The State of the Rhode Island Nonprofit Sector

Results of the 2022 Rhode Island Nonprofit Survey

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Partners

Incentive Gift Cards

- Rhode Island Foundation
- United Way of Rhode Island
- Grantmakers Council of RI

Survey Distribution

- Association of Fundraising Professionals, RI Chapter
- Blue Cross & Blue Shield RI
- Bristol County Savings Bank
- Centreville Bank
- Champlin Foundation
- City of Providence
- Governor's Workforce Board
- Hasbro Inc.
- Jewish Alliance of Greater Providence
- Nonprofit Resource Center Design Team and Advisory Clusters
- Point32Health
- RI Council for the Humanities
- RI Department of Health
- RI State Council on the Arts
- United Way of Rhode Island
- Women's Fund of Rhode Island

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Methodology

- Expands on previous RI nonprofit sector surveys (2020,2021), moving from a focus on the impacts of COVID-19 to a comprehensive look at the RI nonprofit sector

- Survey questions reflect key issues facing the nonprofit sector and the learnings of GCRI and UWRI

- In partnership with 16 various organizations, the survey was distributed electronically between Oct 12 and Nov 4.

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Topics

- COVID impact
- Financial Health
- Staffing
- Volunteerism
- Racial Equity
- Policy and Advocacy
- Environmental Issues and Climate Change
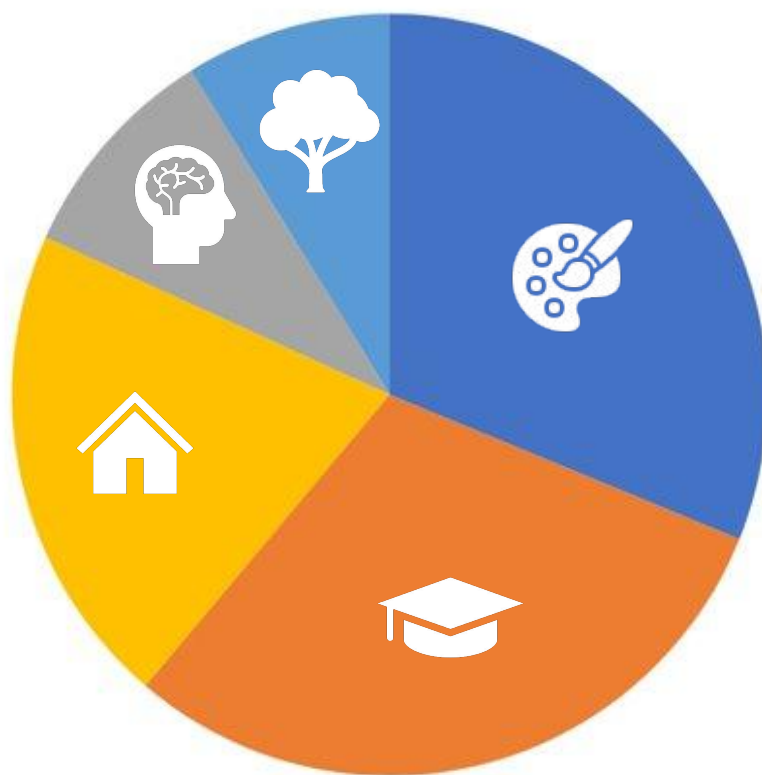- ADA Accessibility
- Capacity Building

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Survey Participants

- 301 total responses
- 288 distinct organizations

Location	Percentage of respondents (n=278)
Metro Providence County (n=118)	42.4%
Newport County (n=53)	19.1%
Washington County (n=37)	13.3%
Kent County (n=25)	12.9%
Bristol County (n=25)	9.0%
Western Providence County (n=22)	7.9%

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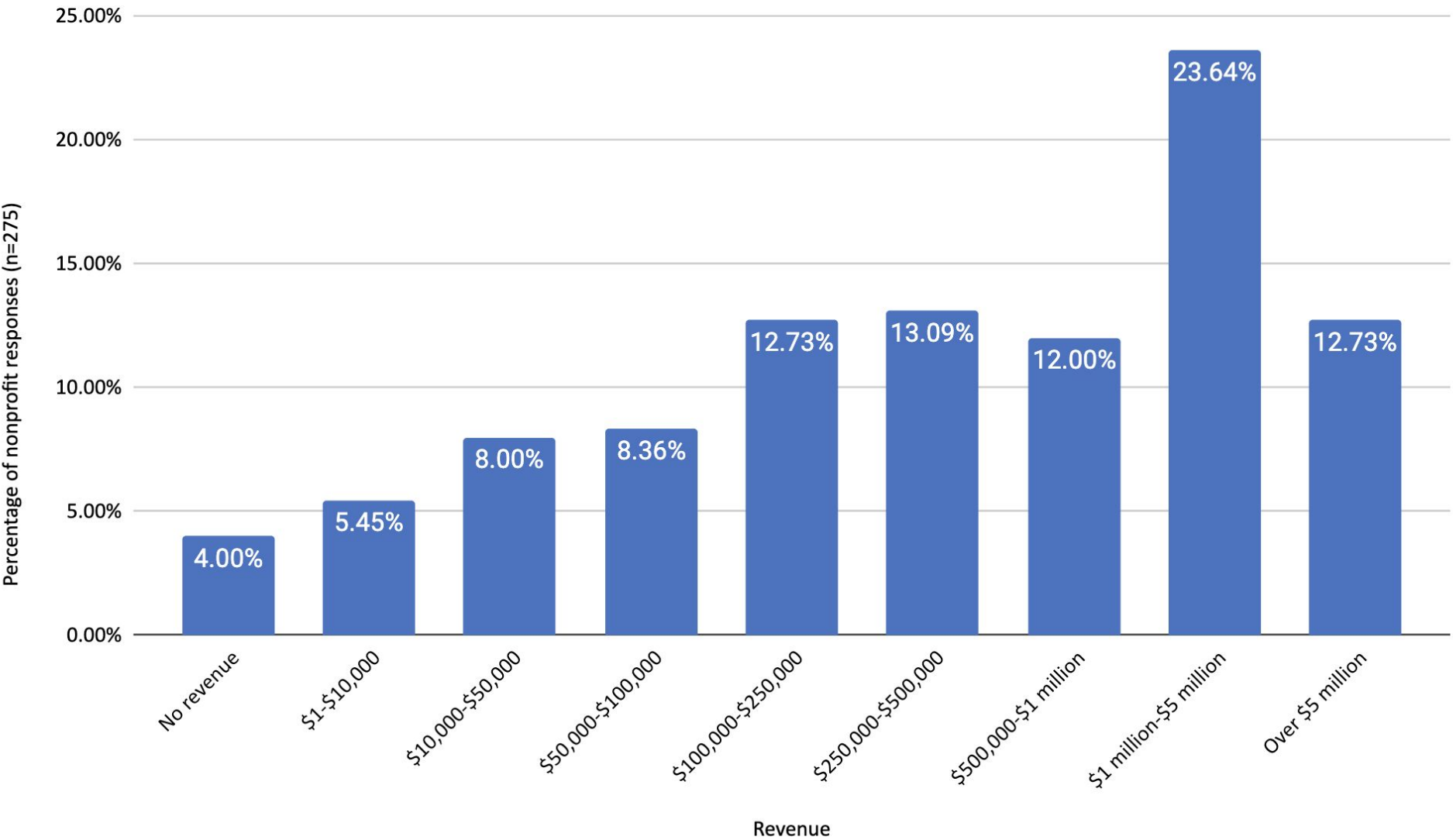
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Survey Participants

Q1. What is the focus of your organization's programs and services?

Top 5 (n=260)

- Arts and Culture (20.38%)
- Education or Youth Development (19.62%)
- Basic Needs -- Housing, food insecurity, etc. (13.46%)
- Behavioral Health (6.15%)
- Environment, Climate, or Conservation (5.77%)

Q37. What was your organization's revenue for your last fiscal/budget year?

Continuing Impact of COVID-19

- High level community need and demand for services

- Changes in service delivery

- Staff burnout and turnover

- Illness-related staffing absences

- Reduced attendance at in-person programs (especially arts and culture, education, etc.)

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Life "after" COVID

Greater demand for services and basic needs. There is also greater mobility in the job market making it harder to recruit new staff to accommodate for the demand.
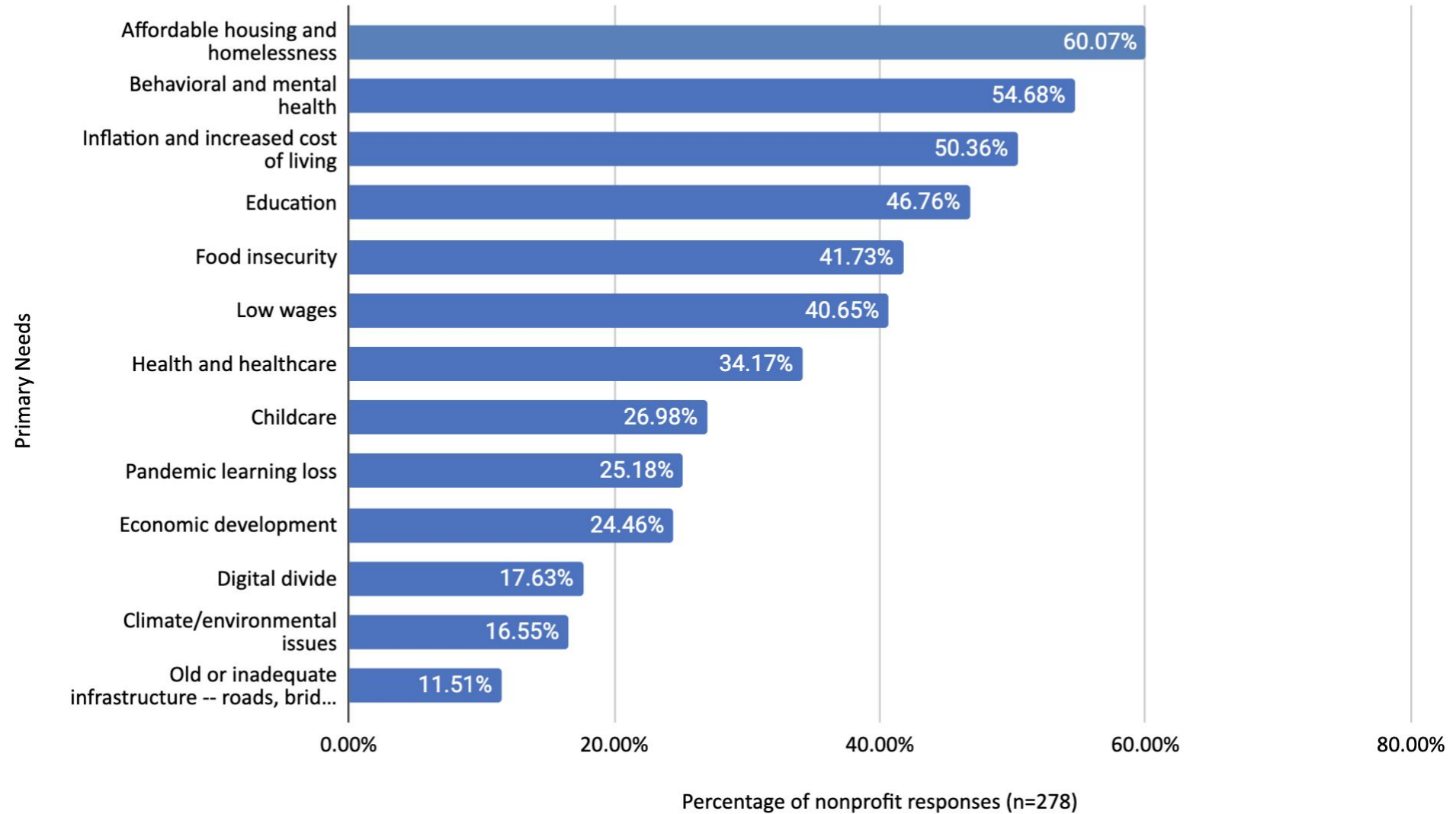
Meeting virtually (no office space since the pandemic). Many of our provider members have had to discontinue programs, or still have a shortage of staff (not enough staff to provide services for people who need them, so people are going without the services they need).

Staffing crisis, program capacity due to lack of staffing, acute needs of clients.

Demand for services is dramatically higher. COVID-19 Emergency Funding has ended. Donations are significantly lower than during the height of the pandemic. Yet, more people are seeking primary, behavioral health, and dental care. Patients whose care was deferred during the height of the pandemic now need to be seen. Personnel shortages (paid and volunteer) are exacerbating delivery of care.

Staff burnout, exhaustion, etc. Staff leaving to make higher wages. Shortage of staff, and struggles with hiring increased demand to meet basic needs - more specifically food.
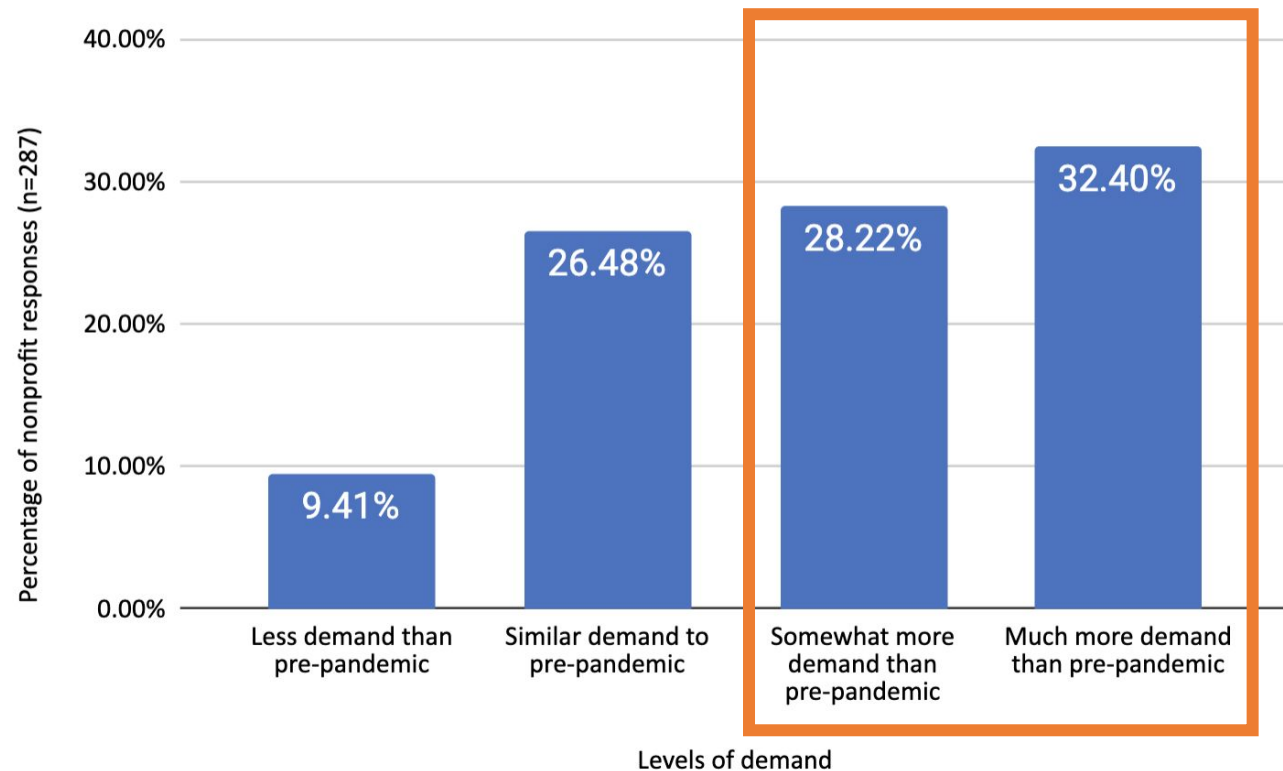
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Q5. What are the primary needs you currently see in the communities you serve?

