

Excerpt
Grantee Perception Report®
prepared for
Blue Shield of California Foundation
Fall 2008

VERSION 02/11/2009



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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 broadly useful – forming the basis of research reports such as *Listening to Grantees: What Nonprofits Value in Their Foundation Funders* (2004), *Foundation Communications: The Grantee Perspective* (2006), and *In Search of Impact: Practices and Perceptions in Foundations' Provision of Program and Operating Grants to Nonprofits* (2006) – and to provide individual philanthropic funders with Grantee Perception Reports.

- ♦ **The Grantee Perception Report® (GPR) shows an individual philanthropic funder its grantee perceptions relative to a set of perceptions of other funders whose grantees were surveyed by CEP.**
 - Overall, assessing funder performance is challenging and a range of data sources is required. The GPR provides one set of perspectives that can be particularly useful in understanding philanthropic funder performance
 - It is important to note that, on most questions, grantee ratings cluster toward the high end of an absolute scale.
 - Grantee perceptions must be interpreted in light of the unique strategy of the funder.
 - The survey covers many areas in which grantees' 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. For example, a funder that does not focus efforts on public policy would likely receive lower than average ratings in this area if it is adhering to its strategy.
 - Finally, across most measures in this report, structural characteristics – such as funder type, asset size, focus, and age – are not strong predictors of grantee perceptions, suggesting that it is possible for all funders to attain high ratings from grantees.

Methodology (1)

- ◆ The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) has surveyed over 60,000 grantees of 231 philanthropic funders since spring 2003. Please see the Appendix for a list of all funders.
- ◆ This Grantee Perception Report® (GPR) contains data collected over the last three years, and includes over 20,000 grantee responses about 114 philanthropic funders.¹ Unless otherwise noted, all comparisons are made between the Foundation and CEP’s current data set of 114 funders.
 - CEP surveyed 454 fiscal year 2007 grantees of the Blue Shield of California Foundation (“BSCF”) during September and October 2008. CEP received 326 completed responses, a 72 percent response rate.
 - CEP surveyed 403 fiscal year 2005 grantees of BSCF from February – April 2006. CEP received 297 completed responses, a 74 percent response rate. Whenever possible, these grantees’ responses are shown.
 - The average and/or median rating for these respondents is shown throughout this report.
 - Grantees submitted responses via mail and the Web.²
- ◆ BSCF provided grantee contact information.
- ◆ Selected grantee comments are shown throughout this report. This selection of comments highlights major themes and reflects trends in the data. These selected comments over-represent negative comments about the Foundation in order to offer a wide range of perspectives.

Methodology (2)

- ◆ BSCF is also compared to a cohort of health focused funders chosen by the Foundation to represent its peers. The 13 funders that comprise this group are:
 - Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation
 - Blue Shield of California Foundation
 - Colorado Trust
 - Community Memorial Foundation
 - Connecticut Health Foundation, Inc.
 - Endowment for Health
 - MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation
 - Missouri Foundation for Health
 - New York State Health Foundation
 - Northwest Health Foundation
 - Saint Luke's Foundation of Cleveland, Ohio
 - The Colorado Health Foundation
 - The Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont

Key Findings

Blue Shield of California Foundation (“BSCF”) is rated positively by grantees compared to other funders on important measures throughout this grantee survey. In addition, BSCF’s ratings are more positive than they were in 2006 on many measures. Grantees are more satisfied than typical with the Foundation, and they rate the Foundation more positively than typical for its impact on and understanding of the fields in which they operate. Grantees refer to BSCF as, “a bedrock” and “a role model for other foundations.”

For its impact on grantees’ communities and organizations BSCF is rated typically. However, it is rated less positively than typical for its understanding of grantees’ communities and organizations and for its impact on the sustainability of their funded work. A larger than typical proportion of BSCF grantees report using their grant to maintain an existing program or enhance capacity. In responses to open-ended questions grantees request more focus on the sustainability of their work and more funding from the Foundation, especially for community clinics.

On a summary of grantee interactions, BSCF is rated more positively than typical, but on one component of this summary – the responsiveness of BSCF staff – the Foundation is rated similarly to the median. A larger than typical proportion of grantees report interacting with the Foundation yearly or less frequently, and a few grantees comment on confusion regarding “who we are to work with” at BSCF. In addition, interactions come up frequently in the context of the selection and evaluation processes; grantees request more interactions and communications with Foundation staff to help them in these processes.

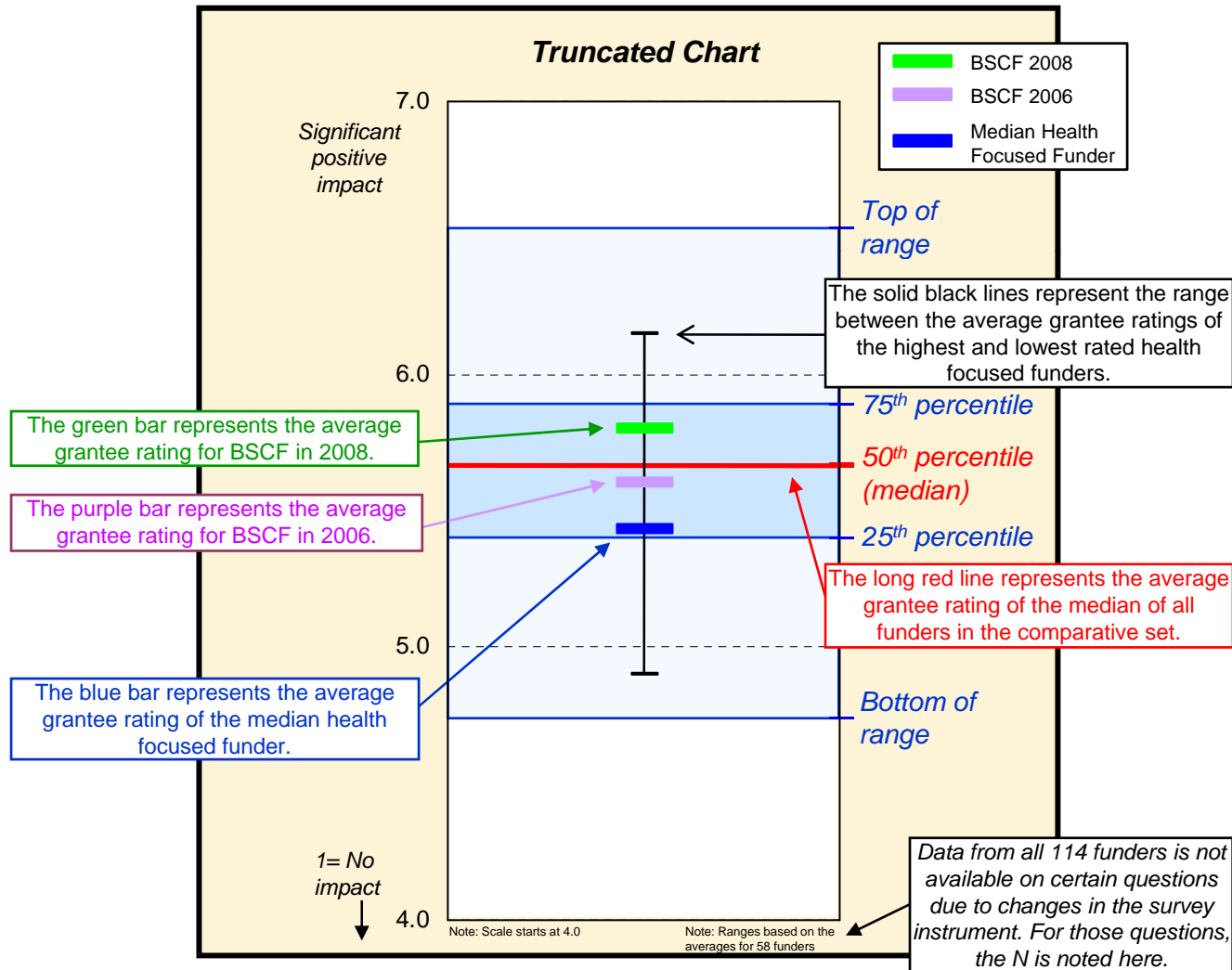
For the clarity with which it communicates its goals and strategy and the consistency of its communications resources, BSCF is rated typically. A smaller than typical proportion of grantees report using the Foundation’s personal communications resources to learn about the Foundation, and a number of grantees comment negatively regarding the Foundation’s website and published funding guidelines, calling them “brief,” “vague,” or “confusing.”

For the helpfulness of its selection and evaluation processes in strengthening grantees, BSCF is rated lower than the median funder. While grantees consider the online processes efficient, they request more help from Foundation staff at the beginning of the selection process and clearer communication in advance regarding the components of the evaluation.

While BSCF’s median grant size – \$40K – is smaller than typical, grantees are spending less time than typical on administrative processes, so at the median the number of dollars awarded per administrative hour spent by BSCF grantees is similar to that of the median funder. BSCF grantees request longer and larger grants – more so than at the typical foundation.

Reading GPR Charts

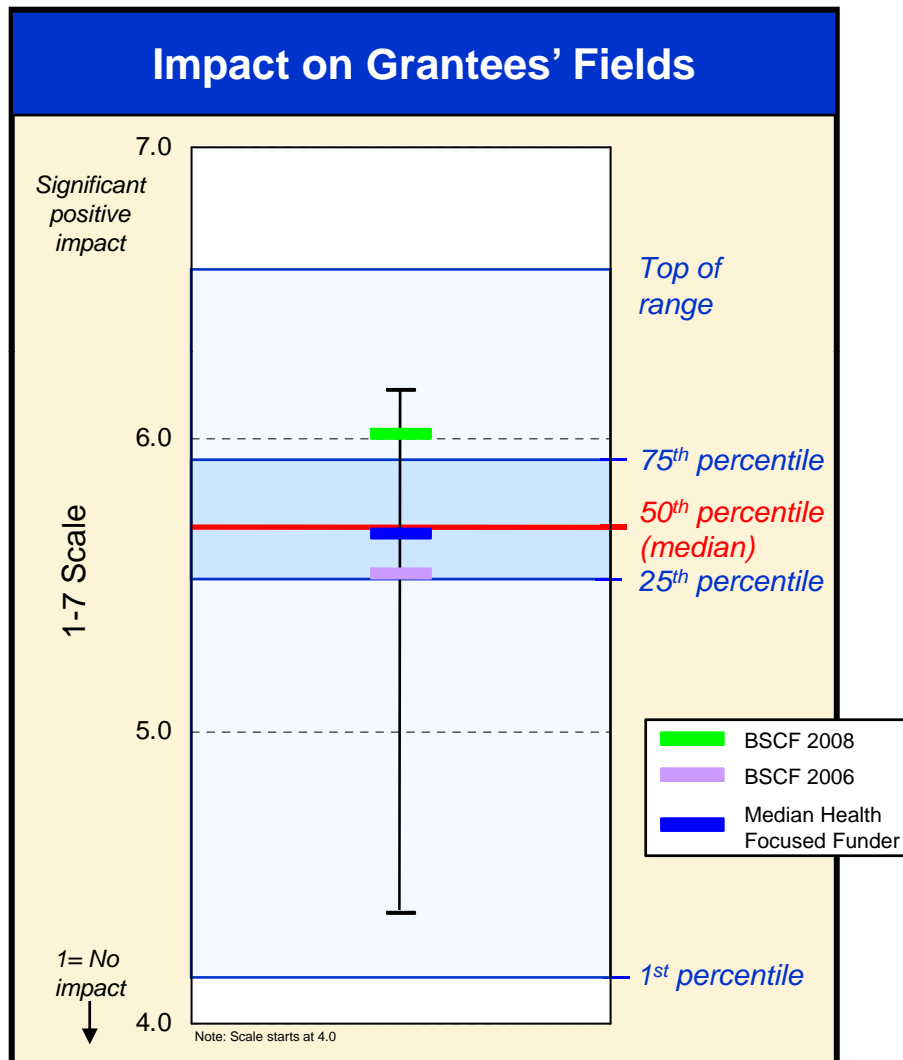
Much of the grantee perception data in the GPR is presented in the format below. These graphs show the average of grantee responses for BSCF, over a background that shows percentiles for the average ratings for the full comparative set of 114 philanthropic funders. **Throughout the report, many charts in this format are truncated from the full scale because funder averages fall within the top half of the absolute range.**



