

# Public Health Equity Grant Capacity Assessment

**OREGON REPORT (2025)**



Report prepared for the Oregon Health Authority  
by the Nonprofit Association of Oregon

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This assessment and report were a result of forward thinking and a commitment to learning, illustrated by the Community Engagement Team in the Equity Office of the Public Health Division of OHA. A big thanks to all the community-based organizations that participated in the study. Special thanks for their support and interest in the work of their community-based partners go to the PHD OHA team, including Cara Biddlecom, Dolly England, Josillia Johnson, Alexa Damis-Wulff, Lianne Miranda, Steve Fiala, Jody Anderson, and Tien So. Their commitment to health equity and vision for a healthy Oregon is deeply commendable. Additional thanks to the NAO team for their work in preparing the survey, collecting the data, writing and designing the report, including Lesley Bennett, Yannika Marquardt, Jennifer Monegan, Brad Ramos, and Jim White.



### Oregon Health Authority

The Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) mission is to ensure that all people and communities can achieve optimum physical, mental, and social well-being through partnerships, prevention, and access to quality, affordable health care. OHA aims to transform the health care system by increasing the quality, reliability, and availability of health care and lowering and containing costs to improve the lifelong health of Oregonians.

[www.oregon.gov/oha](http://www.oregon.gov/oha)



### Nonprofit Association of Oregon

The Nonprofit Association of Oregon (NAO) is the statewide nonprofit membership organization representing and supporting charitable nonprofits of all sizes, geographic locations and missions across Oregon. NAO's work ensures a future in which Oregon nonprofits are visible and valued as essential contributors to our society. We strive to connect, improve and advance all nonprofits to help build thriving and vital communities across the state. We do this through our work in advocacy and public policy work; convening; capacity building; disseminating nonprofit standard of excellence; and conducting thought leadership research.

[www.nonprofitoregon.org](http://www.nonprofitoregon.org)

# ABOUT THE PUBLIC HEALTH EQUITY GRANT CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

In November 2024, a survey was conducted through NAO. The purpose of this paper is to report the findings of the capacity survey of grantees of the OHA CBO partners funded through the Public Health Equity Grant at the end of 2024. This survey and report coincide with intentional relationship building between the Public Health Division within the Oregon Health Authority and their partner community-based organizations, which have played a critical role in Oregon communities over the past four years.

## The goals of this study are to:

- Understand the issues and trends supporting and challenging the CBO partners.
- Factor this data into decision-making across respective organizations and communities.
- Document the unique approaches used by OHA Equity Office in the Public Health Division to provide support to their CBO partners.
- Identify successful strategies to CBO capacity building that should be replicated by OHA and other government funders, where feasible.

## The survey and study covered three main themes of inquiry:

- The change in overall capacity of the CBO since engaging with OHA's programs;
- The change in OHA processes and procedures for ease in grant making and compliance with partners; and
- The value of technical assistance provided through OHA for these programs.

The survey uses items to yield data on 6+ indicators for three domains of capacity:



**People  
Capacity**



**Culture  
Capacity**



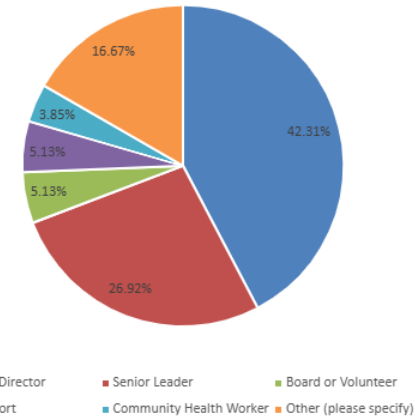
**Finance and  
Operational Capacity**

The data from this survey is intended to provide insights to inform the strategies for continued investments by OHA into nonprofit capacity-building.

# PARTICIPATION

The Public Health Equity Grant Partners Capacity Assessment yielded 78 complete responses.

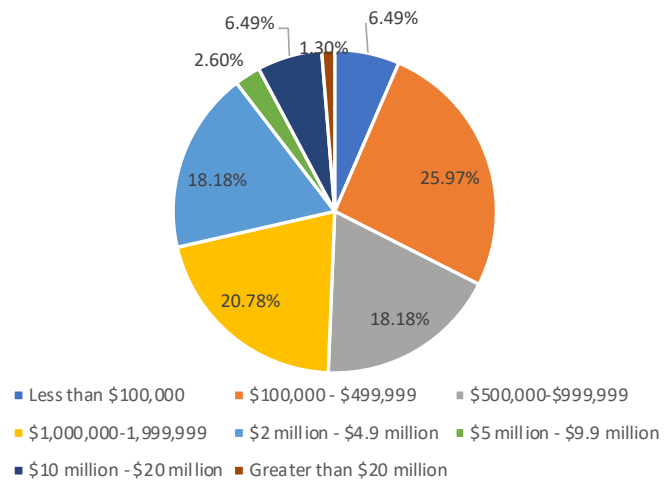
**Role of Survey Participant.** The majority of those completing the survey were executive directors, senior leaders, or board members. A smaller group of participants were volunteers, staff support, and community health workers. Thirteen respondents did not list roles.



