



# MHCRC Community Technology Grants Program Review

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
METHODS .....	5
OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS.....	9
PROGRAM IMPACT .....	9
GRANTMAKING PROCESS.....	28
INSIGHTS.....	41
RECOMMENDATIONS .....	44
APPENDIX A: DATA COOLECTION TOOLS	

## INTRODUCTION

The Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission (MHCRC) has been operating the Community Technology Grants program for over 20 years with a mission of supporting Multnomah County organizations' use of technology resources for a public benefit. Since 2014, approximately 62 grants have been awarded to local organizations, including nonprofits, educators, libraries, and local governments. The MHCRC sought to document the impact of the Community Technology Grants program through a review of the grantmaking process and the grants awarded between 2014 and 2018.

### About MHCRC

MHCRC negotiates and enforces cable service franchise agreements; manages the public benefit resources and assets derived from the franchises; and advocates on behalf of the public interest on communications policy issues at local, state, and federal levels.

The MHCRC serves the communities, residents, and local governments of Fairview, Gresham, Portland, Troutdale, and Wood Village and Multnomah County, Oregon (its member "Jurisdictions").

### About Community Grants

MHCRC is the grantmaking body for the Community Grants program, which provides funds for technology projects to community organizations, libraries, educational institutions, and local government agencies throughout Multnomah County. This program assists local entities in using cable system technology for enhanced communications, including video, data, and voice applications, through two funding programs: the TechSmart Initiative and the Community Technology Grants program. This report is focused on the Community Technology Grants program.

Funding for the Community Technology Grants program is made possible through franchise agreements that the MHCRC negotiates with cable companies for their private use of the public right-of-way. The MHCRC receives grant funds from Comcast, CenturyLink, Zply, and Reliance Connects, who are the

## GLOSSARY

An overview of terms that will be used throughout this report.

### **Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory**

**Commission:** The agency authorized to award Community Technology Grants. Often referred to as MHCRC, the Commission, or granting agency.

**Community Technology Grants:** The funding program being reviewed, which offers funds for capital purchases and requires a 50% match. Often referred to as CT grant(s), grant(s), or award(s).

**Awardees or Grantees:** A collective of organizations who received a CT grant from MHCRC. Often spoken about as a collective, though sometimes referred to as a focus group participant, interview participant, or survey respondent.

**Grantmaking Process:** The combination of activities that awardees had to complete to receive a CT grant and document compliance. This could include a pre-application, an application, follow-up materials, interim or status reporting, and any concluding activities.

current cable operators in Multnomah County, and allocates these funds to serve the public interest. The grants provide a financial means to address concrete local needs using communications technology, such as improving learning resources in public schools and community colleges; removing barriers to receiving an education, workforce training, information or other social services; and increasing access to media tools for local discourse, civic participation, and communications.

## Evaluation Team

Founded in 1999, Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE) is headquartered in Portland, Oregon, where we provide evaluation services across the country. PRE emphasizes obtaining meaningful data with methodologically robust studies that withstand critical review and we consistently deliver accurate and usable research results that enable organizations to build and sustain success.

For this work, PRE partnered with Clarity Scientific, located in Beaverton. Dr. MacKenna Perry, President of Clarity Scientific, has a longstanding relationship with the PRE team, bringing extensive training, methodology and analytics expertise, and nearly a decade of experience managing largescale research and stakeholder engagement projects.

## Project Evaluation

This research study examined the effectiveness of the MHCRC Community Technology Grants program through a review of the grantmaking process, including funding patterns, and the impact on funded organizations and the individuals or communities served, focusing on grants awarded from 2014 to 2018. This review is intended to inform the strategic direction of the grant program moving forward to ensure the program is responsive to community needs and realizes public benefits.

## Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions that guided this study explore impacts on grantee organizations, partner organizations, and the individuals and communities served by the projects. Questions fall into two distinct categories: those exploring program impact, and those exploring funding patterns and MHCRC's grantmaking process.

### *Evaluation of Community Technology Grant Program Impacts*

1.1	Were projects successful at attaining their stated project goals? Why or why not?
1.2	Who did organizations reach through the funded projects?
1.3	Did projects create any demonstrable community impact in the public benefit areas targeted by the grant program? What is different today as a result of grant-funded projects?
1.4	Did grant funds leverage other funds in the community to support the projects and/or work of grantee organizations overall? What role did project partners play in the success of funded projects?
1.5	Did the technology acquired through the grant funds enhance or detract from grantee organizations' ability to be effective?
1.6	Did the grant-funded technology investments add any specific value to grant projects that wasn't initially anticipated?
1.7	Have grantee organizations sustained projects beyond the grant-funded term? If not, why?

- 1.8 Are there collective “lessons learned” or themes among all or most projects? Are there any particularly useful examples of things that went well or where grantees struggled?

***Analysis of Funding Patterns and Grantmaking Processes***

- 2.1 What work was funded by the grant making effort?
- 2.2 How and how well has the program incorporated equity into the grantmaking process? How might MHCRC better advance equity through its process?
- 2.3 How responsive was the grant program in meeting the needs of community organizations that sought and were awarded funds? Which application requirements, if any, posed a barrier to potential applicants or project success?
- 2.4 How realistic were “match” resources?
- 2.5 What are the real-world issues and challenges faced by the grant program’s constituency to use technology as a tool to fulfill their missions? How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the projects funded?
- 2.6 What are the key barriers for the community benefits of the grant program to be realized?
- 2.7 Are there significant differences between the findings presented here and the previous impact evaluation report (completed in 2003)?

## METHODS

In effort to reach the goals MHCRC established for the Community Technology Grants Program Review, a range of data collection methods were utilized: document review, a survey of grantees, focus groups and interviews with grantees, and interviews with MHCRC staff. Each approach is described below, with descriptions of the evaluation activities each data collection method was intended to support. Data collection tools for each activity can be found in Appendix A.



### Document Review

Research team review of MHCRC-provided grant documentation.

PRE reviewed key documents submitted by grantees through the MHCRC’s online grants management system as part of evaluative activities. The primary documents reviewed for each grant were the final project application narrative and the final status report. Interim status reports were reviewed as needed to fill gaps left by the primary document sources. Document review provided information about the approaches Community Technology (CT) grantees took to carrying out their project work, as well as impacts of grant-funded projects as reported by the grantees. This process also provided insight into how CT grant funds were dispersed in terms of the types of organization, public benefit designation, targeted beneficiaries, and use of technology. Document review allowed for information from all grantee organizations to be included in this report, regardless of whether PRE was able to reach a representative of each organization for survey, focus group, or interview participation.



### Grantee Survey

Structured conversations facilitated over Zoom.

A grantee survey was distributed to all grantees funded between 2014 and 2018. The purpose of the survey was to gather standard information across all grantees, with a specific focus on the extent to which the project met the needs of the individuals and communities being served by the project. The survey was designed to gather data about what is different today as a result of each grant. It also included questions related to the sustainability of each grant-funded project after each grant ends.

The survey was administered to grantees via an email invitation and multiple email reminders. Verbal invitations were also extended to those grantees who attended focus groups and interviews. Based on low participation numbers early in the data collection period, the research team decided, in partnership with MHCRC, to incentivize survey participation. Grantees were informed that they would receive a \$10 Amazon gift card in exchange for their participation in the survey.



### Grantee Focus Groups/ Interviews

Structured conversations facilitated over Zoom.

A series of focus groups with representatives from the CT grantees were scheduled, with options across a range of dates and times. The focus of these conversations was the collective impact of the grant-funded projects, with an opportunity for participants to identify shared success stories and common struggles. Focus groups were also designed to gather grantee perspective on the user-responsiveness and user-friendliness of the MHCRC's grantmaking process. Grantees were invited to participate in one of the six different focus groups via email invitations. Recruiting participants for this data collection method proved challenging, resulting in the addition of an incentive to motivate more participation. Grantees who registered for a focus group were offered a \$20 Amazon gift card for their time.

While added recruitment efforts did increase focus group participation, a desire to hear from a higher percentage of grantees remained. As such, PRE's evaluation team reached out to awardees who did not participate in focus groups and asked them to participate in a one-on-one interview.



### MHCRC Staff Interviews

Structured conversations facilitated over Zoom.

PRE also conducted interviews with internal MHCRC staff that were involved in the CT grant program from 2014 to 2018. The primary goal of these interviews was to gather contextual information regarding how the grant funds were dispersed, details regarding how application requirements were determined, and information about equity practices in the grantmaking process.

## WHO PRE SPOKE WITH FOR THIS REVIEW



**Organizations Awarded.** A total of 41 CT grants were awarded between 2014-2018. Of these, two grants were cancelled at the request of the grantee before any grant funds were spent, in coordination with MHCRC; however, participants from the two organizations with cancelled grants were still invited to participate in data collection. Four organizations received more than one grant between 2014-2018, meaning grants were awarded to 37 unique grantee organizations. Project application and status report

documentation was reviewed for all but the two cancelled grants, thus representing 39 grants across 35 organizations.



**Survey Respondents.** Participants representing a total of 20 CT grants were represented on the grantee survey, with individual respondents reflecting a range of roles, though predominately Project Managers and Grant Writers. Represented organizations serve a range of audiences (age groups, underserved communities, and racial/ethnic identification).



**Focus Group Participants.** Representatives from all 2014-2018 grantee organizations were invited to participate in focus groups. A total of 14 organizations participated and were represented across four different focus groups. Participants reflected a range of organizational types, including community-based organizations and colleges and other educational facilities. Organizations differed in organizational age (i.e., some were in their second or third year of existence at the time of awarding, while others had been around for decades) and financial capacity.



**Interview Participants: Grantee Organizations.** An additional three individuals participated in interviews in lieu of focus groups. These three participants were unable to participate in the originally scheduled focus groups because they were contacted during a second round of efforts to find the best current contacts/representatives for each grantee organization. Each of the three grantee organizations interview participants represented appeared to be relatively well-established, with mid-size operating budgets.



**Interview Participants: MHCRC.** PRE conducted interviews with two MHCRC staff that were heavily involved in the CT grant program design and implementation and three MHCRC commissioners who have a long enough tenure to speak to the CT grant program between the years of 2014 and 2018.

## Project Limitations

There are several limitations of the information presented in this report that are important to consider when reading through results. First, there were substantial challenges in recruiting participants for focus groups, interviews, and the online survey. A thorough communications plan was implemented, beginning with contact initiated by MHCRC staff. The research team reached out directly to each primary contact identified by MHCRC, and incentives were offered in the form of a \$10 gift card for participation in the online survey and a \$20 gift card for participation in a focus group or interview. However, the retrospective nature of the review presented a significant hurdle to participation. Because some projects were completed as early as 2014, the research team had difficulty identifying current contacts following personnel turnover and finding points of contact for organizations which have since ceased operations. Additionally, the timing of the review, which was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, meant that some organizations were unable to participate due to decreased staffing, increased workload to support the community, closure, or other COVID-related pressures and changes.

To address this limitation, when a primary contact was not responsive or had left the organization, the research team sought a secondary contact. For some grantee organizations, replacement contacts were readily available. For any grant where a secondary contact was not immediately identifiable (e.g., not listed in a bounce-back email or on the organizational website), the research team contacted the organization

by phone, email, or both. Contact was established with the large majority of grantee organizations. In fact, of the 39 total grants (not including two grants that were cancelled), 23 grants are represented in the survey, interview, and/or focus group data. Of the remaining 16 grants, one organization that represented two different grants from the review period opted out of all communications due to limited resources. One contact signed up for a focus group but ultimately did not attend or respond to any further communication. Two grantee organizations appeared not to be operational at the time of the review. Participants from the remaining grants were unable to be engaged, despite efforts by both the research team and MHCRC staff to reach out by phone and/or email.

Despite challenges in recruiting participants for focus groups, interviews, and the survey, information from all grantee organizations is provided in this report through document review. As described above, participants representing 23 grants engaged in at least one additional form of data collection, beyond document review. Of these 23, a total of 12 participated in both the survey and a focus group or interview, while 6 participated in only a focus group/interview and 5 participated in only the survey.

An additional, related limitation is that the timeframe for the study was relatively short. It is likely that a longer time allotted to study completion would have allowed for additional recruitment of participants, a longer data collection window, or more detailed analysis. However, given time constraints and the limitations described above, the information presented in this report provides great detail and opportunity for insight into the effectiveness of the CT grant program and the impact of grants from 2014-2018.

# OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Findings are organized by evaluation question, split into two broad thematic areas: program impact and the grantmaking process. Information across all data collection sources will be reported in aggregate, telling a multi-dimensional picture of the impact MHCRC was able to achieve through the Community Technology Grants program.



## PROGRAM IMPACT

Responding to Evaluation Questions 1.1 through 1.8

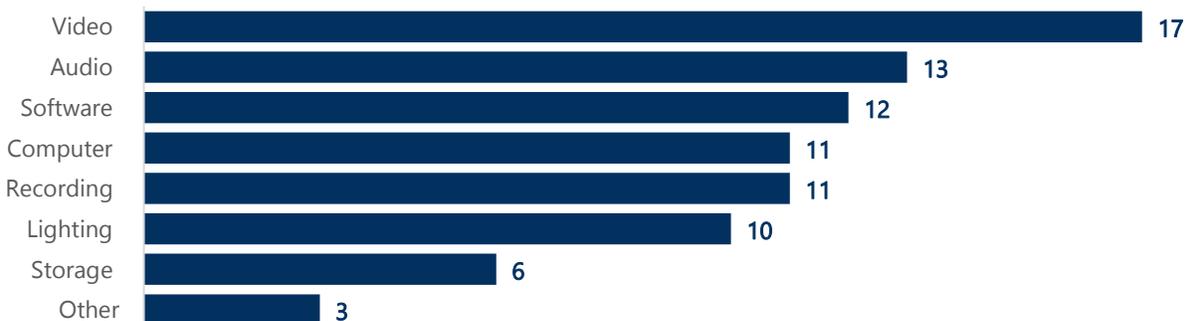
### 1.1 Were projects successful at attaining their stated project goals? Why or why not?

The document review provided the most robust information around grantee goals and use of acquired technology. Project narratives submitted by grantees during the application process outlined a variety of goals and activities. Each grantee organization was asked to identify a cable system technology to focus the grant toward—either community access channels or the Institutional Network (I-Net). Of the total 39 grants, 27 (69.2%) focused on community access channels, while an additional 9 (23.1%) focused on I-Net. The remaining 3 grants identified both community access channels and the I-Net as areas of focus.

Each grantee was also asked to identify the technology they proposed to use. The most commonly identified types of technology were video and audio, which almost all grantees purchased with grant funds. A total of 36 grants (92.3%) included video technology purchases, and a total of 35 grants (89.7%) included audio technology purchases. Other commonly purchased equipment included recording (46.1% of grants), storage (33.3% of grants), and lighting (20.5% of grants).

