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# Ascendium Education Philanthropy 2023 Grantee Perception Report

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The online version of this report can be accessed at [cep.surveyresults.org](https://cep.surveyresults.org)

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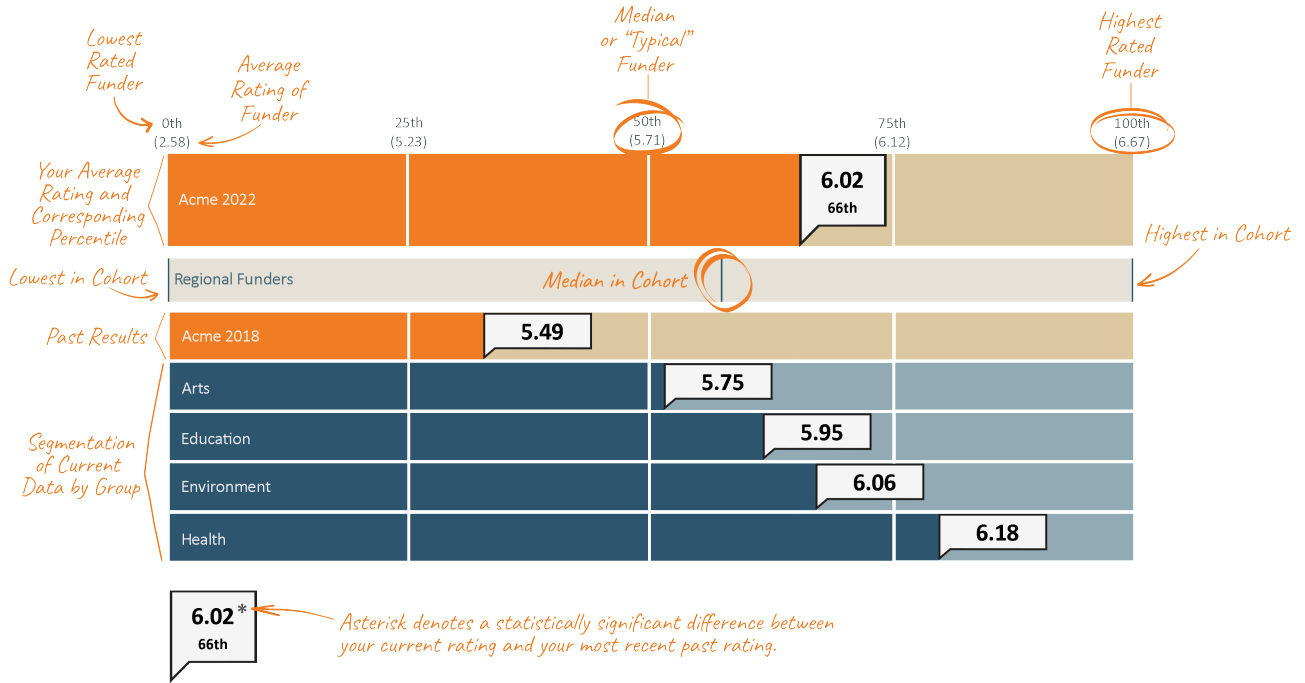
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## Interpreting Your Charts

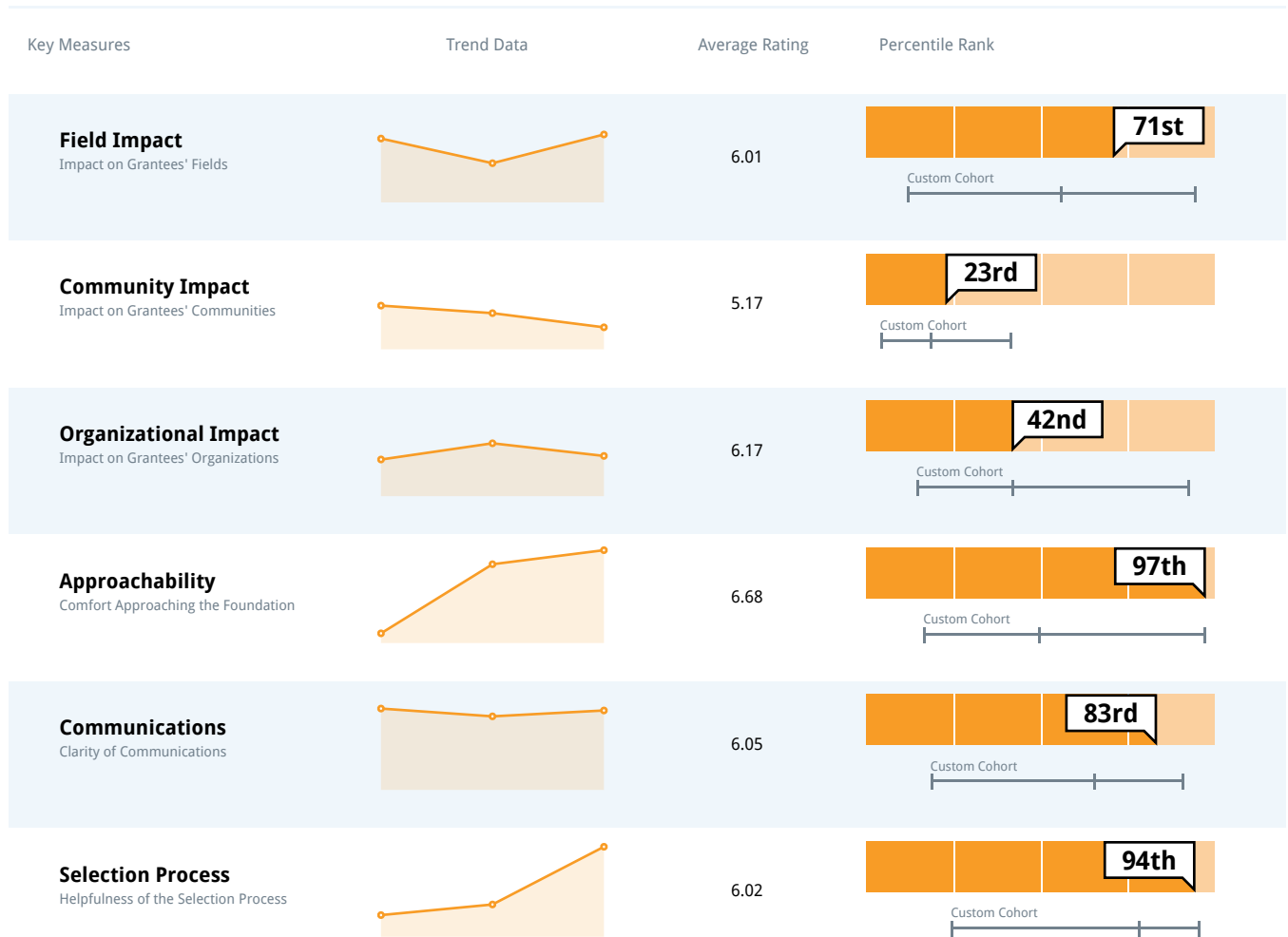
Many of the charts in this report are shown in this format. See below for an explanation of the chart elements.



Missing data: Selected grantee ratings are not displayed in this report due to changes in the survey instrument, or when a question received fewer than ten responses.

## Key Ratings Summary

The following chart highlights a selection of your key results. Each of these data points corresponds to an individual survey measure that is displayed with additional detail in the subsequent pages of this report.



## Survey Population

Survey	Survey Fielded	Survey Population	Number of Responses Received	Survey Response Rate
Ascendium 2023	February and March 2023	144	99	69%
Great Lakes* 2018	February and March 2018	192	143	74%
Great Lakes* 2014	September and October 2014	99	65	66%

\*Note: In 2018, the name of the Foundation changed from Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation to Ascendium Education Philanthropy. Although this report will refer to Ascendium's 2014 and 2018 results as "Ascendium," please note that these surveys were conducted when the Foundation was still known as Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation.

Survey Year	Year of Active Grants
Ascendium 2023	2022
Ascendium 2018	2017
Ascendium 2014	2013

Throughout this report, Ascendium Education Philanthropy's survey results are compared to CEP's broader dataset of more than 50,000 grantee responses from over 300 funders built up over more than a decade of grantee surveys. A list of some funders who have recently participated in the GPR can be found at <https://cep.org/gpr-participants/>.

In order to protect the confidentiality of respondents results are not shown when CEP received fewer than ten responses to a specific question.

### Subgroups

In addition to showing Ascendium's overall ratings, this report shows ratings segmented by Focus Area. The online version of this report also shows ratings segmented by Grant Size, Funding History, Respondent Gender, and Respondent Person of Color Identity.