Life "after" COVID

60% of responding nonprofits are still seeing higher demand for services than pre-pandemic.

Q6. How does the current demand for your programs or services compare with pre-pandemic (before March 2020)?

Percentage of nonprofit responses (n=287)

- Less demand than pre-pandemic: 9.41%
- Similar demand to pre-pandemic: 26.48%
- Somewhat more demand than pre-pandemic: 28.22%
- Much more demand than pre-pandemic: 32.40%

Levels of demand

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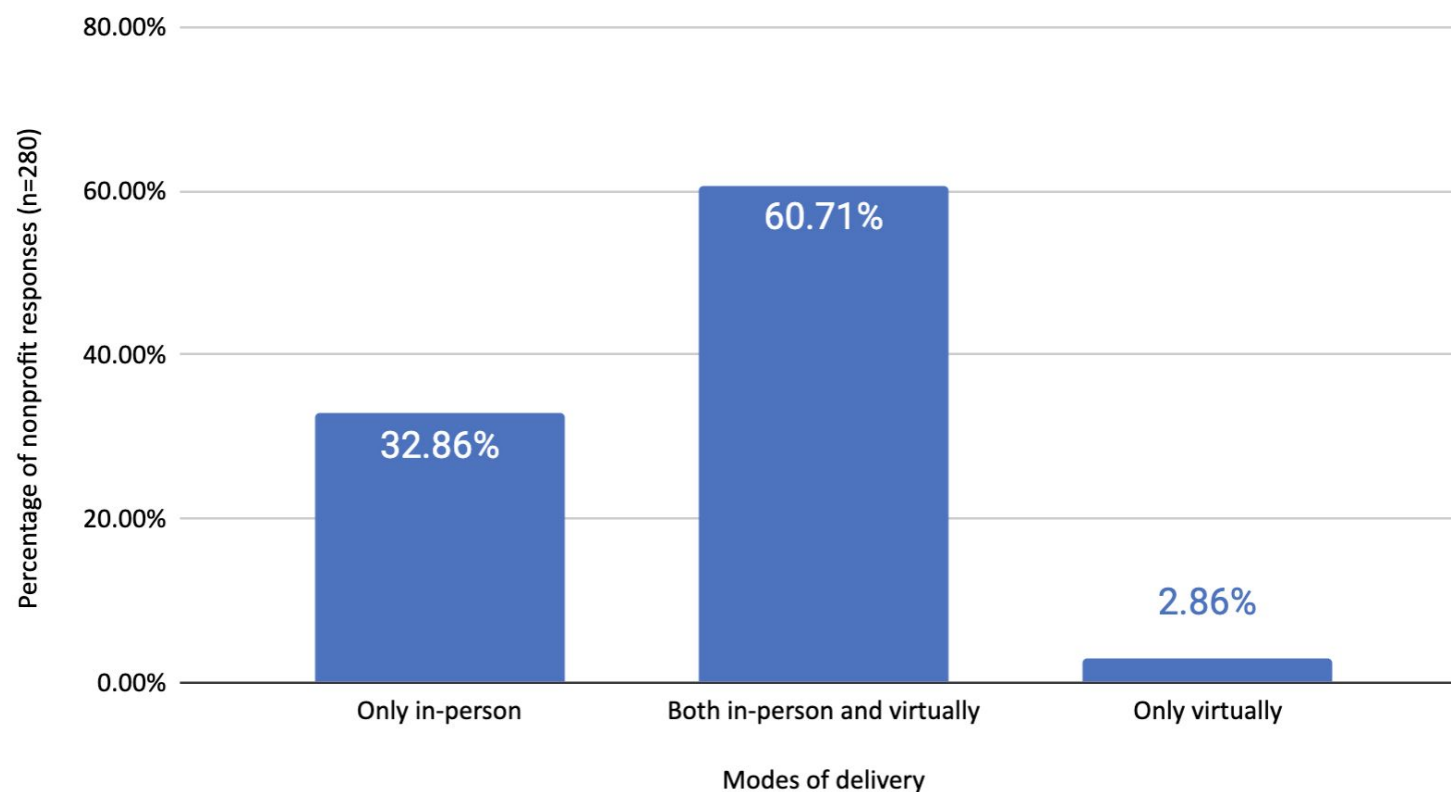
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Life "after" COVID – Program Delivery

It's still disruptive. We see illnesses continue in some youth & families and in past few months had several staff/instructors test positive (we then must reschedule trainings, meetings etc). We almost had to cancel an entire summer youth program when 2 staff tested positive, but scrambled to get/train and virtually support substitute staff (hard for us as our staff is so small). During the pandemic we've had repeated staff turnover, far more than previously; and it was difficult to find/hire/afford new staff. All this disrupted services a great deal, and we continue to have trouble recruiting and retaining staff.

COVID-19 is still significantly interrupting work and our organization's activities, leading to delays in projects and lost revenue (canceled performances). Audiences have not yet come back in full force. In-person education classes are still smaller scale than they were pre-pandemic to mitigate participant risk. The continued stress on workers has led to significant turnover in the past year.

Increased absenteeism due to COVID, participant absenteeism, children's social interaction skills lacking, school age children behind academically, increases in substance abuse, increased number of folks using our housing services for homeless.

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Life "after" COVID – Program Delivery & Staffing

Q7. Are your programs and services being offered:

The majority of staff, with the exception of operations staff (facilities maintenance, transportation, etc.) are working both in-person and virtually.

65.50% of program and intake staff, 68.62% of administrative staff, and 61.89% of leadership and management are working in a hybrid way.

Less than 10% of all staff remain fully virtual.

COVID Innovations

During the pandemic, Rhode Island nonprofits innovated, pivoted, and created new programs.

Many nonprofits plan to continue these innovations, which for some organizations
means supporting expanded services, and for others, additional approaches to service delivery, which
may require additional staff or investments in technology.

Some nonprofits collaborated in new ways, with new partners, and intend to continue these new
collaborations.

Public health protocols and contingency planning will continue for many nonprofits.

COVID Innovations

We installed equipment so we could livestream and record - our technology investments were game-changing.

Hybrid work model, self-care practices during work time, increased wages for staff.

Commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Continued public program delivery in online formats, participating in more online panel discussions with peers in the field, considering new programs/services for more independent research, working with more community partners and developing existing partnerships

Telehealth, hybrid personnel model of core paid staff and volunteers, more fundraising through social media.

We will have hybrid support groups, allowing people to attend who could not come in person

Due to COVID, we had to quickly create a web of support outside of our usual partnerships. We worked with churches, the City government, the Department of Health, the Fire Department and more, and we plan to maintain the relationships into the future, seeking assistance and support for our community.

Focusing more on mental health of youth and the vast inequality in our education system. These are all daunting and should not be happening in this day and age! Yet here we are ………AGAIN!

COVID Innovations

We started a food pantry and we are committed to keeping it going. We also started hybrid and virtual programming and we are committed to using that as a secondary program delivery method.

Continuing to offer masks and encouraging mask wearing on site for everyone's protection particularly now that colder temperatures are starting.

We now implement SEL(social emotional learning) in all our programs, we add breath work and grounding work, we are more aligned with how the arts can connect more dots to over mental health/wellness for K-12: whole brain, heart centered arts integration

Public health policies, outdoor gathering, education of health services

Less stress on required documentation/proof to access support or receive help.

Almost too numerous to list. We've implemented new/expanded services for people of all ages. We've implemented new policies for public health, employee retention, cultural and linguistic sensitivity, and the list goes on.

We shifted from a center-based program to only a home-and-community-based program. Prior to the pandemic we did both.

We provide financial relief to many in the form of purchases or rent being paid. We have been able to largely make these purchases through online, rather than in person. We have also allowed requests to come through online as well, and honoring their wrap-around services that consist of tele-health to be a valid qualifier of our relief programs.
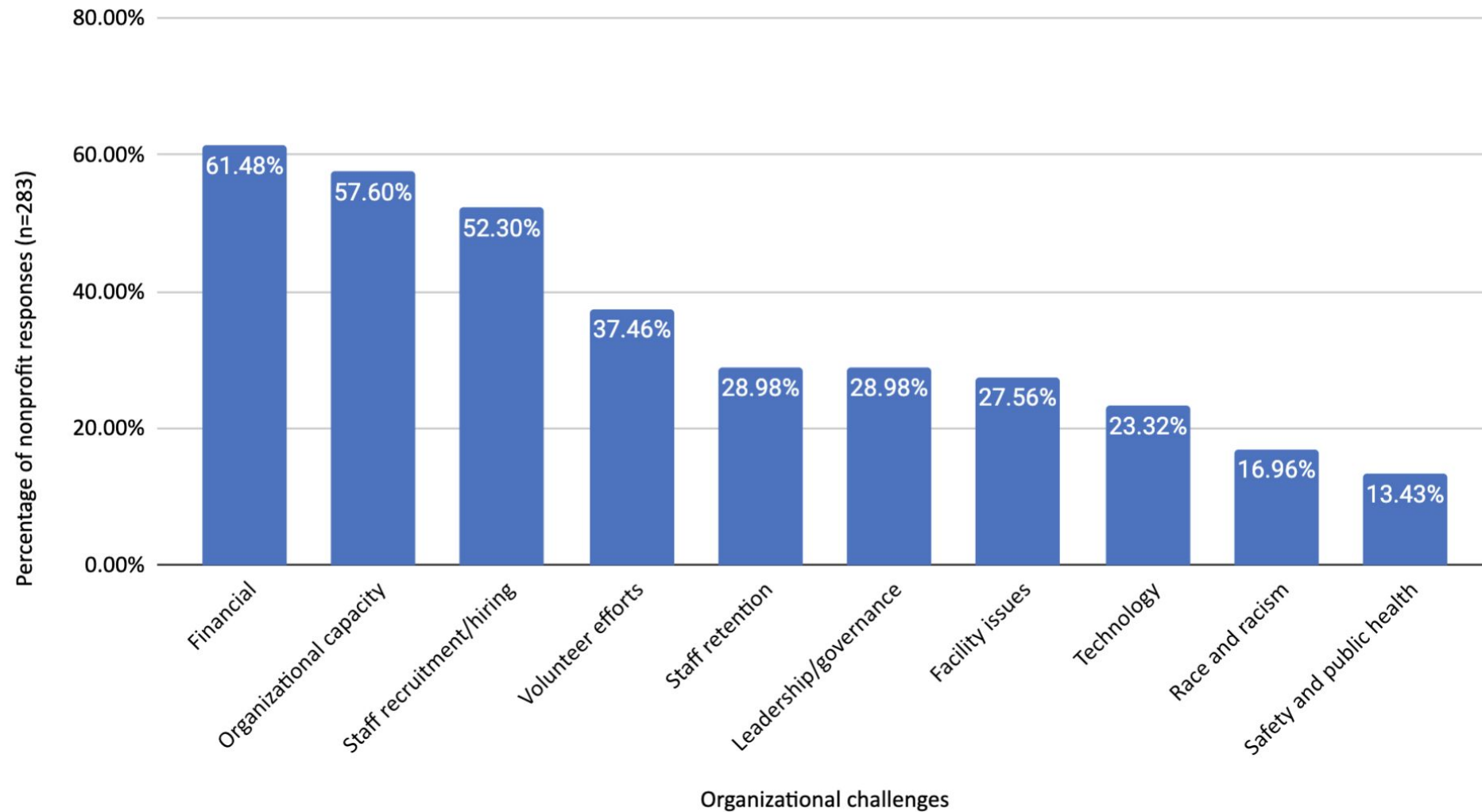
COVID-Related Funder Responses

- 35% Less onerous reporting/evaluation
- 34% General operating support
- 31% Streamlined grant applications
- 31% Flexibility in grant requirements
- 18% Upfront payments instead of reimbursement
- 14% Funders did not make adjustments