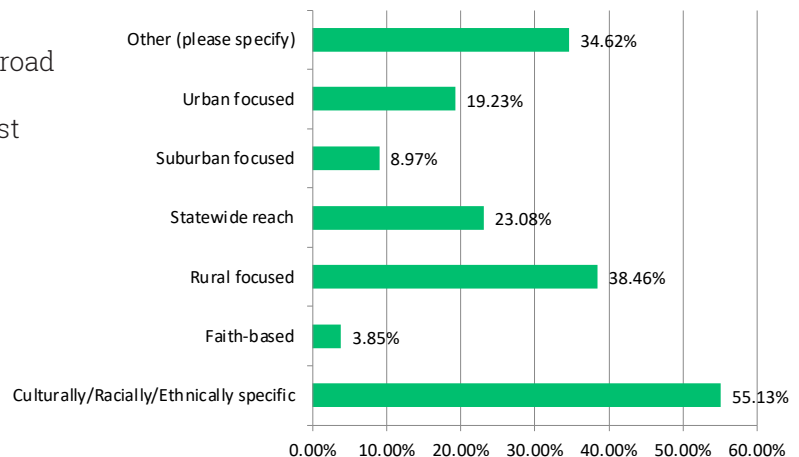
**Location.** The respondents represent 49 zip codes across the state. (See Appendix I)

**Size of organization.** The organizations represented in this study range in size.

- 32.5% have an annual budget less than \$500,000.
- 39% have an annual budget from \$500,000 to \$2 million.
- 28.5% have an annual budget greater than \$2 million.

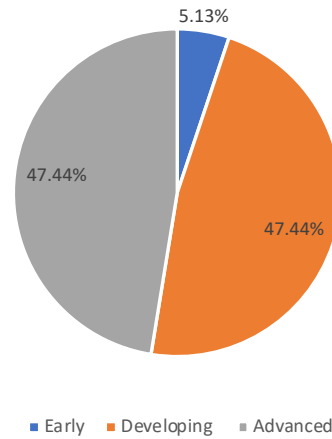


**Organization identity and scope.** The nonprofits in this study represented a broad range of focus areas and communities, with culturally-specific being the largest by far.



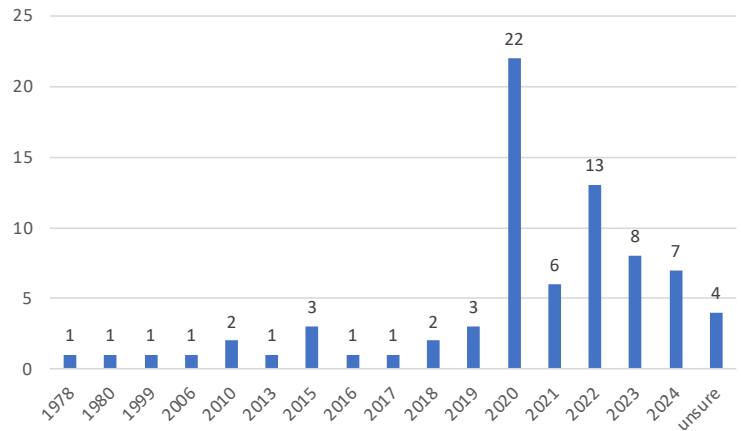


**Stage of development.** The vast majority of participants were with organizations in more developed stages of their life cycles. Only 5% identify as early stage – the first few years of start-up, initiation, and stabilization. 47.5% identify as developing stage – stable and still developing significant areas of programs and services. 47.5% identify as advanced stage - well-established with systems and programs that meet the needs of today built on years of knowledge, experience, and testing.

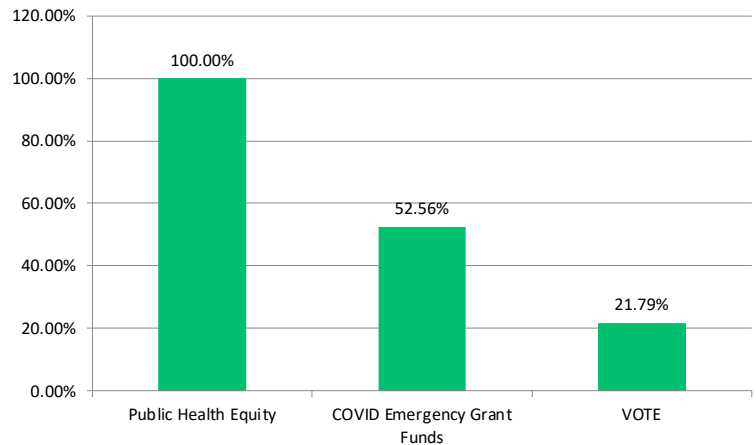


## Experience with OHA Programs

**Start of Engagement:** 22% of respondents began working with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) between 1978 and 2019. OHA started in 2009. Prior to this OHA was part of DHS. The largest group of CBOs - 73% - started after 2020. Five percent were unsure when they started.

