



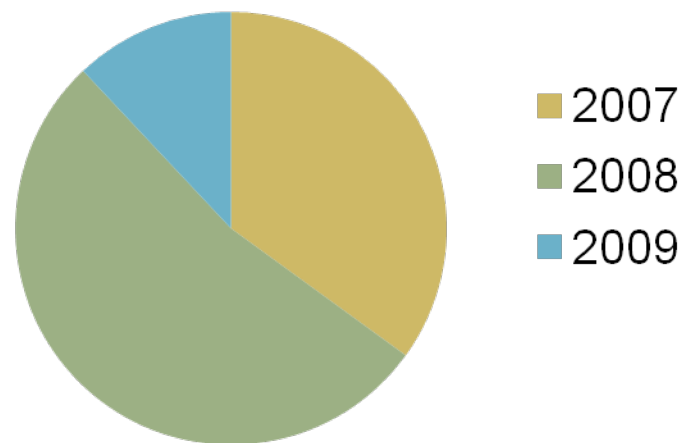
SAM L. COHEN  
FOUNDATION

# Grant Seeker Survey 2009 Report of Findings

# Survey Respondents

- The electronic survey was sent to all grant recipients 2006-2008, and declined applicants 2007-2008.
- 133 out of 223 (60%) responded to the survey, which was available between February 12 – February 27, 2009.

Year of most recent application



# The Web Site

*Grant seekers overwhelmingly find the Foundation's Web site to be an effective communication tool.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree
Web site is clear and easy to navigate	70%	26%
Provides the information needed on the Foundation's mission and grant-making priorities	70%	27%
Provides the information needed to apply for a grant	74%	22%

“We commend the Foundation on providing a web site that is complete and user-friendly.”



# Interactions with Foundation Staff

*Grant seekers are very pleased with their interactions with the Foundation.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree
Feel comfortable approaching Foundation staff	81%	15%
Foundation staff were helpful and courteous	90%	6%
Received a timely response from Foundation staff to phone calls and/or e-mails	85%	13%
Received a timely acknowledgement of initial inquiry and/or application	83%	15%

“Foundation staff are among the most accessible and helpful I’ve ever encountered.”



# The Grant Application Process

*Grant seekers are highly satisfied with the current application process.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree
Initial Inquiry step saves time and effort	60%	36%
Information requested on the Initial Inquiry form is appropriate (sufficient but not onerous)	56%	40%
Information required in the application is appropriate (sufficient but not onerous)	61%	35%
Had the opportunity to provide enough information for Foundation to understand request	70%	29%
Process by which grants awarded seems fair and transparent	49%	41%



# Grant Application Process

## *Site Visits:*

- 47 respondents (35%) indicated that Foundation staff had made a site visit to their organization.
- Of those, 100% agree (83% strongly agree and 17% agree) that the visit was a good use of their time.

“I have found the Foundation to be a model for others that I have worked with. I particularly appreciate its use of the Common Grant Application.”



# Proposal Declinations

*43 respondents (32%) have had at least one request declined by the Foundation. Of those:*

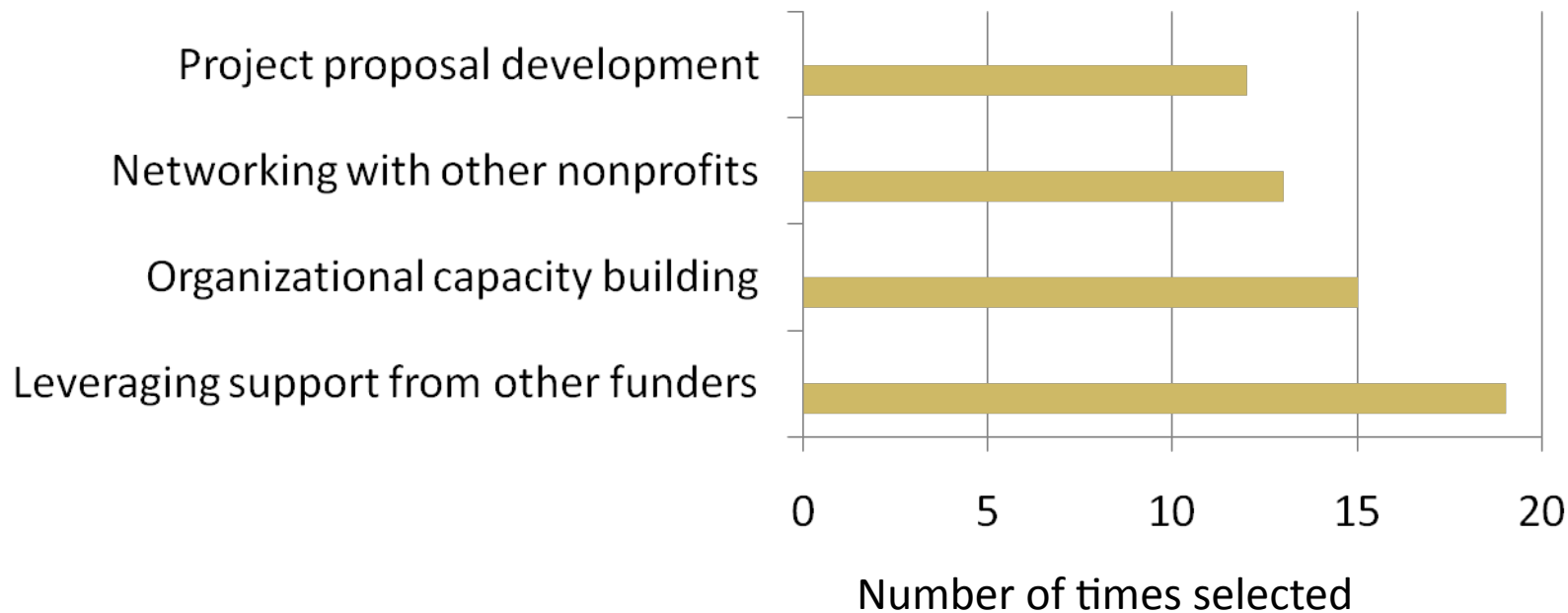
	Strongly Agree	Agree
Notified of decline in a timely manner	63%	32%
Offered an opportunity to discuss reasons for the decline	48%	33%