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Sector Challenges

- Financial
- Staffing
- Racial Equity
- Organizational Capacity

Q10. What are the primary challenges currently facing your organization?
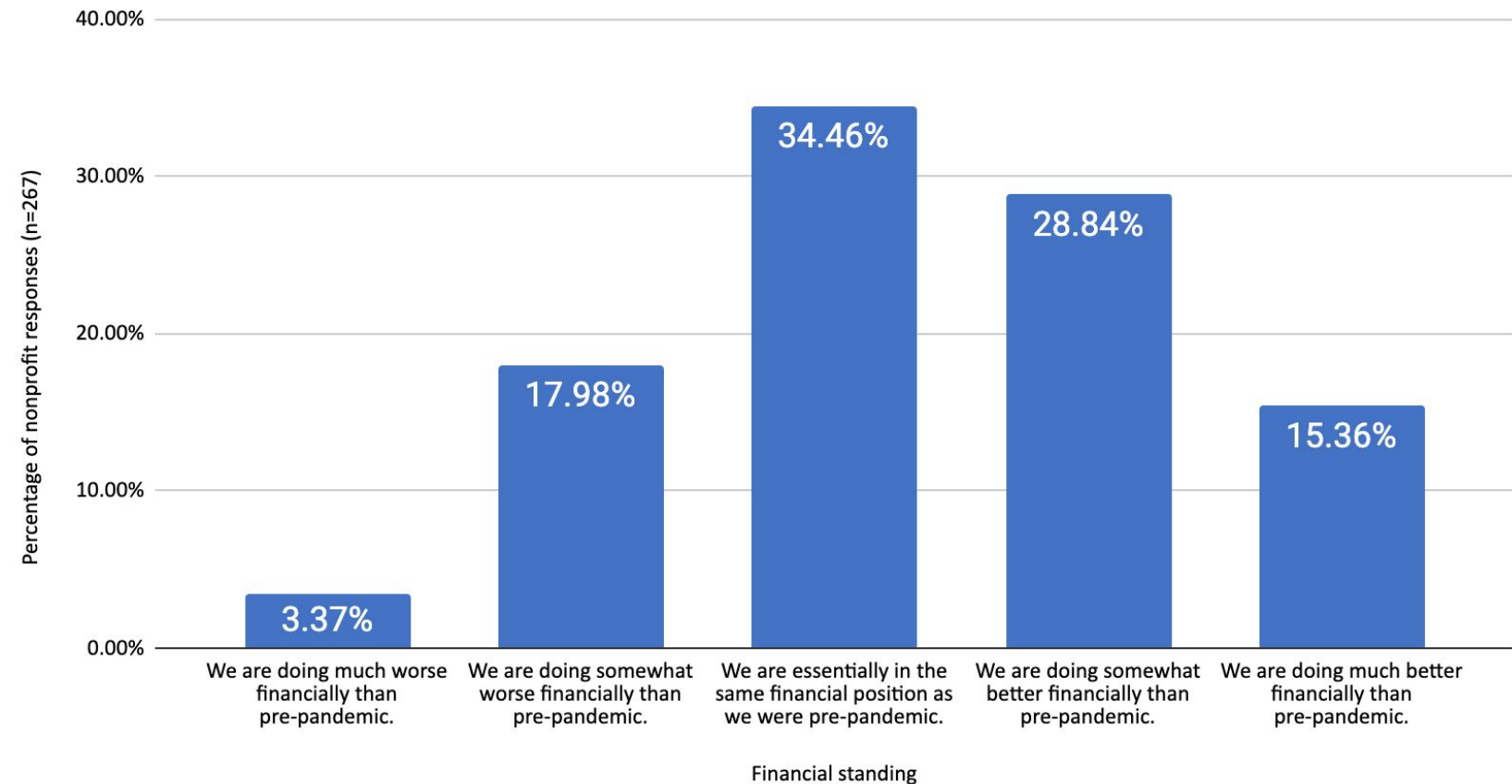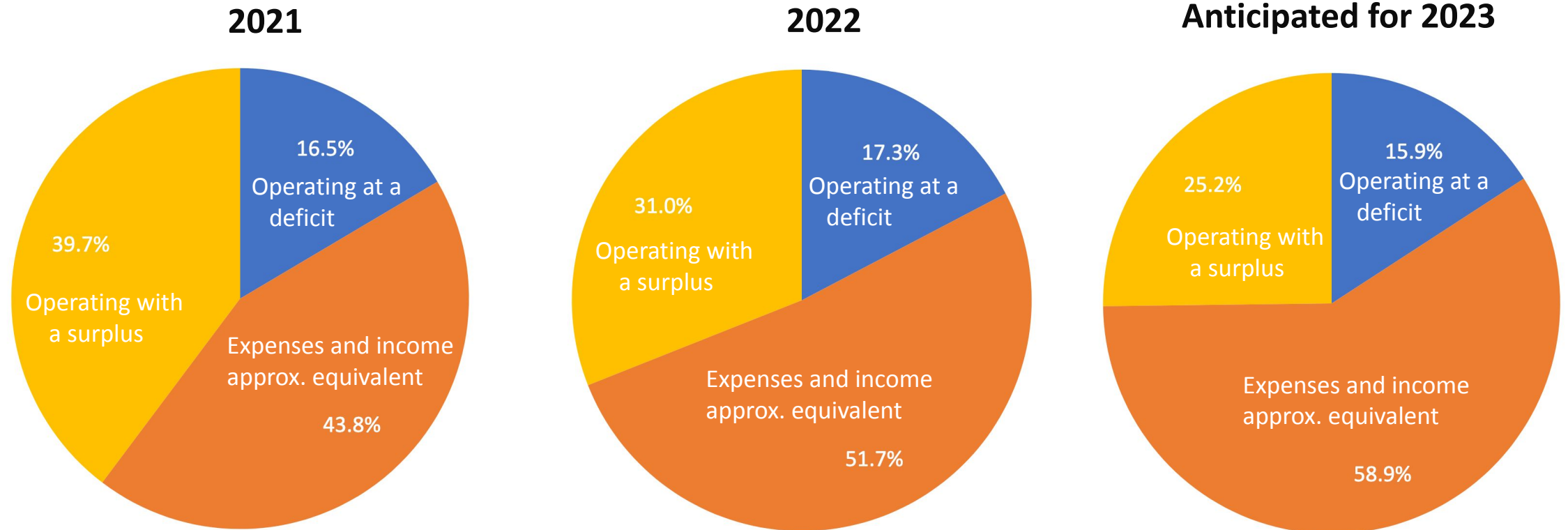
Finances

Q40. How does your organization's overall financial standing compare with its status pre-pandemic (before March 2020)?

Good news: The majority of nonprofit organizations report that their finances are the same or better than pre-pandemic.

This highlights the value of pandemic-related funding over the last two years.
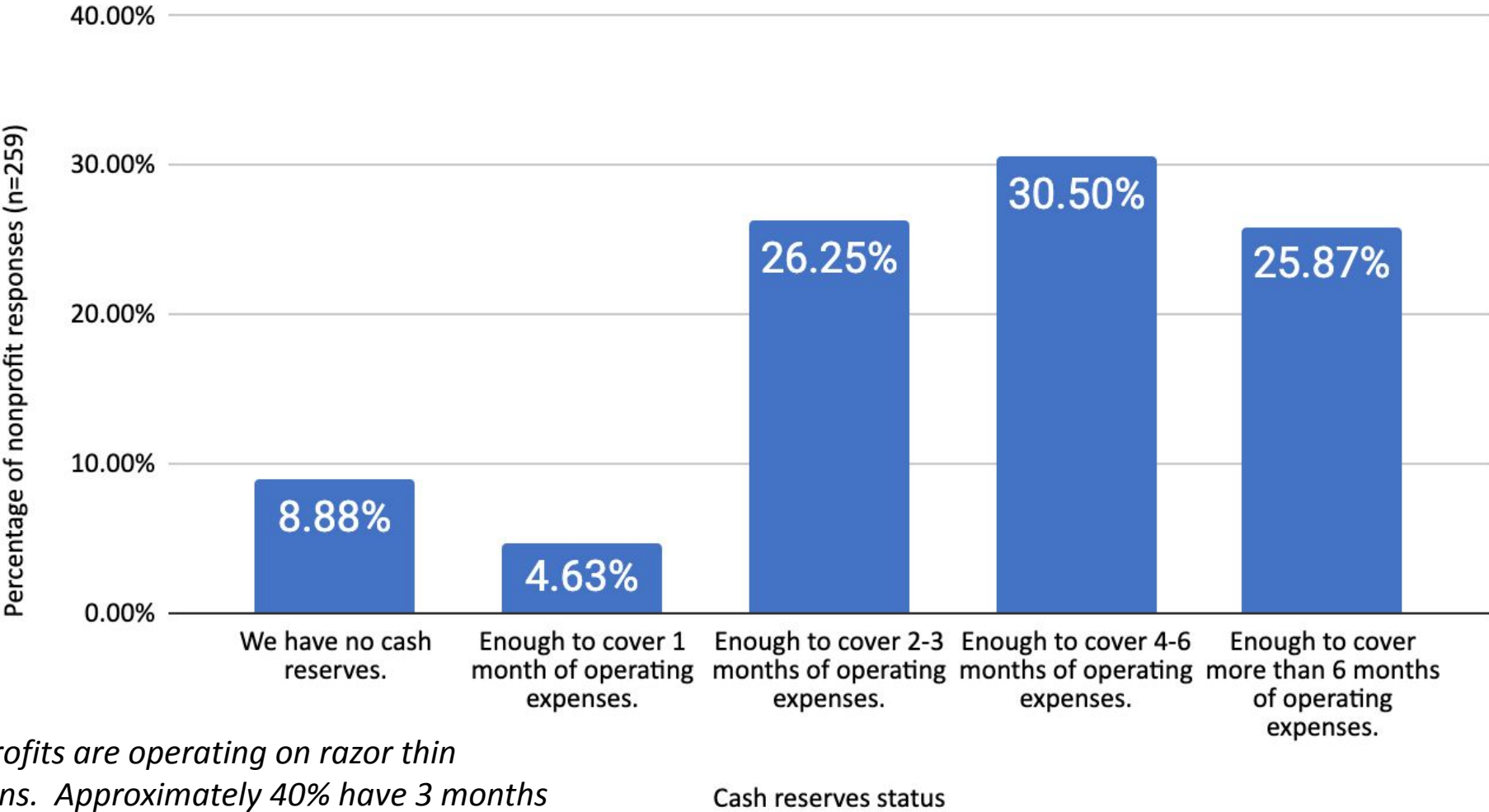
Q39. What is your organization's financial status?

2021

16.5% Operating at a deficit

39.7% Operating with a surplus

Expenses and income approx. equivalent 43.8%

2022

17.3% Operating at a deficit

31.0% Operating with a surplus

Expenses and income approx. equivalent 51.7%

Anticipated for 2023

15.9% Operating at a deficit

25.2% Operating with a surplus

Expenses and income approx. equivalent 58.9%

While the percentage operating at a deficit has remained relatively steady at 16-17%, the number of organizations operating with a surplus is decreasing as COVID resources dry up: 40% in 2021, 31% in 2022, and 25% anticipated in 2023.

This will pose a significant challenge as nonprofits continue to address high levels of community need without supplemental pandemic-related resources.

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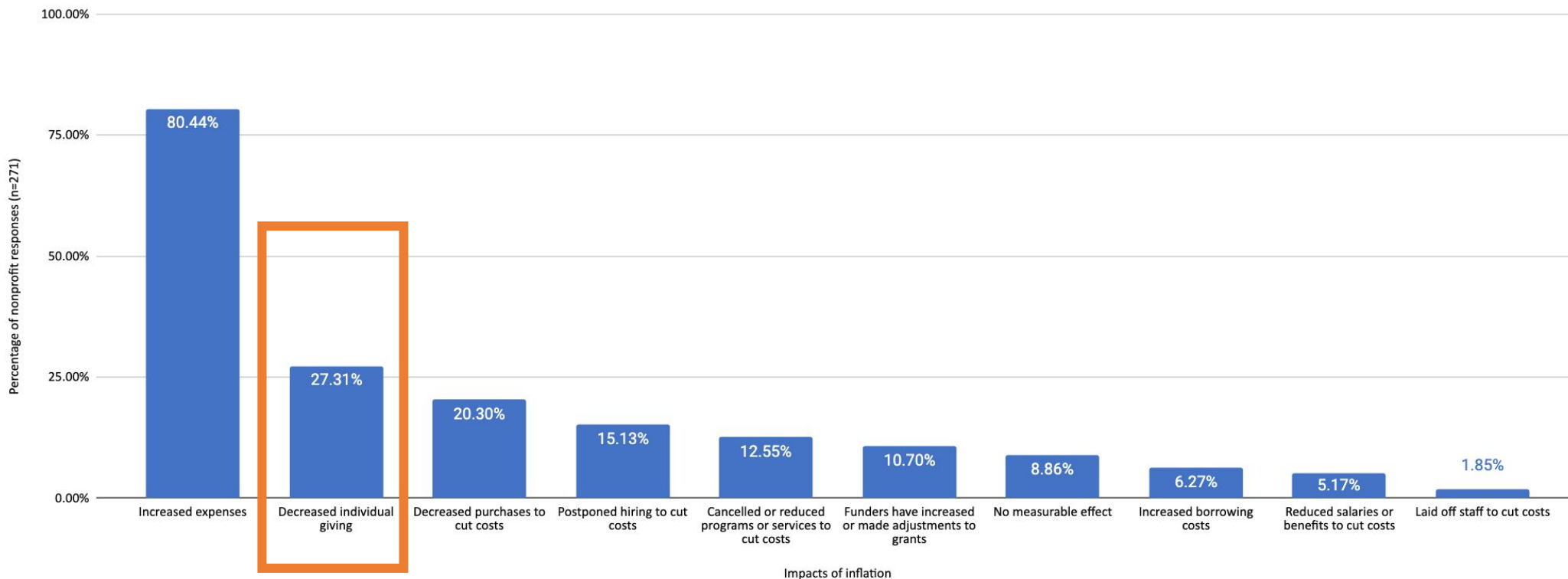Q42. How extensive are your organization's cash reserves?

Nonprofits are operating on razor thin margins. Approximately 40% have 3 months or less of cash operating reserves, and only 26% have more than six months of reserves.

Implications of Limited Cash Reserves

- Long-term sustainability

- Ability to withstand changes in funder priorities or decreased giving due to inflation

- Access to federal, state and private funding that is provided on a reimbursement basis

- BIPOC, small or grassroots nonprofits may have the trusted relationships, skills and programs to provide important services to communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic, but they do not have the cash reserves to front 6-12 months of program costs, so those contracts may go to larger organizations that may not be a good match for the intended audience.

- Creates a glass ceiling for funding. Large organizations continue to receive large contracts/grants because they can cover long-term operating costs until they are reimbursed. Smaller organizations do not receive the funding they need to grow and scale successful programs.

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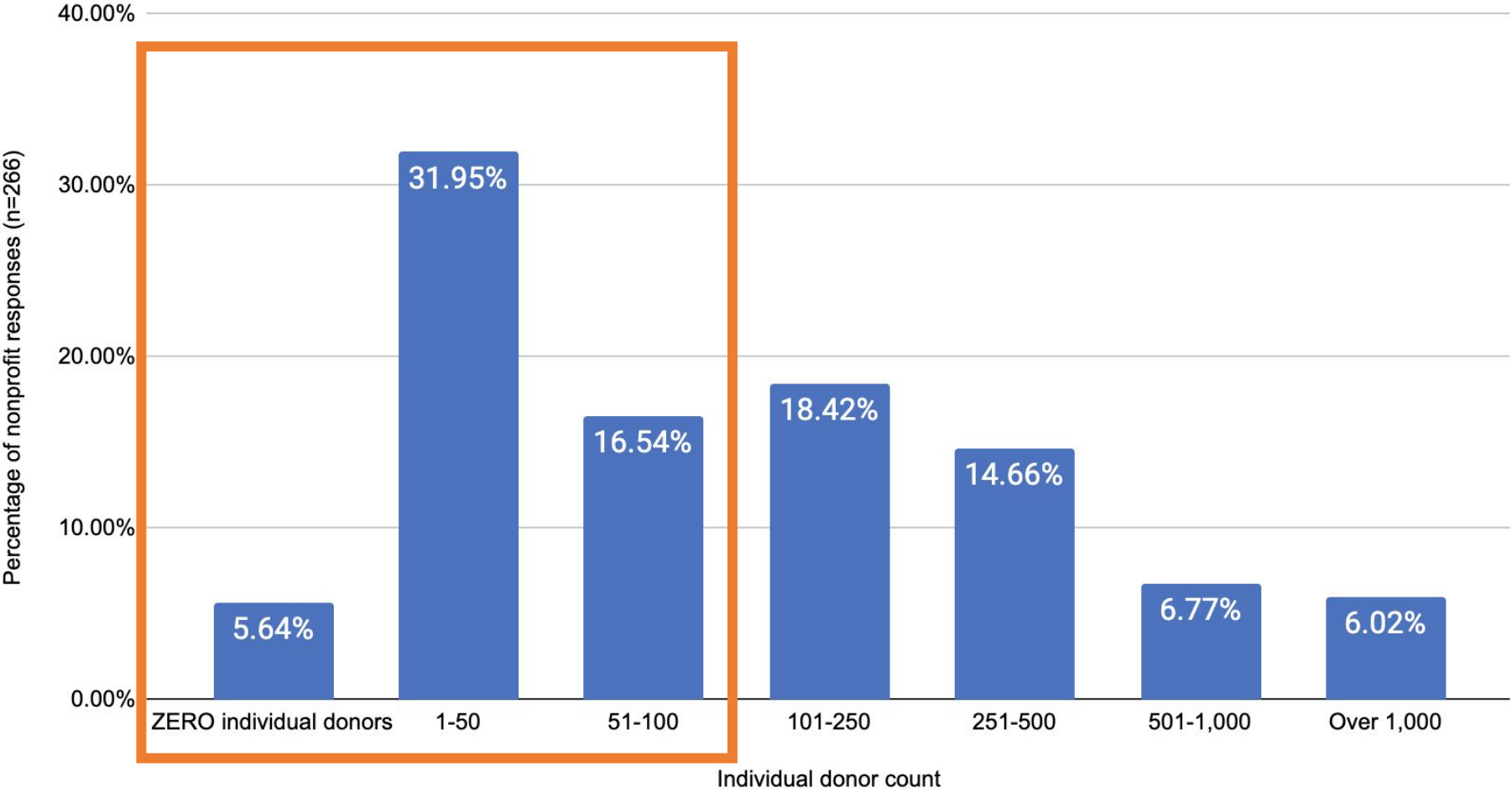Q43. What impact has inflation had on your organization in 2022?