Impact on Grantees' Fields

On impact on grantees' fields, BSCF is rated:

- above the median funder
- above the median health focused funder



Selected Grantee Comments

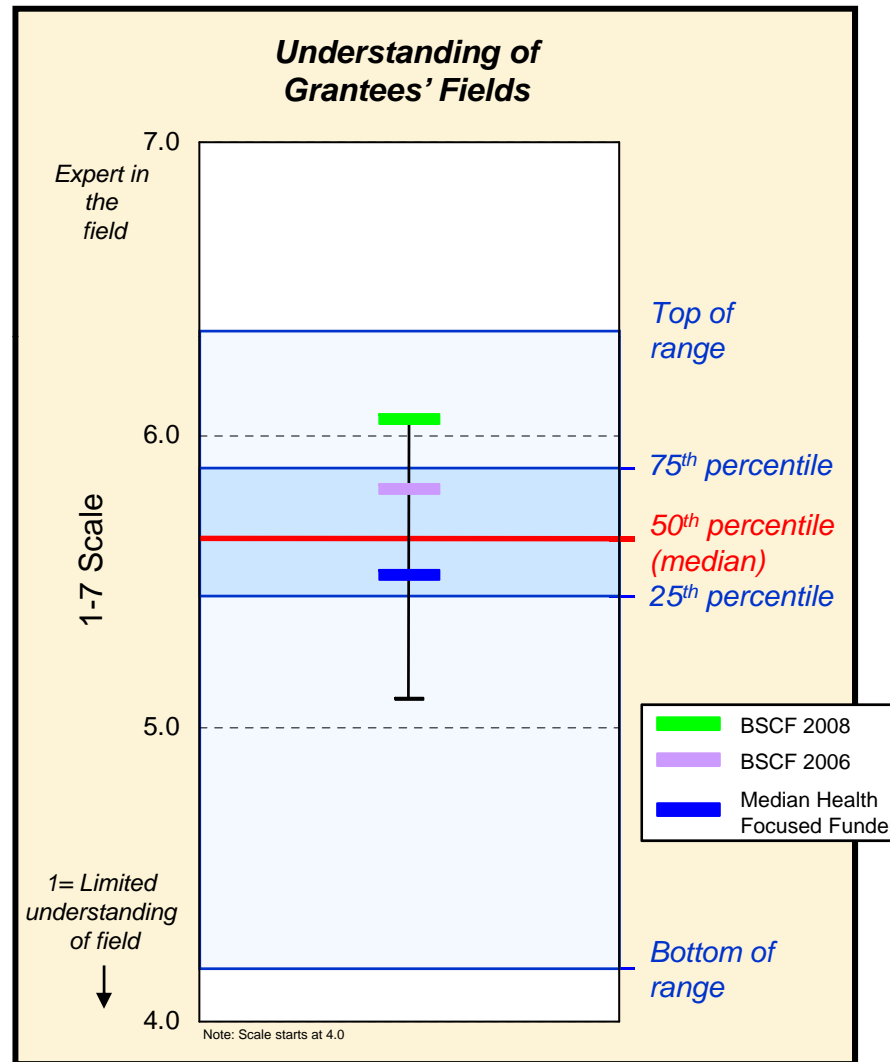
- ♦ *“The foundation has only begun funding work to improve quality and technology-enabled improvements in public hospital systems in recent years. It can have a major impact on efficient and effective health care for safety-net populations if it continues in this direction.”*
- ♦ *“They are the bedrock of domestic violence funding in the state, and their thoughtful philanthropy has a major impact in this area.”*
- ♦ *“Data mining and use of information technology in the infection control field is new and growing. [The] Foundation allowed us to experiment and learn how to best utilize and improve the resources.”*
- ♦ *“They continue to serve as a role model for other foundations to consider emulating particularly as the need for ‘safety net’ community clinics continues to grow in importance in the treatment and care of the growing uninsured patient population.”*

Note: This question includes a “don’t know” response option; 5 percent of BSCF respondents answered “don’t know” in 2008 compared to 8 percent at the median funder, 10 percent of BSCF respondents in 2006, and 8 percent at the median health focused funder. Chart does not show data from one funder whose field impact rating is less than 4.0.

Understanding of Grantees' Fields

On understanding of grantees' fields, BSCF is rated:

- higher than ninety percent of funders
- higher than all other health focused funders



Note: This question includes a "don't know" response option; 7 percent of BSCF respondents answered "don't know" in 2008 compared to 6 percent at the median funder, 12 percent of BSCF respondents in 2006, and 6 percent at the median health focused funder.

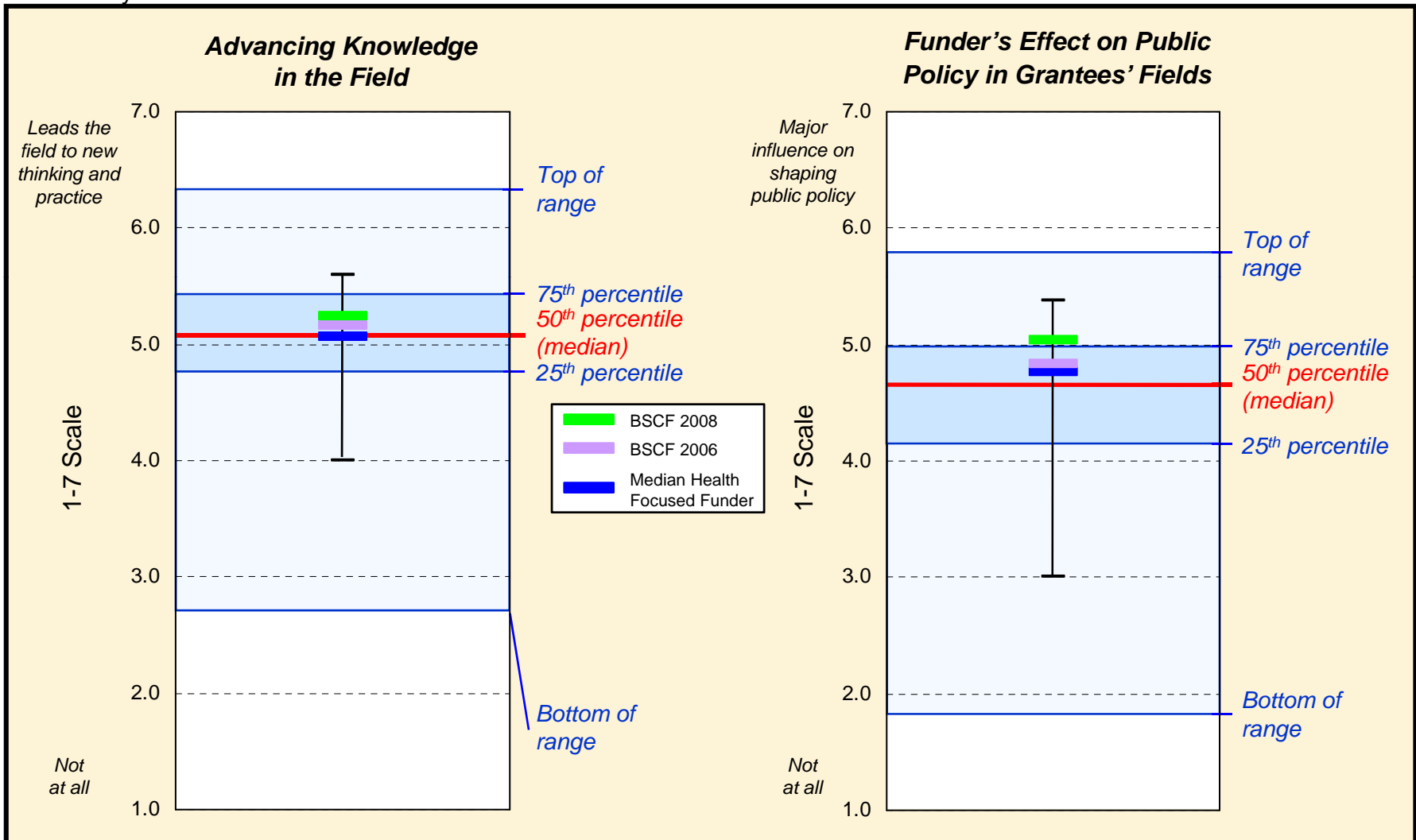
Advancing Knowledge in Fields and Effect on Public Policy

On advancement of knowledge in grantees' fields, BSCF is rated:

- similarly to the median funder
- similarly to the median health focused funder

On effect on public policy in grantees' fields, BSCF is rated:

- above the median funder
- above the median health focused funder

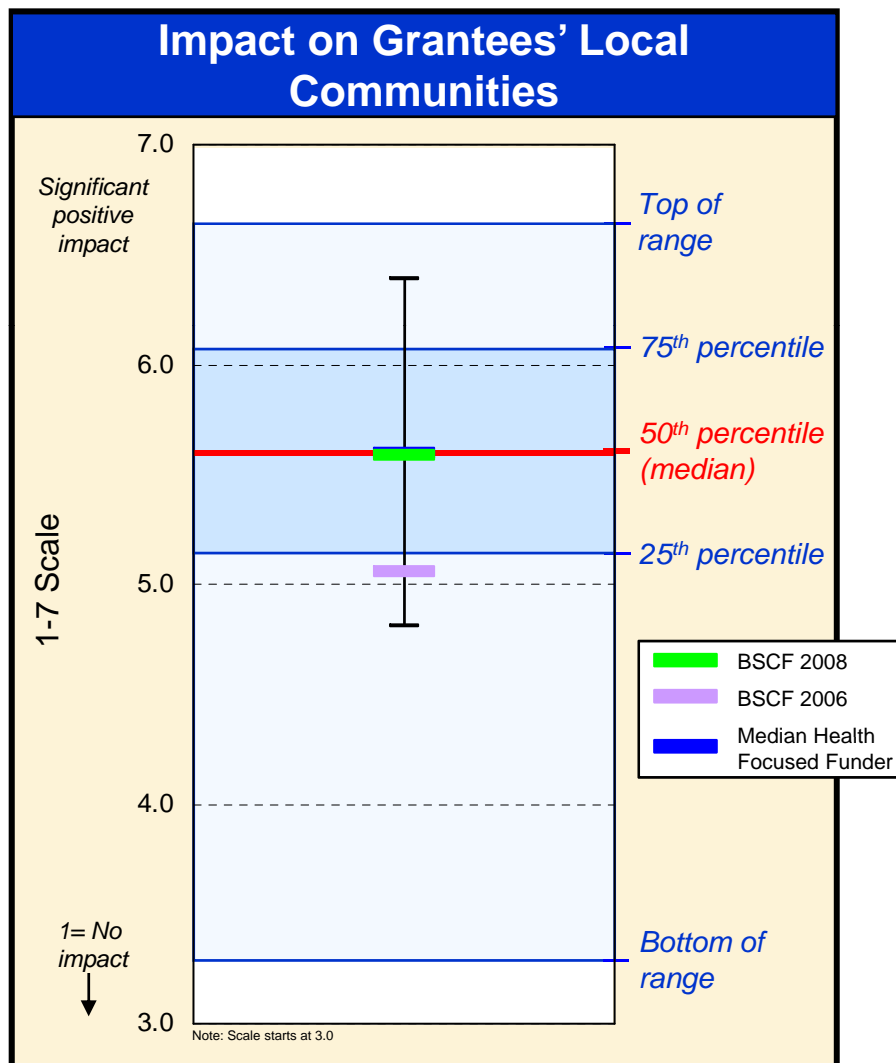


Note: The questions depicted on these charts include a "don't know" response option. In the left-hand chart, 26 percent of BSCF respondents answered "don't know" in 2008 compared to 22 percent at the median funder, 35 percent of BSCF respondents in 2006, and 21 percent at the median health focused funder. In the right-hand chart 40 percent of BSCF respondents answered "don't know" in 2008 compared to 33 percent at the median funder, 51 percent of BSCF respondents in 2006, and 27 percent at the median health focused funder.