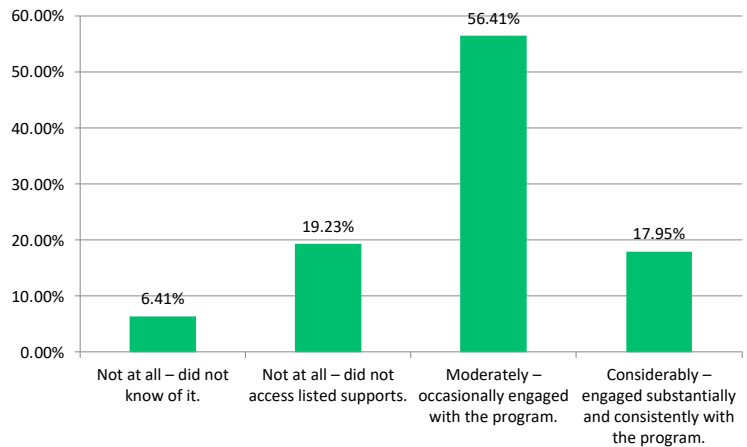


**OHA Programs:** ALL of the respondents were engaged with the Public Health Equity Grant programs of OHA, and 52.56% with COVID Emergency Funds. A smaller 21.79% were involved with VOTE programs.



### Involvement with OHA Technical Assistance Compliance programs implemented by NAO in the past 3 years:

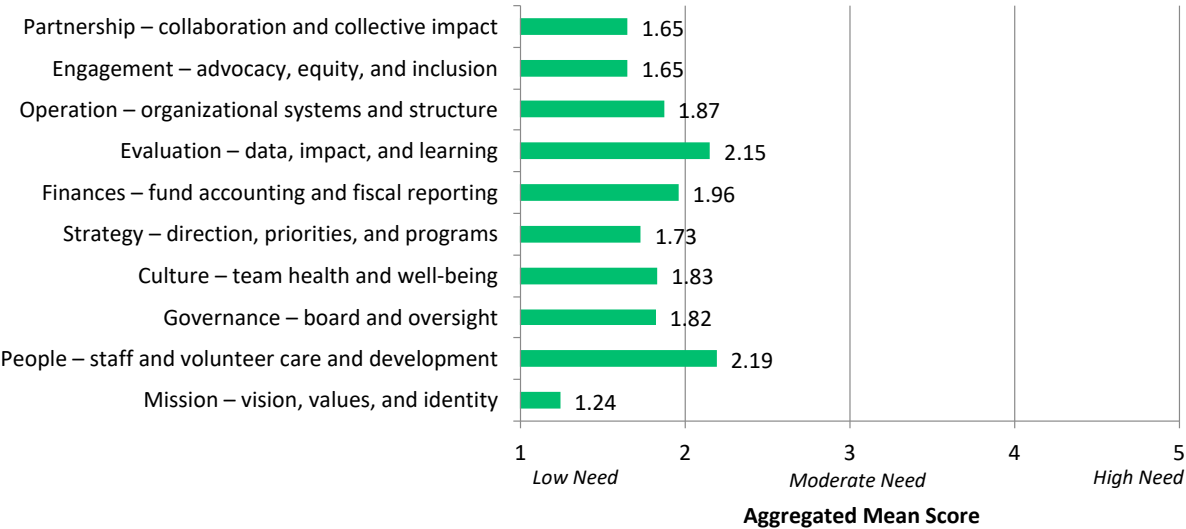
There was good engagement with the NAO programs funded by OHA. 18% reported they were considerably involved, 56.5% were moderately involved and 25.5% were not at all involved. As a reminder 16.8% of respondents reported they were between \$2 million and over \$20 million annual budgets.



## Organizational Growth Since Working with OHA

- 1. Increased Staff and Capacity** – Many respondents reported they have expanded their teams, hiring executive directors, program staff, therapists, community health workers, and administrative personnel, and are able to offer better pay equity and benefits. Some organizations have doubled or more in size, improving their ability to manage programs, grants, and compliance requirements.
- 2. Expanded Programs and Services** – Respondents reported launching new initiatives in healthcare, workforce development, LGBTQ+ support, culturally specific services, and more. Programs have grown to reach more communities, including in rural and underserved areas.
- 3. Financial Growth and Stability** – Some CBOs reported that their budgets have increased substantially. Many organizations that previously struggled with funding now have the resources to provide benefits, sustain staff, and expand operations. However, consistent infrastructure funding remains a challenge.
- 4. Greater Community Impact and Partnerships** – With increased funding and capacity, organizations have reached more people, expanded regional coverage, strengthened collaborations with other CBOs, and improved culturally responsive services. Some have opened new sites and expanded into multiple counties.
- 5. Improved Systems and Sustainability** – Organizations have developed better operational structures, grant management processes, and financial systems. Technical assistance from OHA has helped them navigate government grants, reporting, and compliance. Many are working towards long-term sustainability beyond OHA funding.

