Community Development Fund Evaluation

Review Process; Proposed Modifications

ARLINGTON
VIRGINIA

Scope

- **Goal:** Create a more equitable, inclusive process and promote healthier competition and a better user experience among applicants.

- **Areas of Evaluation**
  - Funding and NOFA structure.
  - Community Development Fund priorities.
  - Outreach, communications, technical assistance.
  - Application structure.
  - Evaluation and review process.
  - Post-NOFA applicant debrief and review.
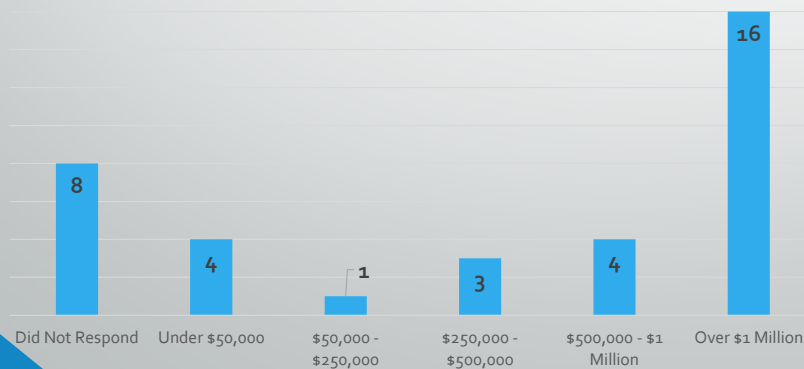 - Grant monitoring, ongoing project management and closeout process.

Community Development Fund Evaluation Process Overview

- Applicant Survey: February-March 2025, 36 total responses

- Applicant Focus Groups: April 2025, 2 focus groups, 15 organizations participated

- CDCAC Task Force Meetings, 3 meetings March-April 2025.
  - Members:
    - Jennifer Bodie
    - Steven Gallagher
    - Maccoy Kauffman
    - Lara Malakoff
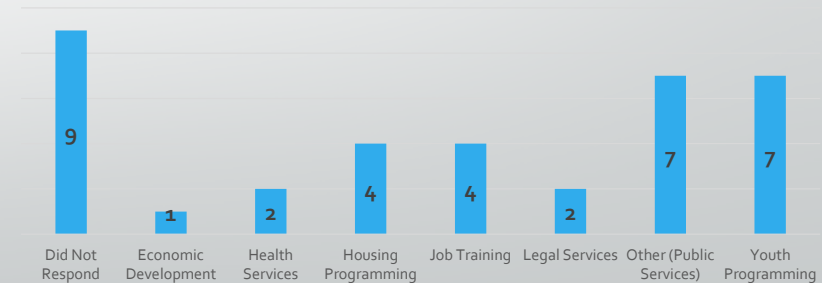   - Margaret McGilvray
    - Wendy Thomas

General Feedback Form Data

- 36 total responses, 60% response rate

- 9 respondents did not complete the full survey

- Mix of "large" and "small" organizations responded (based on organizational budget)