Impact on Grantees' Local Communities

On impact on grantees' local communities, BSCF is rated:

- similarly to the median funder
- similarly to the median health focused funder



Selected Grantee Comments

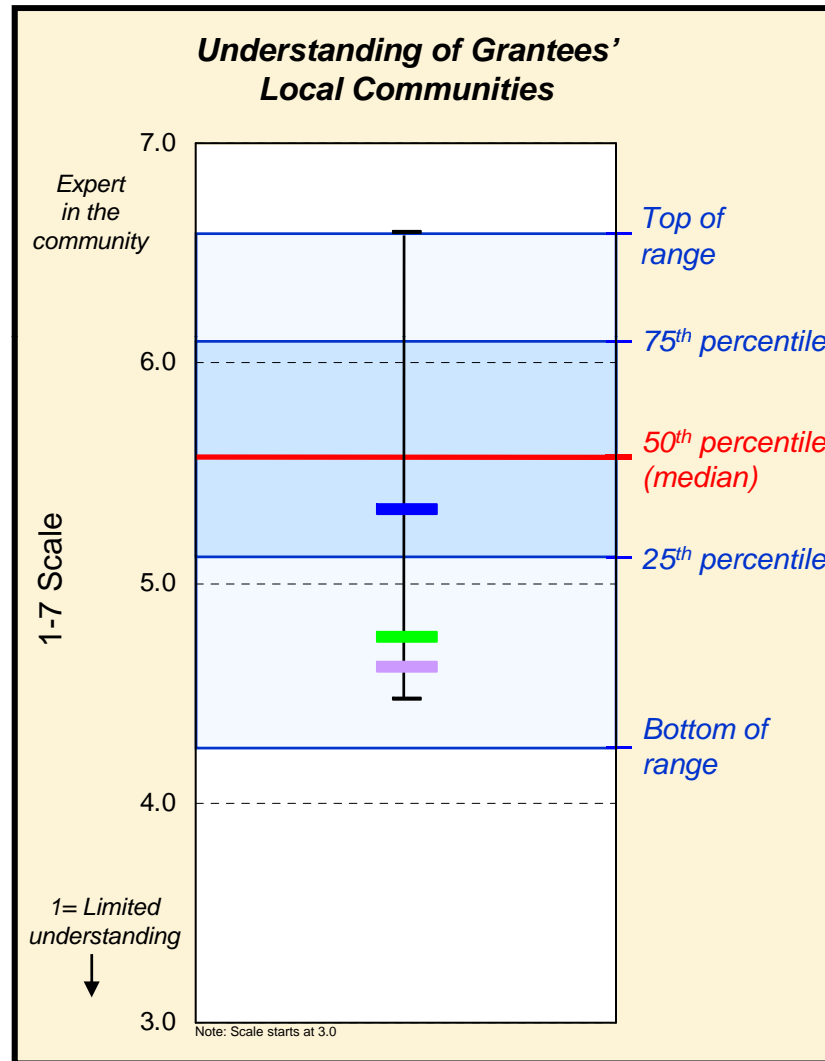
- ♦ *"If you look at the community in a larger context then they have a good understanding however when you look at community from our local stand point I am not sure they know us as well as we would like them to."*
- ♦ *"Blue Shield Foundation staff have actively participated in community town hall meetings and have [been] a physical presence as community members."*
- ♦ *"I don't know what impact the Foundation has had on our community."*
- ♦ *"By providing support for agencies providing medical services for underserved members of our community, the Foundation is helping us to increase the health in our community and decrease unnecessary use of local emergency rooms – thereby allowing emergency rooms to be used for real emergencies instead of routine preventive care."*

Note: This question includes a "don't know" response option; 10 percent of BSCF respondents answered "don't know" in 2008 compared to 11 percent at the median funder, 11 percent of BSCF respondents in 2006, and 8 percent at the median health focused funder.

Understanding of Grantees' Local Communities

On understanding of grantees' local communities, BSCF is rated:

- below the median funder
- below the median health focused funder

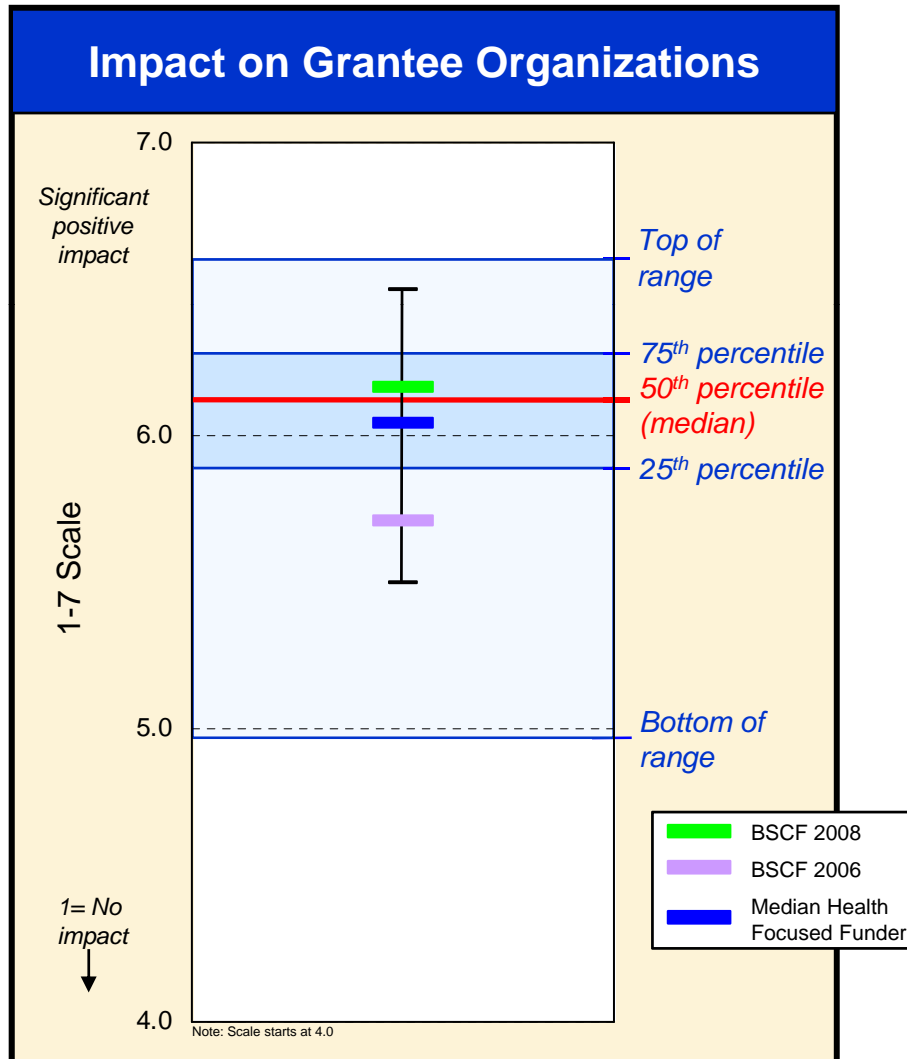


Note: This question includes a "don't know" response option; 22 percent of BSCF respondents answered "don't know" in 2008 compared to 13 percent at the median funder, 29 percent of BSCF respondents in 2006, and 9 percent at the median health focused funder.

Impact on Grantee Organizations

On impact on grantee organizations, BSCF is rated:

- similarly to the median funder
- above the median health focused funder



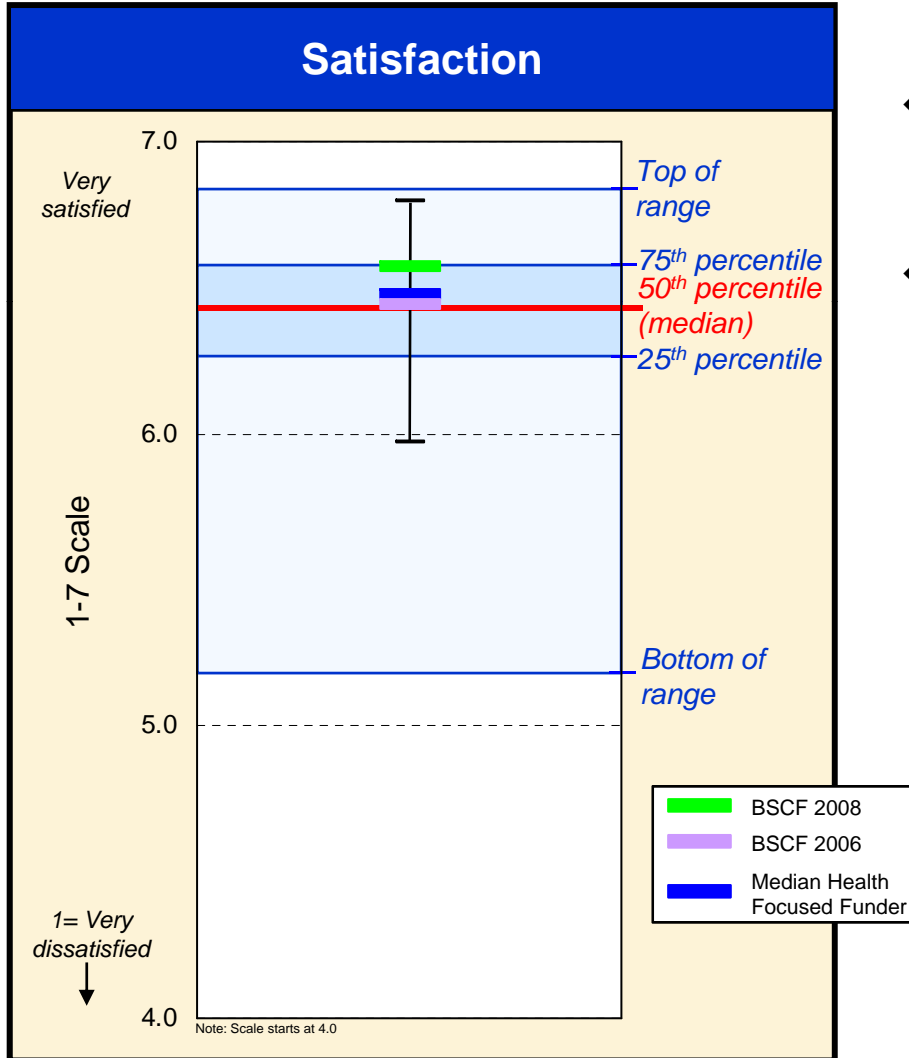
Selected Grantee Comments

- ♦ *“The Foundation understands that in order to serve patients, organizations need general operating/core support funding. And the fact that the Foundation provides grants for general operating/core support is exemplary. This is one of the few foundations that supports this budget area.”*
- ♦ *“Blue Shield Foundation support is critical to our agency’s effectiveness. It is one of a handful of resources that funds the ‘hidden’ problem of domestic violence ... with consistent generosity and successive commitment.”*
- ♦ *“Feedback from the Foundation has not been helpful. We have found Blue Shield Foundation to be the single most patronizing funder.”*
- ♦ *“The Foundation’s grant for our work was vital in that it provided capacity that was not tied to any vested interest and, though project-oriented, offered strategically essential range of motion.”*

Satisfaction

On overall satisfaction, BSCF is rated:

- above the median funder
- above the median health focused funder



Selected Grantee Comments

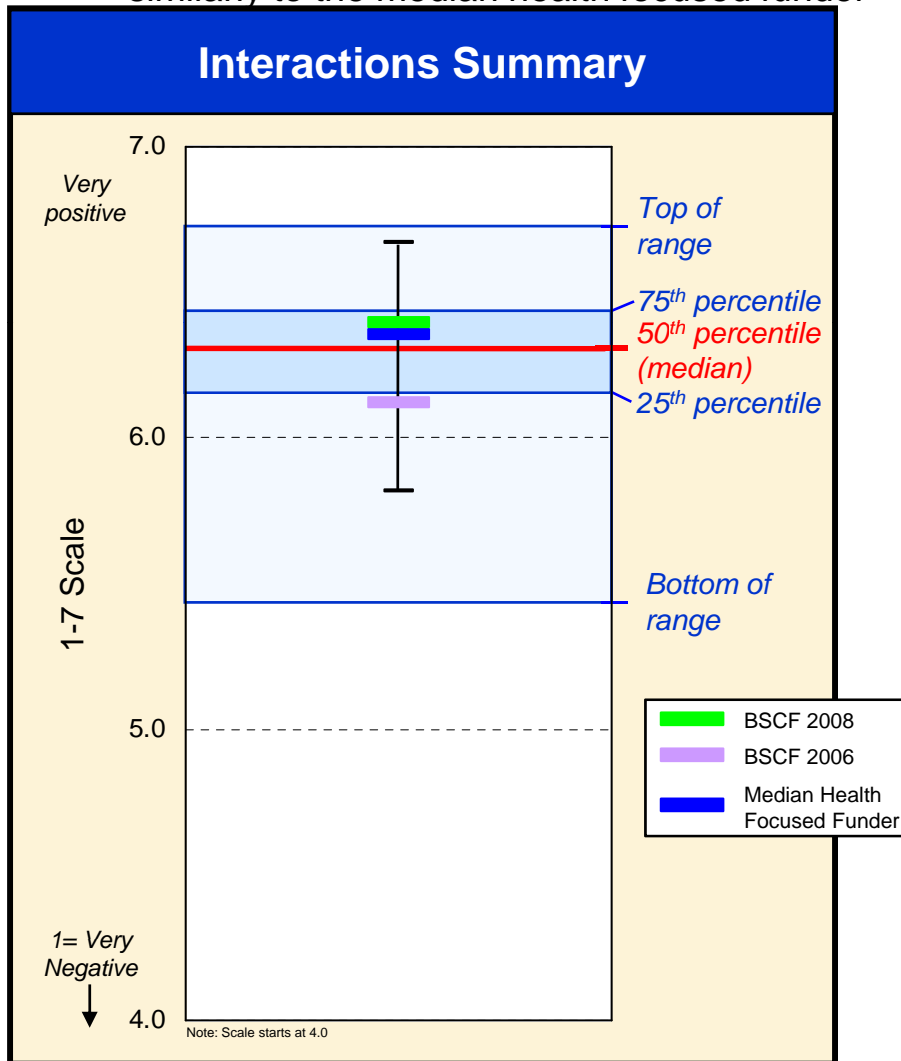
- ◆ “Our organization looks forward to submissions through Blue Shield because their processes are simplified and it is always a pleasure to work with the staff because they are very professional and knowledgeable.”
- ◆ “As a grantee, working with Blue Shield of California Foundation is an overall wonderful experience. The clear and timely communication, the user friendly application and reporting process is both time and cost effective for our agency, and the Foundation staff are always professional and friendly.”

Survey-Wide Analysis Fact: Three dimensions best predict grantee perceptions of satisfaction with their philanthropic funders: 1) *Quality of Interactions with Foundation Staff:* fairness, responsiveness, approachability; 2) *Clarity of Communication of a Foundation’s Goals and Strategy:* clear and consistent articulation of objectives; 3) *Expertise and External Orientation of the Foundation:* understanding of fields and communities of funding and ability to advance knowledge and affect public policy. For more on these findings and resulting management implications, please see CEP’s report, *Listening to Grantees: What Nonprofits Value in Their Foundation Funders.*

Grantee Interactions Summary

On this summary that includes grantees' comfort approaching the Foundation if a problem arises, responsiveness of Foundation staff, and fairness of the Foundation's treatment of grantees BSCF is rated:

- above the median funder
- similarly to the median health focused funder



Selected Grantee Comments

- “Our contact with the Foundation has been very professional. The staff are extremely timely and thorough with their responses. Follow-up by the staff, to ensure that we are completely aware of the process and engaged is especially helpful. This is a model for foundations interested in supporting community based projects.”
- “To date there have been changes in our contact person and it has been a bit confusing as to who we are to work with. [It] takes over a week to hear back from [our] point of contact at [the] main BSCF office.”
- “The Foundation staff accessibility has a positive impact. We feel we are welcomed and listened to when we interact with the Foundation staff. Foundation staff members have come in person to our organization to meet and talk with our staff and staff from our clinics. These presentations/interactions have been extremely helpful in providing understanding and clarity regarding the overall foundation funding field in general and, also, for this Foundation specifically.”

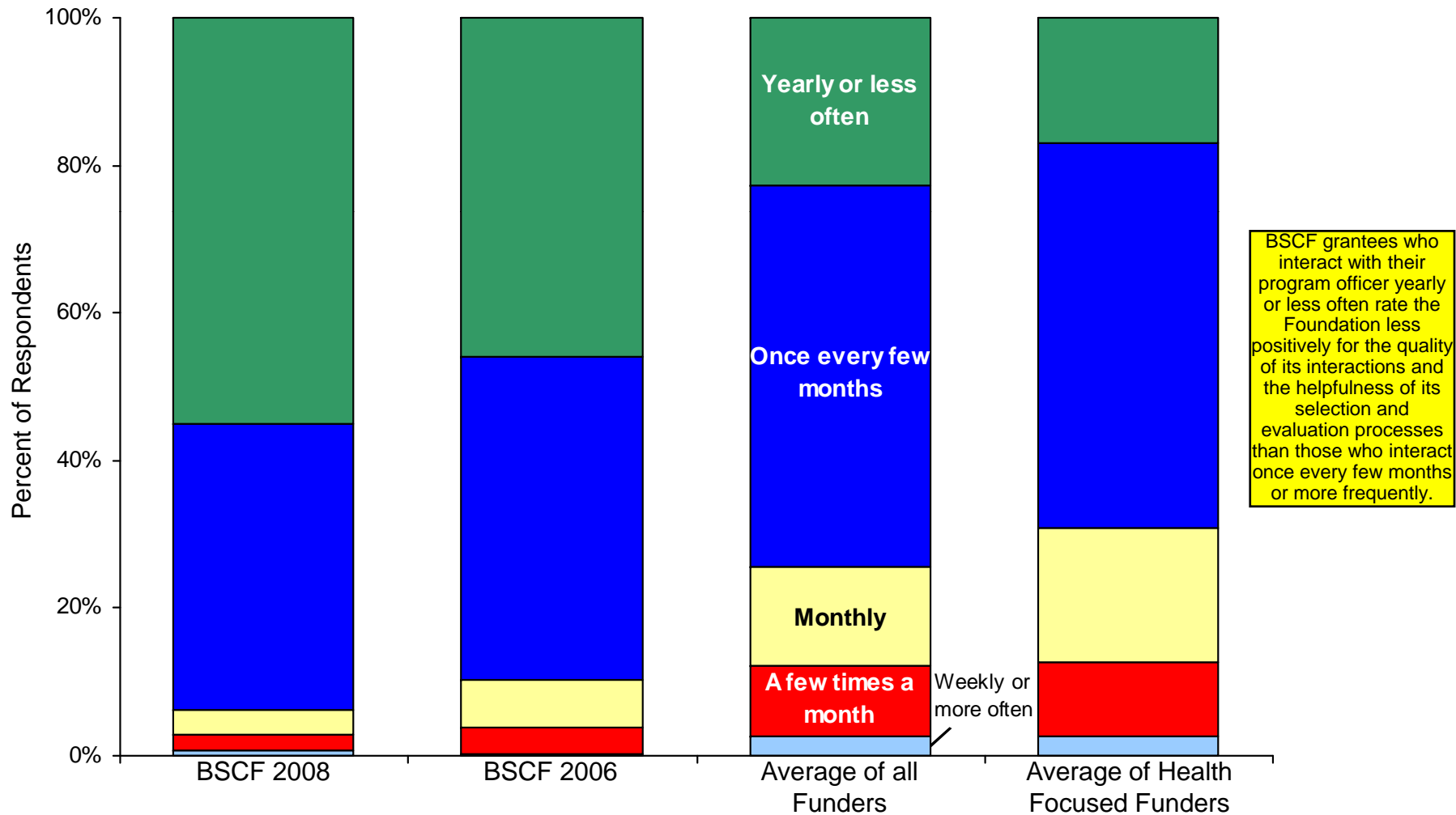
Note: Index created by averaging grantee ratings of comfort approaching the Foundation if a problem arises, responsiveness of the Foundation staff, and fairness of the Foundation's treatment of grantees – ratings that are highly correlated.

Frequency of Interactions

The proportion of BSCF grantees that report interacting with their program officer once every few months or more frequently is:

- smaller than that of the average funder
- smaller than that of the average health focused funder

Frequency of Grantee Contact with Program Officer During Grant

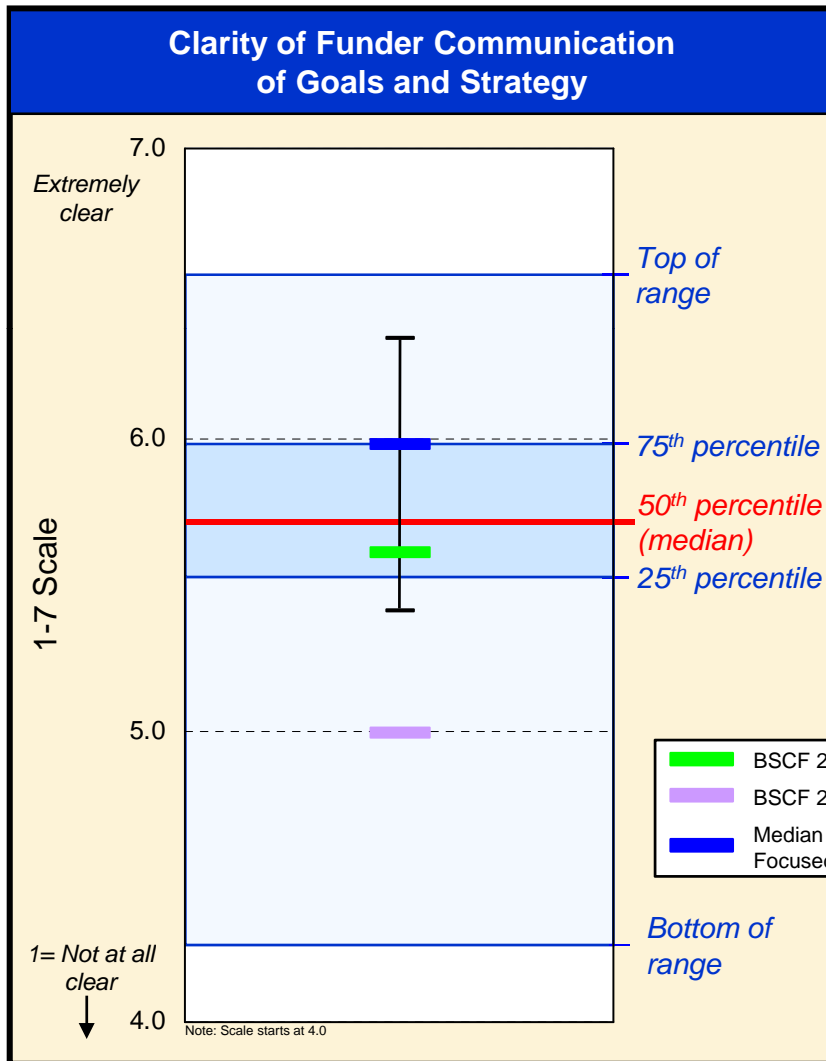


BSCF grantees who interact with their program officer yearly or less often rate the Foundation less positively for the quality of its interactions and the helpfulness of its selection and evaluation processes than those who interact once every few months or more frequently.