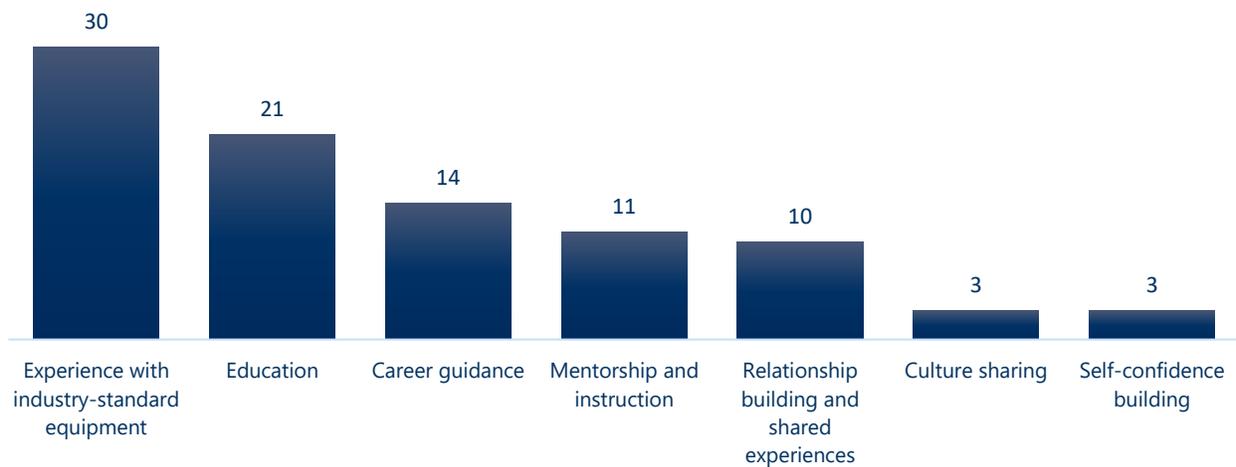
Survey data, shown in Figure 1 below, reiterates document review findings, with almost all survey respondents (85.0%) indicating they acquired video-related technology through grant funds. Additional technology listed from the “other” category include a Drupal website through the Multnomah County Library, improvements to infrastructure, and tablets.

Figure 1. Types of Technology Acquired Through Grant Funds (N = 20 Grants)



Grant applications also included details on each project’s purpose, planned activities, and goals. Applicants were asked to describe the project and share how use of technology could address their chosen public benefit area and serve their target community or beneficiaries. While specific project goals and activities varied widely, PRE coded each grantee organization’s responses and found several recurring themes in the types of goals and activities identified by grant recipients. The most common goal categories that resulted from the analysis are listed in Figure 2. Notably, **30 of 39 grants (76.9%) included a goal that fell into the category of providing opportunities for project participants to gain experience with industry standard-level equipment. Over half of grants (53.9%) included goals or activities that focused on educational opportunities.** Career guidance, mentorship and instruction, and creating opportunities for relationship building and shared experiences were other common focuses described by grantees.

*Figure 2. Project Goals Listed on Applications (N = 39 Grants)*



Finally, during review of application narratives, our research team identified the most critical activities found in each grant application. **These activities fell into five categories: film production; community technology spaces; informational, news, and/or educational programming; live performances, programs, and meeting broadcasts; and general coverage or service improvements.** A few grant applications included focus on activities in multiple categories, but the vast majority fell into a single category of focus.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED BY GRANTEES

- 1 Film production (22 grants; 56.4%)
- 2 Community technology space (8 grants; 20.5%)
- 3 Informational, news, and/or educational programming (4 grants; 10.3%)
- 4 Live performances, programs, and meeting broadcasts (3 grants; 7.7%)
- 5 Expand audience served or other service improvements (3 grants; 7.7%)

To examine whether grantees were successful in attaining the goals described above, the research team chose two complementary approaches: grantee self-assessment through survey responses and research team evaluation through document review. First, on the grantee survey, participants were asked to rate their agreement with several statements related to project goals and outcomes. **When asked the extent to which they agreed their project was successful, 12 of the total 20 respondents (60.0%) strongly agreed and 6 (30.0%) agreed.** The remaining two respondents selected that they did not know or that the statement did not apply to them, perhaps due to grant cancellation or lack of direct involvement in the grant.

**When asked the extent to which they agreed that their organization achieved its project goals, 7 respondents (35.0%) indicated that they agreed and 9 (45%) indicated they strongly agreed.** A further 3 respondents selected “I don’t know,” and one selected “not applicable.” Taken together, these results indicate those grantees who responded to the survey overwhelmingly felt projects were successful.

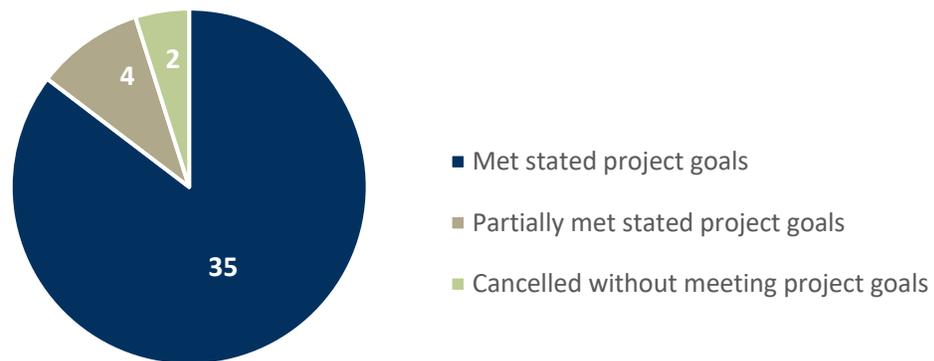
Second, based on grantees’ descriptions of their progress toward stated project goals and their chosen public benefit area, the research team evaluated each project’s final status report during document review. Each organization had different levels of specificity in their stated project goals, and each organization provided a different level of detail in their report of outcomes and progress toward goals. Some grantees were very specific in project goals and subsequent outcome reports, while others did not have the capacity to set and report on goals with such detail (e.g., very small organizations, organizations with more limited resources). The research team reviewed each organization’s progress toward stated project goals using the information provided in a qualitative coding process.

To analyze progress, the research team gathered stated project goals and stated outcomes. These details were often spread across different question responses on the application narrative, so each organization was considered independently. When documentation indicated that all project goals had been met, regardless of the level of detail provided, a project was considered to have fully met its stated goals.

When documentation indicated that there was a substantive obstruction to progress toward stated goals, a project was considered to have partially met its stated goals. Based on this qualitative analysis, a total of 35 grants (89.7%) were deemed to have fully met their stated project goals.

The remaining four grants (10.3%) included in document review were determined to have partially met their stated project goals. Of these four, three were substantially impacted by the pandemic and met goals to the best of their ability but were unable to meet all stated project goals. One pandemic-impacted grant is still ongoing, as the grantee organization signed an amendment in 2020 to allow additional time to meet project goals based on the challenges faced. The final partially completed grant was cancelled at the grantee organization’s discretion early in project implementation; however, the organization did meet some project goals prior to closure. Two grants were not included in document review because they had been cancelled during the grant period at the grantee organizations’ requests, in coordination with MHCRC. Results including all 41 grants awarded from 2014-2018 are shown in Figure 3.

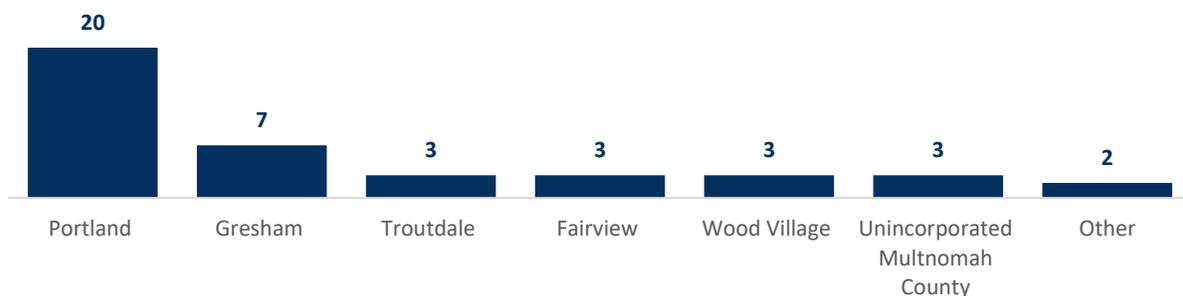
Figure 3. Research Team Review of Project Goal Achievement (N = 41 Grants)



## 1.2 Who did organizations reach through funded projects?

PRE reviewed the audience, beneficiaries, and communities that CT grant projects reached in several ways. First, all organizations that responded to the grantee survey were asked to indicate which of MHCRC’s six jurisdictions—Portland, Gresham, Troutdale, Fairview, Wood Village, and unincorporated Multnomah County—their project served. Respondents could select as many jurisdictions as applied, and response data indicates that many organizations work across multiple jurisdictions. All respondents indicated their project served Portland. Further results are shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. MHCRC Jurisdictions Served by Community Technology Grants (N = 20 Survey Respondents)



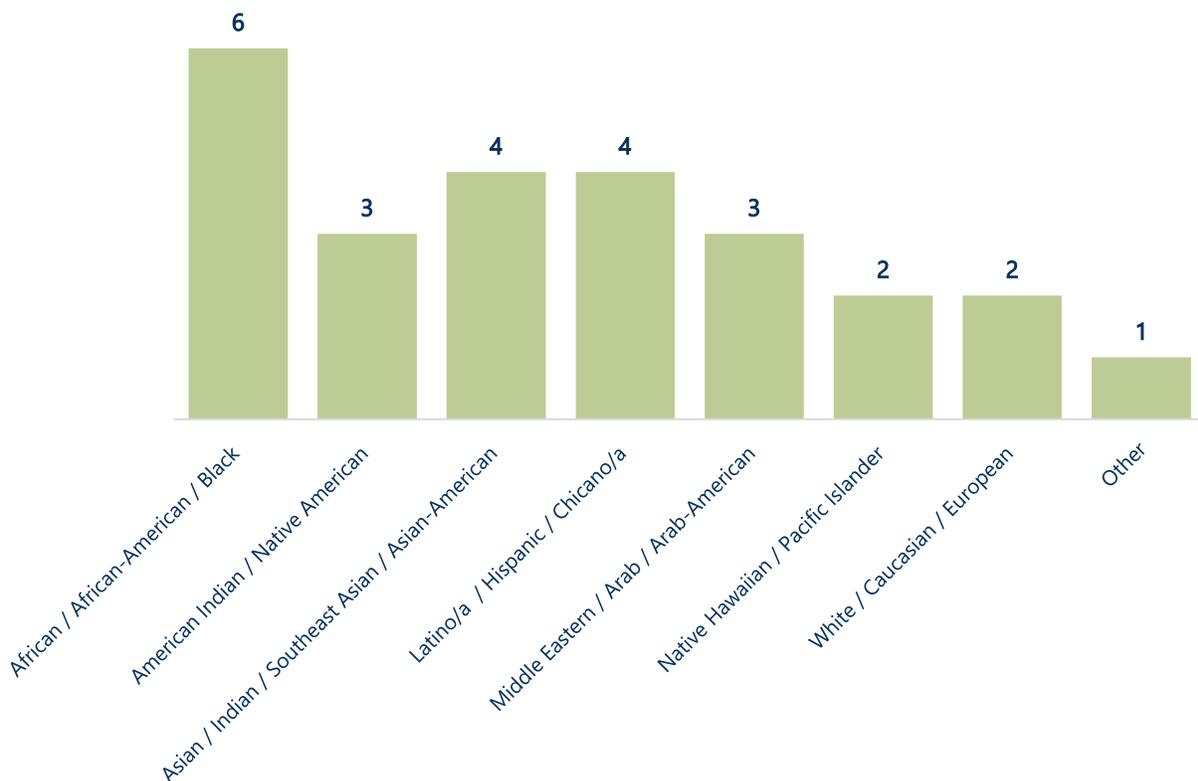
Review of grantees' application project narratives (submitted during the application process) and final status reports (submitted as the final progress report prior to grant closeout) showed that grants served a wide variety of audiences and communities, including numerous historically underrepresented and underserved groups. Grantees were asked to identify the communities, beneficiaries, and audiences served, and to share demographics if available. Results from review of these documents and supplemental survey data analysis are presented next.

***Race, Ethnicity, English Proficiency, and Immigrant/Refugee Status of Populations Served***

Of the 36 total grantees who provided information on project applications and status reports about audience or populations served, **two-thirds (i.e., 24 grantee organizations) stated that their grants served Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)**. Of these 24 organizations, 6 stated their grants specifically served Black or African American populations, 5 stated their grants specifically served Latinx or Hispanic populations, and 4 stated their grants served Native American or American Indian populations. Additional grants specifically served Slavic, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, Iranian, and multiracial populations.

Survey data provided added insights on populations served. Among the 20 respondents, 12 (60.0%) indicated that they did not work with a specific racial or ethnic group. The remaining 8 respondents indicated via a checkbox the ranges of audiences they work with. Many of these organizations indicated work with multiple racial/ethnic groups. Figure 5 shows response counts.

*Figure 5. Specific Audiences Served as Reported on Grantee Surveys (N = 8)*



Based on document review, a total of **8 grants (22.2%) were specifically designed to serve people with limited English proficiency or people whose first language is not English.** Three grantee organizations (8.3%) identified immigrants and refugees as populations specifically served. Survey data provided additional details. A total of 8 of 20 respondents (40.0%) reported that they conducted project work only in English. Three respondents worked in American Sign Language and/or in Spanish. At least two organizations indicated working in Vietnamese and/or Chinese, and one group conducted work in Russian. Three survey respondents selected "other," listing out Somali, occasional Native languages, and noting: "We often translate our videos into our five supported languages (Russian, Vietnamese, Somali, Chinese and Spanish) and provide videos with translated captioning and/or voiceovers."

### ***Age Groups of Populations Served***

In application project narratives and final status reports, grantee organizations frequently identified the age group(s) their grants targeted. A total of 13 (36.1%) grants served children, primarily ages 5 to 12. A further 20 (55.6%) grants served teens aged 13 to 19. An additional 6 (16.7%) grants served community college and university students of all adult ages, while 5 (13.9%) grants served other adult learner populations. A total of 5 (13.9%) grants specifically served older adults and seniors.

Survey data, which is reflective of a subset of all MHCRG grantees, showed higher numbers in each of these categories. A total of 11 out of 19 responding organizations (57.9%) indicated that their project served children, 14 (73.7%) organizations served teens and young adults, 12 (63.2%) served adults, and 7 (36.8%) served elderly groups. More notable than the counts per category is the finding that most survey respondent organizations indicated they served multiple age groups as part of their project audiences.