“In the decline notification letter we were invited to call and discuss the reasons behind the decision. I called and found the conversation enlightening and informative. I discussed what I learned with my board.”



# Support other than Grant Dollars

*Grant seekers primarily value grant dollars. 37 respondents (28%) indicated that they received additional types of Foundation support, including:*



# Final Grant Reports

*73 respondents (55%) completed a final report for a grant. Of those, almost all are satisfied with the process.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree
Reporting requirements are clear	63%	34%
Reporting requirements are appropriate relative to grant size	66%	31%
Process was helpful in the evaluation of the work	53%	36%
Received a timely response from the Foundation to final report	73%	25%

“This is the only foundation from which I have received a thoughtful, personalized response to a grant report.”



# Describing the Sam L. Cohen Foundation

*Respondents offered 128 different words or phrases to describe the Foundation. Below are the most prevalent words, followed by the number of times mentioned.*

1) Helpful, Supportive	27
2) Professional, Well Managed, Efficient	24
3) Generous	22
4) Responsive	20
5) Approachable, Accessible	18
6) Community minded, Community focused	14
7) Caring, Compassionate	12
8) Open, Transparent	12



# Challenges faced by Nonprofits

*In an open question, grant seekers were asked to name the top three challenges facing nonprofits in York and Cumberland Counties. The responses fell under four themes.*

1. The economy. The current economic recession means that many nonprofits face declining private and public funds at a time of increased demand for services
2. Securing adequate funds , particularly funds for operating support and to sustain existing programs
3. The high number of nonprofits, resulting in competition for limited funding and a need for better coordination
4. Building the organizational capacity of nonprofits to work more effectively



# How the Foundation Can Help

- Continue to fund unsolicited proposals through the Foundation's responsive grant program
- Provide unrestricted funding for general operating support
- Other suggestions on how the Foundation can help include:
  - Leveraging support from other funders
  - Fostering nonprofit collaboration and shared learning
  - Capacity-building support
  - Multi-year support

“Cohen Foundation grants have sustained important programming and have in each case helped my organization secure other funding.”



# Highlights of Open Responses

Sam L. Cohen staff are the most professional, approachable, and helpful staff that I interact with regarding grant funding and proposal development.

There is a sense of partnership in the project from the initiation of ideas through the completion of the project.

It has been very easy to speak to Foundation staff after a refusal, and reasons were always expressed clearly and politely.

I appreciate that we have a relationship and not just asking for funding and receiving it.

The Cohen Foundation shows that they really care about the projects they fund by staying in close contact with the organization.

Your support has helped so many struggling nonprofits in southern Maine continue their mission to serve individuals in need and that is truly important.

The Cohen Foundation website is one of the best around in terms of information that is truly useful to grant-seekers.



# Foundation Response

Foundation directors and staff take to heart grant seekers' messages about what they most value about the Foundation:

- the opportunity for responsive grants
- open and direct communications
- a sense of partnership as nonprofits seek to fulfill their missions

Feedback from the survey informed the April 2009 board of directors' decision to adjust the grant program temporarily in response to the current economic crisis, including:

- total annual grant payments equal to or more than paid in 2008
- special consideration to requests for operating support
- special consideration to requests to build organizational capacity
- suspension of the consecutive year rule



# Foundation Response

The Foundation reviewed each suggestion from the survey's open questions. As appropriate, some of these will be implemented in 2009, including:

- links to grantees' sites on the Foundation web site
- communication regarding any changes to the grant program
- support for nonprofit viability assessments

“Thanks for inviting feedback!”

July 2009

