander	3%	N/A	0%
Other	1%	N/A	2%

Note: Median funder job title data not available due to changes to the survey instrument. RBF 2004 job title, gender, and race data not available due to changes to the survey instrument. Proportions may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

- 1: In Spring of 2009 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 3 percent of RBF 2010 respondents selected "other" or "prefer not to say," compared to 4 percent at the median funder.
- 2: In Spring of 2009 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 8 percent of RBF 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

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