Focus Area	Number of Responses
Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	14
Field Support and Development	23
Remove Structural Barriers to Success	22
Streamline Key Learner Transitions	24
Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training	16

Grant Size	Number of Responses
Less than \$300K	24
\$300K - \$599K	16
\$600K - \$999K	20
\$1MM and Over	37

Funding History	Number of Responses
First-Time Grantees	47
Consistently Funded Grantees	31
Inconsistently Funded Grantees	20

Respondent Gender	Number of Responses
Identifies as a Man	38
Identifies as a Woman	59

Respondent Person of Color Identity	Number of Responses
Does not Identify as a Person of Color	72
Identifies as a Person of Color	24

## Subgroup Methodology and Differences

The following page outlines the methodology used to determine the subgroups that are displayed in the report, along with any differences in grantee perceptions. Differences should be interpreted in the context of Ascendium's goals and strategy.

CEP conducts statistical analysis on groups of 10 or larger. Ratings described as "significantly" higher or lower reflect statistically significant differences at a P-value less than or equal to 0.1. Ratings described as "trending" higher or lower reflect a 0.3-point difference larger or smaller than the overall average rating.

### Subgroup Methodology

**Focus Area:** Using the grantee list provided by Ascendium, CEP tagged grantees based on their grant's primary focus area.

**Grant Size:** In the survey, grantees reported on the size of the grant they received from Ascendium. With Ascendium's input, CEP categorized grantees into four groups according to the size of the grant they received from Ascendium: Less than \$300K, \$300K - \$599K, \$600K - \$999K, and \$1MM and Over.

**Funding History:** Using data grantees provided in the survey, CEP tagged grantees based on their funding history with Ascendium: First-time Grantees, Consistently Funded Grantees, and Inconsistently Funded Grantees.

**Respondent Gender:** Using data grantees provided in the survey, CEP tagged grantees based on their gender identity. Those segmented as "Identifies as a Man" selected "Man" only, and those segmented as "Identifies as a Woman" selected "Woman" only.

**Respondent Person of Color Identity:** Using data grantees provided in the survey, CEP tagged grantees based on their person of color identity.

### Subgroup Differences

**Focus Area:** There are no consistent, significant differences in grantees' perceptions according to their grant's focus area. Ratings from grantees in the Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison focus area trend higher than Ascendium's overall survey average on many measures in the report, particularly around themes of Ascendium's impact on grantees' fields, understanding, and aspects of its processes.

**Grant Size:** There are no consistent, significant differences in grantees' ratings according to the size of the grant they received from Ascendium. However, ratings from grantees who received grants under \$300K trend lower than Ascendium's overall survey average on measures related to Ascendium's impact on and understanding of grantees' fields and organizations, its understanding of grantees' contexts, and some aspects of its commitment to DEI.

**Funding History:** Grantees who have been inconsistently funded by Ascendium rate significantly lower than other grantees on some measures, particularly related to Ascendium's impact and understanding. Additionally, ratings from grantees who have been inconsistently funded trend lower than Ascendium's overall survey average on measures related to Ascendium's impact, understanding, understanding of grantees' contexts, and communications.

**Respondent Gender:** There are no significant differences in grantees' ratings according to their gender identity. For more information, please see the [Respondent Demographics](#) section.

**Respondent Person of Color Identity:** Grantees who identify as a person of color rate significantly higher than those who don't on some measures in the report related to impact and understanding. For more information, please see the [Respondent Demographics](#) section.



## Comparative Cohorts

### Customized Cohort

Ascendium selected a set of 11 funders to create a smaller comparison group that more closely resembles Ascendium in scale and scope.

#### Custom Cohort

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Ascendium Education Philanthropy
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
College Futures Foundation
ECMC Foundation
Helios Education Foundation
Lumina Foundation for Education, Inc.
The Kresge Foundation
The Teagle Foundation
Walmart Giving

### Standard Cohorts

CEP also included 18 standard cohorts to allow for comparisons to a variety of different types of funders.

### Strategy Cohorts

Cohort Name	Count	Description
Small Grant Providers	36	Funders with median grant size of \$20K or less
Large Grant Providers	110	Funders with median grant size of \$200K or more
High Touch Funders	34	Funders for which a majority of grantees report having contact with their primary contact monthly or more often
Proactive Grantmakers	106	Funders that make at least 90% of grants by invitation only
Responsive Grantmakers	103	Funders that make at most 10% of grants by invitation only
Intermediary Funders	23	Funders that primarily regrant philanthropic dollars
International Funders	66	Funders that fund outside of their own country
European Funders	27	Funders that are headquartered in Europe

### Annual Giving Cohorts

Cohort Name	Count	Description
Funders Giving Less Than \$5 Million	58	Funders with annual giving of less than \$5 million
Funders Giving \$50 Million or More	88	Funders with annual giving of \$50 million or more

### Foundation Type Cohorts

Cohort Name	Count	Description
Private Foundations	170	All private foundations in the GPR dataset
Family Foundations	85	All family foundations in the GPR dataset

Community Foundations	41	All community foundations in the GPR dataset
Health Conversion Foundations	30	All health conversion foundations in the GPR dataset
Corporate Foundations	25	All corporate foundations in the GPR dataset

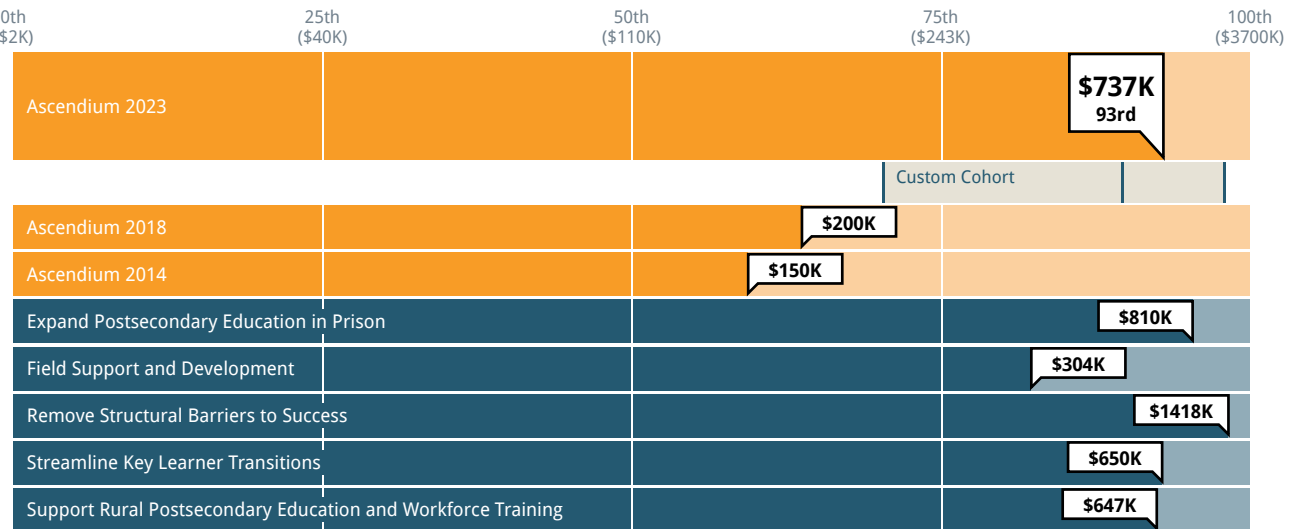
**Other Cohorts**

Cohort Name	Count	Description
Funders Outside the United States	42	Funders that are primarily based outside the United States
Recently Established Foundations	52	Funders that were established in 2000 or later
Funders Surveyed During COVID-19	172	Funders who surveyed grantees during COVID-19 (2020 - 2022)

## Grantmaking Characteristics

Funders make different choices about the ways they organize themselves, structure their grants, and the types of grantees they support. The following charts and tables show some of these important characteristics. The information is based on self-reported data from funders and grantees, and further detail is available in the Contextual Data section of this report.