Inflation has not only increased the demand for basic needs and services from our communities, but it has also added additional cost and challenge for nonprofits to do their important work.

80% of organizations reported increased expenses, which has caused 20% to scale back purchases and 15% to implement hiring freezes.

Even more concerning, 27% of organizations have seen a decline in individual giving, as donors struggle with their own increased expenses.

Q46. In your last fiscal/budget year, how many individual donors gave to support your organization?

More than half of organizations had 100 or fewer donors.

Working with Corporate Partners

Working with corporate partners	Percentage of respondents
Received grant(s) or monetary donation(s) from corporation(s) or business(es)	64.24%
Received in-kind donation(s)	59.72%
Received corporate/business sponsorship(s) for event or program	55.21%
Appointed Board member(s) from local/national companies	27.43%
Hosted business group(s) for volunteer project	24.30%
Business(es) hosted supply drive (food drive, diapers, clothing, etc.)	22.92%
Coordinated on-site volunteer project(s) at business site	14.93%
Cause-related marketing partnership(s)	10.76%

Challenges in Applying for Grants

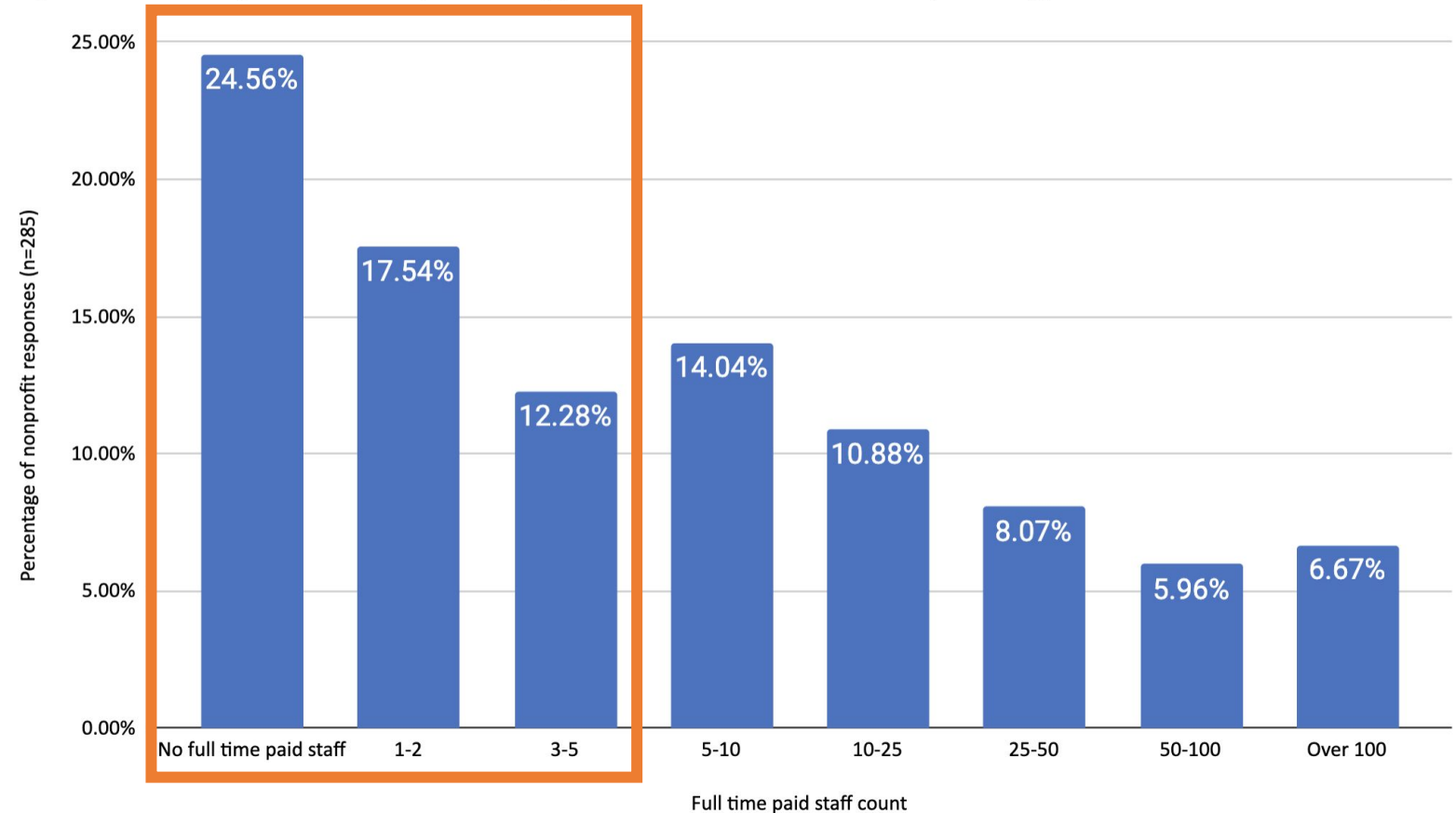| Challenges in grant applications	Percentage of respondents
Complicated and/or time consuming application	52.43%
Restrictive grant spending requirements/lack of general operating support	43.40%
Limited funding available in relevant issue areas	39.93%
Lack of grantwriting or fundraising staff	39.23%
Disproportionate application requirements for the size of the grant	39.23%
Sacrifice of program time to complete grant application and paperwork	34.37%
Lack of grantwriting experience	20.49%
Online application systems not user friendly	17.70%

Staffing Challenges

- Burnout

- Compensation

- Turnover

- Vacancies/Recruitment

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Although some of the largest employers in the state are nonprofit universities and hospitals, most Rhode Island nonprofits are very lean.

Almost a quarter of survey respondents said that they have no full-time paid staff.

Indeed, nonprofits with 5 or fewer full time paid staff comprise 55% of this sample, compared to 7% of nonprofits with over 100 FTE.

Q15. How many full-time equivalent, paid staff members does your organization have?

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Compensation

Staff can't afford cost of living on the entry level wages. The cost of living and the high cost of housing in our community is a challenge even at the CEO level. Staff seek more hours, but with our funding we can only fund part-time positions.

The current workforce is able to obtain employment in retail, fast food or other industries making more that they would working with individuals with IDD.

The pandemic has worsened the ongoing early care and education workforce crisis. We find it difficult to compete on the basis of compensation with other sectors, even though we have adjusted salaries and are offering substantial bonus programs. Many have exited the early care and education workforce as the pandemic has altered family priorities and exacerbated burnout.

Capacity is our biggest challenge. Our staff is working more than they should. Burnout is a serious concern. We continue to find it difficult to secure general operating funding to hire additional staff that will reduce their workload.

Pre pandemic our wages were above market. Now, they are just at market, maybe even below. This will be a big impact on our budget and ability to recruit and retain employees.
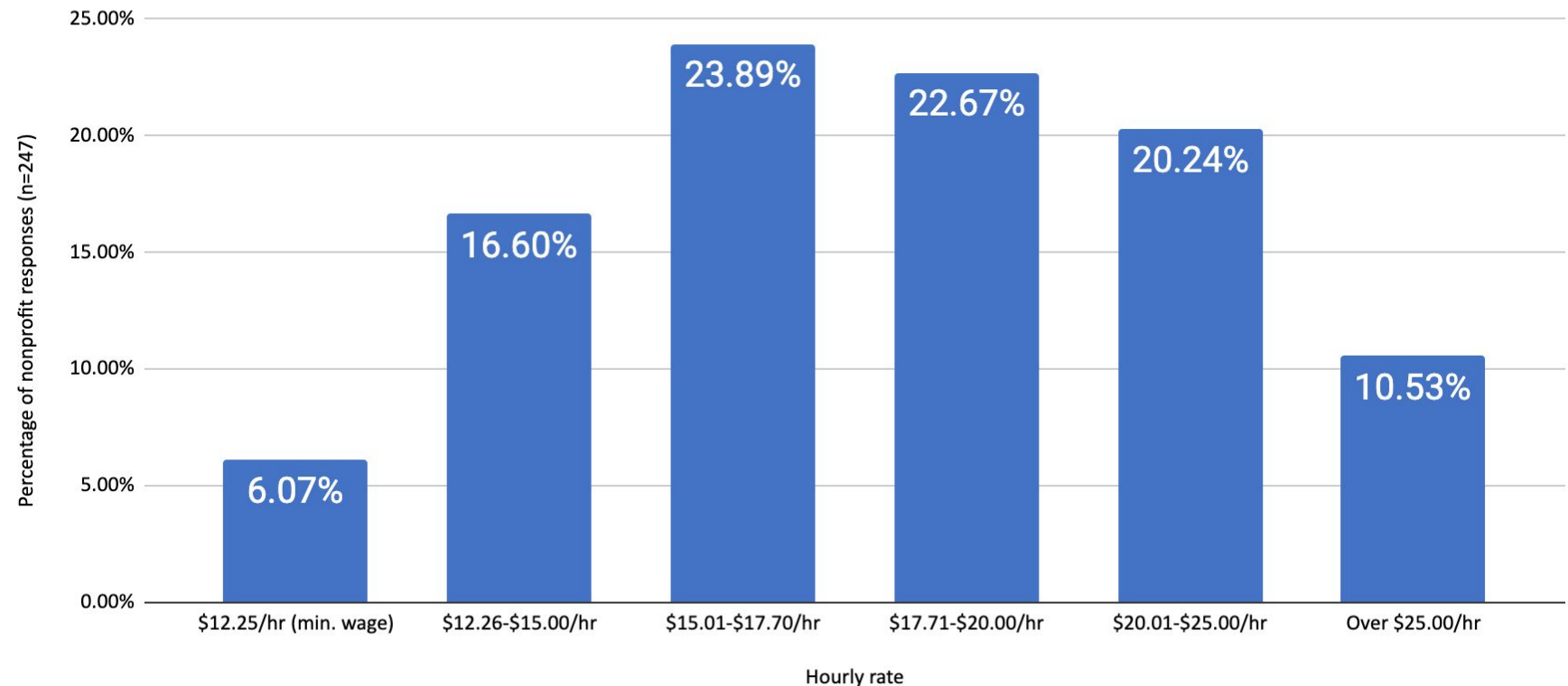
We have staff working two jobs, and staff making more money as a server than in a professional role here.

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Entry level positions in about one in four nonprofits pay less than $15/hour, meaning that nonprofits are competing with retail and hospitality for workers, even though some entry level positions in nonprofits require accreditation.

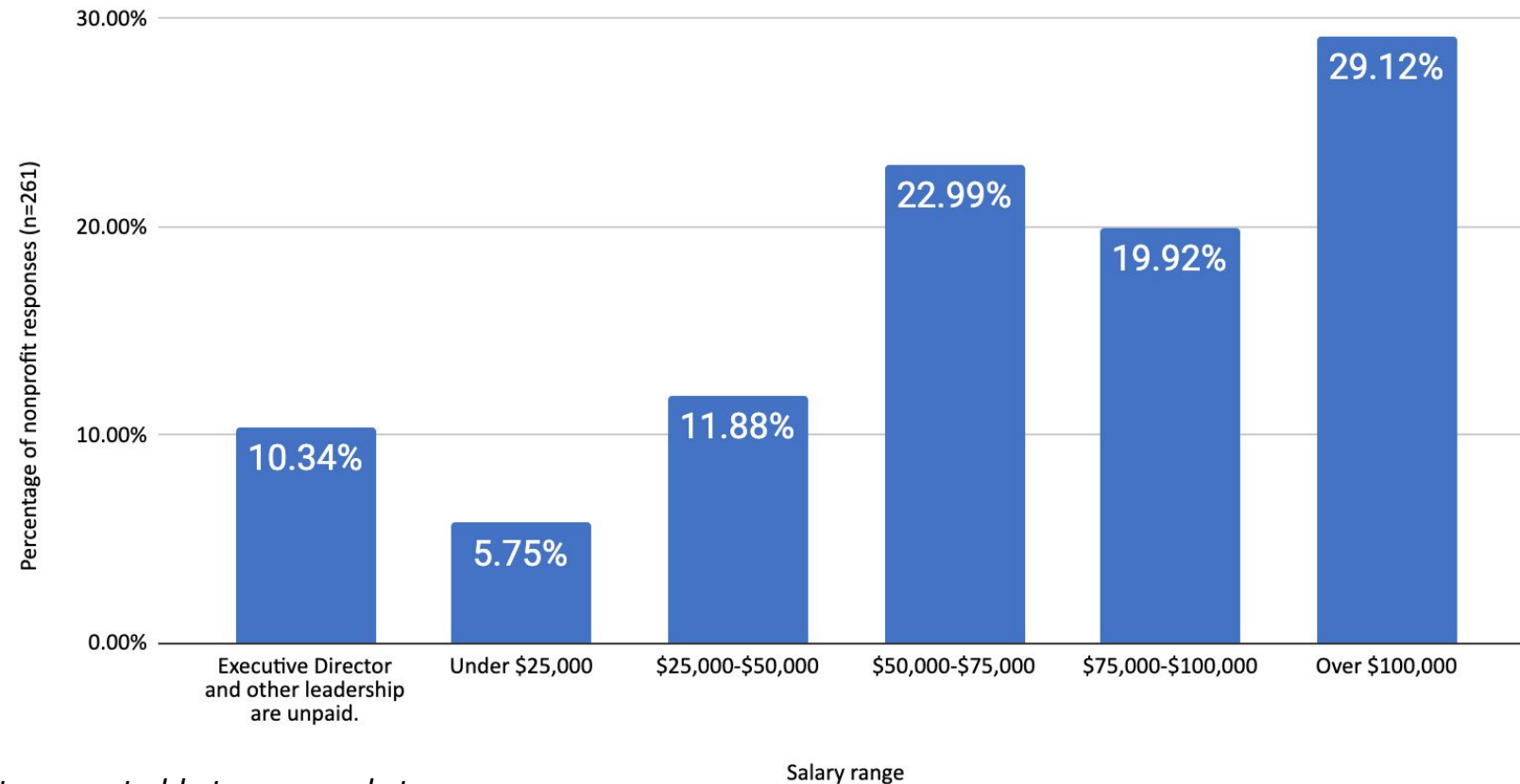*This rate is significantly below the Rhode Island Standard of Need, and only about two-thirds of MIT's Living Wage standard.*

This means that staff members helping clients register for food stamps may also be eligible themselves because of their low compensation.

Q20. What is the approximate hourly pay of your lowest paid staff member(s)?