- Most respondents operating youth programs and/or other public services
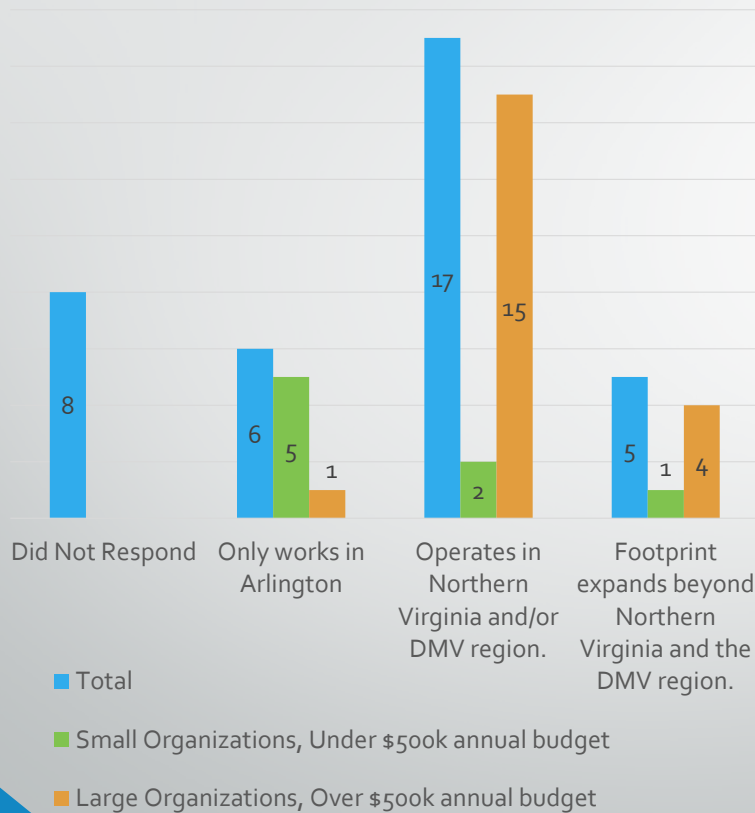
Total Organizational Budget

Did Not Respond	Under $50,000	$50,000 - $250,000	$250,000 - $500,000	$500,000 - $1 Million	Over $1 Million
8	4	1	3	4	16

Respondent Programming

Did Not Respond	Economic Development	Health Services	Housing Programming	Job Training	Legal Services	Other (Public Services)	Youth Programming
9	1	2	4	4	2	7	7

Geographic Footprint and Staff
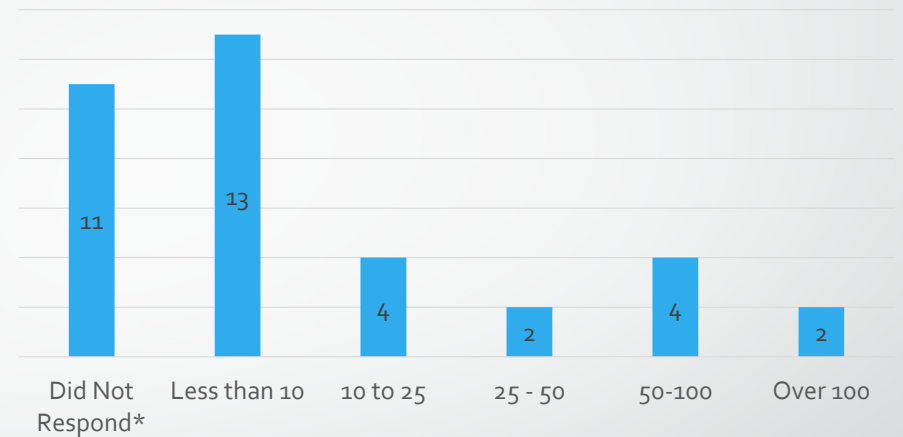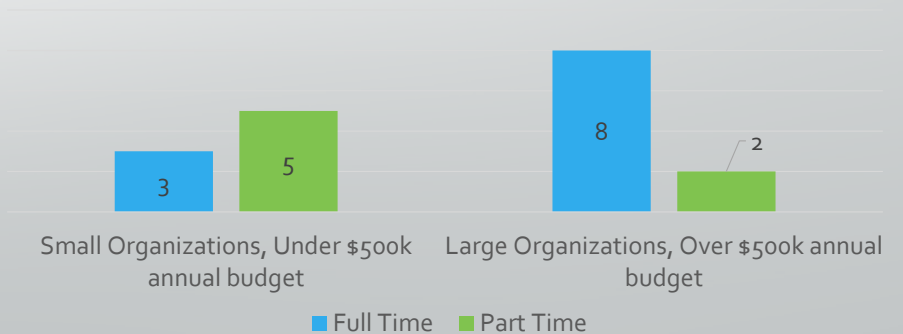
Racial Equity