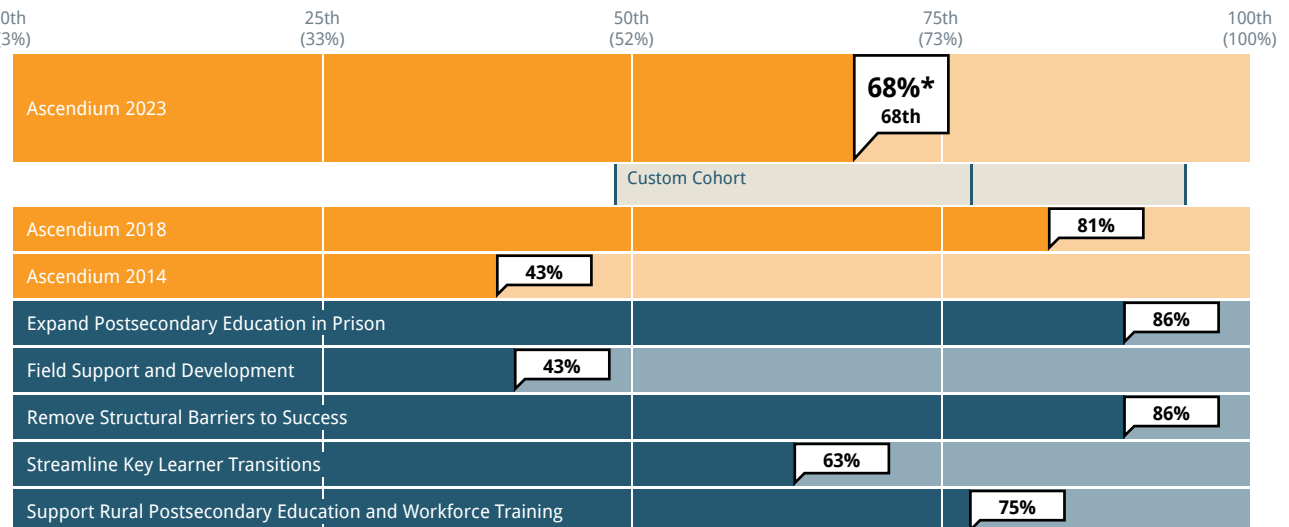
### Median Grant Size



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

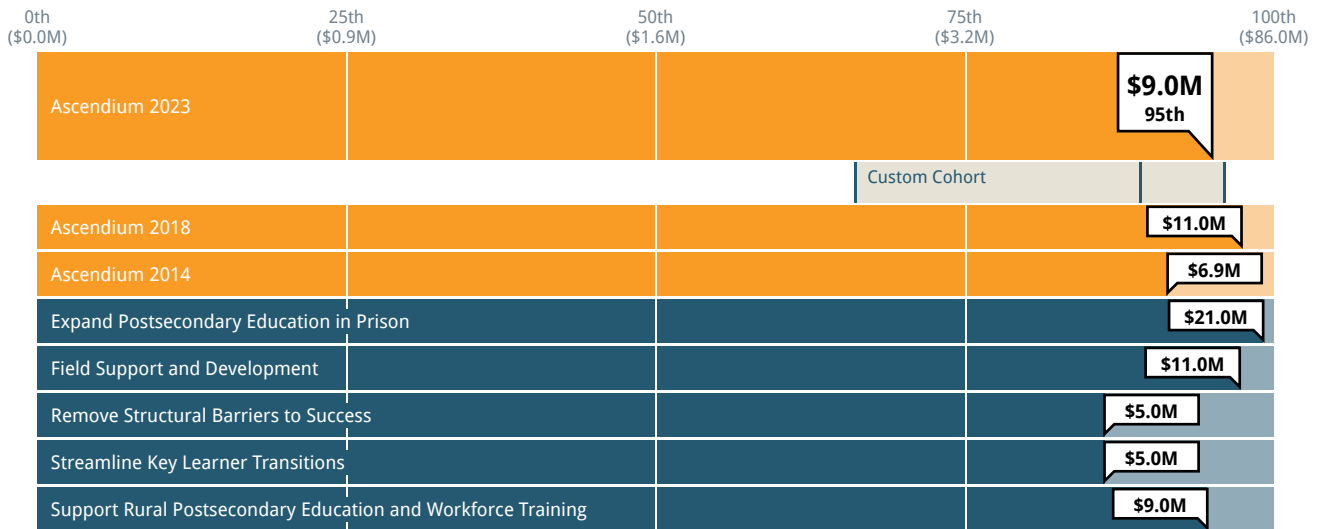
### Proportion of Multi-year Grants

Proportion of grantees that report receiving grants for two years or longer



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

Median Organizational Budget



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort

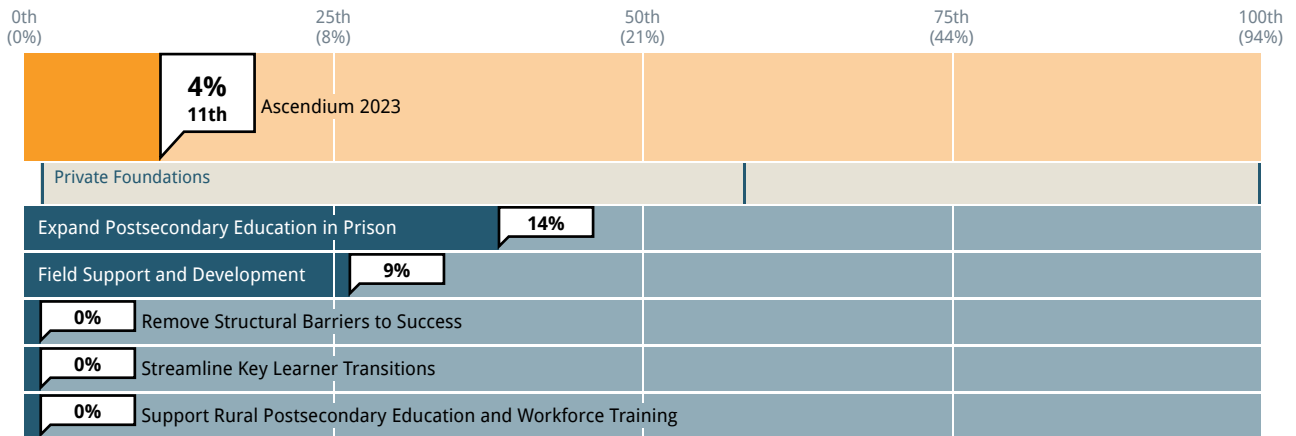
Grant History	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Average Funder	Custom Cohort
Percentage of first-time grants	48%	45%	44%	29%	33%

Selected Cohort: None

Program Staff Load	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder
Dollars awarded per program full-time employee	\$6.2M	\$4.5M	\$1.7M	\$2.7M
Applications per program full-time employee	7	39	70	24
Active grants per program full-time employee	9	48	28	31

### Proportion of Unrestricted Funding

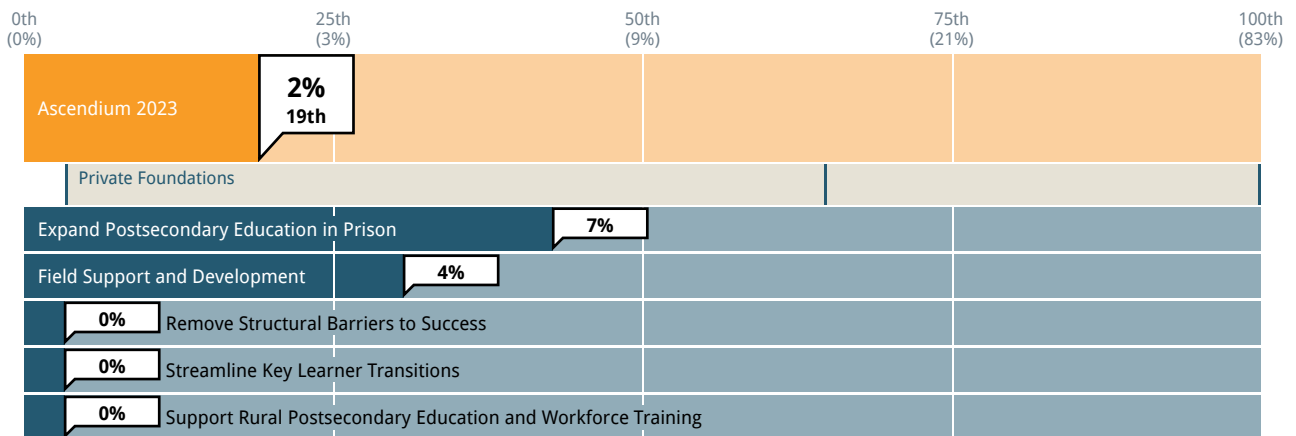
Proportion of grantees responding 'No, this funding was not restricted to a specific use (e.g., general operating, core support)'



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

### Proportion of Multi-year Unrestricted Grants

Proportion of grantees that report receiving grants for two years or longer and who report receiving general operating support funding that was not restricted to a specific use.