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Q21. What is the approximate salary range of your organization's senior management?
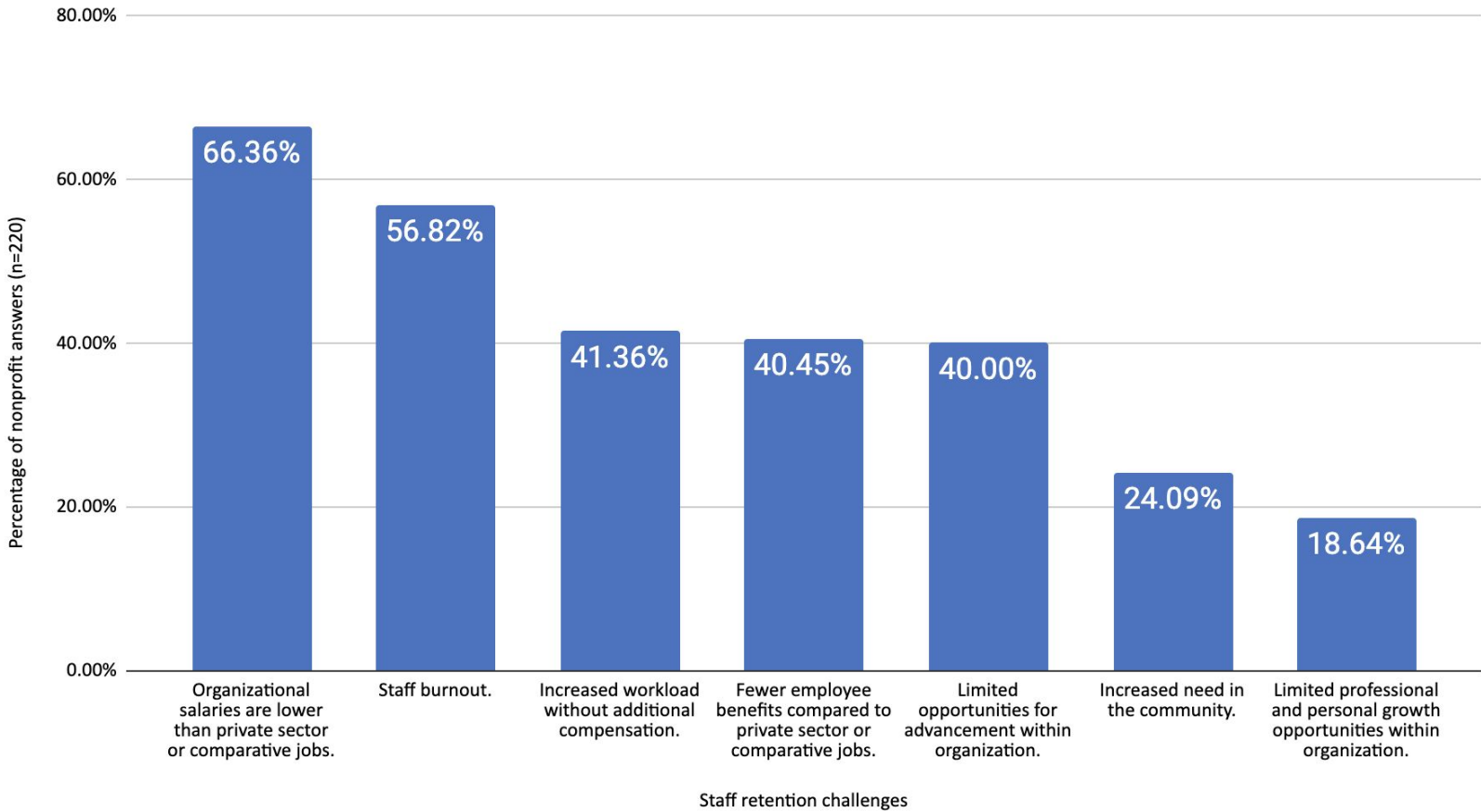
Many nonprofits are not able to pay market wages to their senior leaders.

16% of organizations have leaders who work for no or extremely low pay. These Executive Directors are being compensated below the Rhode Island Standard of Need and could qualify for food stamps if this is their only income.

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Low pay is a significant contributor to staff turnover. Over 2/3 of survey respondents cited low salaries as one of their biggest challenges in retaining qualified staff, followed by staff burnout. While many nonprofit workers enter the sector because of the commitment to their community or desire to make a difference, we all know that altruism doesn't pay the bills,

especially with inflation continuing to increase the cost of living in Rhode Island.

In social service agencies, low wages are in large part due to low reimbursement rates in state contracts. In other organizations, low wages may be the result of fundraising challenges or restricted funding that cannot be used for staffing.

Q25. What are the biggest challenges you face in retaining qualified staff?

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Burnout

Many of our employees feel like they have not gotten a true break since the beginning of the pandemic.

Burnout is not entirely due to the pandemic. Also, longstanding capacity issues / unfunded mandates.

Our only staff member just accepted a new role elsewhere. The hardest part of covid is the shifts in staff as folks look to either pursue more lucrative employment/benefits and/or depart due to burnout. Those holding in there are holding on by a thread. It is a shifting industry at this time.

Capacity is our biggest challenge. Our staff is working more than they should. Burnout is a serious concern. We continue to find it difficult to secure general operating funding to hire additional staff that will reduce their workload.

Staff are having more stress and difficult lives that make continued employment less viable since COVID. Lots more depression, feelings of isolation.
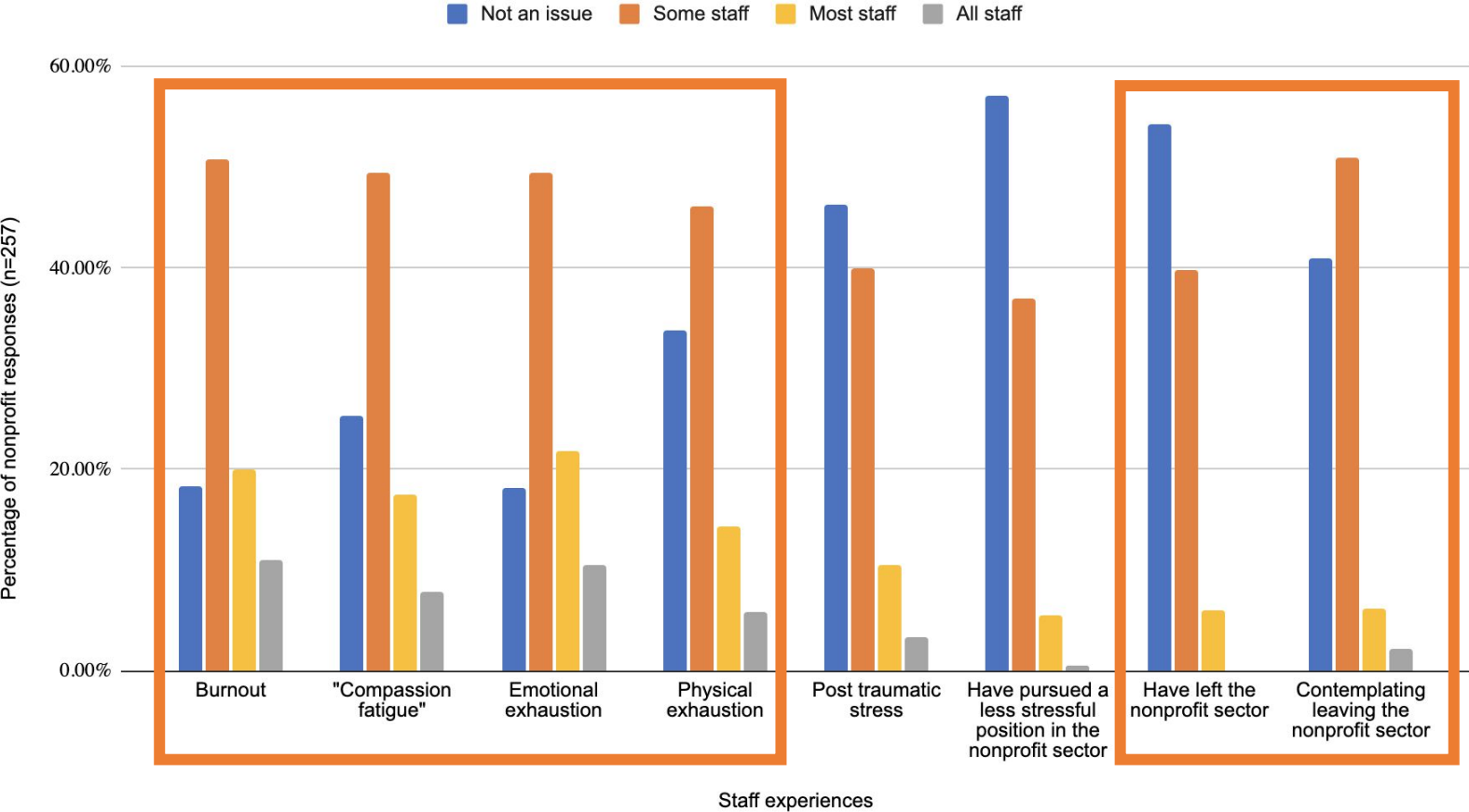
Staff got burnt out. Turnover has been high in the last 12 months, and some institutional knowledge has been lost. Staff who have stuck it out are often still struggling with burnout.

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Over 80% of nonprofits have at least some staff experiencing burnout and 75% with emotional exhaustion. 11% say that all of their staff are burnt out.

Over 2/3 of nonprofits have some staff experiencing physical exhaustion.

This is resulting in an increasing number of experienced staff leaving the sector. 46% of organizations have had staff leave the sector completely and 59% have staff who are considering doing so. This fact, along with the fact that 25% of organizations responded they experienced a leadership transition or succession planning this year, and 34% are anticipating leadership change in 2023, means that the sector is experiencing a tremendous drain of institutional knowledge, and a need to strengthen the workforce pipeline at all levels.

Q26. To what extent are your staff currently experiencing:

There has been significant staff turnover within the sector.

More than 50% of the staff in almost one in five organizations (17.66%) have been in their roles less than two years.

Only 13% of survey respondents say that they have had no staff turnover in the past 2 years.

Q24. What percent of your paid staff positions are currently filled by staff who have been with your organization for less than two years?

Percentage of nonprofit responses (n=276)

Category	Percentage
0 (All current paid staff have worked at our org for 2+ years.)	13.04%
1-25%	38.41%
26-50%	18.12%
51-75%	10.14%
75-100%	6.52%

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Recruitment and Hiring

COVID-19 decimated a large pool of our employees, frontline and management, and it has been difficult to return to pre pandemic staffing, which had already been compromised by years of low wages and insufficient reimbursement for services. Secondly, the pandemic has changed how illness is managed, so with people being more cautious, working with mild cold symptoms is no longer acceptable, further compromising the workforce.

Candidates do not have sufficient experience in the field and upon investing significant time in training they then are recruited by larger companies that pay significantly more.

We are extremely short staffed – we have had multiple unfilled positions for over a year.

Significantly higher demand for services. Our budget has grown from 8 million to 18 million. We're managing growth, and an inability to hire at the same time. We've grown from 85 employees to 165 employees and we have 62 vacancies at the moment. We've raised wages in some roles up to 20%, but we still can't hire fast enough. We require employees to provide our behavioral health services in person, but other employers are allowing for telehealth so we struggle to compete. We are reaching beyond our normal measures, and very dedicated to hiring new staff that reflect the communities that we serve...Grants that we receive often will cover a portion of a salary.

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Nonprofits have struggled to fill staffing vacancies.

Almost half of respondents reported vacancies greater than 3 months, which can be especially detrimental for small nonprofits trying to stay afloat.

This turnover represents a tremendous loss of institutional knowledge, on top of the aforementioned leadership transition/ succession planning.

And the inability to fill open positions means that the remaining staff are handling additional responsibilities, exacerbating their burnout.

Q18. In 2022, how long has your typical vacant position remained open before you were able to hire someone?

Virtually all nonprofits depend on volunteers to support their work.

Volunteers most frequently help with special events (64.12%), but they are also an integral part of program and service delivery (47.33%).

Almost 40% receive support from skilled volunteers in areas such as finance, marketing, etc. Other areas of support include office support (31.68%) and tutoring/mentoring (26.34%).

Q28. How many volunteers have worked in your organization in 2022?

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Volunteerism in the Nonprofit Sector

		No revenue	$1–$10,000	$10,000–$50,000	$50,000–$100,000	37 Revenue last year $100,000–$250,000	$250,000–$500,000	$500,000–$1 million	$1 million–$5 million	Over $5 million	
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
28 Volunteer count		5	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	5
	1–10	5	5	11	9	10	14	9	15	14	2
	11–25	3	5	5	8	12	9	9	11	6	1
	26–50	0	3	0	4	5	4	6	7	4	3
	More than 50	2	1	3	2	5	8	6	28	10	2
	None	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	4	1	0

Volunteers

We have found it difficult to work with volunteers and interns since we have moved to a hybrid work model because it is difficult to provide supervision in the office and we are not sure how to best support them in a virtual setting.

We operate entirely with volunteer staff. Due to inflation brought on by COVID-19, many of our volunteers have had to resign to pursue other paid opportunities so that they can keep up with their own cost of living. Furthermore, our service requests have more than doubled in just a year.

Lack of ability to form social cohesion among volunteers because meetings are primarily virtual.

Covid 19 has been affecting our organization in more ways than one. We have had staff, board members, and volunteers pass away or get sick. This puts more work on the rest of our staff.

We are an all-volunteer run organization and our volunteers are maxed out.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we have seen a rise in need, but lost volunteer program leaders during that time who were not able to adapt to virtual offerings; we are trying to train up new/additional program leaders to meet the rising need.

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Racial Equity

Q31. What percentage of your organization's Board of Directors consisted of Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) in 2021 and 2022?

Q32. What percentage of your organization's senior leadership consisted of Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) in 2021 and 2022?

2021

- 7.29%
- 5.9%
- 11.81%
- 28.82%
- 47.22%

2022

- 7.99%
- 4.51%
- 11.11%
- 29.86%
- 44.79%

Legend:
- 0%
- 1-25%
- 26-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-100%

While the majority of respondents indicated that they had BIPOC members of their Board of Directors (previous slide), almost half indicated that none of their senior leadership were BIPOC.