### ***Gender and Sexuality of Populations Served***

In documents reviewed by the research team, a total of 4 (11.1%) grantee organizations identified women as a population specifically served by their grants. Additionally, 2 (5.6%) grants specifically served trans people and 3 (8.3%) grants discussed serving LGBTQIA+ populations. The grantee survey did not include a question around these population areas.

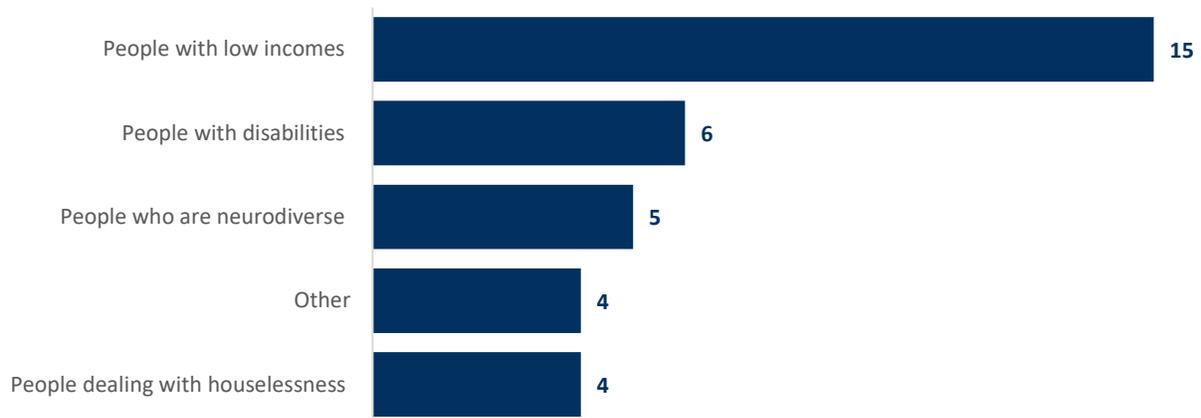
### ***Additional Populations Served***

Grantees also identified other underserved populations served by CT grants on documents reviewed by the research team. A total of 16 (44.4%) grantees specifically stated their grants served people with low incomes. A further 7 (19.4%) grantees specifically stated their grants served people with disabilities and/or people who are neurodiverse. An additional 3 (8.3%) grants served people dealing with houselessness, especially youth, and 2 (5.6%) grants identified children and/or adults in unstable homes, foster care, or group home care as an audience served. Finally, 6 (16.7%) grants identified specific service worker populations, including teachers, public service staff/government employees, and firefighters.

Survey data echoed the topline document review finding, showing most respondents (15 of 20 survey participants) designed projects that specifically served people with low incomes. Others indicated they served people with disabilities, people who are neurodiverse, people dealing with houselessness, and other groups. Responses to the "other" category included work to reduce gender disparity, work for

people “without a voice,” work with Spanish-speaking youth, and work with students (many first generation). Results are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Additional Populations Served as Reported on Grantee Surveys (N = 20)



### 1.3 Did projects create any demonstrable community impact in the public benefit areas targeted by the grant program? What is different today as a result of grant-funded projects?

#### Public Benefit Areas

A key function of the CT grants is to create demonstrable community impact in the public benefit area(s) targeted by the program. On the grant application, each grantee organization was asked to identify a public benefit area to target. The four public benefit areas included: reducing disparities; improving service delivery; improving community involvement; and reducing cost of a service or function. **A total of 48.7% of grantees (19 grantee organizations) identified the primary public benefit area of their grant as reducing disparities.** A further 33.3% of grantees (13 grantee organizations) identified the public benefit area as improving service delivery, while 12.8% (5 grantee organizations) identified improving community involvement and 2.6% (1 grantee organization) identified reducing cost of a service or function. The breakdown of grantees’ targeted public benefit areas is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Grantee Public Benefit Areas (N = 39)



### *Ways Grantees Measured and Evaluated Their Impact*

In their final status report for each project, grantee organizations described results of their grant, as well as results of their own outcome evaluations. The research team reviewed 39 total final status reports to obtain information about evaluation strategies/methods that grantees used in their own evaluations of whether their projects made measurable impact. Evaluation strategies and methods varied enormously across projects, but several themes emerged from our review. In general, the most common indicators grantee organizations used to determine whether their projects had measurable impact are listed below.

## COMMON INDICATORS GRANTEES USED TO DETERMINE IMPACT

- Numbers of video programs created, produced, and/or shown
- Attendance at trainings, workshops, and/or classes associated with CT grants
- Successful planning and hosting of community/public events
- Usage rates for technology associated with or purchased with CT grant funding
- Physical spaces built and/or provided
- Surveys of participants to assess attitudes, skills, and/or change over time
- Engagement rates and/or number of individuals or organizations served
- Networking and mentorship opportunities provided
- Career and professional development, certification, and credit opportunities provided

### *Grantee Perceptions of Project Success and Impacts*

**On grantee surveys, respondents demonstrated great pride in their projects, with 14 of 20 respondents (70.0%) agreeing strongly that they are proud of their project's accomplishments and 5 (25.0%) generally agreeing.** Only 1 respondent (5.0%) indicated they did not know, perhaps due to lack of direct involvement in the grant project. For the most part, survey respondents also agreed that their project goals were realistic. A total of 18 (90.0%) agreed with this statement, 1 respondent disagreed, and 1 respondent didn't know if they agreed with the statement.

Survey data also provided insight into grantees' perceptions of their projects' impact on communities. All respondents agreed, and most strongly agreed, that project activities positively impacted the community they serve. When considering whether project activities positively impacted the community they serve *above and beyond* their typical services, however, four respondents indicated they did not know or disagreed. The remainder agreed or strongly agreed that the positive impact of CT grant project work was above and beyond their typical services.

**When asked the extent to which they agreed that the project provided new services to the communities they serve, 13 survey participants (65.0%) strongly agreed, 4 (20.0%) agreed, and the remainder disagreed or did not know.** Similarly, when asked whether the project enhanced existing services, 10 (50.0%) strongly agreed, 7 (35.0%) agreed, and the remainder did not know. Taken together, these survey results indicate that those grantees who participated nearly unanimously feel their project benefitted the community they serve.

A related theme across grantee conversations was an ability to describe added ways they were able to benefit their community, due to the technology acquired through the grant. Key themes emerged across these conversations. The quality of technology added credibility and elevated expectations of what was possible.

#### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*It has helped give this particular program legitimacy, which is really relevant for a program that specifically focuses on the Black community. I know, too, that word got out that this gear existed. While it's really focused on being available for the six fellows that we work with every year, they began a bit of an informal lending program to other Black filmmakers in the community that wanted to use the gear. We haven't yet done the math on how many people that is, but I know for sure that the gear has lived a very useful life well beyond the initial intent of the program.*

*A lot of the new technology addresses issues around disability. New technology has better resources built into it. From an accessibility standpoint, we weren't buying technology with that in mind, but we kept discovering that it was [happening] because those tools are [have it] embedded. That is a great thing.*

*Something we did know - it's a big part of what we do - the technology connects people to places, especially if you use the cameras. In our case I would go out in the world and meet new people and build new relationships.*

*Most of the people we work with can't afford really amazing technology or cutting-edge technology. I think the idea that they had access to it and that they were trusted with playing with it was incredible and building confidence. ...There is a huge issue in building that confidence in a community to engage with technology. I find this so much more effective than other traditional methods of teaching or even programming or anything.*

#### ***What is Different Today as a Result of Community Technology Grants***

Conversations with grantees provided an opportunity to explore what is different now as a result of grant-funding. Almost all organizations who participated in those discussions were able to describe clear ways the communities they work with were positively served through grant funding. Some respondents described how CT grant funds allowed them to initiate dedicated activities that gave communities space to be creative, see themselves represented in media, and invest long-term in communities.

#### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*It allowed people to find their way into these technologies and into being a media producer in very different ways. That's important because we usually just have one path, and this allowed people to see a path that they could create that fit their identity and vision for what the world should be. I think that's important.*

*One of the essential things for us is that this grant is really focused on technology and lets us buy equipment that is really high quality. It signals to anyone who wants to tell a story, that they can come to [our organization] and we can help them do that.*

*Being able to offer them really professional equipment, really good equipment, it communicates to them immediately how much we respect the story they want to tell. I think that's really important because it's just a marker of what we're investing in the people and then how much we want to help them.*

## QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*We do projects about all sorts of community groups in our region, and we let the students tell the story. It's what they want to focus on. We've had projects from [location] to homelessness to LGBTQ community groups. It allowed us to have some tools to spread the wealth a little- spread teaching and flexibility a little bit because we have a lot of students. It helps to augment all that.*

Some grantees spoke about how the CT grant funds empowered them to bring light to issues that are unique to the communities they serve, reaching communities in ways they otherwise may not have been able to.

## QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*Our project trained people in the community on how to use video equipment. It was really good because we had a great focus for them to go out and film, to find people and interview them, and also to learn the technical equipment. Then we were able to present it in venues where the community showed up. I really believe that it brought visibility to the [issue] because a lot of people have no idea about it.*

*Our community is the [cluster of organizations], families, audiences, and other interested people. Sometimes it feels like all of Portland and beyond, and we need to talk with them publicly.*

*The technology has allowed us to share more of these [public] meetings that people either can't attend [virtually], wouldn't be able to attend [in person], and record them so they can see them later on. It's helped us to be more transparent and share more of those public meetings that we need to.*

### 1.4 Did grant funds leverage other funds in the community to support the projects and/or work of grantee organizations overall? What role did project partners play in the success of funded projects?

As part of the review, PRE explored ways in which grantees leveraged grant funds or other funds from the community to support the project and/or work of their organizations. In focus groups and interviews, grantees provided several examples of how they were able to leverage funds. For example, one grantee explained that having the technology they were able to procure through the CT grants provided a foundation for them, upon which they could seek out additional funding. Another grantee spoke about how owning the technology has allowed them to consistently implement activities, and even to pivot ways they implement activities when transitioning to remote activities during the pandemic. They shared,

*"I can say for sure that having secured that capital funding helped us very much raise more money. I would have to do the math, but we easily raised five to six times the value of the grant from MHCRC in operating funding. We were able to leverage that really well. I would also say I feel we wouldn't have had the quality of gear for this program if we hadn't gotten this grant."*

**-Focus Group Participant**

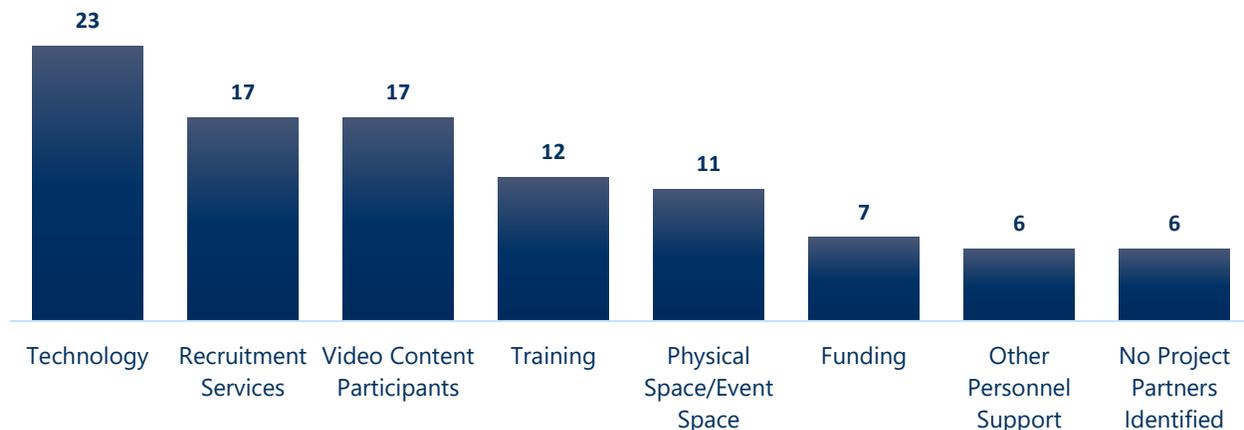
“This year and last year were different in that we were doing no schools or programs in person with students, but instead of utilizing those tools with students, we were able to use technology to meet a lot of needs for our teaching artists.”

Additional details were provided on final status reports, which the research team reviewed as part of the larger document review process. **When examining the ways in which projects were sustained past the grant-funded period (additional details provided in Section 1.7 below), at least 16 of the 39 reports (41.0%) reviewed indicated that additional funding was one way their projects were being sustained over time.** Grantees cited new funding sources found throughout the grant period, new grants that had been received based on the work performed with MHCRC-provided funds, and additional contributions of their own and other organizations to sustain projects over time. For example, one grantee said, “We will use the project’s success—particularly the positive impact on students, community relations, and anticipated employment outcomes beyond the grant period—to advocate for internal and external funding for future upgrades.” Another shared, “Even though our capital needs have been satisfied for this program thanks to your generous support, we are soliciting needed operating support for the program from foundations and individual contributors and expect responses in the next few weeks.”

### *Project Partners*

One particular way grant funds cultivated change and leveraged other funds in the community was through grantees’ partnerships with other individuals and organizations. On their applications, grantees were asked to share who their project partner(s) would be (if applicable), proposed role(s) in the project, and the contribution each project partner would make. The research team coded these responses based on categories that were identified in partnership with MHCRC staff. The research team reviewed 33 grant applications that identified a variety of roles and contributions provided by partners in the community. Partners fell into seven broad categories based on roles and contributions, providing one or more of the following: funding, technology, physical space/event space, training, recruitment services, video content participants, and other personnel support not otherwise listed. Results are presented in Figure 8, which shows the number of grant applications that identified partners with each role/contribution. Note that many projects identified multiple partners and multiple roles/contributions per partner.