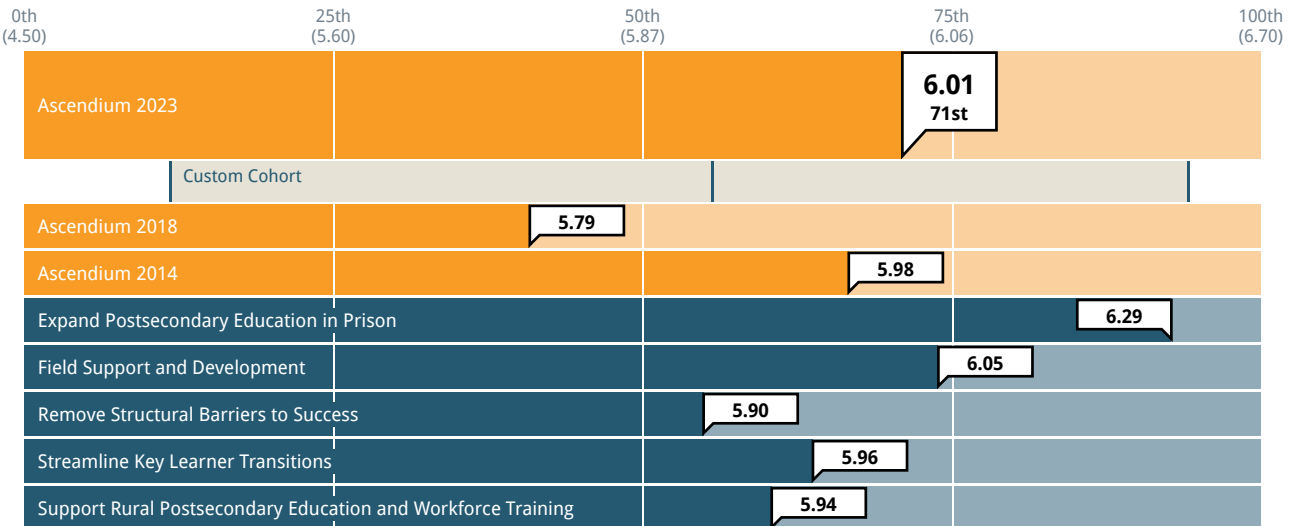


Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

## Impact on and Understanding of Grantees' Fields

### Overall, how would you rate Ascendium's impact on your field?

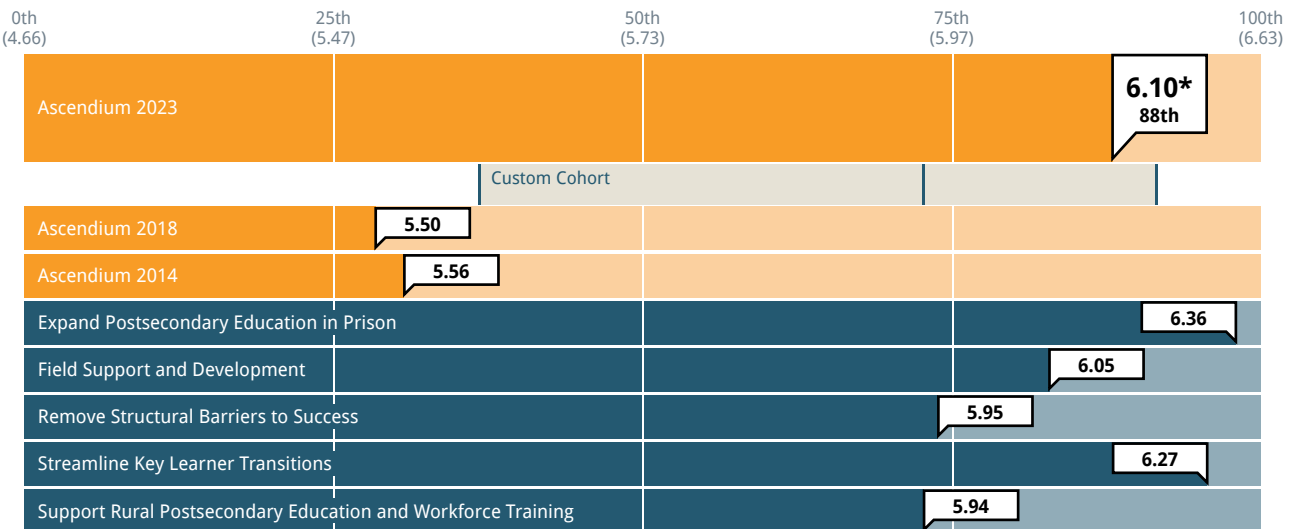
1 = No impact    7 = Significant positive impact



Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

### How well does Ascendium understand the field in which you work?

1 = Limited understanding of the field    7 = Regarded as an expert in the field

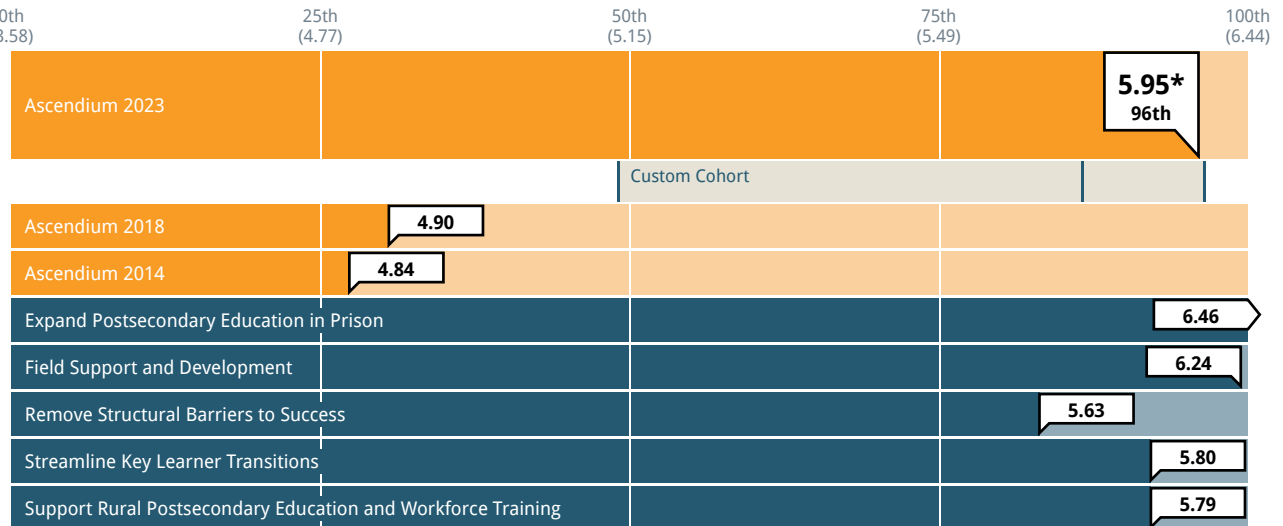


Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

## Advancing Knowledge and Public Policy

### To what extent has Ascendium advanced the state of knowledge in your field?

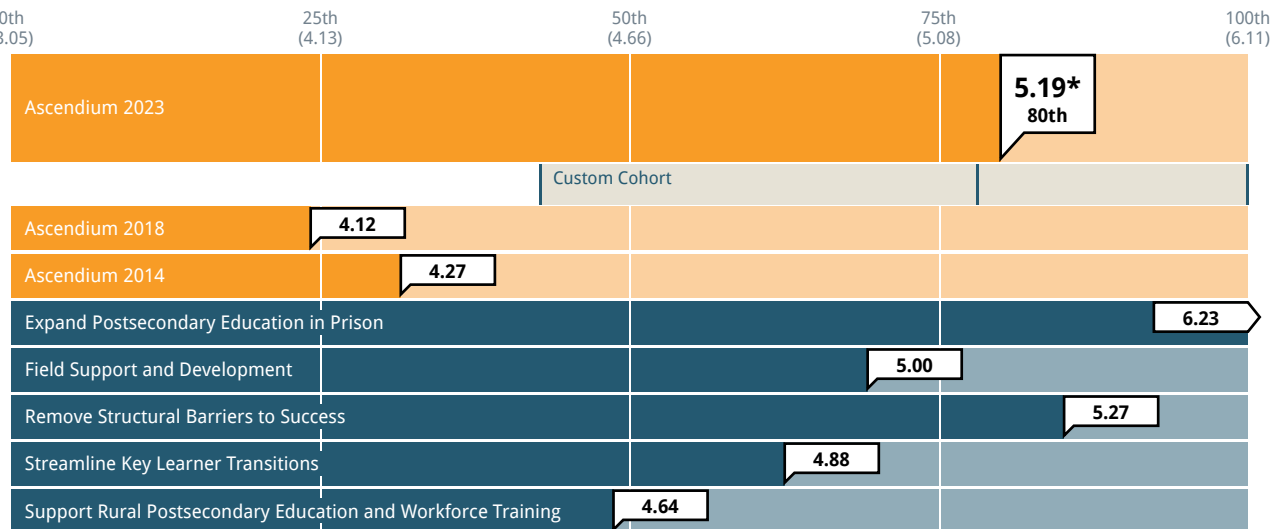
1 = Not at all 7 = Leads the field to new thinking and practice