Percentage of Board, Leadership, Staff represented by Persons of Color

Legend: Board of Directors ■ Leadership ■ Staff

	Did not answer	0-25%	25-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Board of Directors	8	10	8	6	4
Leadership	9	13	6	1	7
Staff	8	6	6	7	9
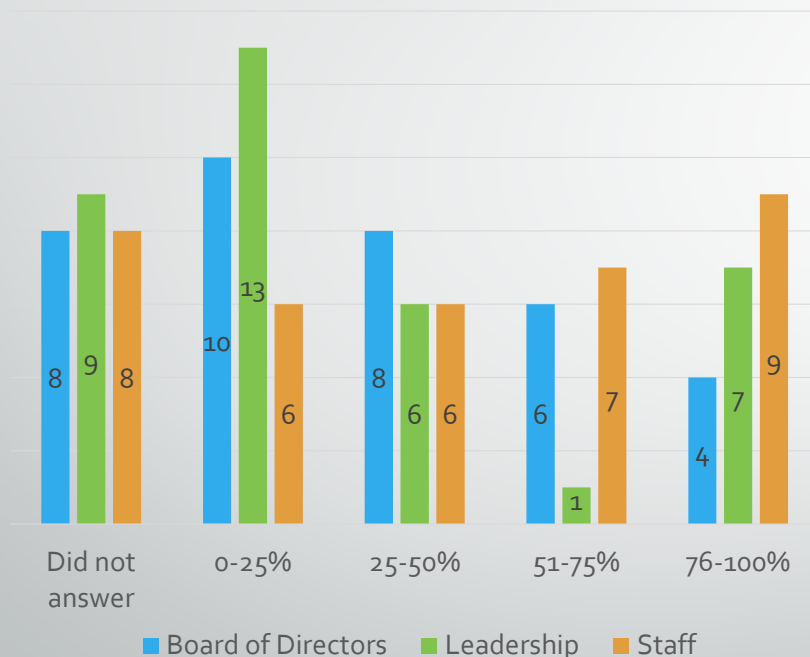
Steps Organizations have Taken to Promote Racial Equity; n = 27
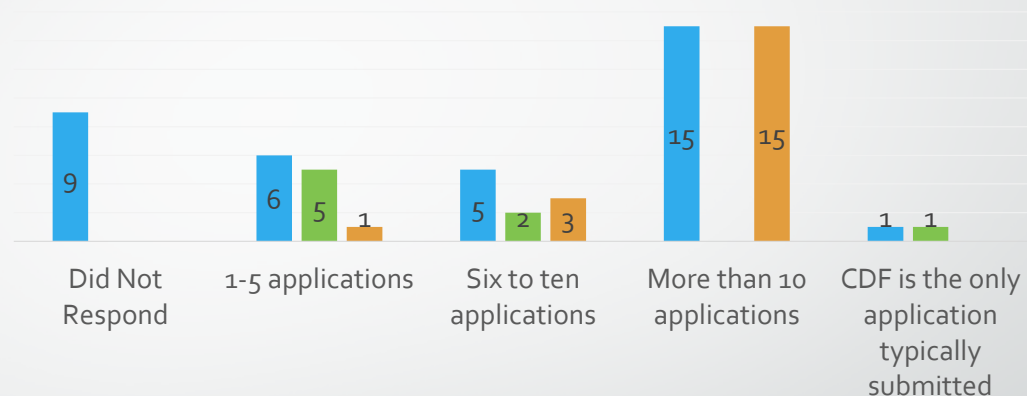
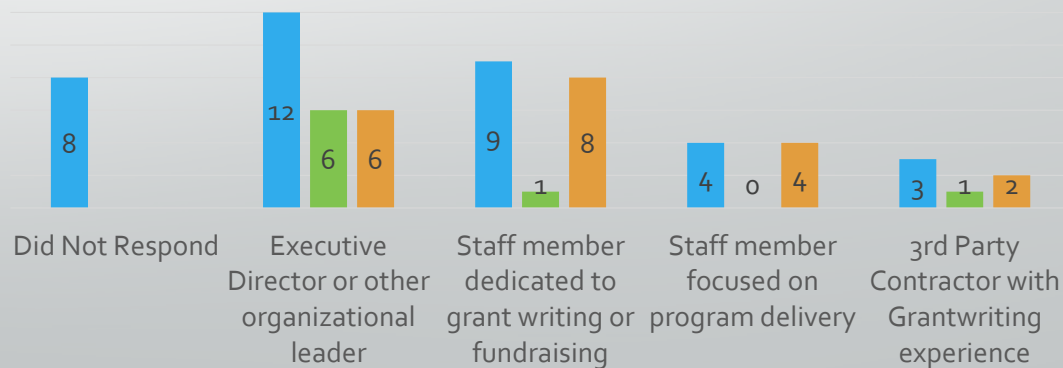|		
Organization solicits input from racially diverse community members and stakeholders during the planning and decision-making processes related to services and program delivery.	25	93%
Actively seeks representatives from communities of color to serve on boards or committees.	23	85%
Organization has a written public declaration stating commitment to racial equity.	15	56%
Training and development opportunities intended to build skills for implementing racial equity are made available to all levels of staff.	15	56%
Council or committee monitoring Racial Equity progress	6	22%
Disparity analysis conducted to identify if any racial inequities exist within employment, service delivery/programs, procurement, boards/committees.	5	19%
Organization has established scorecards and indicators of performance and progress.	4	15%
Written Racial Equity action plan(s) with validated benchmarks and targets.	3	11%
Dedicated position within the organization responsible for Racial Equity (e.g., diversity officer)	2	7%