*Figure 8. Project Partner Roles and Contributions (N = 39 Grants)*

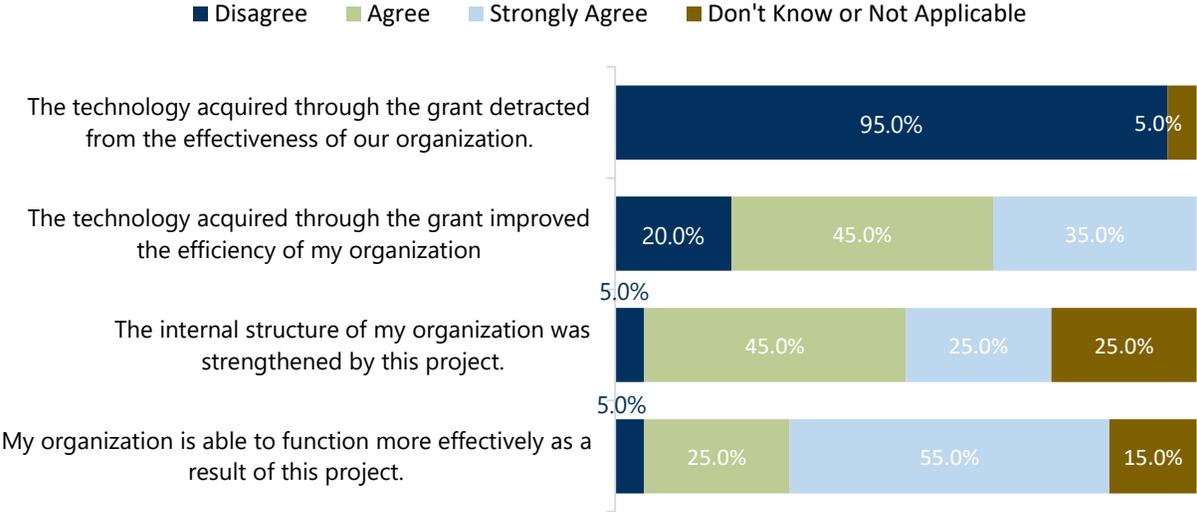


### 1.5 Did the technology acquired through the grant funds enhance or detract from grantee organizations' ability to be effective?

The grantee survey asked several questions about ways that technology acquired through the grant and the grant project itself benefitted or detracted from grantee organizations' efficiency and effectiveness. Results of these survey items are shown in Figure 9. First, grantees were asked the extent to which the technology *detracted from* their effectiveness as an organization. **A total of 19 of 20 participants (95.0%) indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed that the technology detracted from effectiveness**, with the remaining participant indicating they did not know, perhaps due to lack of direct involvement in the grant-funded project.

Next, grantees were asked the extent to which they agreed the technology acquired through grant funds improved efficiency in their organization. A total of 16 out of 20 participants agreed or strongly agreed that the technology did, in fact, improve their organization's efficiency. Similarly, when asked the extent to which the internal structure of their organization was strengthened by the project, only one participant indicated it did not strengthen their organization's internal structure, while 14 of 20 agreed or strongly agreed and 5 of 20 did not know or did not feel the question was applicable to their project. Finally, when asked the extent to which their organization is able to function more effectively as a result of the project, a total of 16 out of 20 participants agreed or strongly agreed. Only one indicated they disagreed, and three indicated they did not know or that the question didn't apply.

Figure 9. Grantees' Perceptions of Organizational Effectiveness (N = 20)



During focus groups and interviews, grantees provided additional information about how the technology and grant-funded projects impacted their organizations' effectiveness. Some grantees described how having access to CT funds was critical to their ability to achieve their mission. One described the funds as "a huge game-changer" describing how having ownership of the technology their organization uses is

critical to the success of their work. The grantee went on to describe how staff are able to become very familiar with how the technology is used, then model working with it when working with the community served (homeless youth, in this grantee example). The grantee said, concisely: "It's allowed us to do our mission, basically."

## 1.6 Did the grant-funded technology investments add any specific value to grant projects that wasn't initially anticipated?

Survey data suggest that most grantees seek CT-funded technology to better their communities, with almost all grantees who participated in the survey indicating the technology acquired through the grant was directly utilized by the community they serve. **The majority (13 of 20 respondents) disagreed that the technology was primarily used to strengthen their own organization internally.**

In addition to the substantial impacts of CT grants described in this report, half of all survey respondents agreed that the technology funded through the grant impacted their organization in ways that surpassed their expectations. A total of 12 survey respondents (60.0%) also agreed that the technology funded through the grant impacted their organization or their community in ways they didn't anticipate. Conversations with grantees brought light to why this may be. Focus groups and interview participants discussed how having access to the kind of equipment funded by CT grants helped build valuable professional skills for grantees and the communities they serve.

### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*From a technical training perspective, our teams get a lot of use out of the equipment. They do multiple trainings and productions a year where they're the ones learning and running the broadcast equipment and figuring out how to do multi-camera shoots and live events and all that.*

*Having that set of iPads, and a full class set at that, allowed us to expand what our teaching artists were able to offer. In addition to offering programs that did not require any technological assistance, we also had some people add things like digital photography and animation. There have been a couple artists who've used them for music production like GarageBand work, that kind of thing.*

*For one, it allowed those partners, those teaching artists partners, to create new work that could go into schools and then it also brought our organization up on educational trends. A lot of teachers and schools were excited to see that we had some of those new offerings. Then related to that, it also brought us some more funding sources that really like to focus on technology and incorporating technology in education.*

*Part of the grant was geared at entry-level students, or basic- students getting started. Then we had a subsidy of the equipment that we purchase for advanced students. I'm really grateful we did it that way because we hit a little bit of both needs. Students build confidence. They learned skills.*

While all grants involved in this study were awarded prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, focus groups and interviews showed that CT-funded technology also enabled grantees to sustain work in their communities amid the pandemic in unexpected ways. For some projects, this meant building infrastructure to lend out equipment to community members so that they could continue creating during closures and stay-at-

home orders. Others spoke about how the equipment enabled them to pivot to streaming or webcast formats for program implementation.

### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*The piece this year was also really not expected that we would need to have artists record videos for virtual instruction. It was really helpful to have those as tools to be able to check out to artists in addition to having them in other years to check up students.*

*As far as COVID goes, we continue to support people during COVID. We used to rent equipment at a really low rate and we switched to a grant. We just gave equipment to people who had projects that they were able to work on. That was letting people check out computers for a couple of months at a time if they needed it or getting access to camera equipment, really drop it off and let people use it.*

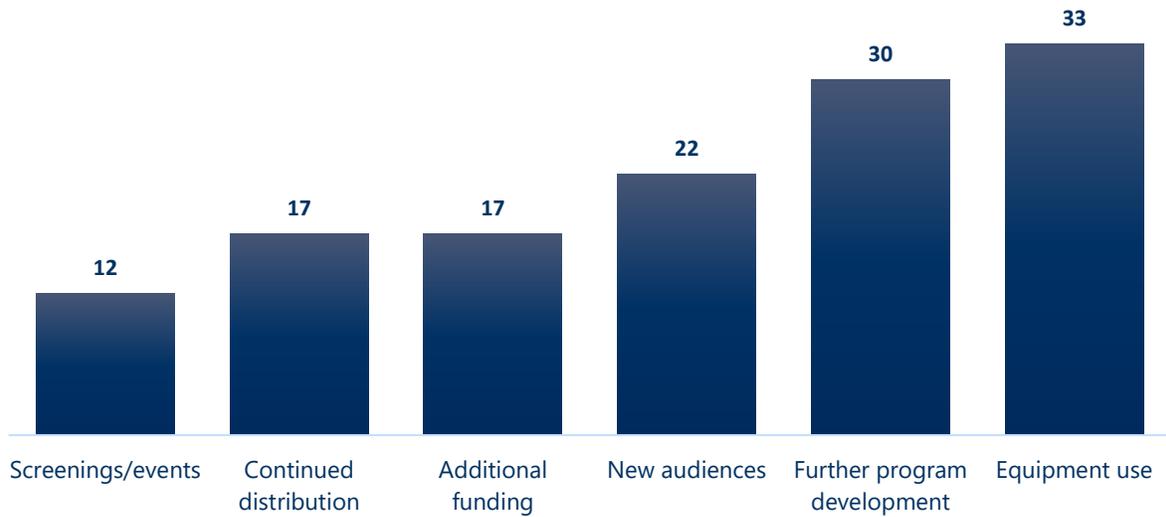
*I think we're going to try and continue to operate that way. We're going to try to make it a free resource. It's something we probably should have done earlier and COVID was the thing that finally pushed us into that space.*

## 1.7 Have grantee organizations sustained projects beyond the grant-funded term? If not, why?

The extent to which grant-funded projects were sustained past the grant term was determined using three different methods: document review, surveys, and focus groups/interviews. First, as part of document review, the research team reviewed final status reports submitted for each completed grant, or the most recent interim status report submitted if a grant project was still underway during the evaluation. It is important to note that results of the document review for this evaluation question are limited by the timeframe in which each grantee completed the relevant status report. Because grantees wrote their reports before much—or any—time had passed since project completion, many grantees focused on plans and hopes for how projects would be sustained over time. However, there were many success stories to be found on status reports, such as one grantee who reported, “This program will very much continue after the end of the grant term, and it is growing. With the initial investment from the MHCRC, we have leveraged that funding to raise more than \$500,000 in additional funding.”

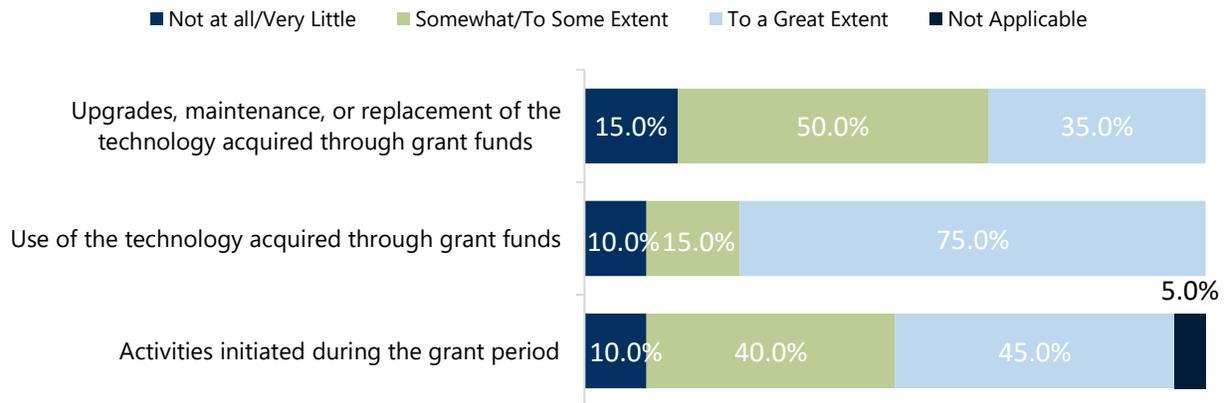
Only three grantees (7.7%) did not identify any way that their project would be or had already been sustained past the grant-funded term. All 36 remaining grantees indicated at least one way in which the project had been sustained, expanded, or evolved. Of these, 33 (91.7%) indicated the equipment or technology acquired through the grant would continue to be used. A total of 30 (83.3%) indicated the program or project funded by the CT grant would continue to be developed. A further 22 (61.1%) indicated their project would be shared with or brought to new audiences, 16 (44.4%) indicated they were seeking or had found additional funding for project-related activities, 13 (36.1%) said their content would continue to be distributed, and 12 (33.3%) were planning additional screenings or events. These results are visualized in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Project Sustainment Plans (N = 36)



Survey data provided additional, more retrospective data about the extent to which grants were sustained. Three-quarters of survey respondents (15 of 20) agreed or strongly agreed that the impact made through their project on the community will be long-lasting; the remaining five either disagreed (3) or did not know (2). When asked to what extent several specific aspects of the project had been sustained since the end of the grant, nearly all participants agreed that each aspect had been sustained at least “somewhat.” Detailed results are shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Grantee Reports of Extent to Which Aspects of Project Have Been Sustained (N = 20)



Finally, through focus groups and interviews, many grantees were able to describe ways in which project activities have been sustained post-funding and/or throughout the pandemic. Some organizations described how having the technology enabled them to pivot to distance-engagement formats, also scaling further their project reach.

## QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*What we've been doing is just adding new programs. We didn't stop during COVID. There was a very brief moment when we went all online and then hybrid, and now we're mostly in-person, but people can also Zoom in to the activities, but we never stopped. If anything, it gave us a kick to get the equipment checkout system up and running and happening.*

*[Our program] wants to live in this space and it wants to exist in a world of its own with or without the grant, which is amazing. Right when the shutdown happened we produced, for free for the community, 10 episodes of [Our Program]. We partnered with kids in New York and we partnered with youth here in Portland to submit segments with whatever they could film on, whether it was a phone or a MacBook or iPad. It enabled us to continue producing throughout the pandemic.*

*For our most recent grant, the one that falls in that timeframe, we're pretty much using all that equipment still. We're using it to help stream out a lot of our live meetings that are Zoom that need to be shared publicly. All of those upgrades are still in place and being used.*

One grantee detailed the ways in which they hope to continue relationship-building, leveraging the access to the equipment they have.

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*I think there's definitely a potential for sustainability with creative partnerships and strategic alliances outside of the grant. The pandemic only really shone a light on the importance of having high-quality equipment. We were advantaged for having that equipment.*

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Another grantee spoke about how their project work continues on through continued broadcasting of projects, through students who continue to advance skills, and by reusing purchased technology to train new students.

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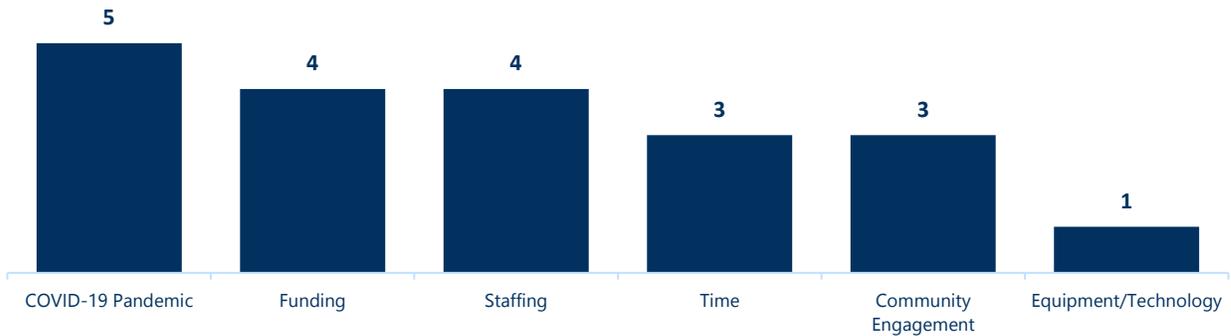
*We're trying to augment our tools, put it in the hands of our students, tell community stories, share those stories. We also partner with [Organization]. We have a channel that we just put these projects on, and we don't take them off. They are lasting because students are still doing things, not necessarily with those tools, but we have an incoming group of students now using those tools.*

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### ***Barriers or Challenges to Sustaining Project Activities***

Survey participants were asked to indicate whether they had experienced barriers to sustaining grant-funded project activities. A total of 9 of 20 (45.0%) survey respondents indicated they had, in fact, experienced barriers. Specific barriers reported by survey respondents are shown in Figure 12. **The most commonly reported barriers were the COVID-19 pandemic, operational funding, and staffing issues.**

Figure 12. Barriers to Sustaining Project Activities (N = 20 Survey Respondents)



In focus groups and interviews, managing technology was a clear challenge almost all grantees articulated. Specifically, organizations described difficulties either reallocating staff time or finding funding to support staff in managing tech systems, updates, etc. This was true across many projects but was seen as a more prevalent problem among smaller community-based organizations.

### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*A couple of the challenges with the grant is that it funds technology, but not as much support with it or training. Technology, especially new technology, for a beginner is very cumbersome.*

*When you write a grant, you put one thing in there and then you buy that thing, and you find out that you need a whole bunch of other modules for that one thing to work. Now, you have to find funds elsewhere to buy the additional equipment so your original equipment can work.*

*[Figuring out different technology needs] was a little bit challenging, but probably I guess not surprising. It's business and companies want to make money so they end up creating all these different things that you have to purchase in order for one thing to work.*

*You don't realize how much time and energy you spend coordinating to get gear and return it until you don't have to do it anymore or as much. That was a huge load off, but when going into new technology, you don't know what you're getting into till you're in it. You buy a server and suddenly you need all this other stuff that you didn't expect, and maintenance.*

*A lot of software has a very set lifespan and depending when Windows wants to upgrade or when our operations and our IT department says [we're moving to Windows 10] ... That would've meant buying the software all over again. Instead, we were able to negotiate with our IT department and [have them leave] two computers out of the upgrade.*

Though administrative capacities to manage technology was the clear primary barrier to ongoing project sustainability, there was one added barrier that a single respondent shared: the costs associated with insuring the tech. This was a requirement for renting out their equipment, and navigating insurance was seen as a cost prohibitive challenge.

### Challenges in Fulfilling Grant Activities

In interviews and focus groups, most grantees described and focused on their success in achieving their intended project goals. Only one organization that participated in focus groups and interviews shared that

they were unable to fulfill intended project activities; this grant was cancelled during the project period at the request of the grantee organization, in coordination with MHCRC staff. The primary reason, they said, is because the program they submitted was a pilot program and was intended to test feasibility of the project should added funds for it to scale be sought. The grantee stated that “the pilot was programmatically not successful,” and that it was evident early on intended activities would not be realized. Some of the projects who received funding in 2018, with activities kicking off in 2019 and continuing on through 2020, described how the global covid-19 pandemic impacted their project’s ability to realize community impact in the way they initially intended.

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*Our project started in 2019, in the summer. It’s when our space opened. We had maybe six months of operation before COVID, per the Governor’s orders. It’s a community center. We had to close for public health regulations. It was just a really awkward period for the grant because all the technology was there for group gatherings, we can have group gatherings. It’s kind of just sat there.*

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## 1.8 Are there collective “lessons learned” or themes among all or most projects? Are there any particularly useful examples of things that went well or where grantees struggled?

Throughout data collection and document review, trends emerged in what allowed grantees to be successful in implementing CT grants. During review of final status reports provided by grantee organizations, the research team examined grantees’ reflections on key factors that contributed to the success of their grant. After reviewing 39 total final status reports, several key themes emerged amongst organizations. The most common success factors grantee organizations provided included:

### COMMON SUCCESS FACTORS

- Type, quantity, and/or quality of technology and equipment acquired through the grant
- Project partners and their contributions
- Staff and volunteer time and effort
- Consulting with professional experts
- Flexibility and willingness to adapt
- Community and team support
- Ability to have an online platform
- Physical space and location

PRE also examined grantees’ final status reports for reflections on challenges grantees faced throughout grant implementation. Several grantee organizations indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting unanticipated closures were a significant hindrance to the success of their project, and thus were unable to provide in-depth descriptions of lessons learned. However, in general, grantees indicated it was challenging to adequately anticipate staffing and volunteer needs prior to the implementation of the grant. Most organizations exceeded their resources and staff hours and had to find alternative strategies to complete the work and accommodate group sizes. In addition, several grantees noted the need to better anticipate hiring of staff, leadership, and unplanned staffing costs as a key lesson learned.

Relatedly, several grantee organizations noted scheduling challenges and suggested grant implementation would have benefited from better attention to coordination around scheduling needs.

There were also initial challenges with timing and getting projects started at the onset of each grant period. Grantees found that projects often required permits or media clearances noted the unanticipated time spent trying to bring all stakeholders together to discuss planning and implementation. Furthermore, some grantee organizations noted the need to ensure there were multiple forms of backup for video content to achieve successful archiving of footage. Grantees also indicated the need to anticipate transportation and food needs and to budget for such needs accordingly. Finally, several organizations indicated needs to assess physical space prior to technology installation, as some spaces were not large enough to accommodate all equipment. Overall, the majority of lessons learned fell into categories of staff considerations, timing and scheduling, and unanticipated costs and resources.

Focus group and interview conversations with grantees provided keen insights around various experiences implementing awarded funds and, through conversation with each other, created shared awareness around common experiences. A key collective learning across many projects is that as they start to accumulate more newer, better technology through the grants they end up with a collection of older equipment. The group discussed challenges for managing all this extra equipment, opportunities for sharing or recycling them, and ways they could collectively support each other in these efforts.

#### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*We have old technology now that we hang on to that no one uses. It's just a lot of work to figure out how to responsibly... is there a place we can put it where people could use it when they want it, but we don't have to manage it or is there a place to put it where we can help recycle it? It would be nice if that was part of these grants or just even if it's to just help me find the resources for where to responsibly donate or recycle things. If it was the ability to create a community pool of all the equipment that could be used, that'd be even stronger.*

*There's a lot of life to that technology, even if an institution or a project has moved on. There's still wonderful technology and it would be nice to have a pathway to share it because it is so expensive... It would be nice if we could create a checkout library for all of the grantees together or something like that, or a donation.*

*I have been wondering for a while [about recycling or renting technology], because we're probably the only organization in town that doesn't have these infrastructural problems because our organization's been building this stuff for four years. How can we better support other organizations in not having to reinvent the wheel more than they want to?*



## GRANTMAKING PROCESS

Responding to Evaluation Questions 2.1 through 2.7.

### 2.1 What work was funded by the grant making effort?

The organizations that received CT grants ranged from very small non-profit teams to local community colleges, municipal government agencies, and more. Grantee project goals, activities, and progress are described in detail in sections 1.1 (project goals by cable system technology; technology proposed in grant applications; types of technology acquired through grant funds; project goals; project activities), 1.2 (project audiences, target beneficiaries, and populations served), 1.3 (public benefit areas), 1.5 (project partner roles), and 1.7 (how work has been sustained over time).

Additional data on how grant funds were spent come from both surveys and document review. On the grantee survey, almost all survey respondents (19 of 20) definitively agreed that the technology acquired through the grant was directly utilized by the community served. As described in other sections of this report, most survey respondents also indicated that the project provided new services to the communities served, plus enhanced existing services (see Section 1.3 for more detail).

Document review provided the opportunity to further understand how grant funds were spent. Grantees were asked to identify the type of technology they proposed to use. Of the 39 grants reviewed (2 were excluded because they were cancelled before project completion), a total of 29 grants (74.4%) indicated they would focus primarily on video production equipment. An additional 7 grants (18.0%) indicated they would focus on interactive data over I-Net. The remaining 3 grants listed other focuses, including mobile devices, interactive video, and other production equipment.

### 2.2 How and how well has the program incorporated equity into the grantmaking process? How might MHCRC better advance equity through its process?

#### *Ways Equity was Evident in the Application and Awarding Process*

CT grant applicants were required to address at least one of the four stated public benefit areas: reduce disparities, improve community involvement, improve service delivery, or reduce costs.

Historically, equity has been incorporated into the CT grant program most directly through the “reduce disparities” public

benefit area. Staff interviewees and grantees alike mentioned concerted efforts by MHCRC—throughout the review period of 2014-2018 and particularly in recent years—to explicitly address equity. The most recent CT grant application and more targeted outreach efforts implemented as MHCRC has developed

#### COMMISSIONER PERSPECTIVE

Commissioners feel that equity has always been a priority for the grant program but appreciate recent efforts by staff to make it more explicit. One commissioner commented, *“I think there was a general understanding that we wanted to reach diverse groups, but I really appreciate in the last year specifying that we are really pointed in this direction.”*

and progressed the CT grant program are great steps toward directly focusing on equity in the grantmaking process.

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*I've noticed that there are more questions about equity now. In the past, it was submerged language; it was hinted at but not directly spoken to. It's nice to have it more defined and visible so applicants can speak more directly to equity.*

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Survey data appears to support the above findings, as well. Slightly more than half of respondents (11 of 20, or 55.0%) agreed or strongly agreed, that MHCRC incorporated equity into the grant awarding process. However, 7 respondents indicated they didn't know if equity was incorporated, and 2 were unaware of the extent to which it was incorporated.

### ***Opportunities to Further Advance Equity in the Grantmaking Process***

MHCRC staff recognize there is an opportunity for continued advancement of equity in the grant application process. They acknowledged that the systemic approach to grantmaking is generally grounded in a white culture and that staff are still focused on outreach methods and finding ways to reach out to small BIPOC-led communities throughout the county in an effort to see more diversity of applications. One staff member commented on the work that still needs to be done, "Over time, the grants have reached underserved communities, and, as we move into the next iteration, we are fine tuning the equity lens with all that we have learned, focusing on racial inequity in communities with disabilities, for example...This process takes staffing changes, learning, bringing commissioners along, taking time to do the work, changing processes, and making systematic changes. This work takes time."

Grantee focus group and interview data document additional insights on ways equity can be considered when awarding CT grants. At a higher level, there was discussion around what "equity" is meant and how it can be interpreted in grant applications as communities served, organization types or functions, or something else entirely. Grantees recalled being asked to define community beneficiaries but didn't always see that as explicitly connected to equity work.

### **QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS**

*On the application there's a lot of "how do you serve your community?" I don't remember if there was any targeted language that stood out saying, "For underserved families or historically underserved families."*

*We have a lot of that language, [where we are] very intentional in what we do and where our resources go to the point that we will say, "We're spending more resources here because there's more BIPOC students there. We're very, very direct about that."*

*As I remember back to the grant application, I know they talk about how we serve our community, if it reaches all of our families, et cetera. It's maybe not as specific as what we're used, but I remember they are talking about reaching more of our community.*

## QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*I don't really remember. I know that one of the things that we sure made note of in the application process was that we were serving a wide variety of demographics of students. I don't know if that was something that gave us higher points, but I'm sure that it was something that was part of our narrative. I really don't remember if or how [equity] was mentioned at the application process.*

Interestingly, having a group of grantees together in conversation with one another about equity brought to light differences across organizations that received grant funding. Representatives from smaller community-based organizations, predominately, expressed surprise and some discomfort to learn that they are competing against larger educational institutions or organizations, and highlighted how this could perpetuate inequity. Another focus group participant spoke about how small organizations tend to serve very specific communities (e.g., those with disabilities). By virtue of their smaller focus area, they will always report out lower output numbers or smaller impact numbers than what larger organizations might be able to report.

*"If you're going to consider equity... The access to resources is different. We have probably 0.0001% of [organization's] budget, but we're still in the same competitive pool. The communities that you want to serve are being evaluated against the mainstream organizations with professional grant management systems. That doesn't cry out equity."*

**-Focus Group Participant**  
Community-Based Organization Staff

One of the grantees shared an opportunity for MHCRC to think more creatively about how technology can be leveraged to create a, potentially, more equitable grant application process:

*One more equity piece that might be considered is... I've noticed on some recent applications the opportunity to submit a video in lieu of writing out a narrative. I think adding that could be an enhancement to the application process and build more equity within it, especially since a lot of applicants are going to be focused on media. It could be interesting.*

### 2.3 How responsive was the grant program in meeting the needs of community organizations that sought and were awarded funds? Which application requirements, if any, posed a barrier to potential applicants or project success?

The MHCRC Community Technology Grants were advertised by MHCRC staff during the fall of each year. The grant opportunity was posted on the MHCRC website, and a postcard was distributed to a contact list of approximately 500-700 nonprofit organizations throughout Multnomah County. The MHCRC asked partner organizations such as Open Signal and MetroEast Community Media to distribute the opportunity to their networks as well.

The MHCRC held a walk-in and call-in information session providing a quick overview of the program, information about the basis for the funding, and an opportunity for organizations to discuss their project ideas to determine whether they were a good fit for the funding. According to MHCRC staff, there were varying levels of participation in the information session, but at least 10 organizations were typically in attendance. The staff communicated that they were available to applicants for one-on-one consultation leading up to the pre-application deadline.

Seventeen survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that MHCRC was responsive to meeting the needs of their organization, while one did not agree and two selected “I don’t know.” Sixteen respondents were satisfied with communication from MHCRC during the grant implementation period, while two were unsatisfied and two selected “I don’t know.”

### ***Application Process***

The pre-application was in place during the entire 2014-2018 grant period and was originally put in place as a way to reduce the burden to the applicants, as described by a staff member, who said, “This was part of our efforts to become a more grantee-centered program...we did a lot of self-education during this time and did not want to put a large burden on potential grantees prior to knowing whether their projects were fundable.” The pre-application also reduced the time commitment required from the Commissioners, as they were only required to review applications that met pre-existing grant requirements.

As grantees were discussing the overarching application process with PRE, one grantee shared thoughts on the pre-application (described as the Letter of Intent, or LOI, in conversation).

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*One interesting thing about the application process is that it has the LOI, which is quite complex, and then the application which is a bit more complex.*

*I don't know if I would have been able to complete the LOI if I was within my first year of writing grant applications when I submitted this one; if my organization hadn't already received these grants and we didn't have someone on staff who could help me interpret what it meant.*

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The complexity of the application process itself was a recurring theme from focus group and interview conversations with grantees. Many saw a clear need for MHCRC support—which they received—in completing the application and linked these challenges to larger considerations around equity.