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Q33. How have you implemented racial equity and/or racial justice values into your organization's internal practices and policies, as well as external programs and services?	Percentage of respondents (n=274)
Staff training on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI)	55.11%
Actively recruit job candidates of color and actively recruit in underserved areas	48.18%
Guest speakers, learning and/or recognition of diverse history, culture and celebrations	42.34%
Intentional efforts to support existing BIPOC staff and Board members	40.88%
Ensure that resident/participant voice is included in decision-making and strategy development	35.04%
Board training on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI)	33.94%
Translation available for all programs, services, job postings, internal and external documents	28.47%
Adopted JEDI policy or values statement	27.37%
Regular assessment of public-facing programs and publications to ensure that language reflects an asset-based community framework	21.90%
Prioritize Minority Business Enterprise vendors	18.25%
Received JEDI-related grant funding for new internal or external work	11.68%
Received JEDI-related grant funding for existing internal or external work	9.49%
Adopted formal rubric or process for evaluating decision-making according to JEDI values and principles	6.93%
We have not integrated racial equity and/or racial justice values into internal or external activities.	13.14%

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Q34. To what extent has your organization created an intentional recruitment and retention plan to increase the presence of BIPOC leadership and staff in your organization and on your Board?	Percentage of respondents (n=271)
My organization has implemented a BIPOC recruitment and retention plan.	18.82%
My organization has created a BIPOC recruitment and retention plan but has not implemented it.	4.43%
My organization has been in discussions about a BIPOC recruitment and retention plan.	28.04%
My organization does not have a BIPOC recruitment and retention plan.	35.06%

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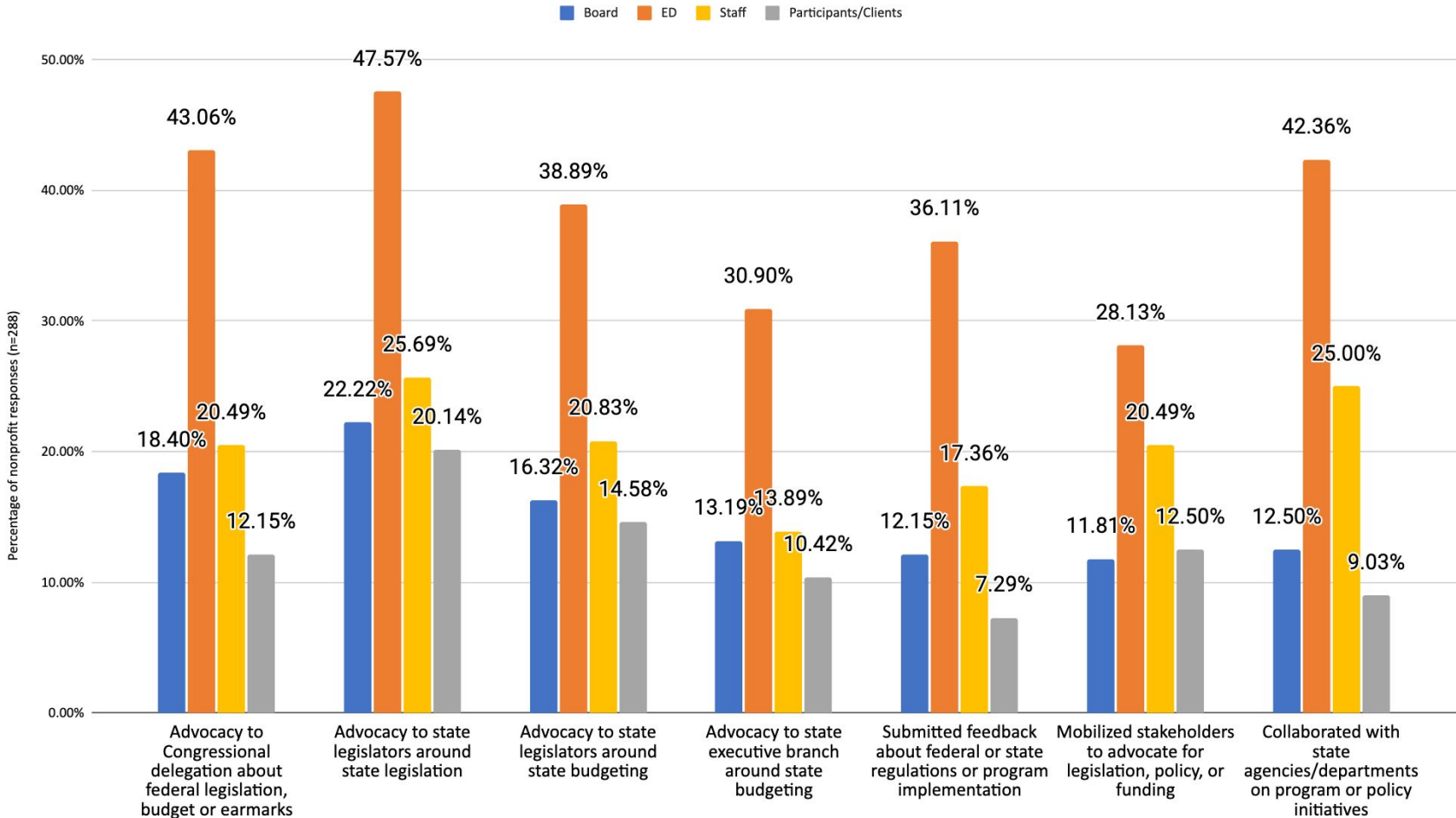
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Policy and Advocacy

One of the nonprofit resource center's focus areas will be providing support for advocacy in support of the sector at the federal, state and local levels, and creating spaces for collaboration between policymakers and nonprofits.

Currently, we see that roughly a third to a half of Executive Directors have engaged in advocacy work in the last 12 months, but there are much lower rates of engagement by Board members, staff and participants/clients.

Some narrative comments indicated a lack of awareness about legally permissible nonprofit advocacy activities.

Other comments illustrated the vicious cycle that nonprofits need more resources, which could be obtained through advocacy, but they can't engage in advocacy because they are too busy with their mission-related responsibilities and fundraising to get involved in advocacy.

Q54. To what extent has your organization been engaged in advocacy and policy work over the last 12 months?

Policy and Advocacy

We do this now. Always helps to do this collectively as opposed to fighting over the same dollars.

Policy research, including past votes on similar laws or issues among existing state and municipal electeds, similar policies in other states, state agencies charged with implementing specific policies, their powers, jurisdictions and communication with the public

Student interns or volunteers to track legislation and notify us of hearings, how to submit testimony, etc.

We need a better understanding of the way state government actually works in RI (as in, the actual politics of it, not how it works on paper).

As a 501c3 we don't lobby the legislature, we are available to educate legislature but opportunities to do so are limited and hard to get. Training on developing and bringing forward a legislative agenda would be helpful.

Honestly, someone asking us to be involved and graciously showing how. We're so in the weeds with day to day operations and programming that it's difficult to even consider advocacy without a clear invitation and blueprint on how to engage.

Policy and Advocacy

Alleviating overburdened staff resources would be the key hurdle. Our arts sector does not have a resource to organize around advocacy, so efforts are uncoordinated and inefficient. As a result we have very little voice on a state level despite sustaining huge negative impacts from Covid, and bringing significant impacts to the state's economy and quality of life.

We need to free up enough time for our Executive Director to work more effectively with the board and with our constituents to focus on public policy. Again, it is a matter of priorities, if we spend most of our time trying to raise money there is little time left for anything else

We have resistance within our board about taking a public stance on affordable housing in our community. Our local listening exercise revealed this to be the most urgent unmet need in our pricey local housing market, but some influential members of our board are not supportive.

List of issues concerning/impacting the sector (positively or negatively) that are up for debate (i.e., a bill has been drafted or being drafted).

How do we do work with state and federal agencies on policy, primarily by connecting them to research, data, and community input. We're pretty good at this. We don't do much with the congressional delegation, we might appreciate help learning how to do that.
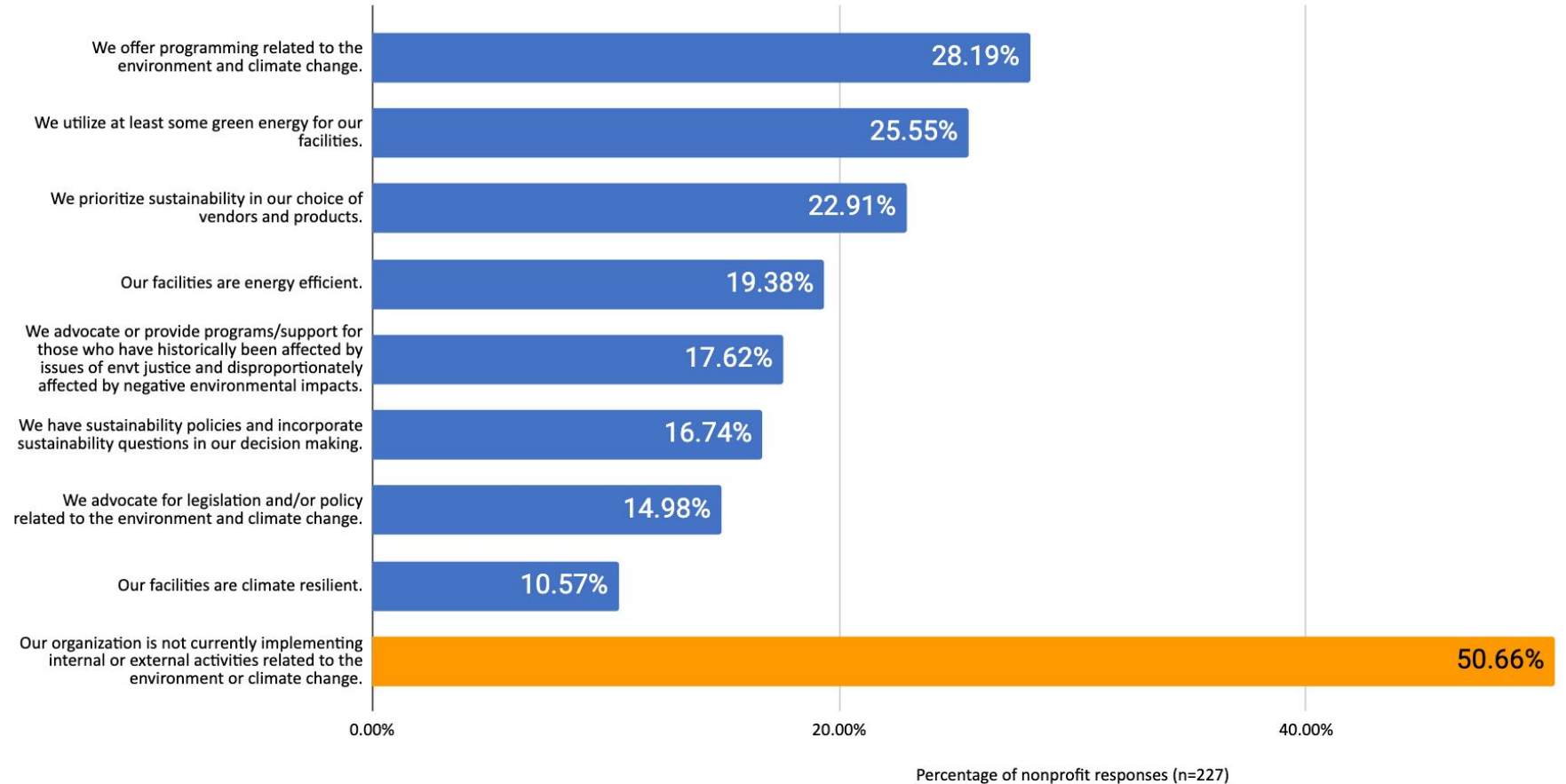
Environmental Issues & Climate Change

Q57. How is your organization addressing environmental issues or issues related to climate change?

Many nonprofits expressed a desire to make their facilities greener, climate resilient and energy efficient, but did not have the funding for these kinds of improvements.

Many nonprofits also voiced the need for pro bono technical assistance and training on affordable, sustainable improvements.

Response	Percentage
We offer programming related to the environment and climate change.	28.19%
We utilize at least some green energy for our facilities.	25.55%
We prioritize sustainability in our choice of vendors and products.	22.91%
Our facilities are energy efficient.	19.38%
We advocate or provide programs/support for those who have historically been affected by issues of envt justice and disproportionately affected by negative environmental impacts.	17.62%
We have sustainability policies and incorporate sustainability questions in our decision making.	16.74%
We advocate for legislation and/or policy related to the environment and climate change.	14.98%
Our facilities are climate resilient.	10.57%
Our organization is not currently implementing internal or external activities related to the environment or climate change.	50.66%

Percentage of nonprofit responses (n=227)

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Climate

Although we deeply care about the environment and our members are involved, other issues such as homelessness and poverty are top of mind for our constituents. We are willing to elevate environmental issues through collaborations where institutional partners help us to recruit, maintain, and grow our leaders within our own institution.

Subsidies for non-profits to get solar energy

Training and Funds would be needed to make this a primary focus. We care deeply about the environment, however our facility is old and would require many upgrades to make it more energy efficient/green!

We need funding to renovate our buildings using environmentally friendly materials and install energy and water saving systems.

We would also appreciate policies and practices that would make it easier to make environmentally sustainable choices.

We invested major state/federal grant funding to upgrade our HVAC system for Covid safety. This has an unintended consequence of significantly increased energy consumption. We are concerned about the budget impact of looming electric rate increases.

ADA Accessibility

Q59. Are your facilities, programs and website currently ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible? (n=226)

Most nonprofits in the survey said that their facilities were ADA accessible, although many noted in their comments that they did not know about whether their websites were ADA accessible. Some noted that a portion of their facility was accessible. Nonprofits who rent space often cited only partial accessibility because they don't own the building.

Funding is needed for ADA upgrades, and many nonprofits requested training and technical assistance in making their websites accessible.

Unsure
16.4%

No
13.3%

Yes
70.4%

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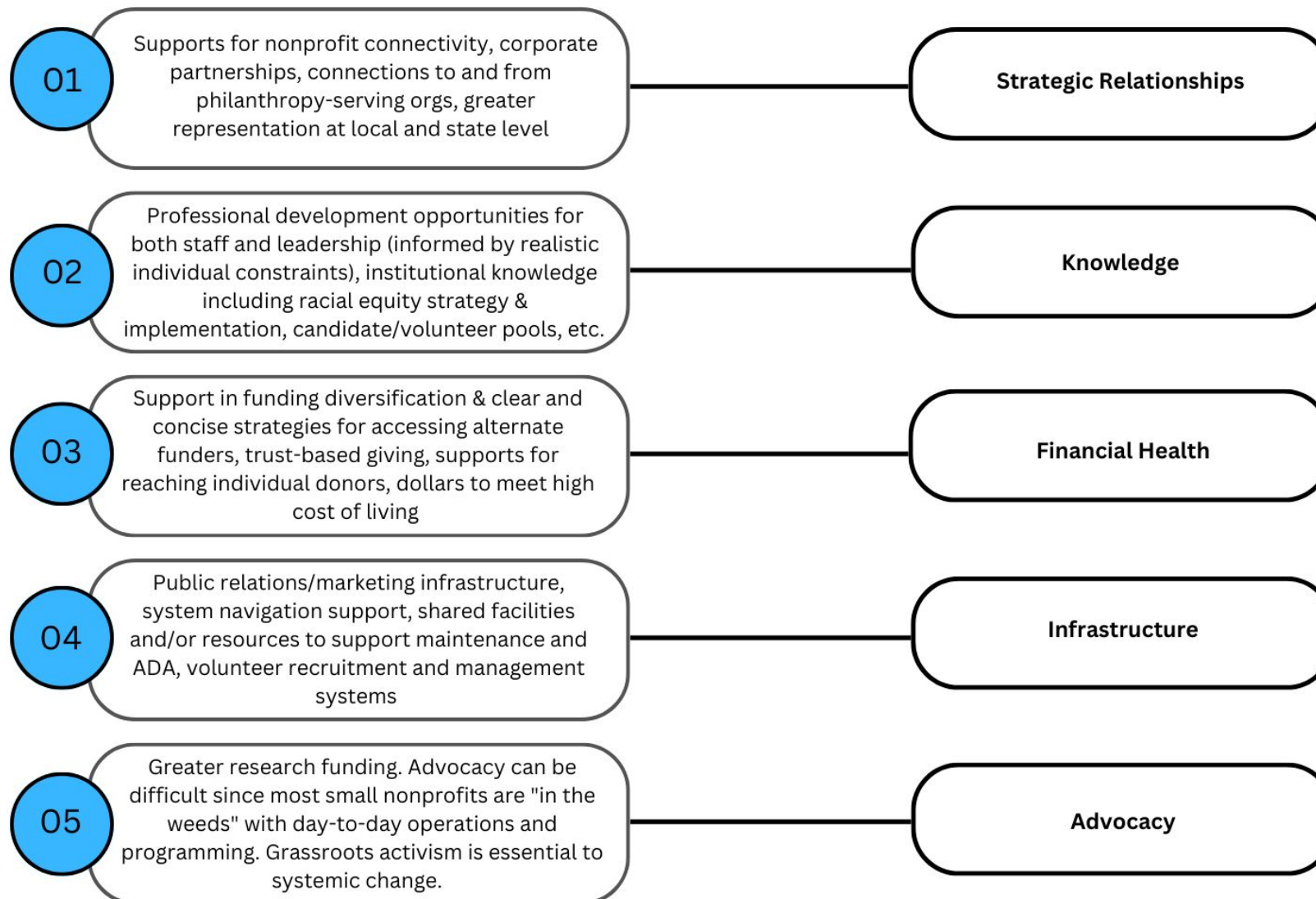United Way

Organizational Capacity

Currently, organizational capacity building work in Rhode Island is primarily offered by public and private funders. Leadership development is offered by colleges and universities, as well as programs such as the Executive Director/Deputy Director Learning Circle at United Way of Rhode Island, the Institute for Nonprofit Practice, and the Equity Leadership Institute at the Rhode Island Foundation. Nonprofit consultants also support the work on a fee-for-service basis.