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

### To what extent has Ascendium affected public policy in your field?

1 = Not at all 7 = Major influence on shaping public policy

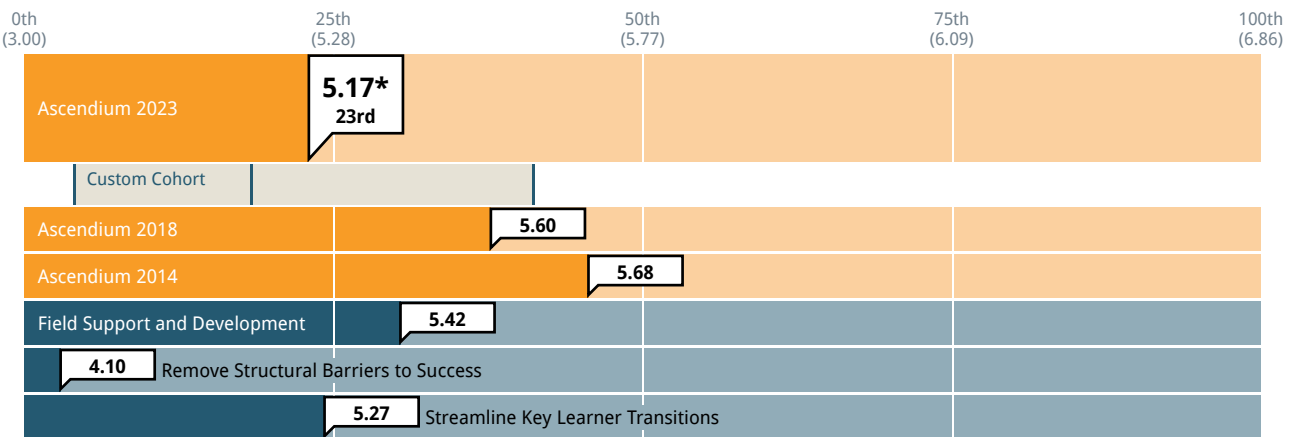


Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

## Impact on and Understanding of Grantees' Local Communities

### Overall, how would you rate Ascendium's impact on your local community?

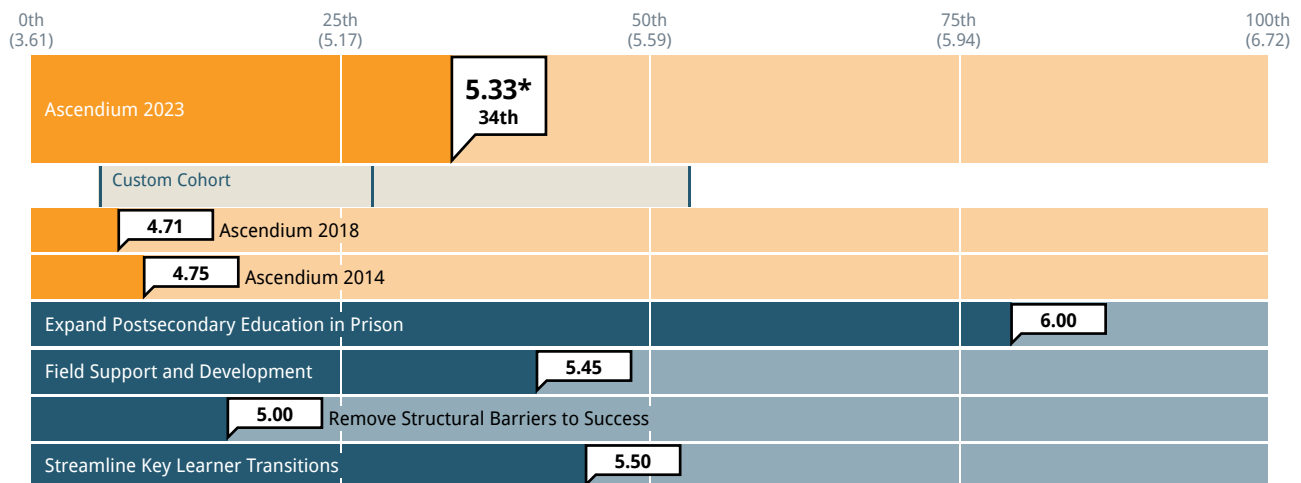
1 = No impact    7 = Significant positive impact



Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

### How well does Ascendium understand the local community in which you work?

1 = Limited understanding of the community    7 = Regarded as an expert in the community



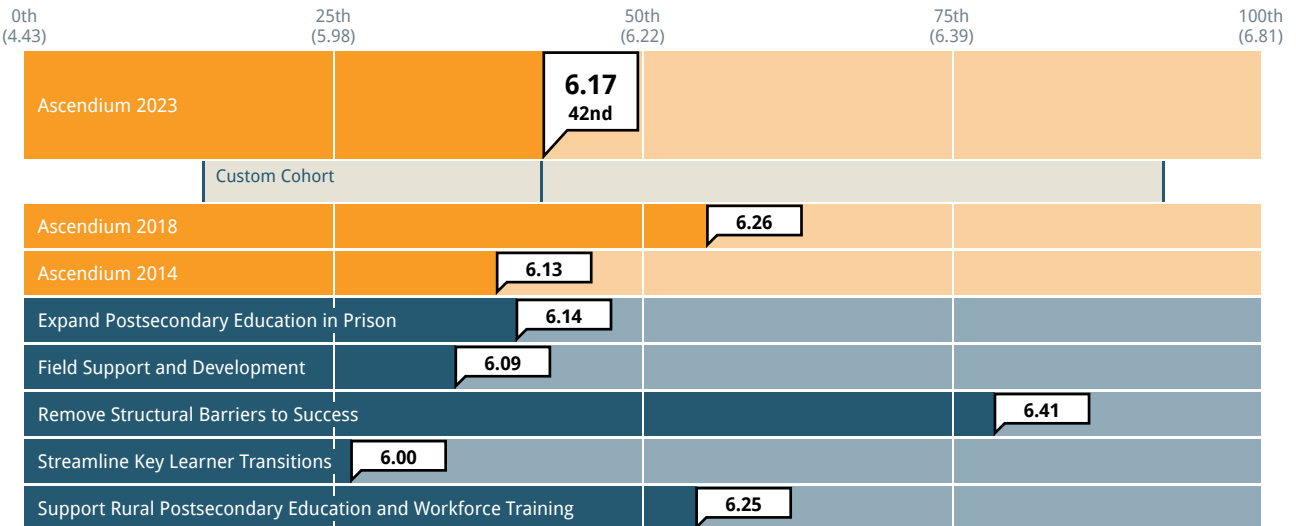
Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area



## Impact on and Understanding of Grantees' Organizations

### Overall, how would you rate Ascendium's impact on your organization?

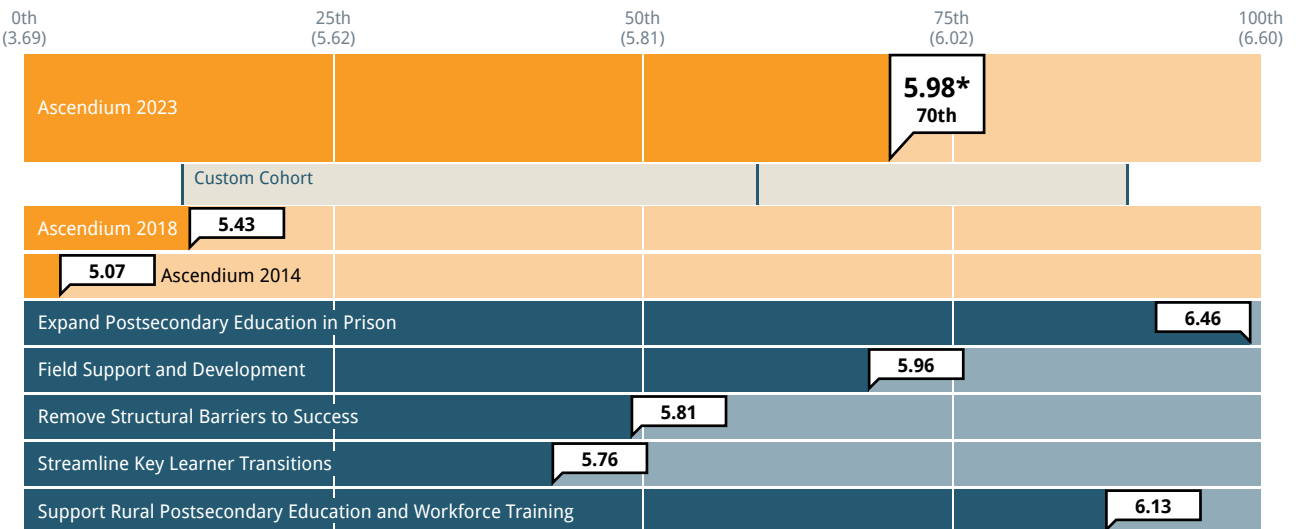
1 = No impact    7 = Significant positive impact



Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

### How well does Ascendium understand your organization's strategy and goals?

1 = Limited understanding    7 = Thorough understanding

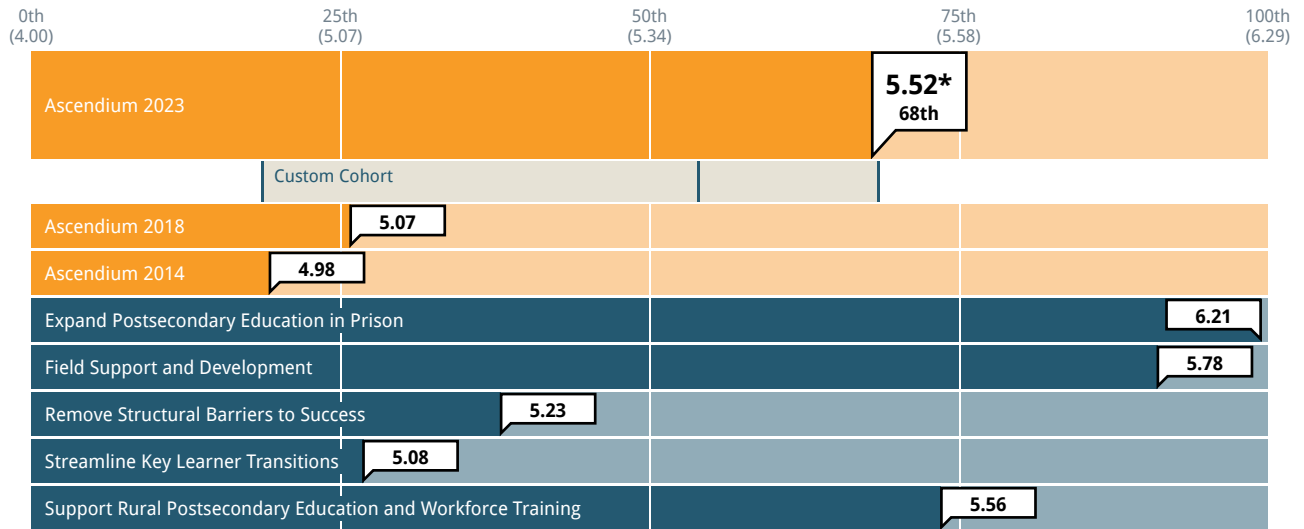


Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

## Grantee Challenges

How aware is Ascendium of the challenges that your organization is facing?

1 = Not at all aware 7 = Extremely aware

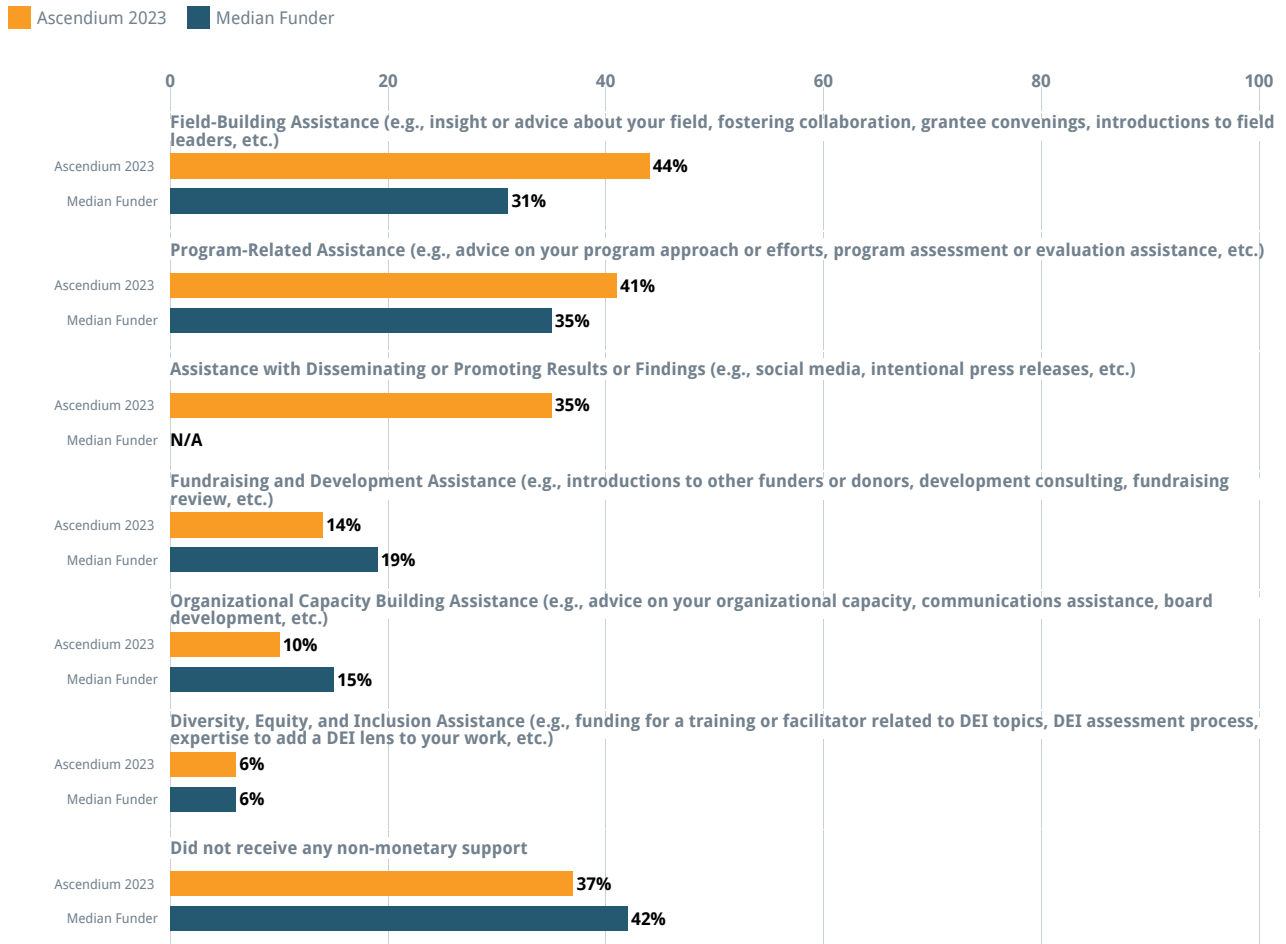


Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

## Non-Monetary Assistance

Note: The following questions were recently added to the grantee survey and depict comparative data from fewer than 25 funders in the dataset.

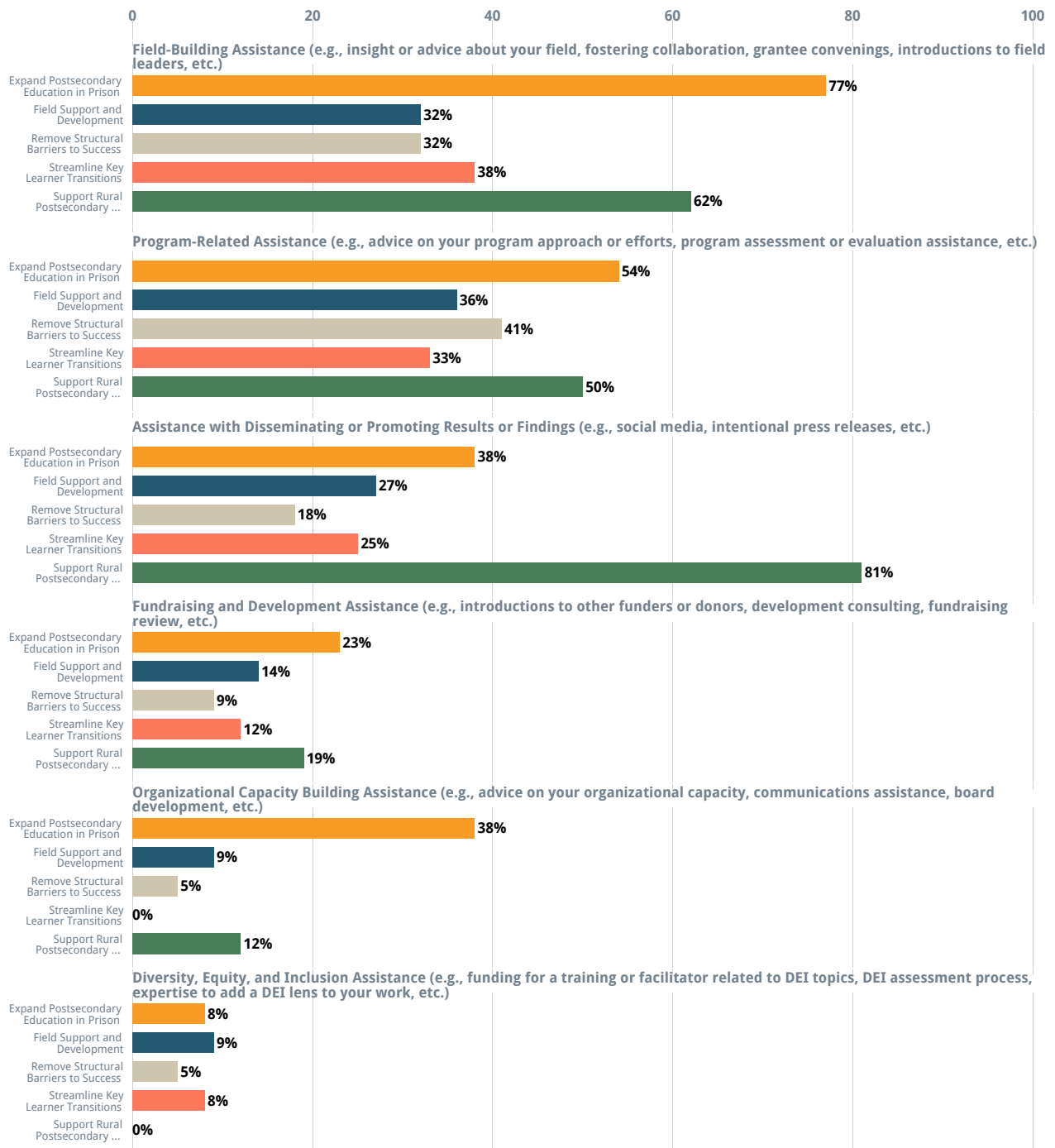
Please indicate any types of non-monetary assistance that were a component of what you received from Ascendium (from staff or a third party paid for by Ascendium)