### **QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS**

*Like most government adjacent processes, from a reporting and application standpoint, it is a little arcane. Rebecca was great and gave us a lot of assistance hands-on. That was helpful, but that was definitely required or we would have really struggled to understand exactly what was being asked, what the requirements of the grant were, and why those requirements were there.*

## QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*In terms of character counts, [the last application I submitted] was 10 times longer. There were more questions, there were 10,000 characters per question rather than 2,000. From an equity perspective that's also good – but smaller, newer organizations sometimes do not have the resources to write those just complex formal grants.*

*I think the conversations help because then you realize what's important. Part of equity is recognizing that it's not just about numbers, but about the depth of the experience for the people. I know that's not easy to measure without numbers, but there needs to be some part of the anticipated outcomes that can also be [saying we create stories, we have examples and case studies] rather than just 12 people taking the workshop, 10 people finishing. I wonder if there's a way to incorporate the stories as part of the impact because I think that's the equity piece, too."*

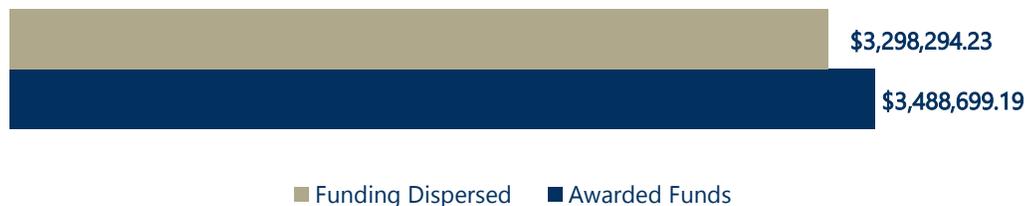
*I felt very supported as a tiny new organization with a lot of coaching from the Rebecca at the time. It seems to run gamut from small organizations to big ones. If you're in your first year, [most granting organizations] won't talk to you, and that's reasonable. I felt like it was very equitable.*

Grantees believe the volume of information required during the application process to be part of the MHCRC culture, but that communications around this expectation could be clearer: "I think a little bit more work could be done upfront to share that that is the culture of the grant [to have to share back a lot of information], because when you start it is just a very standard application... There's some upfront transparency or communication stuff that would help, but the experienced reality of it is that the staff is really generous, and they are super available."

### 2.4 How realistic were "match" resources?

Grantee organizations were asked to contribute at least 50% of the total funds required for project implementation. Of the 41 total grants awarded, 2 grants were cancelled during implementation and were thus excluded from funding totals. The remaining 39 grants totaled \$3,488,699.19 of awarded funds. Some funding was not needed or utilized. For example, one project did not proceed past the pilot stage. The total funding dispersed was thus \$3,298,294.23, as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Awarded Funds Compared to Dispersed Funds (N = 39 Grants)



In comparison to the funding dispersed by MHCRC, match funds greatly exceeded the total grant funds. During the application stage, grantee organizations proposed a total of \$10,037,755.51 in matching funds. Ultimately, following implementation of all 39 grants, grantee organizations collectively even further exceeded matching requirements, with a total match of \$12,994,878.68. Figures 14 and 15 below show the

proportions of grantees who exceeded, met, and did not meet both the 50% minimum matching criteria provided by MHCRC and grantees' own, individualized proposed match goals. Only 2 of the 39 total grants did not meet the initial matching criteria of providing at least 50% of the required funding for the project, and one of those was because the project did not proceed past the pilot phase.

Figure 14. Results of 50% Match Goal (N = 39 Grants)

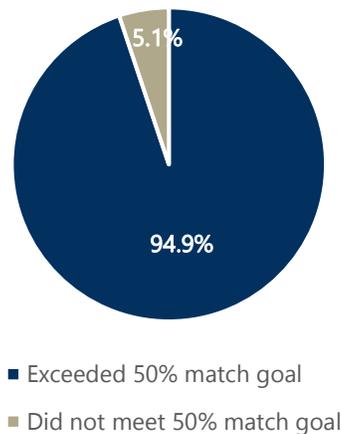
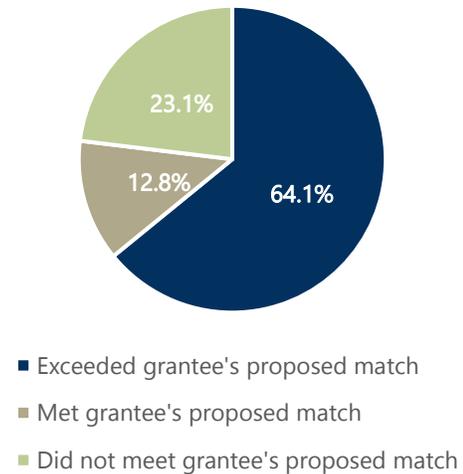


Figure 15. Results of Grantees' Individualized Match Goals (N = 39 Grants)



### Considerations Around The "Match" Requirement

According to MHCRC staff, the 50% "match" requirement for the CT grants was grounded in research around the implementation of technology grant projects and was instituted due to the capital nature of the grant program. Due to the fact that the grants were restricted to funding capital costs only, the MHCRC wanted to ensure that the organizations had the operational resources that would be needed to actually implement the project. Staff communicated that the grant program did not require grantees to list a "financial" match, as described in one interview:

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*It didn't have to be matching funds. It was more about what matching resources were on the table. Some organizations went for additional funding but usually it was matched in staff time so that organizations were not just acquiring the equipment and technology but actually had capacity to learn and use it.*

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MHCRC staff acknowledged that the match may have been a barrier to applicants, not necessarily in a financial sense but in the organization's ability to implement the project and the internal capacity it would require from the organization.

Other barriers noted by staff include the recent restrictions imposed by the cable system as well as the capital nature of the projects as described in one interview. "The capital nature of the grants and how a capital cost is defined was a barrier to some folks. Capital projects like these take a significant amount of staff time to be effective. With no other funding support, organizations getting the capital for the equipment but learning it and using it on their own for the matched dollars is a hard lift." According to

MHCRC staff, this was the primary challenge faced by grantees in using technology to fulfill their mission. The projects require knowledge and skills for using multimedia technology and it can be challenging for small organizations to train and retain this expertise on their own time and funding.

Indeed, grantees agreed with staff describing the ways in which securing funds for these operational costs sometimes placed an added burden on grantees. Organizations which aren't technology-centered described needing to procure additional funding – or to set aside internal operating costs – to hire personnel to help teach how to use the equipment, review its alignment with existing infrastructure, and provide additional support with identifying what kind of equipment to ask for in the CT grant.

#### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*What I was saying before, about the inaccessibility to community-based organizations, still remains true. Especially for organizations that don't work with technology, [this equipment provides] a really high learning curve. We had to hire an IT consultant basically to scope it out for us. That wasn't included in the grant. We paid for a consultant to [tell us what we need and what to write in the application].*

*I know some public funders now do pre-assistance for grants to help with things that require a lot of technical input. I think that's something to consider.*

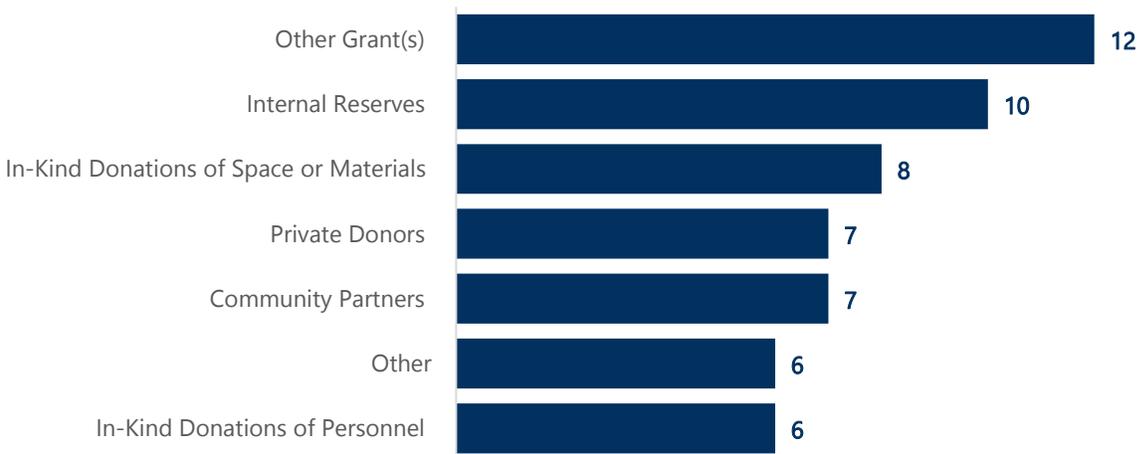
MHCRC staff also mentioned that the restrictions of the cable company funds limits the pool of organizations that have mission driven projects that fit the grant criteria. "There isn't that large of a pool of organizations that have the capacity to integrate multimedia into their organization and have a mission driven project." Again, there was alignment with MHCRC staff perceptions and grantee perspectives. Awardees spoke about how this creates a disconnect between the community element of the grants, the shift towards equity, and the reality of what can be achieved with grant funds.

#### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*I think for the communities who we are trying to benefit, it shouldn't be so much about the dollar match. It should be about the type of partnership that you have. The MHCRC is administered by the city tech department, and the city is building a ton of affordable housing. If you are going to support low income, affordable housing tenants with technology needs somehow, that should just be all you need to say.*

When asked to indicate on the survey where matches came from, survey participants most often indicated that match funds came from other grants or internal reserves. Figure 16 below shows that range of match donation sources.

Figure 16. Source of Grantee Matches (N = 20 Survey Respondents)



The majority of survey respondents (12 of 20 respondents, or 60.0%) agreed that the 50% match was reasonable for their organization, with 2 additional respondents (10.0%) indicating they strongly agreed. Four respondents disagreed that the match expectation was reasonable for their organization, erring towards strongly disagreeing, with this statement. Two respondents did not know if the requirement was reasonable, perhaps due to lack of direct involvement with the grant.

## 2.5 What are the real-world issues and challenges faced by the grant program’s constituency to use technology as a tool to fulfill their missions? How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the projects funded?

On the grantee survey, participants were asked to rate the extent to which the technology acquired by the grant allowed their organization to better serve their targeted community. In response, all but one participant agreed (35.0%) or strongly agreed (60.0%) that the technology did, in fact, allow them to better serve their community beneficiaries. However, navigating use of new technology, while exciting and beneficial for the communities they served, was also challenging for some grantees. Difficulties that grantees identified during focus groups and interviews ranged from restrictions in the grant with regards to how they connect the public to their content, the learning curve in managing equipment inventory, and the administrative expertise needed for identifying appropriate technology for various project elements.

### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*I don't even know if some of the requirements that we struggled with are still part of the grant at this point, but what failed was the content delivery as an outbound service. Basically, we find this complicated, arcane way of bringing the content directly to the user on request basis versus making it available at a hub streaming site and giving people access to that as they want it, which is what we do now.*

## QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*I will say one of the things that has made things harder is that we have not previously been set up to have an inventory of things that we check out to schools. It has meant that we've needed to provide a whole bunch of new systems for that and then also keep them up to date which has been quite a bit. It has meant that we have formed some new partnerships with some other organizations who do that work more consistently. I think that in the future, that's the direction we might be moving, but for the time being, it's been helpful to allow us to even think about that as a possibility.*

*I think the one thing that just jumped out to me is we have admin support helping with purchasing and all that. It hit me later that it should be part of matching funds. All that time. It is a lot of time that gets put in for that.*

Despite the study's focus on grants awarded during the 2014-2018 period, the COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on how organizations continued to use technology acquired to advance their goals. Some grantee organizations were still carrying out project responsibilities when the pandemic began, while others were impacted primarily in their efforts to sustain their work and use of the technology acquired through grants. As a group, organizations described two key shifts in the way they operate: renting out the equipment they have and pivoting to streaming services. As one grantee described, "[Community members] took [the cameras] home with them and then record themselves and then send us the program for editing and then we would edit it and post it somewhere." Another grantee spoke about how the renting the technology they purchased through the CT grant was an unintended use but indicated that now that the practice has been implemented it will likely be a sustained practice. They said, "I think when we start going back the video conferencing unit will probably be used a lot more, or some sort of hybrid model. We didn't really have a culture of remote work before the pandemic. I think having those capabilities for the future are going to be super cool."

While COVID may have been the factor that brought these considerations to the forefront, it was also acknowledged that the shift from broadcasting to streaming appeared to be long lasting.

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*We still look at the broadcast as very important, but I think looking at more of an integration into the broadcast and the streaming at the same time. That's something that we had to say, "It was great to have the equipment." We were able to make it work for live streaming as well, but moving forward, we're going to be looking more at live streaming and internet first, then how we can use that to send to our broadcast on our cable as well.*

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Connecting the trends above, another grantee described how general trends towards giving all students a personal device paired with needing to adapt during the pandemic paved the way for them to create a new lending model and use it for their projects entirely: "One of the things that we learned is that it's much better for us to check them out in smaller batches than to check them out in the full class set because that allows us to have more than one artist working with them at a time... We divided them up and are checking them out in pieces rather than in a full set."

## 2.6 What are the key barriers for the community benefits of the grant program to be realized?

### *Strengths of the Community Technology Grants Program*

Overall, the research team’s review indicated a wide array of strengths in both the program and MHCRC’s grantmaking process. Grantees appreciate that MHCRC is a supportive partner, who works with them to successfully achieve their goals. A common thread throughout all discussions was how kind, responsive, and adaptable staff at MHCRC were throughout the entirety of the grant process. Grantees described feeling comfortable asking questions or discussing evolving needs. Further, they felt MHCRC was invested in them. A few grantees mentioned how proactive staff were at letting them know about upcoming awarding opportunities. This approach to working with awardees certainly seemed unique to MHCRC; many grantees described being surprised and appreciative of how approachable MHCRC staff were.

#### QUOTES FROM GRANTEE FOCUS GROUPS/INTERVIEWS

*The people of MHCRC have always been great. They’ve always been very patient, it just ends up being a lot of work that way. They’ve been always really good about reaching out to me saying, “We’ve got another round of grants coming up, do you want to apply?”*

*We had a couple of changes that happened mid-grant; we needed to change the length of the grant timeline. They were very responsive. I worked with Rebecca at the time – I think she’s moved positions or moved out from that position – she was great. We had to do some last-minute things of getting things in front of the MHCRC board, and she was very responsive, really helpful.*

*I was really surprised by how accessible and approachable the staff was and how much I’ve been able to meet with the staff and talk about our grant after the fact. That’s been amazing.*

MHCRC staff expressed a desire for more staff capacity throughout the grant implementation process, and MHCRC commissioners recognized that between 2014-2018, staff to support this work was limited and stretched thin. Staff worked closely with grantees during the application phase of the process and were responsive to the levels of assistance requested by grantees. Staff relied heavily on the grantee status reports to know what was going on with the projects. Staff reviewed the reports to closely track financials and to identify challenges that often triggered check-in calls with the grantees. One staff member described how they would like to be more directly involved with grantees during implementation, saying, “It would have been great to have more staff capacity to do things like regular site visits and for staff to be a little more informed on the ground around what was happening with the project...I think the grantees were fine in general, but we had a list of things that we would love to do more.”