Communication of Goals and Strategy

On clarity of the Foundation's communication of its goals and strategy, BSCF is rated:

- similarly to the median funder
- below the median health focused funder



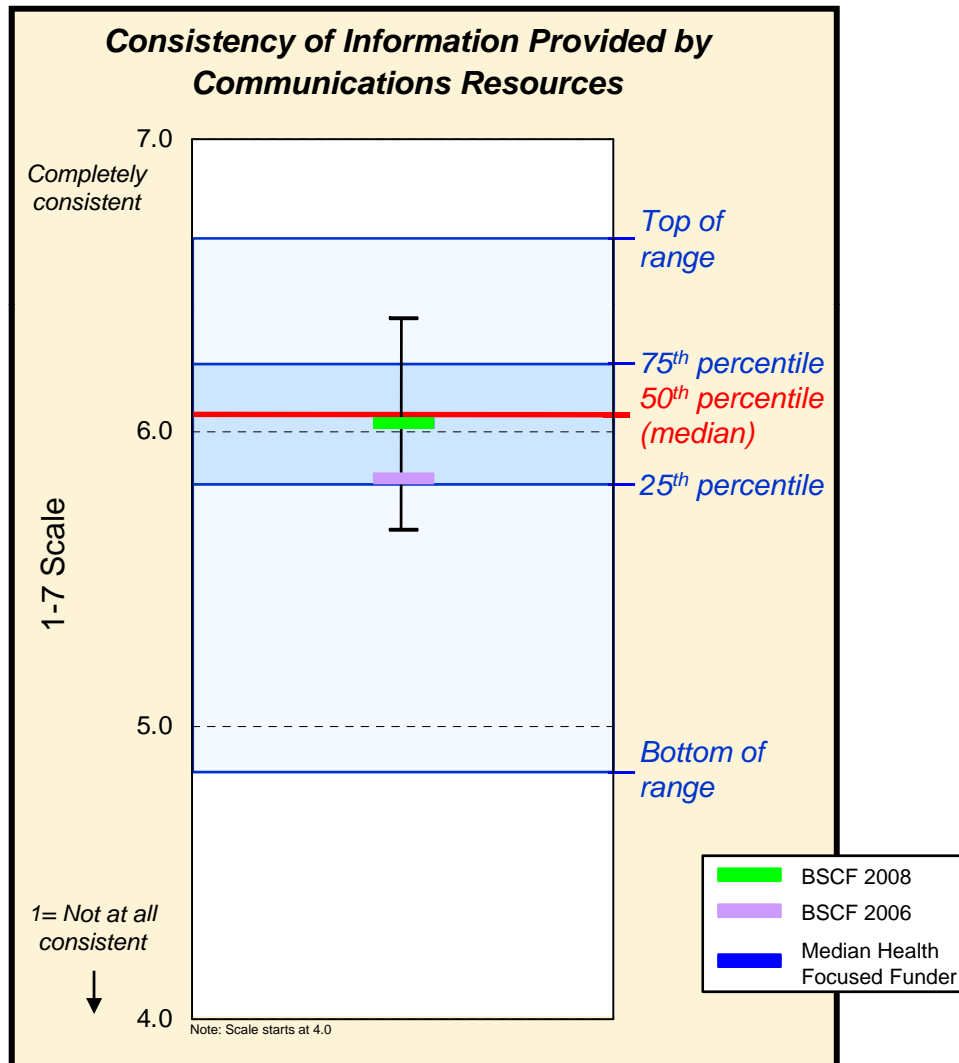
Selected Grantee Comments

- ♦ “Generally, I find the Foundation to be very efficient. Our program officer in particular has been very clear in terms of articulating what is and what is not consistent with Foundation goals.”
- ♦ “I stopped using the BSCF web site because I could never find information about the Community Clinic and Consortium Core Support Initiative that we’re funded under, nor could I find any info on other clinics funded by this initiative. It’s confusing to separate this funding from the other opportunities.”
- ♦ “Blue Shield has profound knowledge of our services (domestic violence) and its importance to community. This expertise and commitment positively affects the Foundation’s communications.”
- ♦ “The Foundation’s website and published funding guidelines were only minimally helpful as the funding guidelines are relatively brief and vague.”

Consistency of Communications

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

- similarly to the median funder
- similarly to the median health focused funder

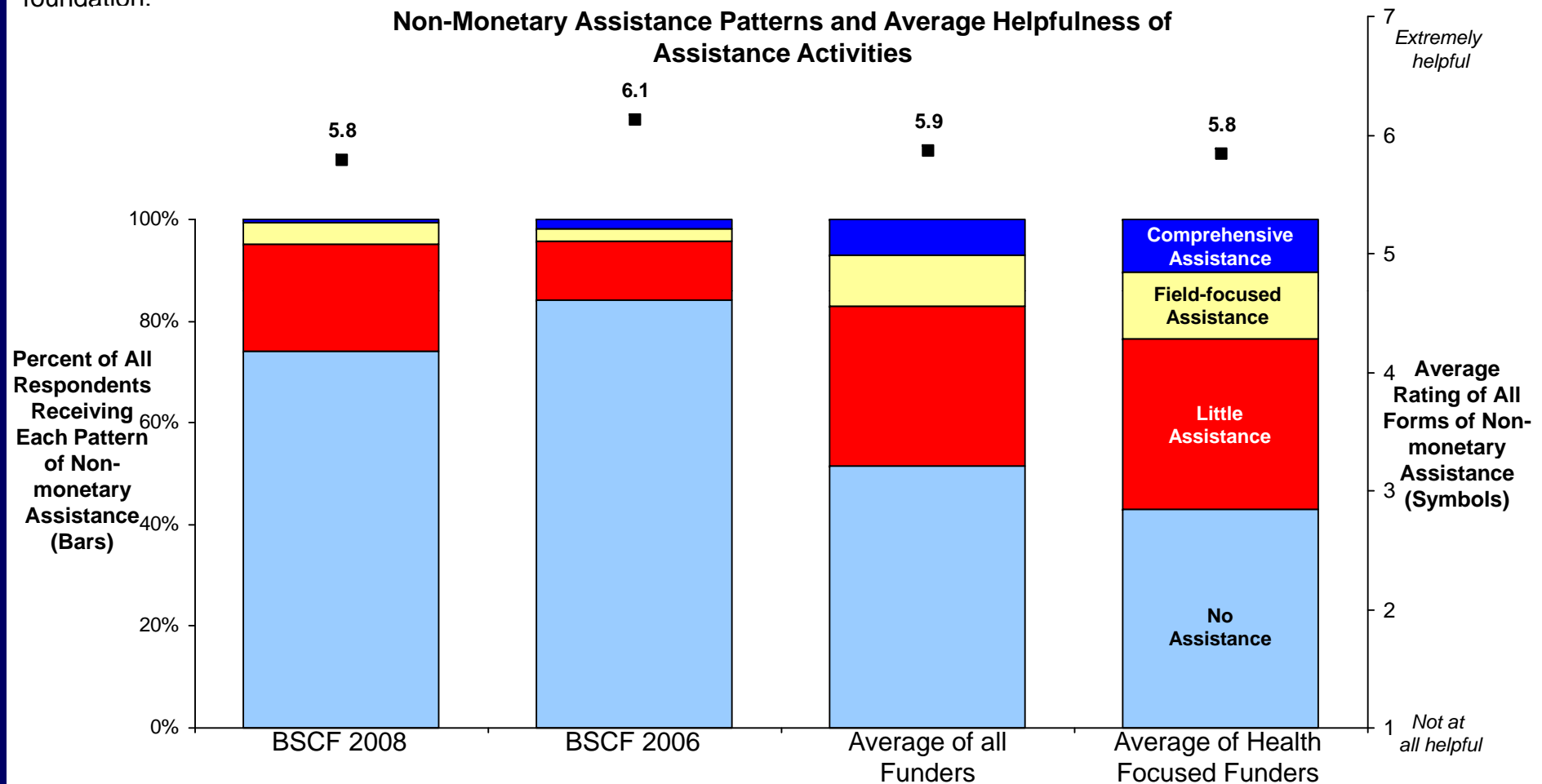


*Survey-Wide Analysis Fact: Consistency of Communications, both personal and written, is the best predictor of grantee ratings of a funder's clarity of communication of its goals and strategy. Other predictors are 1) Quality of Interactions with Foundation Staff: fairness, responsiveness, approachability and 2) The helpfulness of a funder's selection and reporting/evaluation processes in strengthening grantees' programs and/or organizations – key moments that can reinforce or undermine funder messages. For more on these findings, key resources most valued by grantees, and management implications, please see CEP's report, *Foundation Communications: The Grantee Perspective*.*

Non-Monetary Assistance Summary

This chart is an approximation of the findings of CEP's report *More than Money: Making a Difference with Assistance Beyond the Grant Check*, as applied to BSCF.¹ A smaller than typical proportion of BSCF grantees report receiving comprehensive and field-related assistance. On average, BSCF grantees rate the helpfulness of the assistance they receive similarly to that of the median foundation.

Non-Monetary Assistance Patterns and Average Helpfulness of Assistance Activities



Survey-Wide Analysis Fact: Providing just two or three types of assistance appears to be ineffective; it is only in the minority of cases when grantees receive either a comprehensive set of assistance activities or a set of mainly field-focused types of assistance that they have a substantially more positive experience with their foundation funders than grantees receiving no assistance. For more information on these findings, please see CEP's report, *More than Money: Making a Difference with Assistance Beyond the Grant Check*.

VII. Assistance Beyond the Grant Check

¹: The method of classifying grantees into different assistance patterns for the above chart is different from that used in *More than Money*, but the resulting chart data is consistent with results in *More than Money* for all categorizations with the exception of the field pattern: the current classification assigns a slightly higher percentage of grantees to the field pattern.

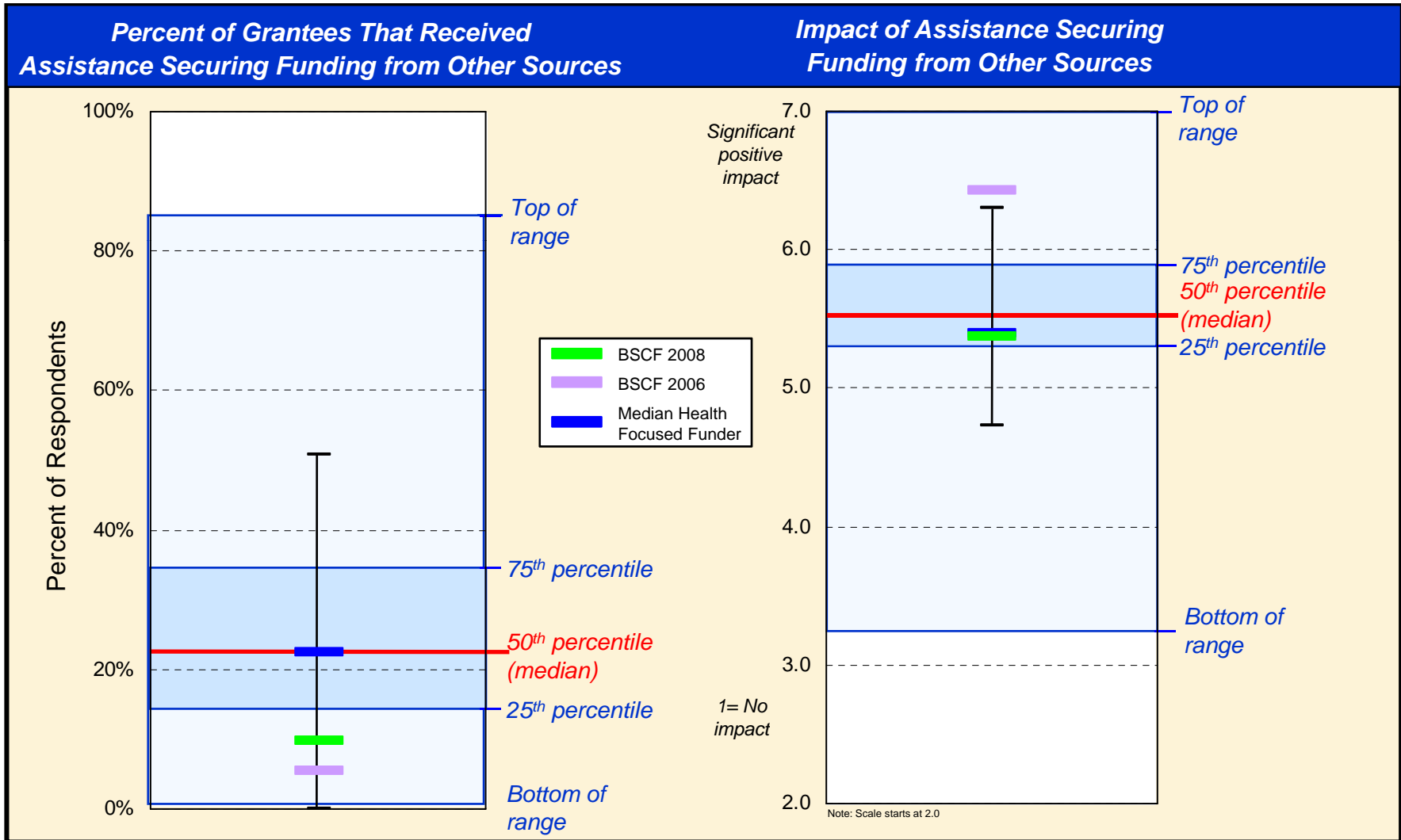
Impact of Assistance Securing Funding from Other Sources

The proportion of BSCF grantees receiving active assistance from the Foundation in securing funding from other sources is:

- smaller than that of ninety percent of funders
- smaller than that of the median health focused funder