Organizational Capacity, Grant Writing

How Long Organization Takes to Research, Write Application, n=36

	Did Not Respond	1-2 Days	3-6 Days	A week	2 weeks	More than 2 weeks
Total	8	2	6	4	6	10
Small Organizations, Under $500k annual budget			1	1	3	3
Large Organizations, Over $500k annual budget		2	5	3	3	7

- ■ Total
- ■ Small Organizations, Under $500k annual budget
- ■ Large Organizations, Over $500k annual budget
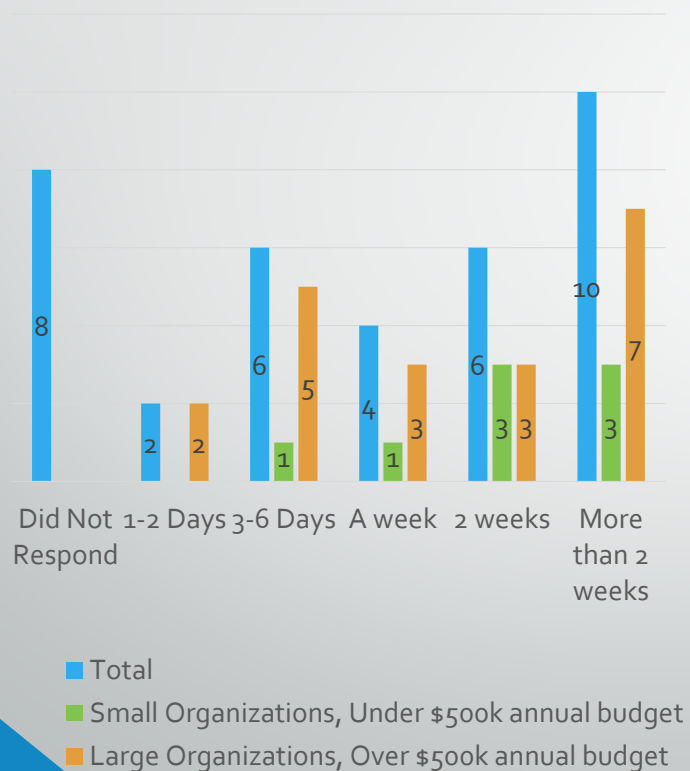
How Many Grant Applications Organization Submits Annually (Excluding CD Fund), n=35