### *Potential Barriers and Opportunities*

Along with the strengths revealed by this review, several opportunities and potential barriers also came up, especially during focus groups and interviews. First, although this review focused specifically on grants awarded between 2014 and 2018, discussion of the unprecedented global and local events did occur. Two grantees described specific challenges they saw become exacerbated due to the pandemic and mused that there could be an opportunity to minimize inequities on communities through technology. One

community-based organization described how accessing vaccines posed digital, linguistic, and cultural divides for the people they serve. They described this as “new economy” that exists online and with technology, requiring proficiency with a range of digital tools. This perpetuates a divide between those who have access and ability, and those who cannot – particularly those who are community elders or unable to work. They described how meeting these needs became a priority in the last year over using awarded funds: “If you look at why communities of color are often lagging behind in vaccination rates, a huge part of it is technological. Unless we’re solving for those kinds of divides now, we’re going to see that phenomenon exacerbate.”

Another grantee spoke about how they have had to think creatively about the ways in which they engage with their communities. They described having a stationary technological setup and indicated that, if they were able to have more mobility in their devices, it could open up accessibility (by not requiring people to travel to them) and would diversify who they are able to work with (by expanding into rural communities). The grantee described how this was an idea they had but did not mention seeking funding or amendment to their grant to realize this goal.

*“We always wanted to have some kitted out van that we could bring on the road to teach people filmmaking and bring it to them. I think that would have helped increase our accessibility and reaching underserved communities.”*

**-Focus Group Participant**

Additional challenges were identified in staff interviews. One challenge was when the agency was no longer able to fund INET projects as noted by one staff, “Video projects are still needed but there is a huge gap around CBO’s need for high powered laptops.” Overall, the restrictions from the cable companies around how funds could be used was the consistent challenge cited by staff and commissioners.

Finally, open-ended survey questions provided opportunities for grantees to share barriers and opportunities for growth and improvement. When asked if any application requirements posed a barrier to their organization in the application process or implementation phase of the grant, about half of grantees indicated there were no particular barriers from application requirements. However, of those who did indicate a barrier, almost everyone referenced matching and/or reporting requirements. Some grantees indicated they themselves struggled to meet the matching requirement or to complete the reporting process throughout implementation. Other grantees indicated they foresaw that smaller organizations would not have been able to successfully apply, given matching and reporting requirements.

The survey also asked grantees to share feedback on the application process. While about half indicated no improvement was needed or that they were not involved in the application process, the other half consistently described desires to have a much more simplified application and reporting process. Many grantees indicated that MHCRC staff were very supportive during the application and reporting process (e.g., “Support from MHCRC was good throughout the process.”), yet still expressed desire for reduced application and reporting burdens. Those organizations with smaller staff numbers, in particular, shared

the challenges they faced in meeting demands of application and reporting requirements. One survey respondent shared, “It was simply too complex overall. The LOI was the length of a complicated full application, and the full application is one of those most difficult applications I have completed to date. The budget also felt quite confusing.”

As another respondent indicated, it is important to note that some of the changes desired may have already been addressed, as these respondents received awards from 2014-2018. They suggested, “Simplify the reporting process and future application process (which I believe has been done) to make it more accessible to a broader, more diverse community. Let communities know they can get some support in filling out the application (informal reviews), as some newer organizations may not have professional grant writers and may not be comfortable with the formal language of the grant.”

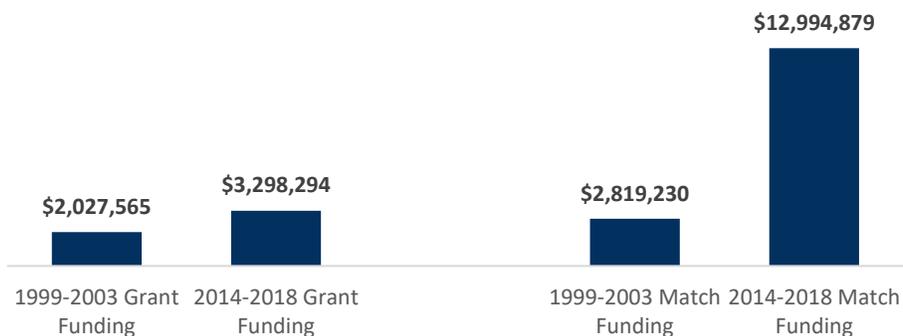
## 2.7 Are there significant differences between the findings presented here and the previous impact evaluation report (completed in 2003)?

The research team conducted a comparison of the findings presented in this report, which represents a review of the CT grant program from 2014-2018, and the findings of the MHCRC Community Access Capital Grant Program Evaluation report that was published in 2003 (“2003 Report”), which represented a review of the grant program from 1999-2003. This comparative analysis revealed many areas of substantial progress made in the 15 years, as well as some continuing trends and some areas that remain growth opportunities.

### *Projects Funded*

The 2003 Report reviewed 25 projects funded from 1999-2003, representing more than \$2 million of MHCRC investment, plus an additional \$2.8 million in matched funds. The present report reviews 41 projects funded from 2014-2018, representing \$3.5 million of MHCRC investment, plus an additional \$13 million in matched funds contributed by grantees and their partners. This represents not only an increase in the number of awards and total amounts awarded since the previous review, but also a striking increase in the matched funds provided by grantees and their partners. The total investments over a similar time period of about four years are visualized in Figure 17. Total funds expanded from \$4.8 million in the 1999-2003 period to \$16.5 million in the 2014-2018 period—a substantial accomplishment that reflects strong commitment from both the Commission and its grantees and communities.

*Figure 17. Comparison of Total Grant and Match Funds from 1999-2003 to 2014-2018*



While grants funded during both periods focused on the same public benefit areas (reducing disparities, improving service delivery, improving community involvement, and reducing costs), the percentages focused on each area shifted substantially. It appears that grantees were able to identify more than one public benefit area in the 1999-2003 period, while grantees were asked to focus on a single primary area in 2014-2018. Even so, the most common public benefit area in the 2003 Report was improving service delivery, while in this report the most common public benefit area grantees identified is reducing disparities. While a substantial portion of grantees in the 2003 Report also identified reducing disparities as an area of focus (68%), this may reflect a shift toward more work to reduce disparities by MHCRC and its grantees over time.

### ***Program Success and Sustainability***

It appears that an even higher percentage of grantees met project goals in the 2014-2018 period than the 1999-2003 period. The 2003 Report states that 84% of the 19 completed projects met all proposed outcomes and 16% partially met proposed outcomes. In the present report, approximately 90% of the 39 projects reviewed had met stated project goals. Results thus provide evidence that the grant program continues to be similarly—and highly—successful at achieving project goals and outcomes across both time periods.

Regarding the extent to which projects were sustained beyond the funding period, the 2003 Report states that 89% of grantees expected to continue project activities beyond the funding period. In the present report, 93.3% of grantees identified at least one way their project would be or had already been sustained past the grant-funded term, representing a small increase in expected sustainability of program activities. Grantees in both reports identified project partners, the ability to leverage additional resources, and the support of MHCRC staff as key factors in their successes. However, the primary barriers seem to have changed somewhat across grant periods, perhaps owing to increasing familiarity with more complex technology over time and MHCRC staff efforts to support grantees through common issues and challenges. In the 2003 Report, primary barriers identified were internal organizational issues, equipment issues, and problems with the cable system's technology or capacities. While these topics came up occasionally during the present review, equipment issues were not cited as a primary barrier. Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing issues, and limitations on time were listed as some of the top barriers to success and sustainability of projects from 2014-2018.

### ***Grantmaking Process***

In the 2003 Report, it was clear that MHCRC staff were vital in the application and overall grant process, providing support generously. Grantees expressed similar appreciation for MHCRC staff responsiveness and support in the present review. However, across both reports, grantees identified that the application was daunting for some organizations. Many struggled with reporting requirements in both time periods and suggested simplifying and streamlining both the application and reporting processes. In particular, small organizations were identified in both reports for their lack of resources to successfully meet requirements.

In spite of this continued area for potential improvement, the areas of need identified in the 2003 Report have, in part, been addressed through MHCRC and other organizations' efforts. In 2003, grantees

identified a desire to “expand the realm of qualified activities beyond traditional cable TV applications.” While the requirements of the funding stream remain specific, MHCRC seems to have found ways to help grantees work creatively within the boundaries required. For example, the 2003 Report identifies a need to link classroom distance learning with web-based training—a topic several grantees wove into project activities. Additionally, the 2003 Report identified multilingual communications as an area of need. In fact, as presented in this report, more 1 in 5 grants awarded between 2014-2018 was designed specifically to serve people with limited English proficiency or people whose first language is not English. Only 8 of 20 survey respondents reported they conducted project work only in English.

One additional continued area of opportunity in the grantmaking process is the idea of creating a learning community for grantees and/or interested community groups and organizations. In both the 2003 Report and the present review, grantees expressed desire for a consortium, networking group, or other opportunity to interact with other grantees and project partners, offer support to each other, share lessons learned, and find new connections and ways to work together toward common goals.

## INSIGHTS

Overall, the results presented in this report show substantial evidence of continued program success. Projects generally met stated goals, grantees reported feeling their projects had been successful, and numerous diverse communities were served through implementation of a wide array of technology-related projects within the bounds required by the funding stream. Below are several key takeaways and insights from which to continue to build and evolve the Community Technology Grants program. These highlights focus the grant program’s impact on grantee organizations, communities served, and MHCRC as a grantmaking body.

### Impact of Community Technology Grants on Organizations

- ◆ Overall, grantees indicated that grant funds provided positive, beneficial opportunities for their organizations and the communities they serve. Many experienced unanticipated benefits of engaging in project activities, and some have used the technology acquired with grant funds in unanticipated ways to benefit their organizations and communities.
- ◆ The majority of grantees have been able to successfully sustain their projects over time, despite numerous barriers—not the least of which has been the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding and staffing challenges were additional barriers described by those who have struggled to sustain their projects over time, but approximately half of grantees did not report barriers to success.

*“Because of PSU.tv, I’ve been able to work on multiple features, TV shows and commercial gigs around the Pacific Northwest. PSU.tv didn’t just educate me on professional grade equipment or simply further assist my understanding of filmmaking operations, but rather supplied for me a fostering, supportive and friendly community that has helped me grow as a confident filmmaker and teammate.”*

— Participant, PSU.tv Student Empowerment Through Video Production Program

- ◆ Funding from the MHCRC often served as a springboard for grantee organizations to access other funding streams, or to divert existing funds to support continued success of their MHCRC-funded projects over time. Grantees shared that, following CT grants, they were able to find new funding sources, new grants based on the work performed with MHCRC-provided funds, and additional contributions from their own and partner organizations.
- ◆ Difficulties that grantees identified during focus groups and interviews ranged from restrictions in the grant program regarding how they connect the public to their content, the learning curve in managing equipment inventory, and administrative expertise needed for identifying appropriate technology.

## Breadth of Communities and Community Needs Being Served

- ◆ Evidence supported the conclusion that the grant program is successfully meeting its overarching goal of using technology resources for public benefit. Grantee organization representatives indicated in surveys, focus groups, interviews, and grant documentation that their projects were generally successful. In some cases, success was inhibited or redefined as the COVID-19 pandemic developed—a barrier for some organizations in meeting project goals.
- ◆ The projects funded by the Community Technology Grant program covered a diverse spectrum of goals and activities, all within the bounds of broader program goals and directives related to the funding stream. The majority of projects included goals related to providing experience with industry-standard equipment and/or providing educational opportunities. More than half of grants included film production, and others supported creation of community technology spaces to serve diverse community needs.
- ◆ Grantee organizations and MHCRC staff alike expressed that limitations of the funding stream can be hard to work within, especially as supported activities have been restricted over time.
- ◆ Nearly half of grants targeted the public benefit area “reducing disparities,” and an additional one-third of grants focused on improving service delivery, reflecting MHCRC and community organizations’ interests in supporting equity and access to high-quality services across diverse communities in Multnomah County and beyond.
- ◆ Grants served a wide variety of audiences and communities, including numerous historically underrepresented and underserved groups. Two-thirds of grantee organizations stated on grant documents that their grants served Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Many grants were specifically designed to serve people with limited English proficiency or people whose first language is not English. Grants served people from all age groups, with many specifically benefitting children and teens. Almost half of grants served people with low incomes.

*“I couldn’t ask for a better program. Everything I have learned has prepared me for my future. Working with and getting to know the people (on my team) has also been key. It has been a great experience.”*

— Participant, MHCC Community Access to MetroEast

## MHCRC as a Grantmaker

- ◆ Overall, representatives from grantee organizations consistently expressed gratitude for the kindness and support they received from MHCRC staff throughout grant application and implementation, despite challenges they faced with the volume and complexity of application and reporting requirements. Although staff time for grant management was limited, MHCRC staff did the best they could within the limitations they faced, and their efforts were reflected in grantee responses throughout the assessment.
- ◆ MHCRC's focus on equity has become more explicit over the last year, and staff and commissioners feel MHCRC is moving in a good direction. This was confirmed by representatives from several grantee organizations across surveys and focus groups. However, grantees also discussed differences among experiences of organizations that received funding, focusing primarily on how smaller organizations in particular may be disadvantaged by the grantmaking process. MHCRC staff recognized an opportunity for continued advancement of equity in the grant application process.
- ◆ Grantee organizations were asked to contribute at least 50% of the total contribution required for project implementation. Grantees far exceeded matching requirements, with a total match of nearly \$13 million. The match requirement is a key part of the grant program and is designed to ensure that grantees are understanding the staffing and training resources that are required for implementing grants. This is important because the capital nature of the grants restricts them from being able to fund staff time or the operational pieces necessary for implementation. However, grantees also indicated the match requirement may be a barrier to applicants, especially smaller organizations with fewer resources.
- ◆ Overall, grantees and MHCRC staff and commissioners indicated that CT grants provide critical opportunities in the community, and there is great need for these grants. All hope there will be continued opportunity to fund the grants into the future. Restrictions around capital costs were cited as the foremost barrier by MHCRC staff, and any opportunities to restructure the program to allow greater flexibility would be welcome by grantees and MHCRC.

*"There are rare moments in life when things come our way precisely when we need them. For me, this was Outside the Frame. Before finding this program I was homeless, directionless, depressed, and running low on hope. When I found Outside the Frame, I finally felt like I had something creative to put my energy into. They put a camera in my hands and taught me how to use it. Hundreds of people wrapped around the block just to hear my story, and stories like mine. This was a life-changing experience."*

— Participant, Changing How Homeless and Marginalized Youth See and Are Seen Through Film

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the insights shared above, below are a range of recommendations for MHCRC to consider when planning for sustained activity through the Community Technology Grants program. The opportunities highlighted below are intended to build on and advance the grant program's impact on grantee organizations, communities served, and MHCRC as a grantmaking body. In considering recommendations, it is again important to note that several years have passed since the review period (i.e., 2014–2018), and many changes have already been made or begun by MHCRC staff. As such, some ongoing or planned changes may not be reflected in this retrospective report and the below recommendations.