On impact of the Foundation's assistance in securing funding from other sources, BSCF is rated:

- below the median funder
- similarly to the median health focused funder

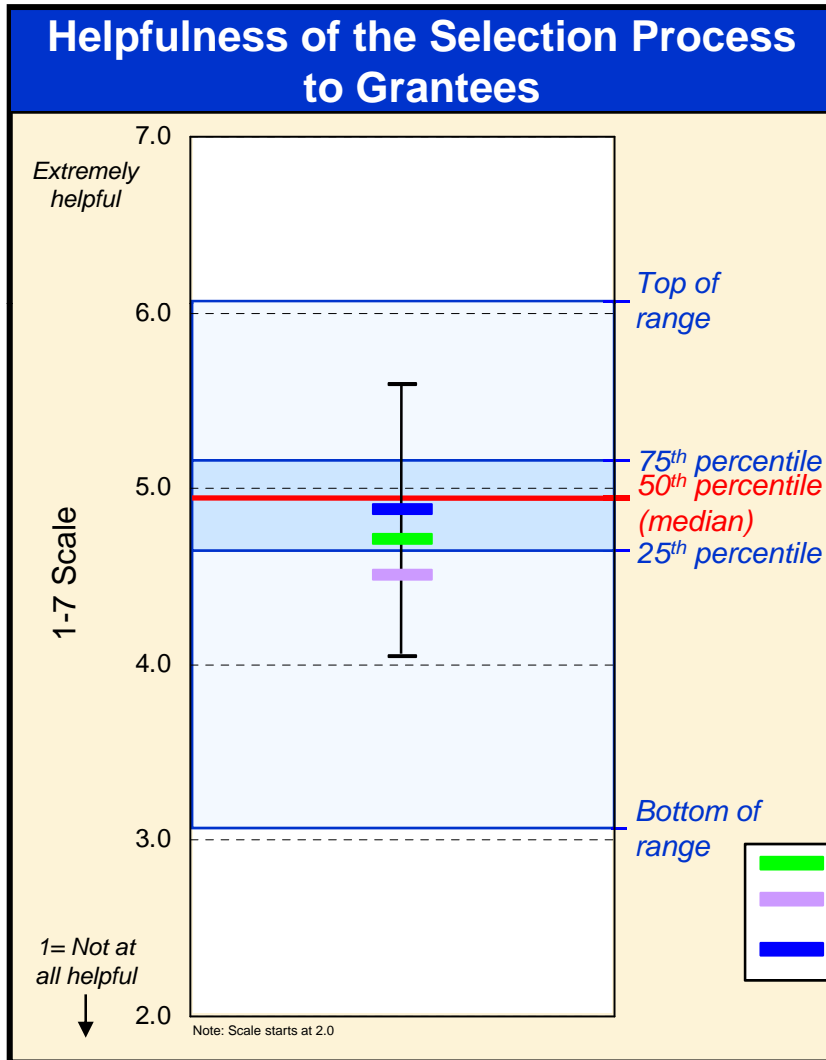


Helpfulness of Selection Process

On helpfulness of the Foundation’s selection process in strengthening the grantee, BSCF is rated:

- below the median funder
- below the median health focused funder

Selected Grantee Comments



- ◆ “There was some confusion about when we were to apply. We ended up preparing and submitting an application for project funding instead of core support. This was in response to an email they sent, so it was a little frustrating.”
- ◆ “The biggest challenge is the process. CyberGrants is a tough system to navigate, so it can be frustrating at times.”
- ◆ “The Foundation’s grant process from beginning to end has obviously been designed to keep things simple ... and I deeply appreciate keeping things simple. Completing applications on-line is great and the Foundation’s on-line process, once learned, is very easy to use.”
- ◆ “The financial [document] request on the grant application online was not clear. It didn’t clear up what fiscal year financial document was needed and whether the Foundation needed the audited or unaudited documents.”

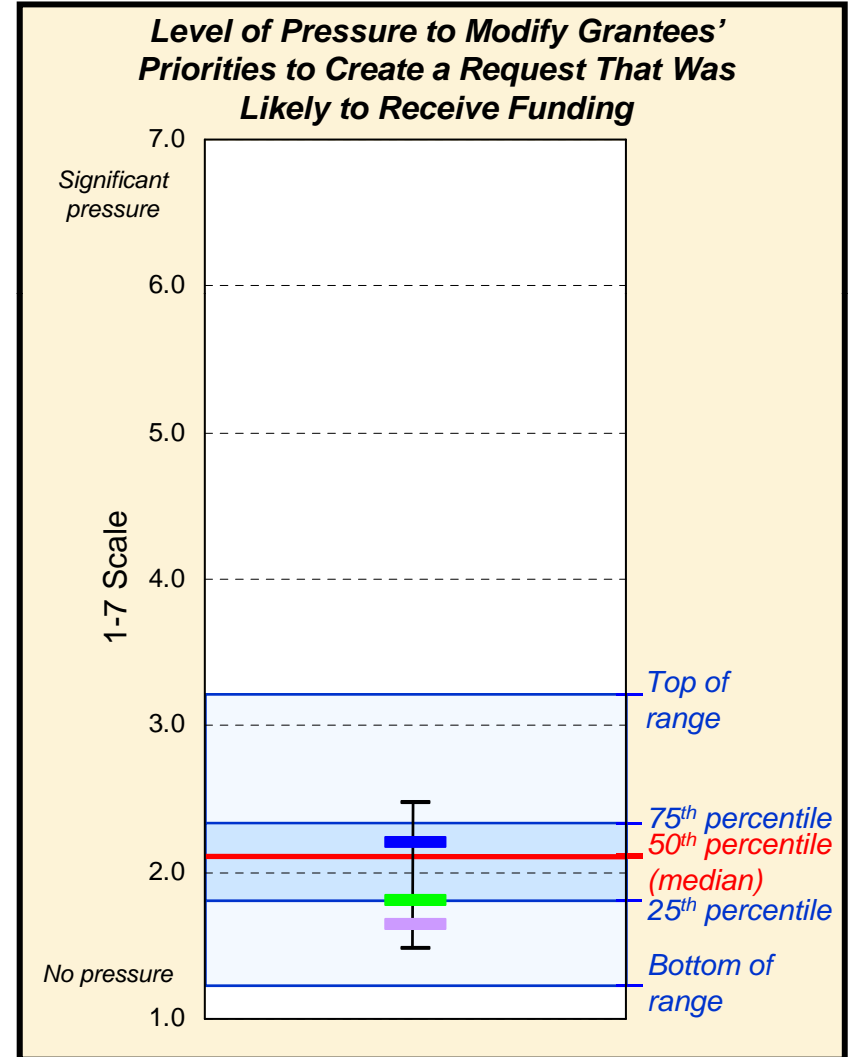
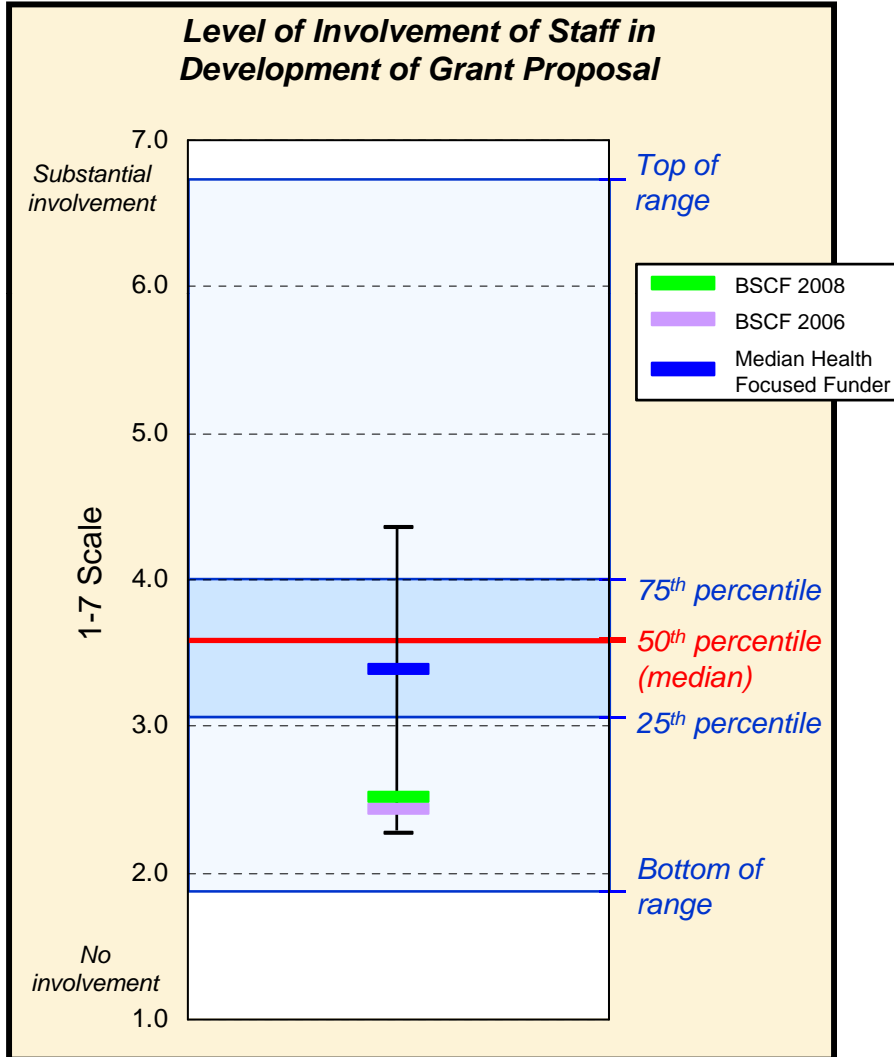
Funder Involvement and Pressure in Selection Process

On the level of involvement in the development of grantees' proposals, BSCF is rated:

- lower than ninety percent of funders whose grantees CEP has surveyed
- below the median health focused funder

On the level of pressure grantees feel to modify their priorities to create a proposal that was likely to receive funding, BSCF is rated:

- below the median funder
- below the median health focused funder

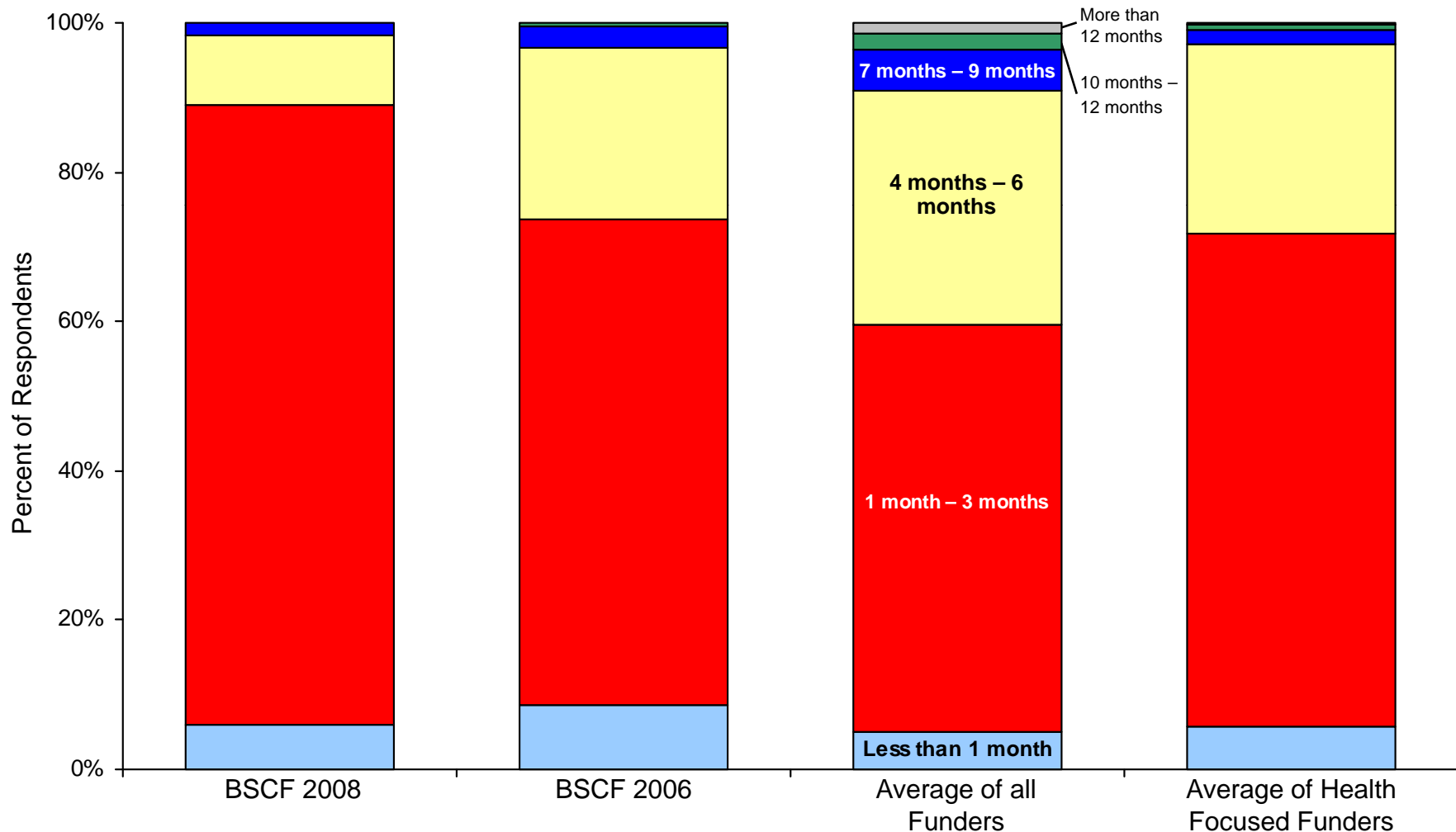


Time Between Submission and Clear Commitment

The proportion of BSCF grantees that report that four months to nine months elapsed between submission of proposal and clear commitment of funding is:

- smaller than that of the average funder
- smaller than that of the average health focused funder

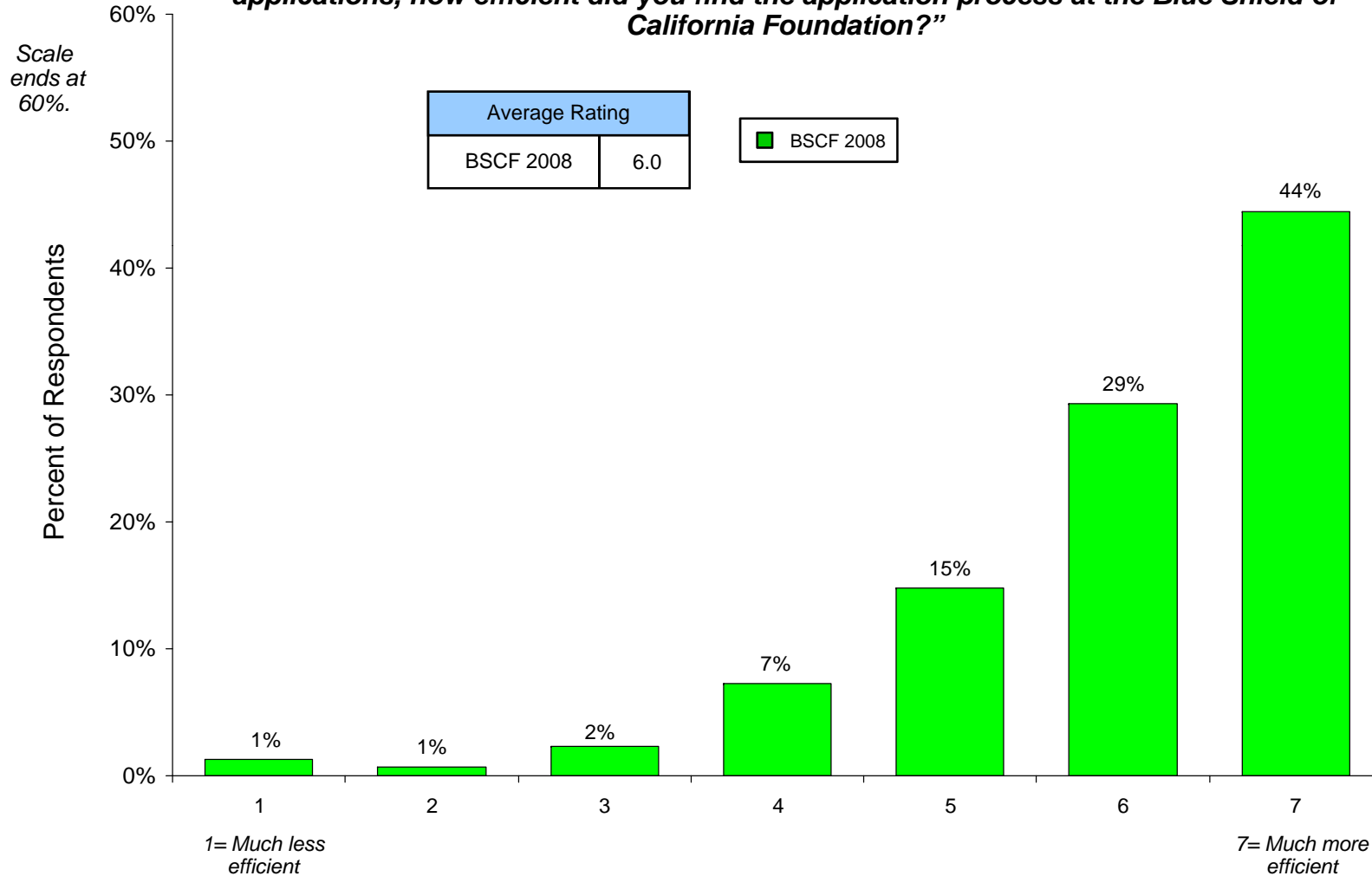
Time Elapsed Between Proposal Submission and Clear Commitment



Efficiency of On-line Selection Process

BSCF grantees were asked to rate how efficient they found the BSCF’s application process, compared to other foundations that *do not* use an on-line system for grant applications. The average overall rating is 6.0, where 1 is “Much less efficient” and 7 is “Much more efficient.”

“Compared to other foundations that do not use an on-line system for grant applications, how efficient did you find the application process at the Blue Shield of California Foundation?”

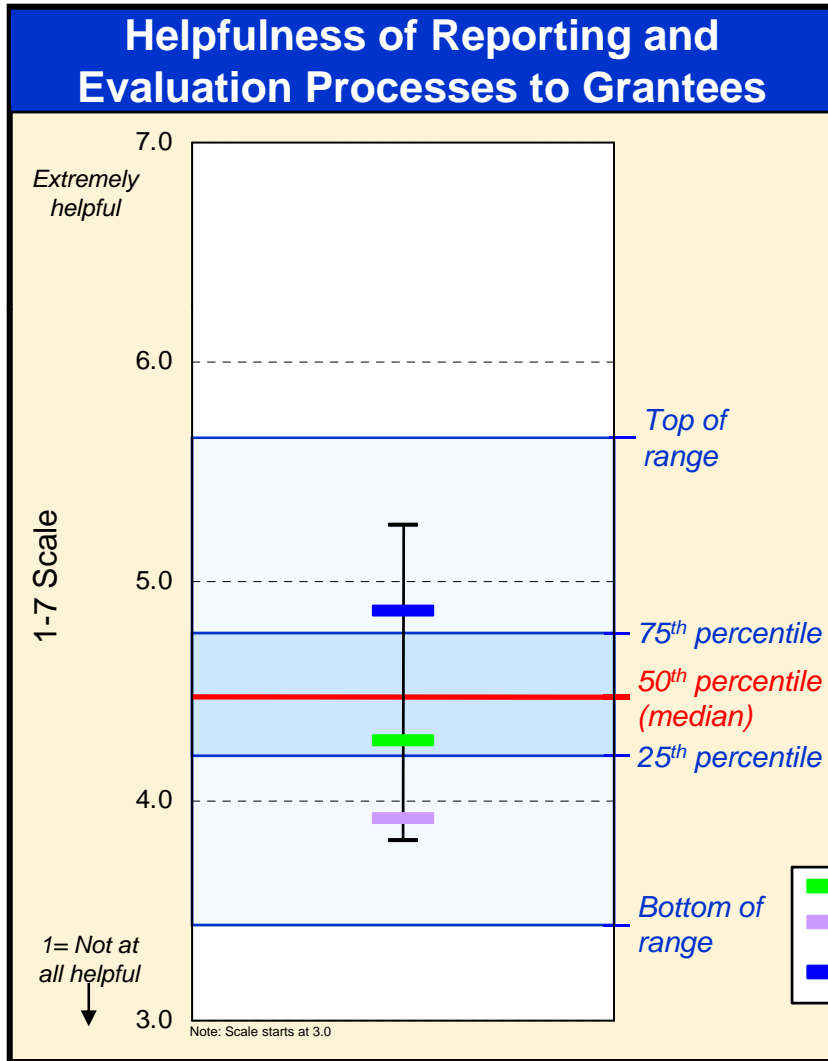


Note: No comparative data is available because this question was only asked of BSCF grantees in 2008. 304 grantees rated the efficiency.

Helpfulness of Reporting and Evaluation Processes

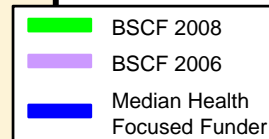
On helpfulness of the Foundation’s reporting/evaluation process in strengthening the grantee, BSCF is rated:

- below the median funder
- below the median health focused funder



Selected Grantee Comments

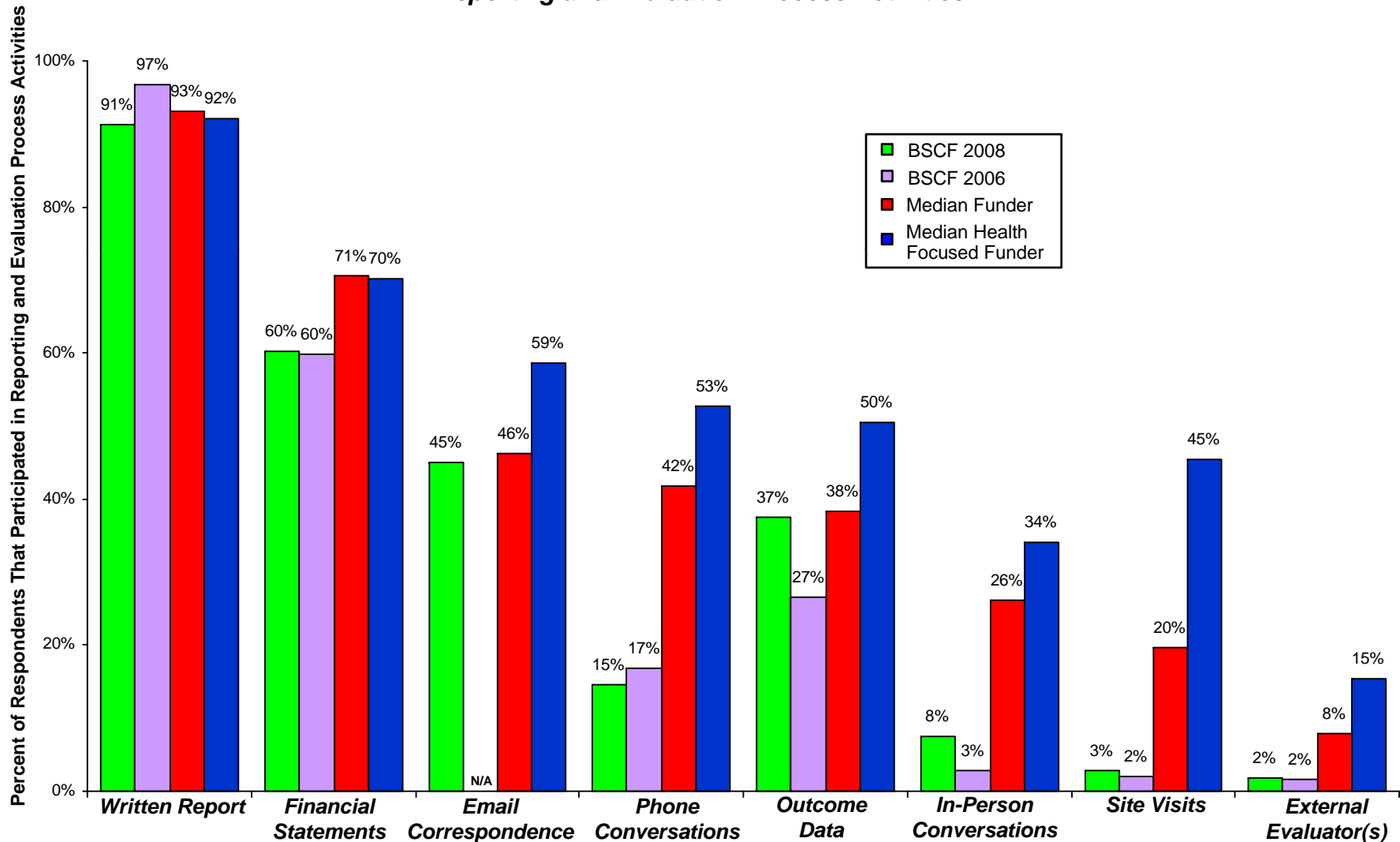
- ♦ “[I] Found the on-line reporting inadequate as there was no space to clarify how we met objectives.”
- ♦ “Objective assessment of our program gave us more confidence in our ability to meet our objectives, pinpointed areas for improvement and showed how we might make parts of our program available to other communities.”
- ♦ “The evaluation process is more specific than what is required in the grant proposal process.”
- ♦ “They come across as not wanting to add more burden than necessary to reporting and evaluation requirements.”
- ♦ “Reporting requirements of some Foundations can turn into a full time job (increasing clinic costs), but the Blue Shield Foundation only requires that we report progress and achievements once or twice per year. The process is simple (as compared to others) and I really do appreciate this.”