# NEED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

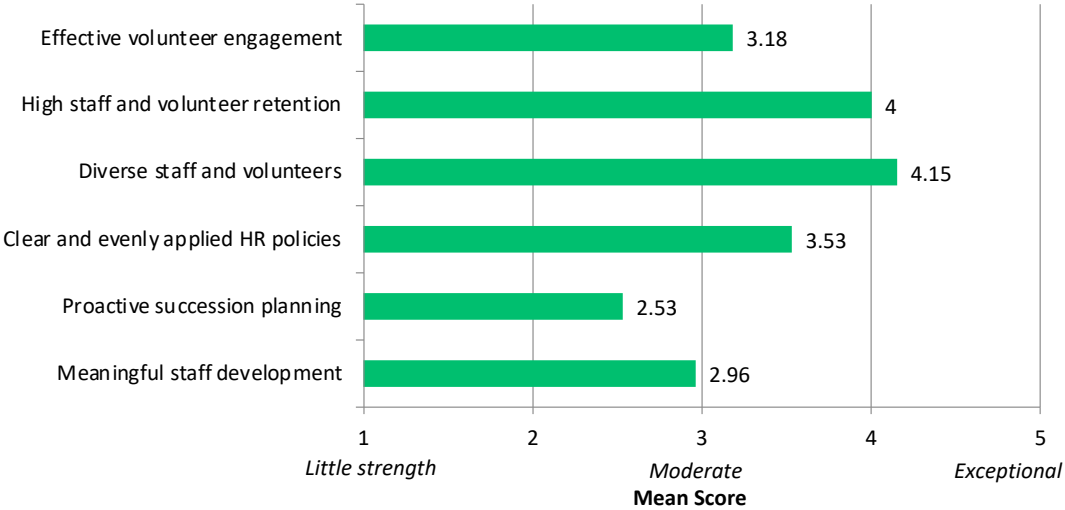


**Participating Oregon nonprofits assess the need for capacity-building in each domain:**

The reported need levels were all below moderate, with respondents indicating the greatest need for people capacity, followed by evaluation capacity.



# PEOPLE CAPACITY



## Strengths

Survey participants report having staff and volunteers that reflect the diversity of their communities and having strength in their ability to retain their most capable staff and volunteers over time. They also report having relative strength in having clear policies on vital human resource issues that are applied evenly to all staff and their ability to effectively recruit, train and manage volunteers.

## Opportunities

One of the lowest ratings in the survey relates to leadership succession plan that prepares transitioning leadership for future success of the organization. Another area of concern in this category relates to enhancing staff development through consistent and impactful training and coaching. These two issues indicate a chance to strengthen nonprofits' ability to develop personnel and prepare for staff turnover, particularly in leadership positions.

## Greatest Barriers to People Capacity

The following were described as the greatest barriers to people capacity:

1. **Wages and Compensation**– It is not surprising that insufficient funding to offer competitive salaries, benefits, full-time hours or living wages and an inability to expand staff due to budget constraints was mentioned by many respondents.
2. **Recruitment and Retention** – Difficulty finding qualified candidates, high turnover rates, challenges in attracting and retaining talented staff or volunteers, lengthy and burdensome hiring and onboarding process.
3. **Training and Development** – Lack of resources or time for staff training, professional development, and capacity building. Difficulty finding culturally specific development opportunities.
4. **Geographic and Demographic Challenges** – Difficulties related to rural locations, limited local talent pools, and language barriers.
5. **Organizational Structure and Management** – Challenges of leadership were reported as well as a lack of dedicated administrative staff.

### Survey respondents said the following related to people capacity barriers:

“There are not enough funding opportunities to build administrative capacity. It forces us to prioritize different positions, so there are still important positions we're not able to fund (eg. HR).”

“Finding qualified and caring staff is difficult. Our potential employee base is very limited because of our rural community and small population.”

“The obvious one, is funding- salary increases and understanding of the work have increased 1000% and the funding landscape has stayed the same- one example- what a funder would grant in 2019 is the exact same amount in 2024... that just does not work anymore.”

## Impact of OHA Trainings and Support on People Capacity

Most respondents indicated in the survey that their people capacity was strengthened by OHA trainings and support, particularly in the following ways:

1. **Increased Staffing and Organizational Growth** – Funding from OHA has allowed organizations to hire additional staff and expand leadership teams.
2. **Professional Development and Training Opportunities** – Many organizations have accessed valuable trainings on fiscal management, compliance, and program-specific skills, improving overall staff knowledge and effectiveness.
3. **Operational and Administrative Processes** – Guidance from OHA working with NAO, such as fiscal office hours and grant administration assistance, has helped organizations streamline processes and policies, improve financial management, and establish stronger systems.
4. **Improved Program Implementation and Service Delivery** – Training and funding have enabled organizations to enhance program planning, execution, and evaluation, leading to better community impact.
5. **Networking and Peer Learning** – Organizations have benefited from connections with other grantees and partners, fostering collaboration, shared learning, and access to additional resources.