### Enhance Grantee Support Throughout Grant Lifecycle

- ◆ Grantees expressed barriers to both the application and reporting processes. Although the program has made efforts in recent years to reduce the application requirements, further review of the current application process could reduce the burden for grantees. In conducting such a review, MHCRC could consider involving input from current grantees to ensure that any changes made are based on the current application process. Staff noted that, contrary to MHCRC's efforts to revise the application process, the reporting process has not been revised in recent years. Revisiting the reporting process in an effort to streamline what is asked of grantees is recommended.
- ◆ Grantees commented on barriers related to training and staffing needed to implement the grants. Additional efforts to communicate these expectations to grantees in the application phase would be a valuable focus of future work. The MHCRC might also consider partnering with other grantmaking organizations to support the operational costs of the grant or provide grantees with a list of organizations that could partner in this way.
- ◆ Results of this report showed that one of the most substantial barriers to the grant program is the restrictions MHCRC must ask CT grantees to operate within, based on the requirements and regulations surrounding the funding stream. Grantees seemed to struggle with or not be aware of the restrictions and barriers within which MHCRC must operate. Enhanced transparency around laws that govern funding, what MHCRC must report back to the Comcast and how it impacts CT grantee reporting, and how this creates certain limits to use of funds may help grantees better understand the rationale for the current communication and reporting structure. Enhanced visibility of these limitations or boundaries from the start may also help motivate applicants to build relationships with community media centers or other similar organizations to best support learning, implementation, and management needs.

### Foster Relationship-Building Across Grantees to Support Communities Served

- ◆ Grantees shared a desire to acquire additional knowledge in the early stages of grant application and project work, especially related to selecting and utilizing technology. To meet this need for training and additional support, MHCRC could build upon their connections with the community media centers and systematically inform grantees about how these organizations can support their learning needs.

- ◆ Grantees expressed a desire to connect with one another to learn about how different organizations are approaching the projects. We recommend the MHCRC consider a peer learning event where grantees can come together to share successes, barriers, and resources. While some connection among grantees took place even via virtual focus groups during data collection, an in-person event would be particularly desirable for grantees. Such an event may also provide an opportunity for grantees to create partnerships to support the operational side of the work.
- ◆ As shown in this report, great strides have been made toward advancing equity through the CT grant program. We recommend that MHCRC celebrate and articulate the ways in which equity is being woven into the grantmaking process so that all applicants feel fully aware of opportunities available to them. While many grantees noted great strides in how the application was highlighting equity in clearer ways, several indicated little awareness of practices to center this work. MHCRC staff have gone out of their way to craft unique opportunities, such as funding advances to support those smaller organizations that may not be able to carry project funding until reimbursement, pre-application support for technical assistance, and referrals for partnerships with community media centers. Making these better known may help applicants better articulate—and take advantage of—the equitable practices built into the grantmaking process.

## Continue to Evolve the Community Technology Grants Program

- ◆ MHCRC staff, commissioners, and grantees are hopeful about the future of this grant program despite the limitations imposed by funding streams. This report clearly highlights the value of the grant program for grantee organizations, communities, and partner organizations. Continuing to seek out innovative opportunities and partnership to keep this important work going is likely to highly benefit community-based organizations and the wide variety of audiences that funded projects serve around Multnomah County and beyond.
- ◆ As MHCRC begins its upcoming strategic planning process, we recommend inviting and incorporating feedback from a range of grantee representatives from different communities, operational budgets, and organizational ages to help inform how CT grants and the MHCRC as a whole can continue to adapt to meet community needs respective to limitations around funding streams, funding use, and mindfulness toward the equity needs their organizations serve every day.
- ◆ A limitation noted in the methods section of this report is related to the retrospective nature of this research study. To facilitate MHCRC's ability to continue to periodically look back at the impacts of the program, we recommend incorporating formative evaluation methods into the current grant program. This could be achieved by conducting a brief survey in conjunction with an annual in-person event, if developed. Alternatively, or in addition to an annual event, a survey of grantees that could be provided at the end of each grant would provide an exceptional opportunity to gather feedback about progress towards goals, successes, challenges, and opportunities for additional support from the MHCRC.

# APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

## Grantee Survey

Thank you for participating in this important research study funded by the Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission (MHCRC). The primary goal of the study is to understand impacts of MHCRC Community Technology Grants on the organizations who received grants and, ultimately, on the communities they serve. In an effort to continuously improve the Community Technology Grants program moving forward, the study also focuses on feedback regarding the grant awarding process.

This survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. All information you provide is confidential. Your responses will be reported in aggregate with those from other grantees. Your individual responses will be seen only by the external research company leading this study (Pacific Research and Evaluation LLC).

Unless you opt out, you will receive a **\$10 Amazon gift card** for participating in this survey. Your gift card will be sent within the next several weeks to the email address you provide.

Please reach out to [Taline@pacific-research.org](mailto:Taline@pacific-research.org) with any questions.

### Background Items

1. Please describe your role in the Community Technology Grant project implemented by your organization.
2. Were there other partner organizations involved in your Community Technology Grant project?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don't Know
3. What did partner organizations provide for the project? (check all that apply)
  - Funding
  - Technology
  - Training
  - Physical Space/Event Space
  - Other Personnel Support
  - Payment Processing
  - Video Content Participants
  - Recruitment
  - Other – Please Specify

## Population Served

4. Which of the following MHCRC jurisdictions did the project serve (select all that apply)?

- Portland
- Gresham
- Troutdale
- Fairview
- Wood Village
- Unincorporated Multnomah County
- Other – Please Specify

5. Which of the following age groups did the project serve (select all that apply)?

- Children
- Teens and young adults
- Adults
- Elderly
- Other – Please Specify

6. Which of the following additional underserved communities did the project serve (select all that apply)?

- People with disabilities
- People who are neurodiverse
- People with low incomes
- People dealing with houselessness
- Other – Please Specify

7. Which of the following racial or ethnic groups best describes the people the project served (select all that apply)?

- No specific racial or ethnic focus
- African / African American / Black
- American Indian / Native American
- Asian / Indian / Southeast Asian / Asian-American
- Latino/a / Hispanic / Chicano/a
- Middle Eastern / Arab / Arab American
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- White / Caucasian / European
- Other – Please Specify

8. Was any aspect of the project carried out or presented in any languages other than English (select all that apply)?

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Spanish
- Vietnamese

- Chinese
- Russian
- English was the only language used
- Other – Please Specify

### **Grant Goal and Progress**

Please rate your agreement with the following items regarding the impact of your organization’s Community Technology Grant project. (1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don’t Know • 6 – Not Applicable)

9. Our project was successful.
10. My organization achieved its project goals.
11. Our project goals were realistic.
12. We experienced barriers in achieving our project goals.
13. I am proud of our project’s accomplishments.

### **Grant Impact**

Please rate your agreement with the following items regarding the impact of your organization’s Community Technology Grant project. (1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don’t Know • 6 – Not Applicable)

14. Project activities positively impacted the community we serve.
15. Project activities positively impacted the community we serve above and beyond our typical services.
16. This project provided new services to the community we serve.
17. This project enhanced existing services provided to our community.
18. I believe the impact made through this project on our community will be long lasting.
19. My organization is able to function more effectively as a result of this project.
20. The internal structure of my organization was strengthened by this project.

If grantees responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to question 19, they were asked to provide an example of the grant’s impact on the community.

### **Technology**

The next set of questions are specific to the technology acquired through the Community Technology Grant funds.

21. What types of technology were acquired through the grant funds? (select all that apply)
  - Audio
  - Video
  - Lighting

- Software
- Recording
- Computer
- Storage
- Other – Please Specify

22. The technology acquired through the grant was directly utilized by the community we serve.

- Yes
- No
- I Don't Know

23. The technology acquired through the grant was primarily used to strengthen our own organization internally.

- Yes
- No
- I Don't Know

24. The technology funded through the grant impacted our organization in ways that surpassed our expectations.

(1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

If grantees answered "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" they were asked to describe how the technology impacted their organization in ways that surpassed their expectations.

25. The technology funded through the grant impacted our organization or the community we serve in ways I didn't anticipate.

(1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

26. The technology acquired through the grant improved the efficiency of my organization.

(1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

27. The technology acquired through the grant detracted from the effectiveness of our organization.

(1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

If grantees answered "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" they were asked to describe how the technology detracted from organizational effectiveness.

28. The technology acquired through the grant allowed us to better serve our targeted community.

(1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

## **Sustainability**

29. Has the Community Technology Grant project been sustained since the end of the grant? If so, how?

30. To what extent have the following aspects of the project been sustained since the end of the grant?

(1 – Not at All • 2 – Very Little • 3 – Somewhat • 4 – To Some Extent • 5 – To a Great Extent • 6 – Not Applicable)

31. Activities initiated during the grant period.

32. Use of the technology acquired through the grant funds.

33. Upgrades, maintenance, or replacement of the technology acquired through the grant.

34. We have experienced barriers to sustaining grant-funded activities.

(1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

If grantees answered, "Neither Agree nor Disagree", "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" they were asked the following question:

35. What have been the primary barriers to sustaining the grant funded activities? (select all that apply)

- Funding
- Staffing
- Physical Space
- Time
- Pandemic
- Equipment/Technology
- Community Engagement/Interest
- Change in Organizational Mission
- Other – Please Specify

36. Please share your greatest success story from the implementation of this grant.

## **Grant Awarding Process**

37. The MHCRC was responsive to meeting the needs of my organization during the grant implementation period.

(1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

38. I am satisfied with communication from the MHCRC during the grant implementation period.

(1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

39. What could be improved about the application process?

40. Did any application requirement pose a barrier to your organization in the application or implementation phase of the grant?

41. Could the grant application or grant requirements pose barriers to organizations similar to yours?

42. Please rate the extent to which the MHCRC incorporated equity into the grant awarding process.

(1 – Not at All • 2 – Very Little • 3 – Somewhat • 4 – To Some Extent • 5 – To a Great Extent • 6 – I Don't Know)

If grantees answered, "Very Little", "Somewhat", "To Some Extent", or "To a Great Extent", they were asked to explain how the MHCRC described the role of equity in their grant project.

43. The grant application required a 50% match in funding by your organization. What was the source of the match funds?

- Internal Reserves
- Community Partners
- Private Donors
- Other Grant(s)
- In-Kind Donations of Space or Materials
- In-Kind Donations of Personnel
- Other – Please Specify

44. The 50% match requirement was reasonable for my organization. (1 – Strongly Disagree • 2 – Disagree • 3 – Agree • 4 – Strongly Agree • 5 – I Don't Know)

## Grantee Focus Group / Interview Protocol

### Welcome

Thank you for taking time to join this focus group today. My name is Taline Kuyumjian, and I am from Pacific Research and Evaluation, which you might hear me call PRE.

Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission brought my team on to help them learn more about their Community Technology grants program, how the grants are awarded, and what opportunities there are for the future of these grants. We'll be focusing on grants awarded between 2014-2018, which we know was some time ago.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of your programs, at all. Rather it is an opportunity to hear from you about what is working well with this grant implementation and what could be improved in terms of additional support for grantees.

We would like to record today's session. This is mostly for internal recordkeeping and note taking - it will not be shared with MHCR. If anyone prefers not to be recorded, please send me a private message in the chat and I'll hold off. I'll give you some time to think on that before we get going.

Speaking of private messages, if you don't feel comfortable sharing your thoughts verbally or publicly in the chat, feel free to private message MacKenna or Kristi, and they will make note.

Your responses will be kept confidential, so we ask you to be open and honest in your feedback. Do you have any questions before we get started?

Start recording.

### **Project Outcomes**

1. Would you start by telling us briefly about your role or the extent of your involvement on the Community Technology Grant project your organization received?
2. What is different today as a result of the project?
  - a. What about for your organization?
  - b. What about for the community your organization serves?
  - c. What about for your organization's partners/project partners?
3. Did the technology your organization acquired through the grant funds enhance or detract from your organization's ability to be effective?
4. Has your organization sustained the project beyond the grant-funded term?
  - a. If yes, how?
  - b. If no, why?
5. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your project or the ways in which the project has been sustained?
  - a. How did the work you did during the project impact the work of your organization during the pandemic?

### **Lessons Learned and Grant Takeaways**

6. Were you surprised by any of the value the grant and technology funded by the grant added? Was there any added value that you didn't initially anticipate?
7. What are the issues and challenges your organization faces in using technology as a tool to fulfill your mission?
8. What were your primary lessons learned from the project?
  - a. Are there any examples of things that went well or places you struggled that stick out in your mind?

## The MHCRC as a Granting Agency

9. From your perspective, how well did the program incorporate equity into the grant application and awarding process?
10. How responsive was the MHCRC in meeting your organization's needs?
11. Were there any application or project requirements that posed a barrier to you or that you think could pose barriers to other organizations in applying for Community Technology grants?
12. What might hold the grant program back from realizing its goal of benefiting the community? Are there any barriers you see?

## MHCRC Internal Stakeholder Interview Protocol

I'd like to walk through the process that an organization went through to apply for an MHCRC Community Technology Grant between 2014-2018.

1. **Let's start by talking about how the grants were marketed. How did organizations learn about the grants?**
  - a. Did the MHCRC do any outreach to organizations?
2. **I'd like to hear more about the application process.**
  - a. When did the pre-application get instituted? What was the motivation for putting this in place?
  - b. What criteria were used to determine whether a grantee would move forward after pre-application?
  - c. Did any of the application requirements pose a barrier to applicants?
    - i. How did you learn this was a barrier? (voiced by applicants or evident in implementation?)
3. **From your perspective, how well has the program incorporated equity into the grantmaking processes?**
  - a. What has this looked like for the program?
  - b. Do you have ideas for how the MHCRC might better advance equity through the process?
4. **Can you speak to the requirement for matched resources?**
  - a. How realistic was this requirement for grantees?
  - b. How did grantees make this match?
  - c. Did you ever hear of the match hindering an organization's ability to pursue a grant? Prevent them from applying?

5. **From your perspective, how responsive was the grant program in meeting the needs of community organizations that sought and were awarded funds?**
  - a. What did the needs of the organizations typically look like?
  - b. What did communication look like between the MHCRC and the grantees?
    - i. Through the application process
      1. Any differentiation for acceptance/declines?
    - ii. Through the duration of grant activities
    - iii. With any organizations that sought another grant from MHCRC
6. **From your perspective, what have been the challenges faced by the grant program's constituency to use technology as a tool to fulfill their missions?**
7. **What are your hopes for the CT grant program moving forward?**
8. **Other comments?**