Reporting and Evaluation Process Activities

BSCF grantees less frequently report submitting financial statements, engaging in phone and in-person conversations with Foundation staff, and receiving site visits as part of the reporting and evaluation processes than is typical.

Reporting and Evaluation Process Activities



Note: This chart includes data about 114 funders, with the exception of "email correspondence," which includes data about 96 funders. "Email correspondence" BSCF 2006 data not shown due to changes in the survey instrument.

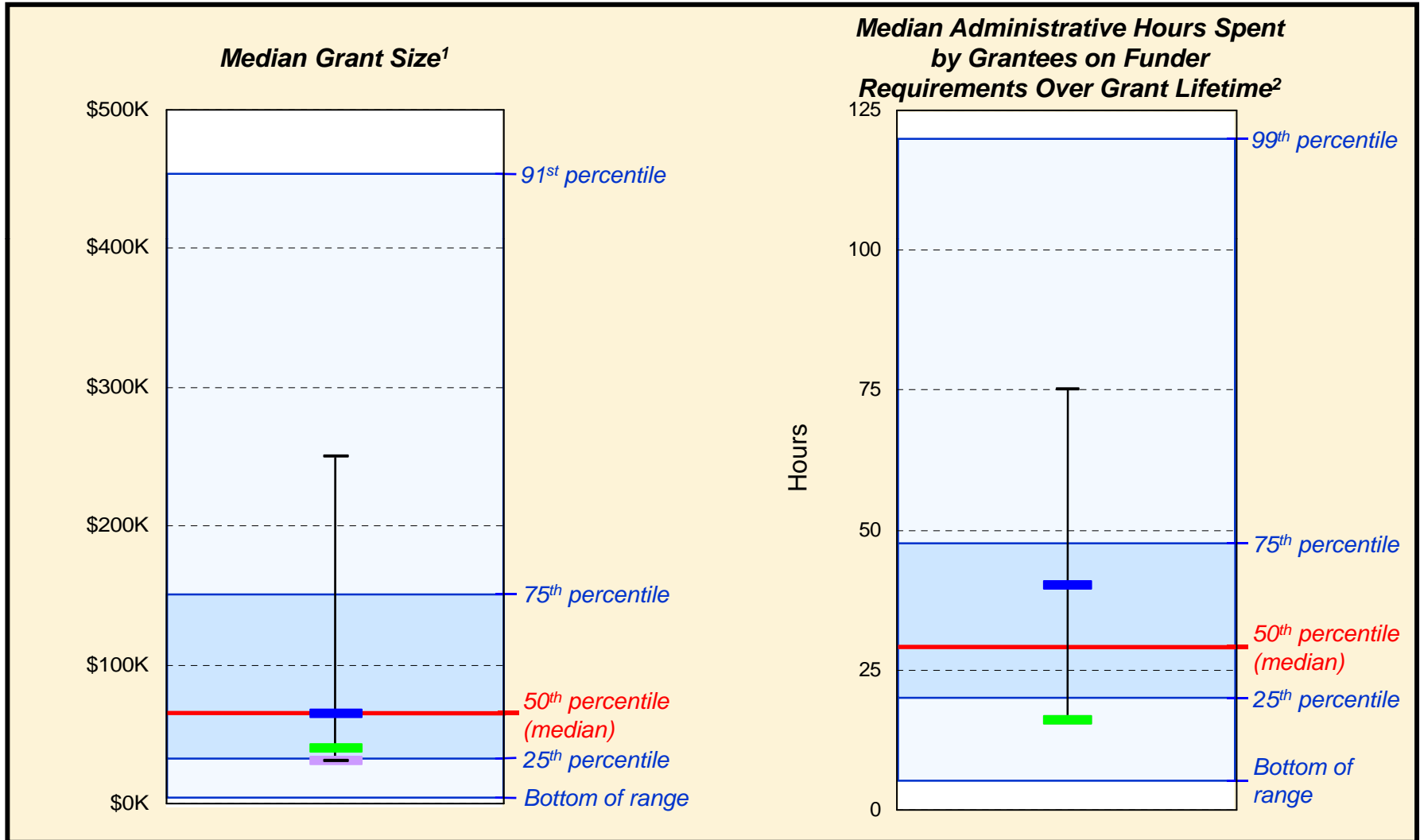
Grant Size and Administrative Time

At the median, the grant size reported by BSCF grantees is:

- smaller than that of the median funder
- smaller than that of the median health conversion funder

At the median, the number of hours of administrative time spent by BSCF grantees during the course of the grant is:

- less than the time spent by grantees of the median funder
- less than the time spent by grantees of all other health conversion funders



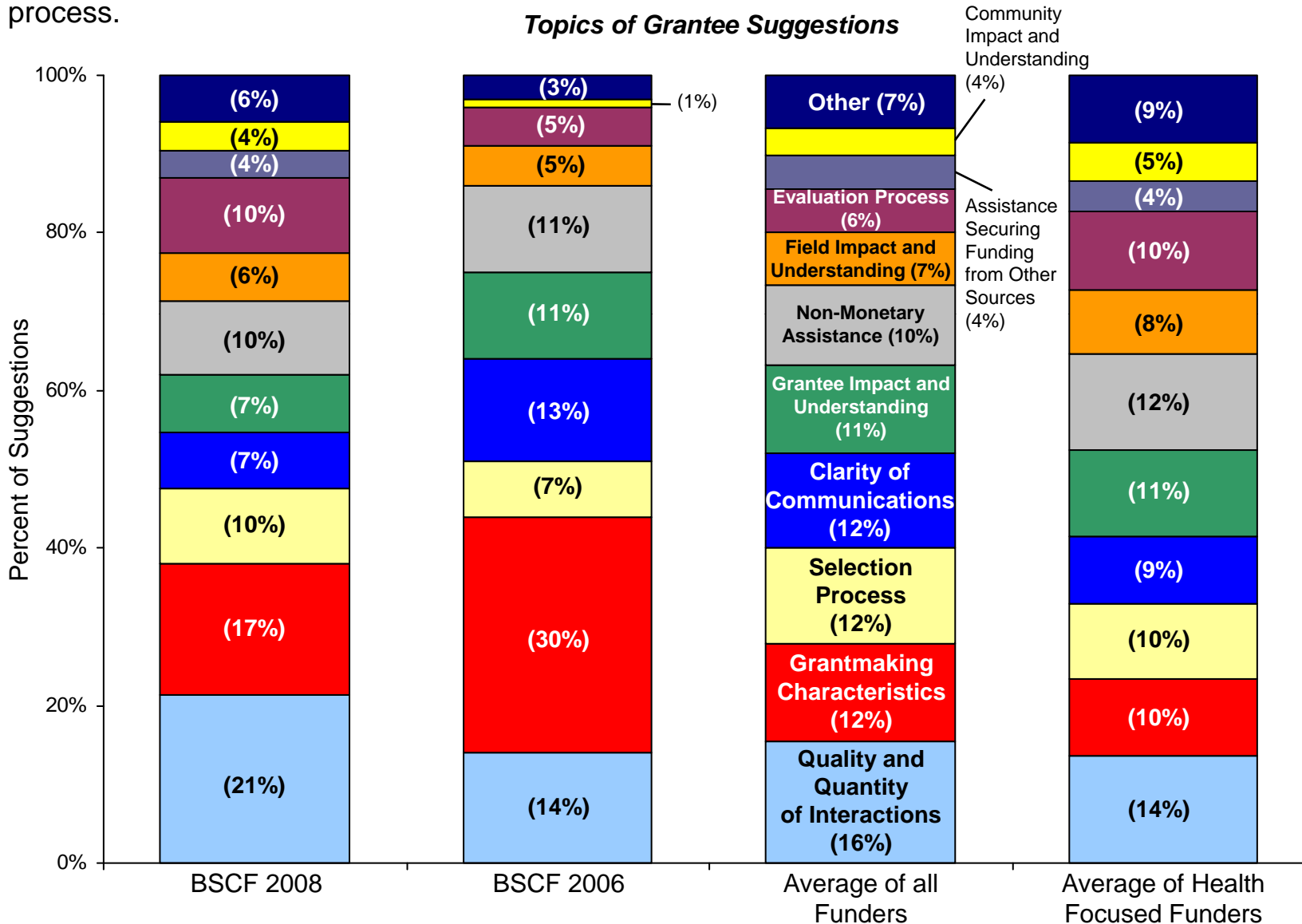
1: Chart does not show data from ten funders whose median grant size exceeds \$500K.

2: Chart displays total grant proposal creation, evaluation, and monitoring hours spent over the life of the grant; each of these events did not necessarily occur for each individual grantee. Chart does not show data from one funder whose median administrative hours exceeds 125 hours.

Grantee Suggestions for the Foundation

Grantees were asked to provide any suggestions for how the Foundation could improve. A larger than typical proportion of BSCF's suggestions concern interactions, grantmaking characteristics, and the evaluation process.

Topics of Grantee Suggestions



Note: Proportions may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding. There were a total of 84 grantee suggestions for BSCF in 2008.

Review of Findings

Chart shows BSCF 2008's (◆), BSCF 2006's (◇), and the Median Health Focused Funder's (◆) percentile rank among all funders in the comparative set.



X. Review of Findings and Analysis and Discussion

Indicator		Percentile Rank on Indicator					Description of Indicator
		0th	25th	50th	75th	100th	
Impact on the Field							Grantees were asked to rate the funder's impact on their fields.
Impact on the Community		<p>BSCF 2008 overlaps the Median Health Focused Funder.</p>					Grantees were asked to rate the funder's impact on their local communities.
Impact on the Grantee Organization							Grantees were asked to rate the funder's impact on their organizations.
Satisfaction							Grantees were asked to rate their satisfaction with their funder.
Quality of Interactions							This summary includes grantee ratings of funder fairness, responsiveness, and grantee comfort approaching the funder if a problem arises.
Clarity of Communication of Goals and Strategy							Grantees were asked to rate the clarity of the funder's communication of its goals and strategy.
Non-Monetary Assistance	% Receiving	<p>BSCF 2008 overlaps BSCF 2006.</p>					The proportion of grantees receiving higher impact field-focused or comprehensive assistance.
	Helpfulness						This summary is the average of grantees' ratings of the helpfulness of the non-monetary assistance received.
Assistance Securing Funding from Other Sources	% Receiving						The proportion of grantees receiving assistance securing funding from other sources.
	Impact						Grantees were asked to rate the impact of the funder's assistance securing funding from other sources.
Selection Process							Grantees were asked to rate the helpfulness of the funder's selection process for their organizations.
Reporting and Evaluation Processes							Grantees were asked to rate the helpfulness of the funder's reporting and evaluation processes for their organizations.
Dollar Return on Grantee Administrative Hours							This summary is the calculation of number of dollars received divided by the time required of grantees to fulfill the funder's administrative requirements.