Some funder offerings are free and open to all, but smaller nonprofits may not know about opportunities or be able to take time away from mission-related work to participate. Some offerings may be limited to a funder's grantees or invitations may be offered to organizations with relationships to the provider. There may also be other issues of access.

The development of a new nonprofit resource center, as well as innovation and new partnerships developed during the pandemic, provide an important foundation for new collaborative approaches to strengthen the capacity of nonprofits across the state.

Q61. Looking to the future, there are opportunities to expand existing resources, and develop new innovations and collaborative efforts to strengthen the nonprofit sector in Rhode Island. Which of these would be valuable or extremely valuable to you?	Percentage of nonprofit responses (n=288)
Nonprofit resource center	82.99%
Marketing and visibility of the nonprofit sector and its impact	79.51%
Reference database on funders and funding opportunities	79.51%
Professional development, leadership development, training and support	79.17%
Opportunities to develop relationships with funders	79.17%
Hub for nonprofit collaboration	78.47%
Hub for data and research on the nonprofit sector and philanthropic giving in RI	76.74%
Resources and training for nonprofit boards and governance issues	75.35%
Hub for racial equity/anti-racism training	75.00%
Opportunities to develop relationships with policymakers	74.65%
Hub for nonprofit innovation	72.92%
Centralized calendar for nonprofit events	72.92%
Peer networking and support	72.57%
Year round searchable public giving platform for RI nonprofits (similar to 401 Gives platform)	71.18%
Hub/infrastructure for mobilizing the nonprofit sector for federal and state advocacy	70.83%
"Job Alike" gatherings -- gathering together nonprofit communications professionals, executive directors, or HR professionals, etc.	70.83%
Cohort programs for nonprofit leaders and aspiring leaders	70.83%
Incubator/accelerator program for nonprofits founded or led by people of color	70.49%
Development of new approaches to inequitable funding practices and organizational structures	68.75%

Capacity building

01 — Supports for nonprofit connectivity, corporate partnerships, connections to and from philanthropy-serving orgs, greater representation at local and state level → **Strategic Relationships**

02 — Professional development opportunities for both staff and leadership (informed by realistic individual constraints), institutional knowledge including racial equity strategy & implementation, candidate/volunteer pools, etc. → **Knowledge**

03 — Support in funding diversification & clear and concise strategies for accessing alternate funders, trust-based giving, supports for reaching individual donors, dollars to meet high cost of living → **Financial Health**

04 — Public relations/marketing infrastructure, system navigation support, shared facilities and/or resources to support maintenance and ADA, volunteer recruitment and management systems → **Infrastructure**

05 — Greater research funding. Advocacy can be difficult since most small nonprofits are "in the weeds" with day-to-day operations and programming. Grassroots activism is essential to systemic change. → **Advocacy**

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Capacity Building

We need additional financial resources to support qualified professionals that have the acumen to effectively organize the community and navigate the policy development process. This is not cheap.

We need initiatives to attract and support first-time and early-career workers to the non-profit sector. Ideally also initiatives to make the sector a more sustainable place to work. Our sector is facing an employee shortage as older employees retire and burned-out employees resign.

The high cost of housing...cost of living in our community is a challenge even at the CEO level. Limited income sources means we can only fund part-time positions when staff seek more hours.

Benefits are a big issue. Other sectors have family medical insurance - that can be a $20,000 difference in pay for some employees.

The process for applying for government funding is unbelievably difficult and the reporting requirements are just over the top. We spend hours that could be focused on delivering services and delivering on the mission on looking for money, completing applications, writing reports. It seems to be purposely designed to discourage small nonprofits from even applying.

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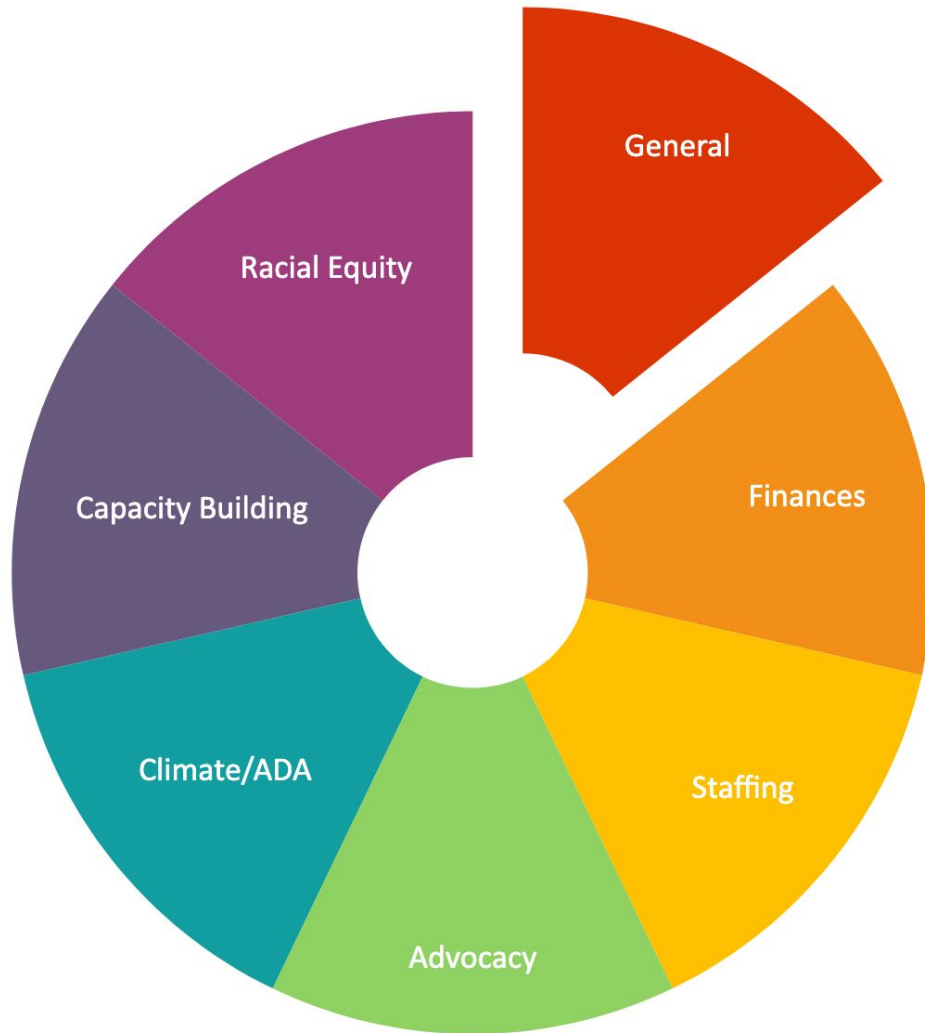United Way

Capacity Building

It is next to impossible for relatively small nonprofits to get on major corporate partners' radar. So many companies have recently chosen to move support away from smaller nonprofits to larger nonprofits that are scaled to affect global change. As a result, smaller nonprofits are suffering. The sad part of that trend is that smaller nonprofits are incredibly hands-on, personal, and responsive without a load of red tape.

We need more supportive facilities for small community grassroots organizations to implement their programs, and collaborative hub for website ADA.

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Key Takeaways and Recommendations

Community Need
Takeaways

High level of community need:

- Continued pandemic impacts, combined with the effects of inflation, are resulting in continued high demand for nonprofit services

- Long-term work is needed to address systemic issues that make communities vulnerable
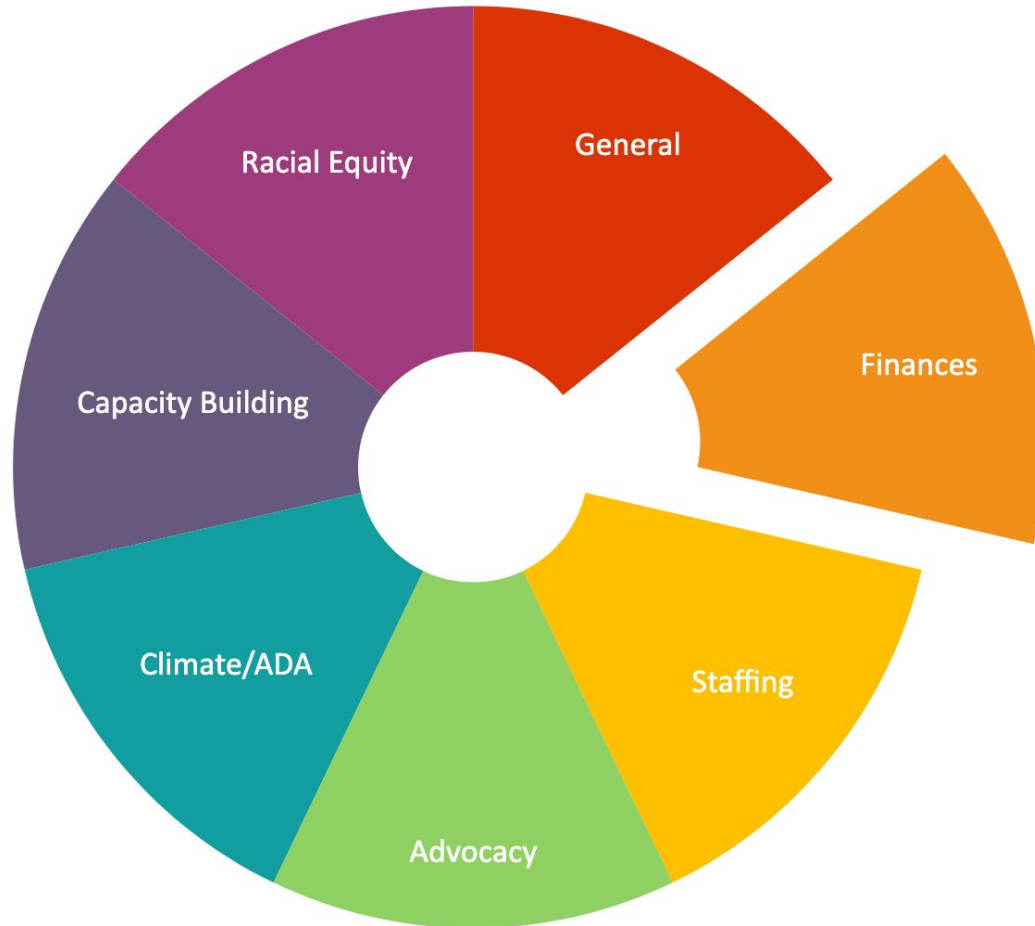
Finances
Takeaways

- End of COVID funds, increased expenses because of inflation, and decreased giving suggest a financial "cliff" is coming.

- Nonprofits are working on razor thin margin. This makes it difficult for smaller and BIPOC organizations to access funding provided on a reimbursment basis.

- Most nonprofits have a very small individual donor base, making them more vulnerable to changes in availability of funding from government and funders.
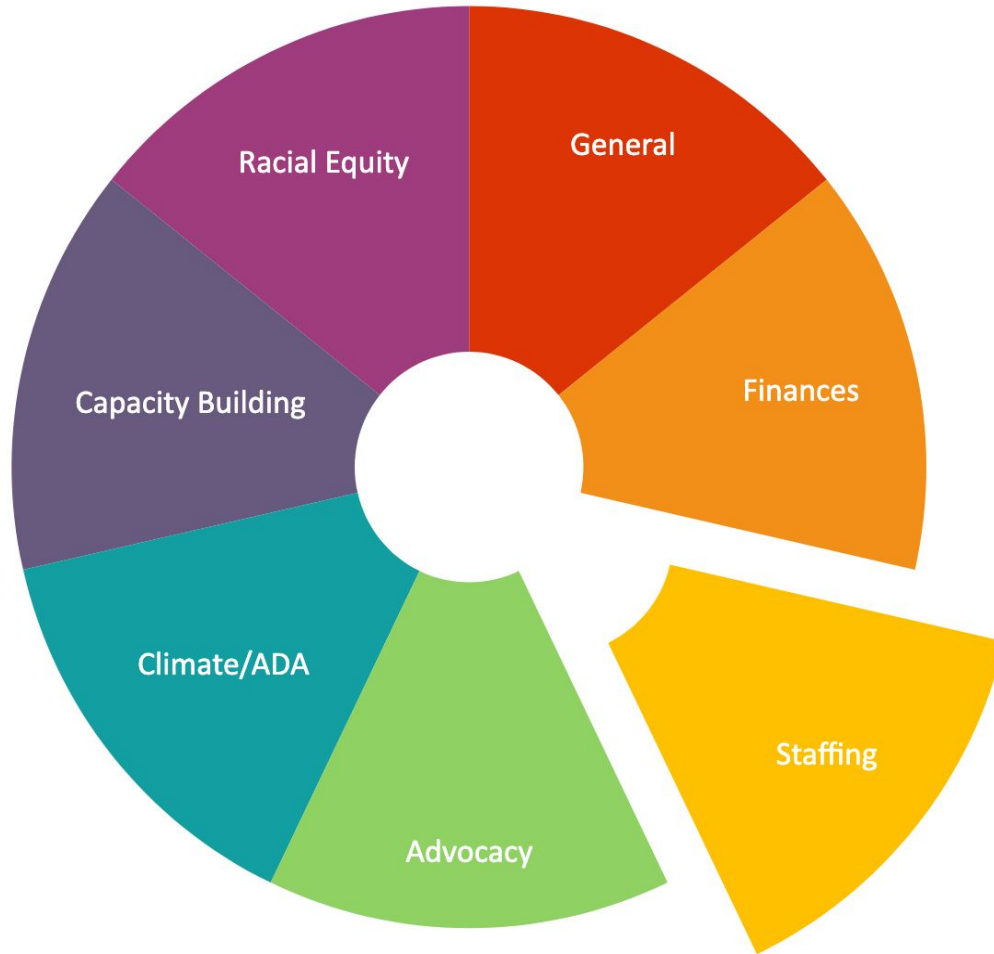
Finances
Recommendations

- Engage with nonprofits proactively, similar to early in the pandemic, making available additional "rainy day" resources accessible to address continued community need.