	Did Not Respond	1-5 applications	Six to ten applications	More than 10 applications	CDF is the only application typically submitted
	9	6 / 5 / 1	5 / 2 / 3	15 / / 15	1 / 1

Who is Primarily Responsible for CD Fund Grant Application, n=36

|	Did Not Respond	Executive Director or other organizational leader	Staff member dedicated to grant writing or fundraising	Staff member focused on program delivery	3rd Party Contractor with Grantwriting experience
	8	12 / 6 / 6	9 / 1 / 8	4 / 0 / 4	3 / 1 / 2

Grant Program Specifics

- Nearly half of respondents have received between 5-10 grants over the last 10 years.

- Most applicants that have received between 5-10 grants are applying to sustain existing programming.

Strategies Grant Funds are Intended For

Number of Grants, Last 10 Years
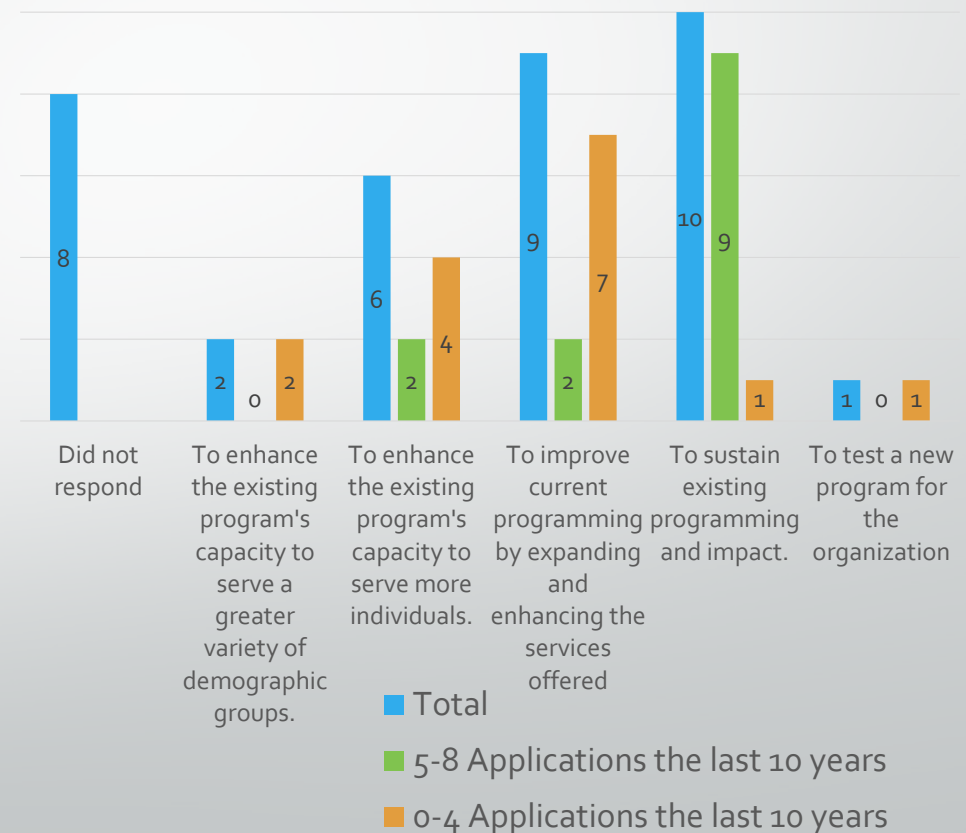
Application Process

Arlington County staff are responsive after grant decisions and provide adequate feedback about my application (if requested)

Funding decisions are fair, easy to understand, and transparent.

The presentation requirement adds value to the application process.

The project scoring/evaluation delivers the highest need/impact projects.