### Survey respondents said the following related to the ways that OHA trainings and support have strengthened their people capacity:

“We are establishing all new policies and HR documents since OHA has enabled us to hire our first staff members. This is an overwhelming task but utilizing NAO’s support has been instrumental in establishing robust documentation that we will use for years to come.”

“Workshops and capacity-building sessions have provided tools for project planning, implementation, and evaluation. Guidance on building partnerships has expanded networks, enabling collaborations with other organizations and stakeholders for broader program impact. Finally, training on data collection and analysis has strengthened the ability to monitor community health trends and report outcomes effectively.”

“With the diversified funding to support capacity building, we have hired an Associate Director March 2024 and focus on HR department for people capacity building. After that, each program department added a new role Administration Assistance to support program director and program managers.”

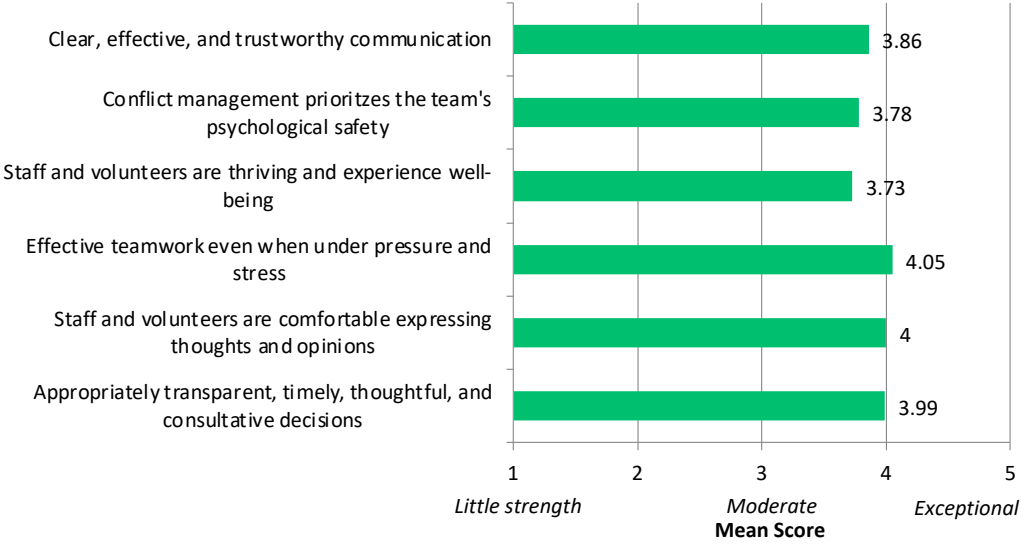
### Some respondents reported that their people capacity was not strengthened by OHA support in some regards, as their staff did not have the time to take advantage of some OHA offerings:

“We appreciate that OHA provides several training opportunities, but a lot of our staff are at full working capacity and don’t have opportunities to open up their schedule and attend trainings.”

“Trainings don’t provide capacity if the team is already at capacity. We need stable funds that allow us to build administrative capacity. We need people to handle the administrative, HR, finance work.”



## CULTURE CAPACITY



### Strengths

The culture capacity of nonprofits in Oregon is rated quite strong. The highest rated items have to do with staff and volunteers working well together even when they are under pressure and stress, and the internal culture of authenticity where staff and volunteers are comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions, including disagreement and dissent. Items related to decision-making and communication show strongly as well.

### Opportunities

Even though the entire domain of culture is quite strong among Oregon nonprofits, the lagging areas of culture are related to conflict management and the well-being of staff and volunteers.

## Greatest Barriers to Culture Capacity

The following were described as the greatest barriers to culture capacity:

1. **Capacity Limitations and Workload** – Lack of time, funding, or staff capacity for team building, cultural development, and addressing cultural issues due to workload and limited resources.
2. **Communication and Trust Challenges** – Difficulties in addressing conflicts, building trust, and fostering open communication within the organization. Staff hesitancy to be open with leadership in sharing issues or concerns.
3. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Barriers** – Navigating differences in worldviews among diverse staff and volunteers, challenges in creating and maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace culture, including representation and cultural understanding.
4. **Leadership and Management** – Issues related to leadership skills, management practices, and their impact on organizational culture, including challenges with transitions and issues of distrust in leadership.
5. **Staff Turnover and Retention** – Challenges related to staff turnover and helping new staff understand the existing culture.
6. **Training and Development** – Lack of resources or opportunities for staff training and professional development that could enhance cultural capacity.
7. **Structural and Logistical Challenges** – Staff disconnect related to remote work or office space constraints.