  - Streamline grant process and strengthen connections between funders and smaller organizations.

  - Increase available resources and address inequities in funding processes.

  - Increase individual giving.

  - Educate the public about importance of nonprofit support.

  - General operating support is needed to recruit and retain staff, and to build sustainability.
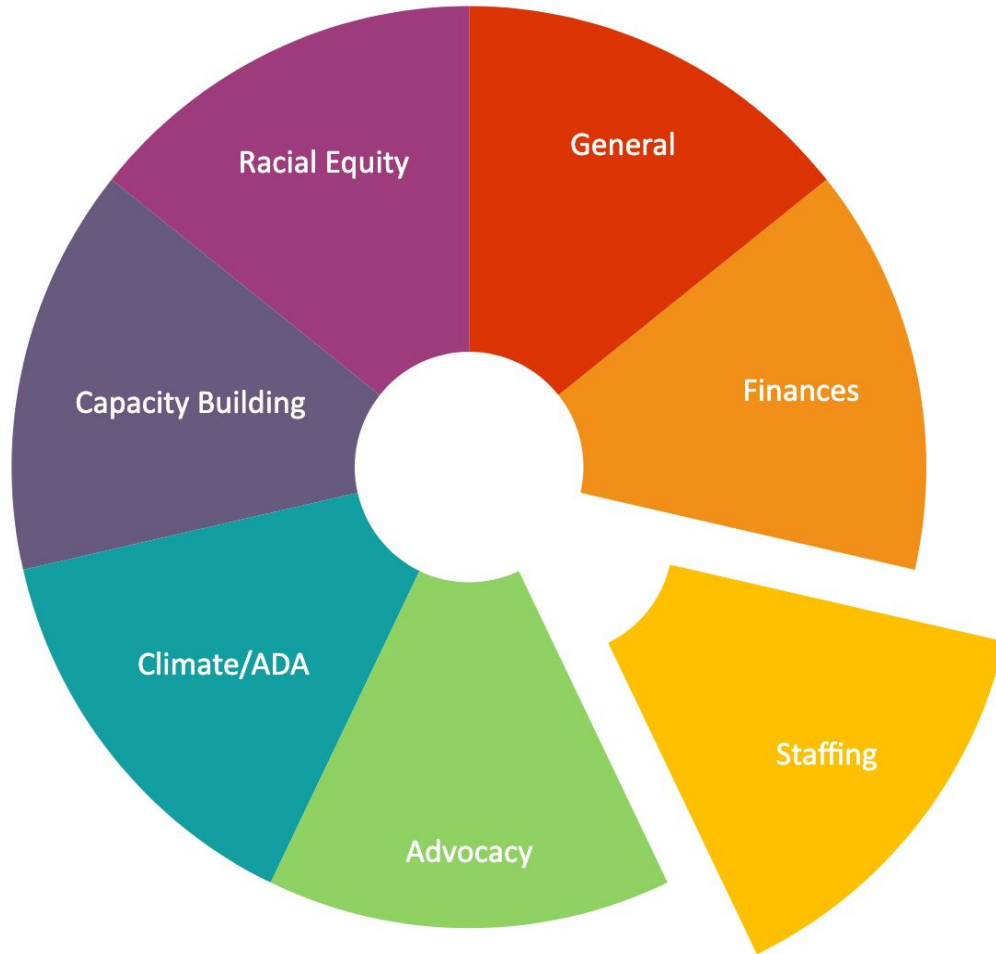
General

Finances

Staffing

Advocacy

Climate/ADA

Capacity Building

Racial Equity

Staffing
Takeaways

- Staff suffering from burnout
  - Understaffed organizations unable to provide services to meet community demand
- High turnover, experienced staff leaving the sector, ongoing loss of institutional knowledge
  - Better understanding of the sector workforce as an economic anchor in the state
  - Imperative for support for nonprofit workforce development and leadership pipelines

Staffing
Recommendations

- Reimbursement rates in state contracts need to be increased (OHIC review in progress)

- Develop creative solutions to support nonprofit staff (e.g. access to health and mental health benefits, student loan forgiveness)

- Help educate the public about the need to pay living wages and the importance of the sector workforce as an economic engine

- Make strategic investments in entry level and leadership pipeline in the nonprofit sectors

Racial Equity

General

Capacity Building

Finances

Climate/ADA

Staffing

Advocacy

Advocacy
Takeaways

Opportunities for
structural change

Advocacy
Recommendations

Education about legal advocacy activities

Tracking of legislation and mobilization of sector

Increased general operating support to ensure staffing available for advocacy, research and legislative education

Opportunities for nonprofits to engage directly with policymakers and state agencies

Efforts to increase resources available to nonprofits, including universal charitable deduction, legacy IRA legislation, energy efficiency for nonprofits, etc.

Climate / ADA Takeaways

Nonprofits are open to climate action, but lack funding and technical assistance
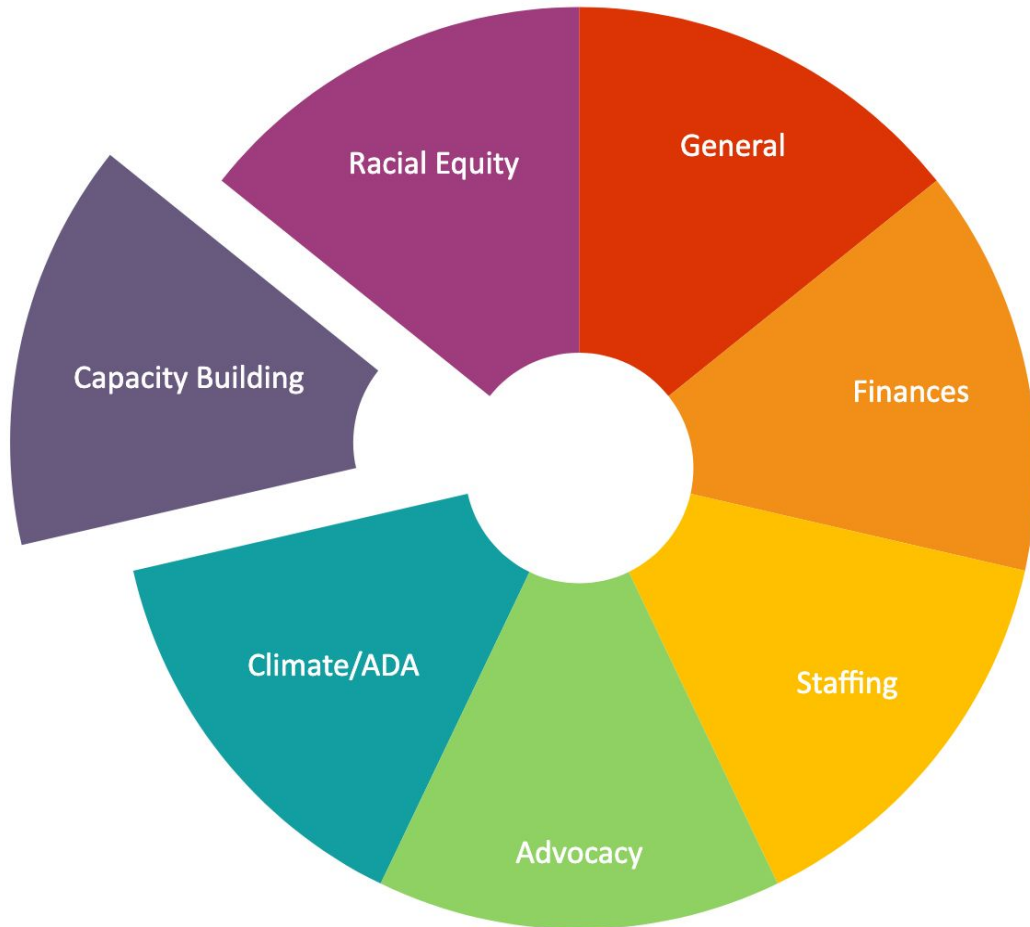
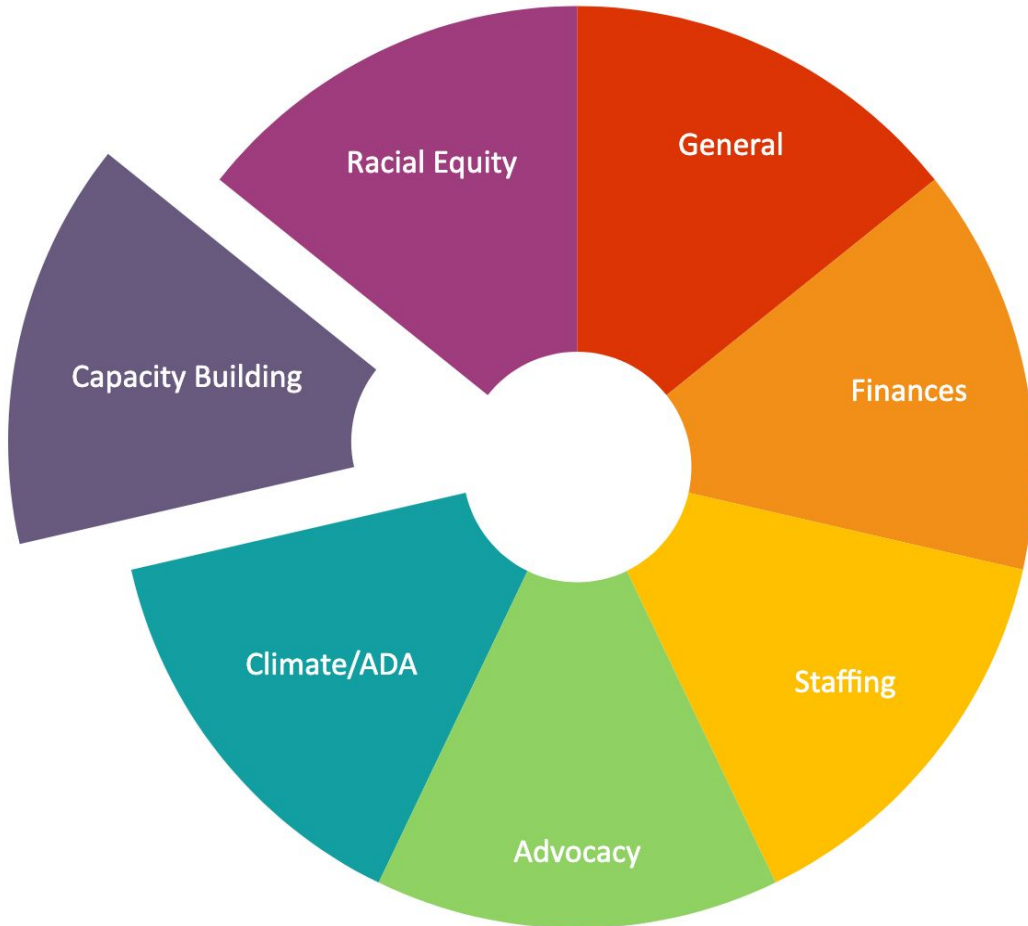# Climate / ADA Recommendations

Provide funding and technical assistance to increase energy efficiency, alternative energy usage, climate resilience, and understanding of effective, low-cost strategies

Pie chart segments: General, Finances, Staffing, Advocacy, Climate/ADA, Capacity Building, Racial Equity
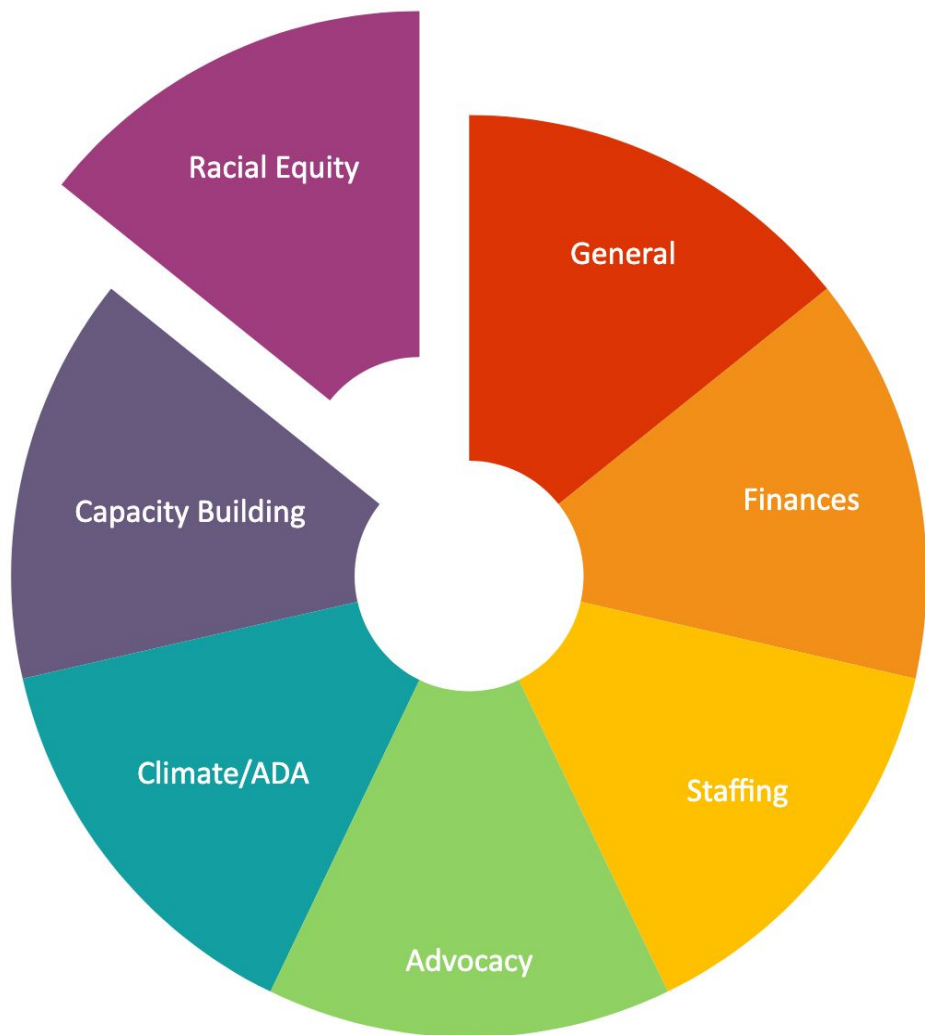
Capacity Building
Takeaways

- Professional development opportunities are helpful but require staff can step away from other responsibilities

- Relational connections with funders, policymakers, pro bono experts and other nonprofits is essential

- Strong desire for nonprofit resource center and collaborative ecosystem instead of competitive environment because of limited resources

Capacity Building
Recommendations

- Nonprofit resource center

- Communication about, and access to, existing opportunities

- Funder investment in professional development and organizational sustainability, as well as resources to support staffing so that leaders can step away for training and support

- Collaborative approaches to share knowledge and resources

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Racial Equity
Takeaways

Disconnect between BIPOC leadership and the communities served

Racial Equity
Recommendations

Investment in BIPOC-led and BIPOC serving organizations.

Questions?

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Thank you.

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