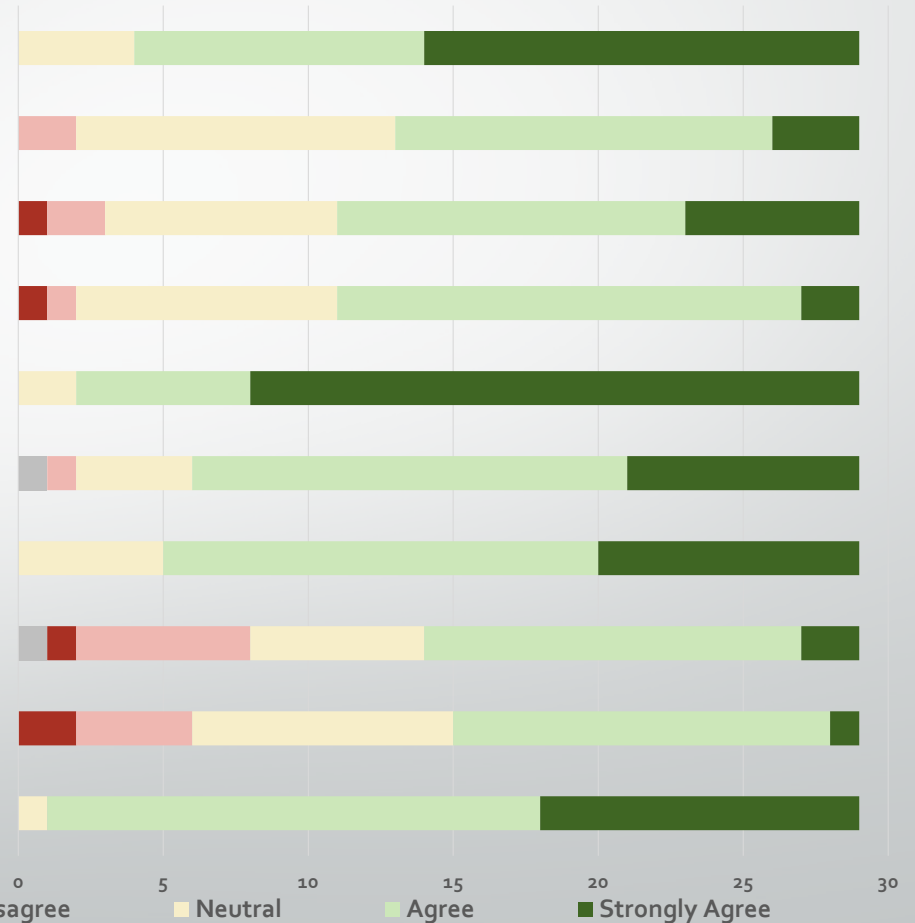Arlington County staff are responsive to inquiries or issues that arise during the application process.

My organization easily establishes needed partnerships to implement the program.