### Survey respondents said the following related to the ways that OHA trainings and support have strengthened their culture capacity:

“We recognize that we are a white led organization staffing members of underserved community members and sometimes we lack the capacity, lived experience and cultural perspective to really support diverse staff to be effective in culturally specific work and there can be challenges identifying appropriate consultative services to meet this need other than our HR consultant that we've recently contracted with. Really getting at the heart of supporting a bi-cultural, bilingual staff in their work as a CHW and or Health Care Interpreter and being responsive to the challenges they face in their work.”

“Long term staff stuck in their old ways and unable to separate their own opinion and ways of doing things from their personal identity and their job position.”

“We pride ourselves on having an open and transparent culture. Everyone at every level has an opportunity to contribute to decisions. The biggest barrier is that although staff are able and encouraged to participate, several are still too shy to express themselves. I believe this is from past work traumas and experiences in their life, and it's something our organization tries to accommodate and heal.”



## Impact of OHA Trainings and Support on Culture Capacity

While many organizations reported that their culture capacity had not been impacted by OHA training and support, some reported their work was strengthened in the following ways:

1. **Training and Professional Development** – Investing in staff training, leadership development, and skill-building opportunities.
2. **Funding and Capacity Building** – Grants and funding support have allowed organizations to stabilize, expand, hire new staff, and implement new policies for internal equity and retention.
3. **Community and Collaboration** – Opportunities to connect with other CBOs, share resources, and engage in decision-making conversations.
4. **Wellness and Staff Well-Being** – Additional funding to hire new staff and improve processes has improved staff workload and enabled better work-life balance.

### Survey respondents said the following related the ways that OHA trainings and support have strengthened their culture capacity:

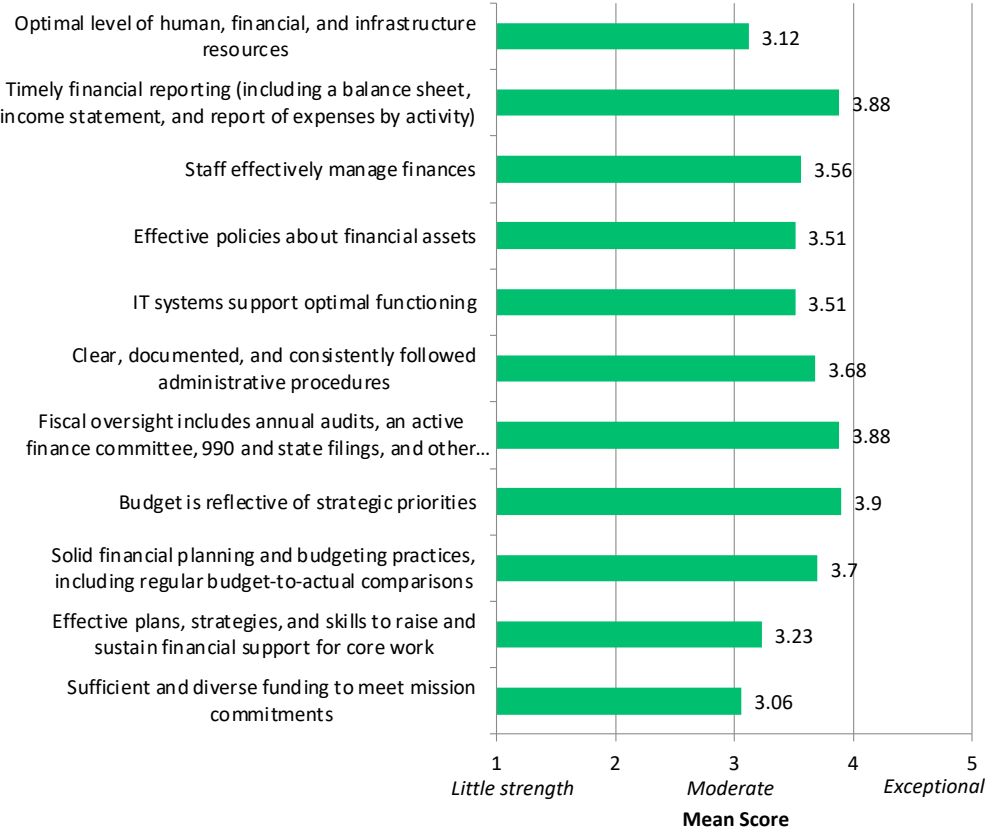
“Through this work our staff get to develop skills and practice them in community.”

“Middle management and new administrative staff have benefited from the training and support provided through OHA by empowering them to grow as leaders and take part of the success of the organization.”

“With limited funding, we always appreciate free trainings from our funders or partners. We also appreciate events and gatherings hosted by OHA and other partners. It allows us to feel connected and part of the community. It also allows us to stay up to date with resources for our community and learn about new programs/funding that is available.”

“Funding has supported us hiring adequate staff to devote time, resources to developing policy and culture.”

# FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CAPACITY



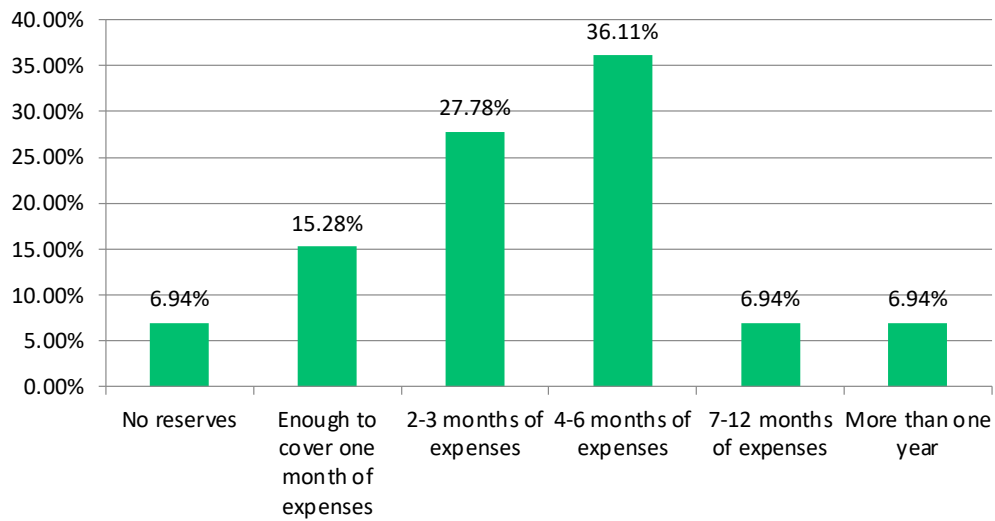
## Strengths

Overall, the respondent CBOs show relative strength in financial and operational capacity. The highest rated areas of operations have a budget that is reflective of strategic priorities, strong fiscal oversight, and timely financial reporting. Respondents also report having moderate strength in their financial planning and budgeting practices, including regular budget-to-actual comparisons. In addition, the area of clarity about administrative procedures is demonstrated as an area of moderate strength for nonprofits, as is staff’s ability to effectively manage finances. Organizations also report having relatively effective policies about financial assets and IT systems that support optimal functioning.

## Opportunities

The area of greatest potential for improvement is having sufficient and diverse funding to meet mission commitments. Areas related to having the right level of human, financial, and infrastructure resources to fit the scale and scope of their commitments and having effective plans, strategies, and skills to raise and sustain financial support for core work closely followed as opportunities for improvement, while still remaining moderately strong areas.

## Unrestricted Cash in Reserve



Of the nonprofits in this study, only 14% reported having more than 6 months of unrestricted cash in reserve. Half of the responding CBOs had less than three months or no reserves at all. At 36%, the largest percentage of respondents reported having 4-6 months of cash in reserve. Reserves are a key indicator of financial stability for a nonprofit with best practices being at least 3-4 months of reserves at a minimum.



## Greatest Barriers for Financial and Operational Capacity

The following were described as the greatest barriers for financial and operational capacity:

1. **Funding and Financial Resources** – Insufficient funding for operations, limited budget for administrative costs, and challenges in securing unrestricted funding.
2. **Staffing and Human Resources** – Lack of sufficient staff, need for specialized roles (e.g. HR, finance), and challenges in hiring and retaining qualified personnel.
3. **Sustainability and Long-Term Planning** – Uncertainty around the stability of federal programs or funding sources. Reliance on restricted or short-term grants, making long-term program planning difficult.
4. **Expertise and Skills Gap** – Lack of specialized knowledge or skills in areas such as finance and HR.
5. **Grant and Financial Management Complexity** – Difficulty in managing multiple funding sources with varying requirements, especially with inexperienced staff.

### Respondents reported the following financial and operational capacity barriers:

“Inconsistent program requirements for budgets: Various indirect rates, different rules about what allowable direct costs can be included, some that will allow facilities, some that won't, and the losses we take on those differences in order to comply with our federal diminimus rules. Also lack of clear information from OHA about what is appropriate compensation, leaving small organizations in a position they aren't sure it's appropriate to offer livable wages and benefits for compensation, so they could be selling themselves short when they propose their budgets.”

“We have diverse funding sources but grants are typically only one year in duration. We struggle to apply for new grants every year to stay funded at the same capacity, especially while we grown and hire more staff. We are in need of more multi year grant opportunities.”

“Paradoxical barrier: We need more funding to enhance the financial and operational staff capacity, but we need more staff capacity to seek and maintain the needed level of funding for financial and operational capacity.”

## Impact of OHA Trainings and Support on Financial and Operational Capacity

Most survey respondents reported that their financial and operational capacity was strengthened through trainings and support provided through OHA. Particularly, they emphasized the following areas of greatest impact:

1. **Training and Technical Assistance** – OHA trainings and OHA external partner trainings have helped staff grow their knowledge, particularly around financial management, reporting, and grant processes.
2. **Grant Support and Funding** – OHA's grant funding has been critical for organizational growth, for some, and sustaining operations, especially during COVID-19 and for maintaining core services.
3. **Operational Improvements** – Several organizations have improved internal finance systems through OHA's guidance.
4. **Staff Development** – OHA's trainings have helped staff build essential skills and equipped them with foundational knowledge and tools to do their work successfully.