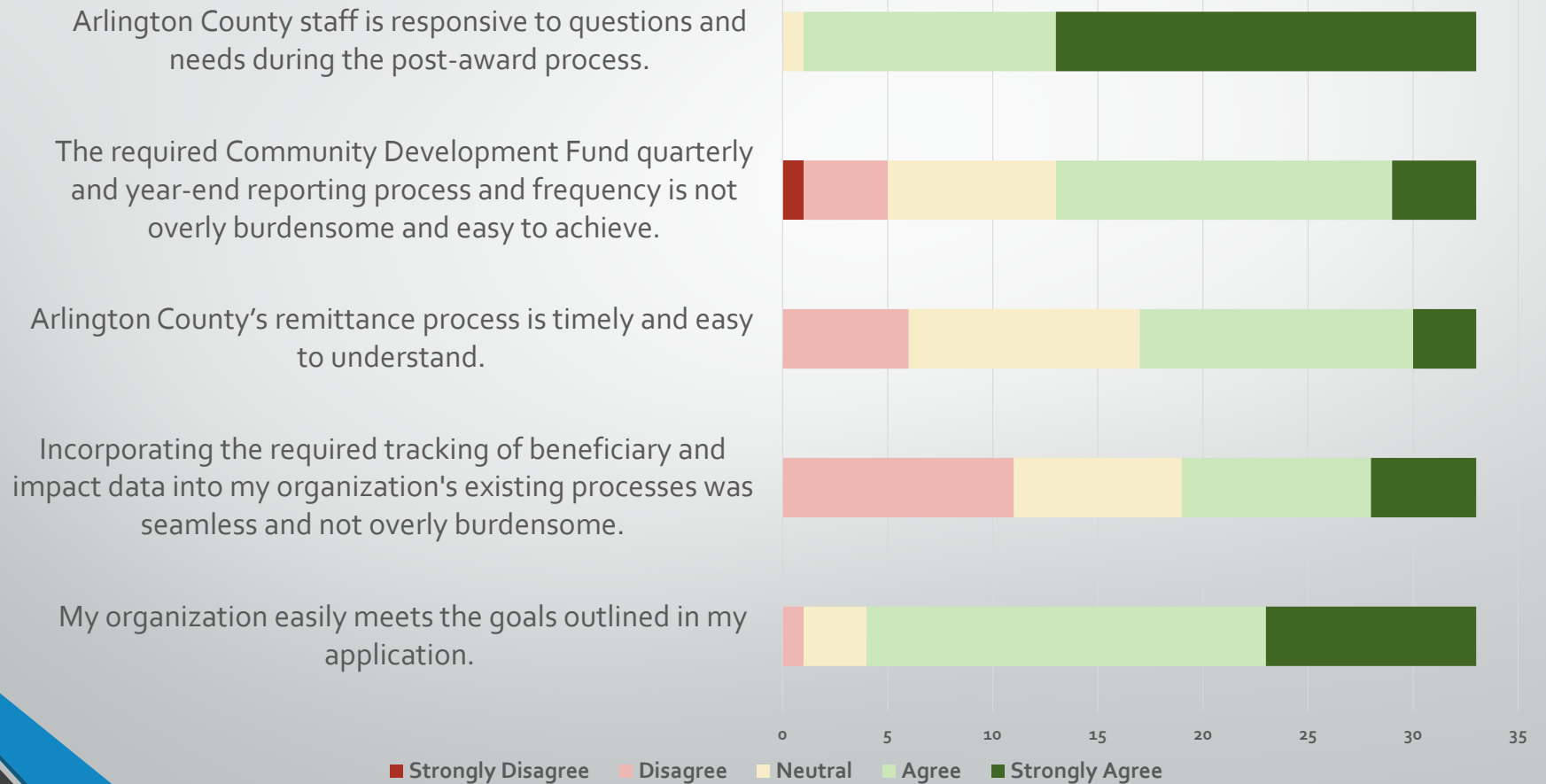The resources provided (e.g., NOFA document, training) are helpful.

The number of questions and required documents to submit are reasonable.

The application process is difficult given the level of funding available.

The overall application instructions are clear.

0   5   10   15   20   25   30

☐ Did not answer   ■ Strongly Disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ Neutral   ■ Agree   ■ Strongly Agree

Post-Award Process

Main Feedback Form Takeaways

- Application: generally, application is redundant and long, word limits don't allow enough space. Certain requirements are unnecessary/challenging to complete (sustainability, leverage, letters of support).

- Post-Award: Reporting process has improved; some have challenges with reporting requirements. Generally, applicants positive about post-award requirements aside from ZoomGrants platform.

- Review Process: Feelings towards presentations were mixed, in particular repeat applicants unfavorable of presentation requirement. Review period timing not ideal.

- Staff: Generally respondents were supportive of staff.

Pre-Application

Current Process

- July (Monday after July 4): NOFA Released.

- Late July: NOFA Workshop.

- Technical Assistance from staff available upon request.

- September (Friday after Labor Day): Applications Due.

Proposed Modifications

- July (Monday after July 4): NOFA Released.

- July 7-August 12: Technical Assistance Sessions or "Office Hours"

- Late July: NOFA Workshop.

- August 13: Pre-Applications Due.
    - Application evaluated for eligibility, program compatibility.
- August 15: Applicants notified of eligibility.

- August 18-September 11: Technical Assistance Sessions or "Office Hours"

- September 12: Applications Due.

- Staff to conduct completeness check and applicants able to "cure" applications within 2 days.

Reviewers

Current Process

- Housing Division staff: review and score all applications

- CDCAC members: review and score all applications

- SMEs: review only a few applications but do not score

Proposed Modifications

- Housing Division staff: review and score all applications

- CDCAC members: review and score all applications

- SMEs: review only a few applications but do not score.

  - SME Questionnaire will be developed to create consistency between SME reviews. Questionnaire will be uploaded to application for reviewers to view.

Application Review Process

Current Process

- Mid-September: CDCAC members sent all applications

- October Wednesdays: Applicant Presentations each Wednesday in October.
  - Applicant questions due weekly.

- Mid-November: CDCAC final scores due.

Proposed Modifications

- September 19: CDCAC members sent all applications

- October 22, 29, November 5,12, 19: <mark>Application Discussion Sessions</mark>.
  - CDCAC scores will be due weekly based discussion session schedule. If an application will be heard 10/22, scores are due the Friday before, 10/17.
  - Applicant questions due weekly.

Application Discussion Sessions

- Applications will be split into discussion sessions by category as determined after applications are submitted.

- Summary sheets and final reports from previous years will be provided.

- After CDCAC scores are submitted weekly, staff will create a score sheet for all applications being discussed. Score sheet will include each CDCAC score.

- CDCAC members to discuss each application within the category one by one. The discussion will focus on the merits of the proposal, pros and cons, and CDCAC members will be able to ask clarifying questions about proposals and/or the organizations applying for funding.

- CDCAC members will decide if they are ok with their individual scores based on the discussion and will be able to change / modify scores on the spot.

- Staff will record each member's justification as to why they are changing scores.

October

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

CDCAC scores due — Discussion session

Proposal Ranking

Current Process

- Mid-November: CDCAC final scores due.

- December CDCAC Meeting: CDCAC members to rank proposals within each category based on "priority".

    - Final score sheet includes average CDCAC score, average staff score and average of the two scores.

    - Priority, applications that are most needed in the community, unique to each reviewer.

    - Each member has certain number of "votes" to distribute per category.

Proposed Modifications

- November 22: Staff shares final score sheet with CDCAC. Final score sheet includes average CDCAC score, average staff score and average of the two scores.

- December CDCAC Meeting: CDCAC members to rank proposals within each category based on "priority".

    - Priority, applications that are most needed in the community, unique to each reviewer.

    - Each member has certain number of "votes" to distribute per category.

    - "Votes" for each application will be translated to a certain number of bonus points to be added to final score.

Final Proposed Schedule At-a-Glance

Timing	Activity
July 7-August 12	County Staff "Office Hours" for Applicants
August 13	Pre-Application Due
August 15	Applicants notified if the are eligible submit Full Application
August 18-September 11	County Staff "Office Hours" for Applicants
September 12	Full Application Due
September 19	Applications Shared with CDCAC and SMEs
October 17	CDCAC Preliminary Scores Due to Staff
October 22, 29, November 5,12, 19	Proposal Discussion Sessions and Ranking for Each Category
November 22	Final Score Sheet Shared with CDCAC
December 3	CDCAC Application Ranking Session
December 19	Staff Funding Recommendations Due to DMF
February 25, 2026	FY 2027 County Manager Budget Released
March 4, 2026	CDCAC to Review FY 2027 Budget Recommendations
April 2026	County Board to Consider FY 2027 Budget Recommendations

Next Steps

- CDCAC Task Force, will meet next week to continue discussing application questions, required contents and evaluation criteria.

- CDCAC to review proposed modifications to application, evaluation criteria, and outreach activities at June 2025 meeting

- Community Development Fund NOFA to be released July 7

- Phase 2 of the Community Development Fund Evaluation will continue in the fall.

  - Funding and NOFA structure.
  - Community Development Fund priorities.