### Survey respondents said the following related the ways that OHA trainings and support have strengthened their financial and operational capacity:

"OHA has provided technical assistance to our finance team so that we can meet the many, varied reporting requirements across our OHA contracts"

"Lesley Bennett has been instrumental in helping through one on one's as we embarked on our first federal audit, and now we have successfully passed 2 audits with no findings and are already started on our 3rd."

"OHA has helped provide support that may include tools, resources, or workshops to streamline internal processes such as financial reporting system, budgeting, and forecasting. This also includes navigating grant application processes, reporting requirements, and compliance measures to help secure more funding and to manage them effectively."

When survey participants were asked in an open-ended question: "What kinds of capacity building would be most helpful to your organization?" The answers were extremely varied; however several themes arose including:

- Sustained low barrier funding support to do more program work, hire staff or pay higher salaries, and better support back-office functions.
- Evaluation and data collection.
- HR support, internal culture work, and conflict mitigation.
- Continued fiscal management support.



**When survey participants were asked in an open-ended question: “Is there anything else about the OHA technical compliance support program that you would like us to know?” participants indicated several additional needs which were factored into the above list. Additionally, survey respondents said the following:**

“We appreciate OHA's commitment to stabilizing nonprofits and CBOs.”

“We appreciate this survey to allow OHA partners like us, to provide feedback. Thank you to OHA for all your support!”

“(Our CBO) has opened 2 shelters with 211 bed capacity, expansion of our food bank, a vehicle for transporting the food donations, clothing closet, transitional shelter, partnership with OHCS to build 180 unit affordable housing adjacent to our parking lot, ALL as a result of ... Dolly England's support. And the list goes on...! Thank you, OHA.”

“OHA technical compliance was very helpful at the beginning of the COVID and VOTE funding.”

“It was a nice surprise that you were offering it to us--we haven't seen this before in other grants. Keep it up!”

“You all are fantastic. It would be great for other parts of OHA to better learn to operate outside of white supremacy structure. We still experience a lot of judgement because we don't do things the academic public health way, yet we are effective. Urgency is a constant part of our contracts that is not necessary.”

“Prior to our first OHA grant in 2020, we had not received any government funding. In fact, we hadn't received a lot of funding in general and were operating on a shoestring budget. We struggled with capacity and burnout a lot. Receiving COVID response funding allowed us to rebuild our programming to meet needs in our community that desperately needed to be met. We learned a lot through FYI and Fiscal Fridays, conversations with our Q-munity Engagement Coordinator (Christine), and meeting with Lesley Bennett on how to administer a government grant and how to build more functional reporting systems. We also received the financial resources we needed to move beyond surviving on chicken legs and into a thriving community organization. We don't struggle as much with burnout anymore because we have enough funding in our budget to provide health and wellness benefits to our staff and put policies into place that support their wellbeing on a day-to-day basis including paid self-care time. Our budget has grown from \$150k to \$1.8 million in the last 5 years. A lot of that growth has come from our partnership with Dolly and her team and the empathy, care, robust support systems, and technical assistance they provided. We have grown from 2 staff to 11 and even received a contract from Multnomah County last year. Our growth has been immense ever since we started working with the community engagement department and I don't even know how to express all of the gratitude I have for that.”



## CONCLUSION

The 2024 OHA Public Health Equity Grant survey reveals a group of partners that are resilient, mission-driven, and deeply committed to serving communities across Oregon. While nonprofits demonstrate remarkable strengths in areas such as mission focus, cultural cohesion, and strategic adaptability, they also face significant challenges in resource development, evaluation practices, and leadership development and succession. These findings underscore the continued, critical need for targeted capacity-building efforts. Moving forward, we suggest OHA take these five specific actions:

1. **Strengthen Funding Diversity** – Provide funding and training for robust impact measurement. Facilitate sharing of best practices in evaluation across the sector Enhance Evaluation Practices.
2. **Invest in Leadership and Professional Development Programs** – Support succession planning initiatives across the sector Develop Leadership Pipelines.
3. **Support Early-Stage and Under-Resourced Organizations** – These small, but mighty organizations can add significantly to OHA core work and reach to otherwise marginalized communities.
4. **Learn from Culturally Specific Community-Based Organizations** – The expertise in community engagement of culturally specific community-based organizations amplifies OHA’s work and community acceptance.
5. **Benefit from Capacity-Building Offerings** – Through NAO and the work that OHA has invested in, CBOs that are more involved, demonstrate higher levels of capacity, and meet OHA’s compliance needs more easily.

By taking these steps, OHA will invest in the vibrancy, health, and prosperity of their Community Based Organization partners. That investment will foster a stronger, more resilient community ecosystem that can meet the evolving needs of Oregon for years to come.

# APPENDIX I

## Respondents by Locations

The respondents represent 49 zip codes across the state.