Cohort: None Past results: on

**Please indicate any types of non-monetary assistance that were a component of what you received from Ascendum (from staff or a third party paid for by Ascendum) - By Subgroup**

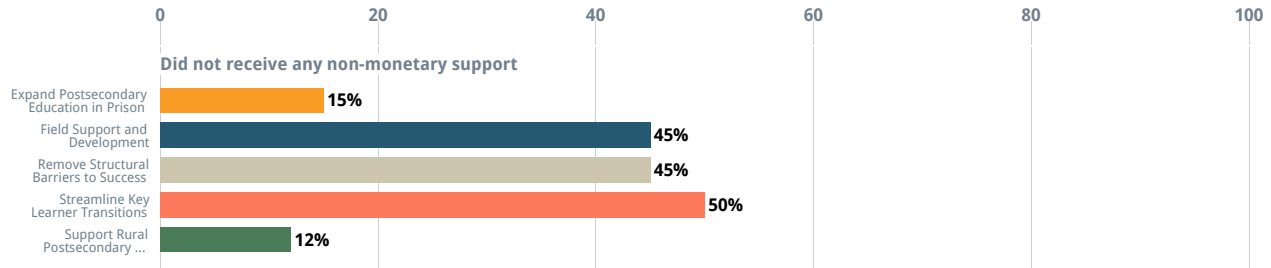
- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



Subgroup: Focus Area

**Please indicate any types of non-monetary assistance that were a component of what you received from Ascendium (from staff or a third party paid for by Ascendium) - By Subgroup (cont.)**

- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



Subgroup: Focus Area

**Note:** Respondents could select all forms of non-monetary support they received in the previous question. Therefore, the following chart provides a summary of the proportion of grantees who indicated that they received at least one form of non-monetary assistance.

**Proportion of Grantees Receiving Non-Monetary Assistance**

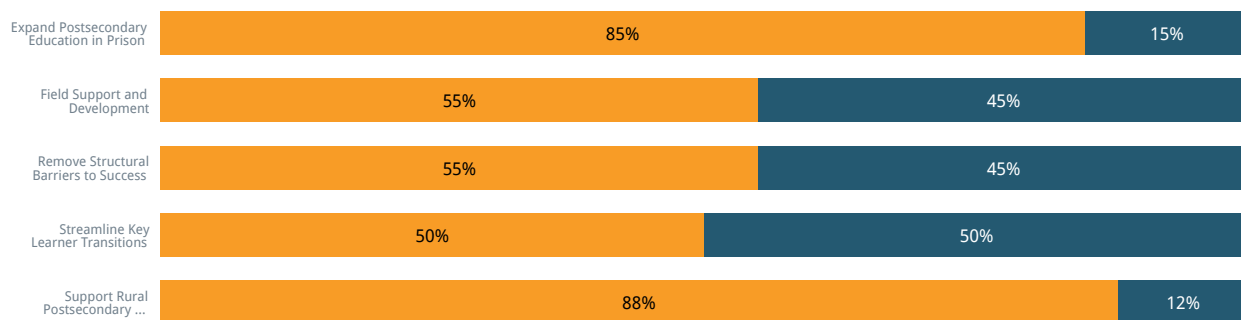
- Received at least one form of non-monetary assistance
- Did not receive any non-monetary assistance



Cohort: None Past results: on

**Proportion of Grantees Receiving Non-Monetary Assistance - By Subgroup**

- Received at least one form of non-monetary assistance
- Did not receive any non-monetary assistance



Subgroup: Focus Area

**Note:** The following questions were only shown to grantees who indicated receiving the respective forms of non-monetary support in the previous question. There were not enough grantees who indicated receiving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Assistance to show grantees' satisfaction with this form of assistance.

Additionally, the following question was asked as a custom question to just Ascendium grantees, and thus comparative data is unavailable.

Please rate how satisfied you are with the following types of non-monetary assistance that you received from Ascendium.

1 = Very dissatisfied 7 = Extremely satisfied

Ascendium 2023



Cohort: None Past results: on

Please rate how satisfied you are with the following types of non-monetary assistance that you received from Ascendium. - By Subgroup

1 = Very dissatisfied 7 = Extremely satisfied

Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



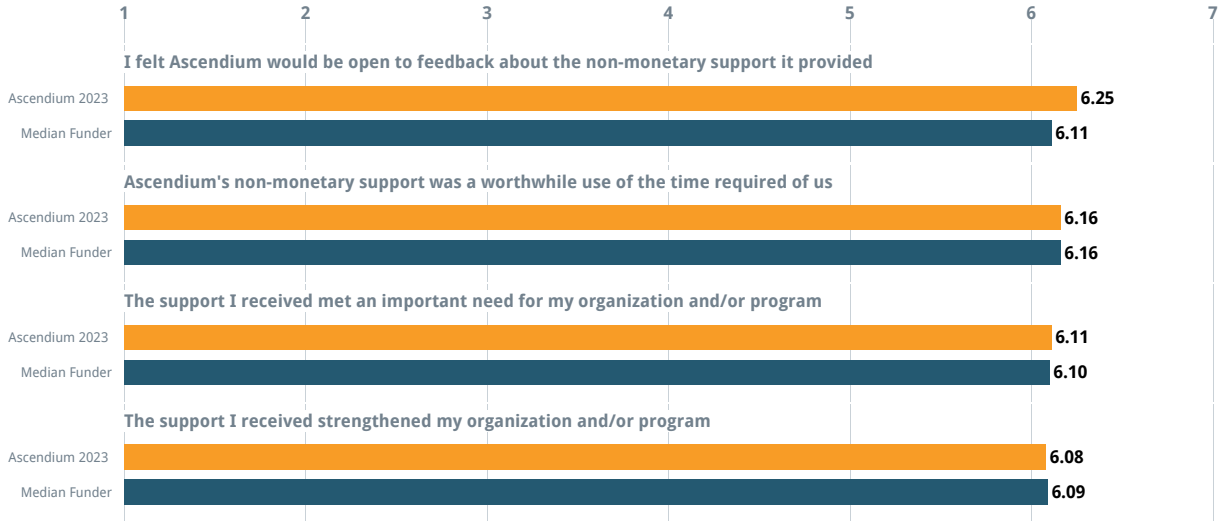
Subgroup: Focus Area

Note: The following question was asked only of grantees who indicated receiving at least one form of non-monetary assistance in the previous question.

**Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the non-monetary support you received from Ascendium:**

1 = Not at all    7 = To a great extent

Ascendium 2023    Median Funder

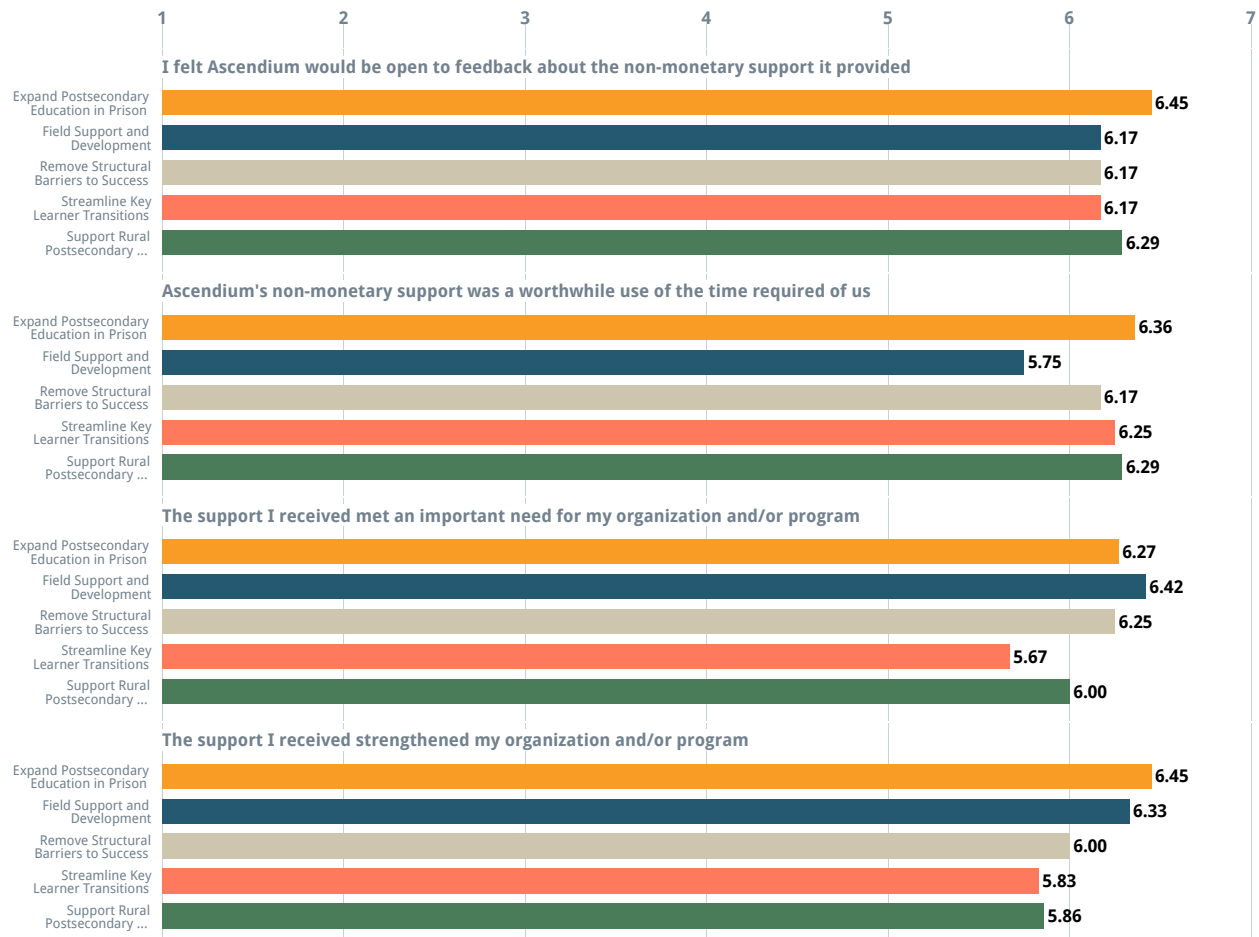


Cohort: None    Past results: on

**Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the non-monetary support you received from Ascendium: - By Subgroup**

1 = Not at all 7 = To a great extent

- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



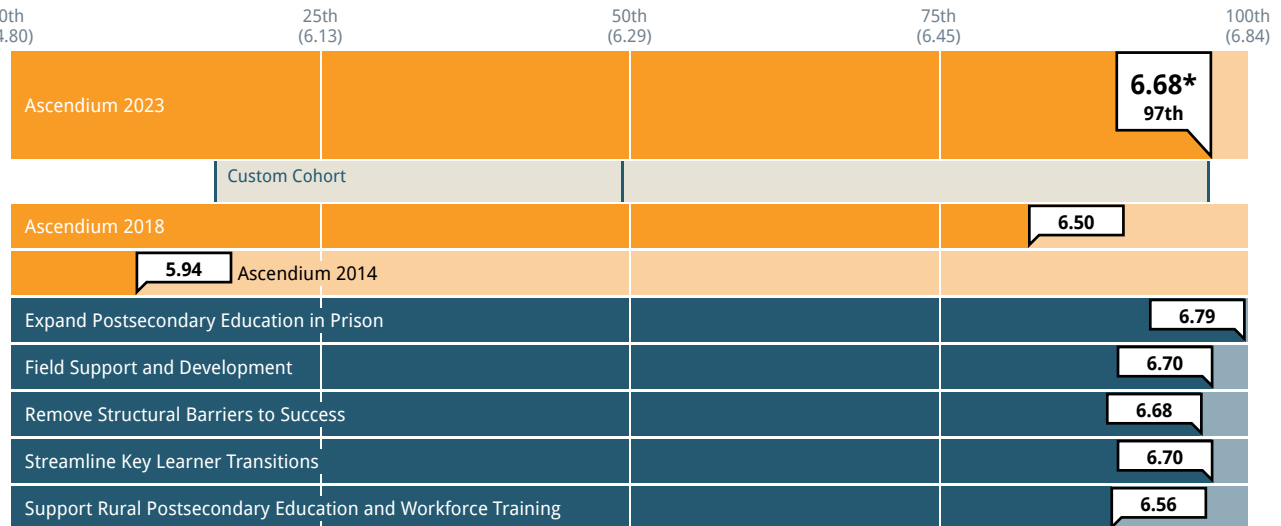
Subgroup: Focus Area



## Funder-Grantee Relationships

### How comfortable do you feel approaching Ascendium if a problem arises?

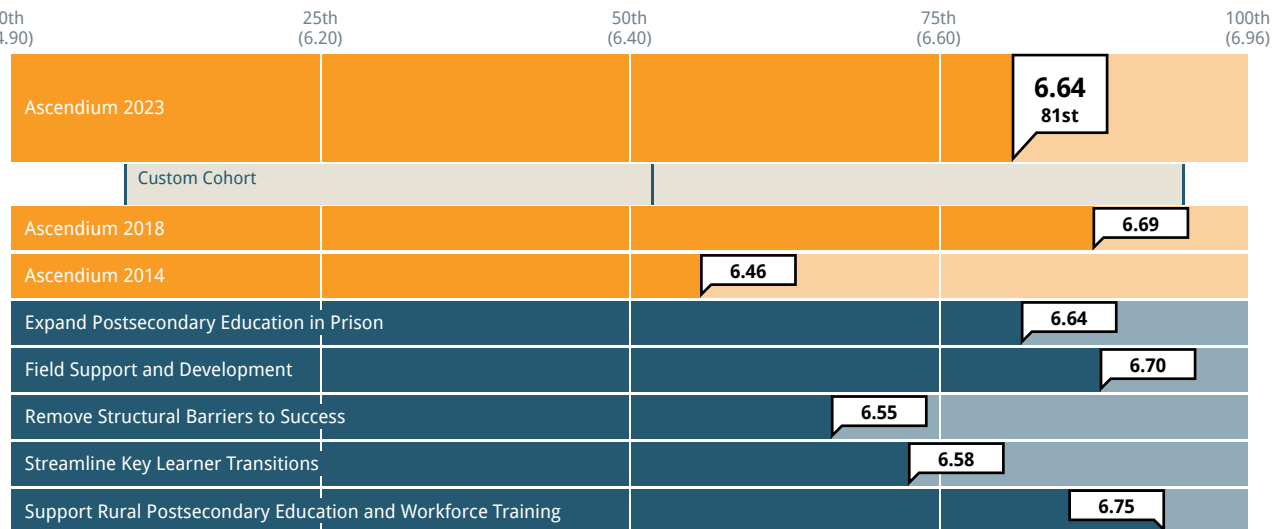
1 = Not at all comfortable 7 = Extremely comfortable



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

### Overall, how responsive was Ascendium staff?

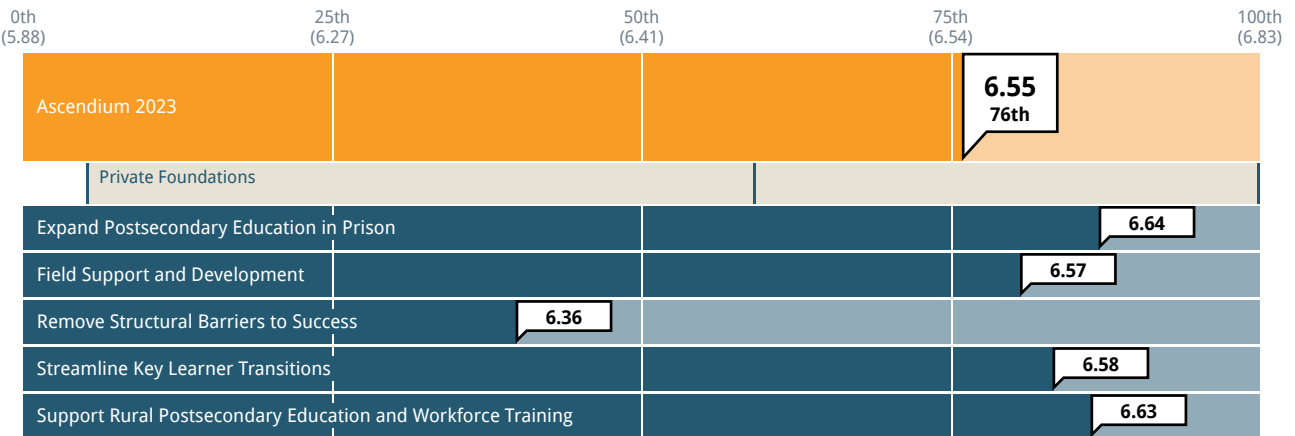
1 = Not at all responsive 7 = Extremely responsive



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent did Ascendium exhibit trust in your organization's staff during this grant?**

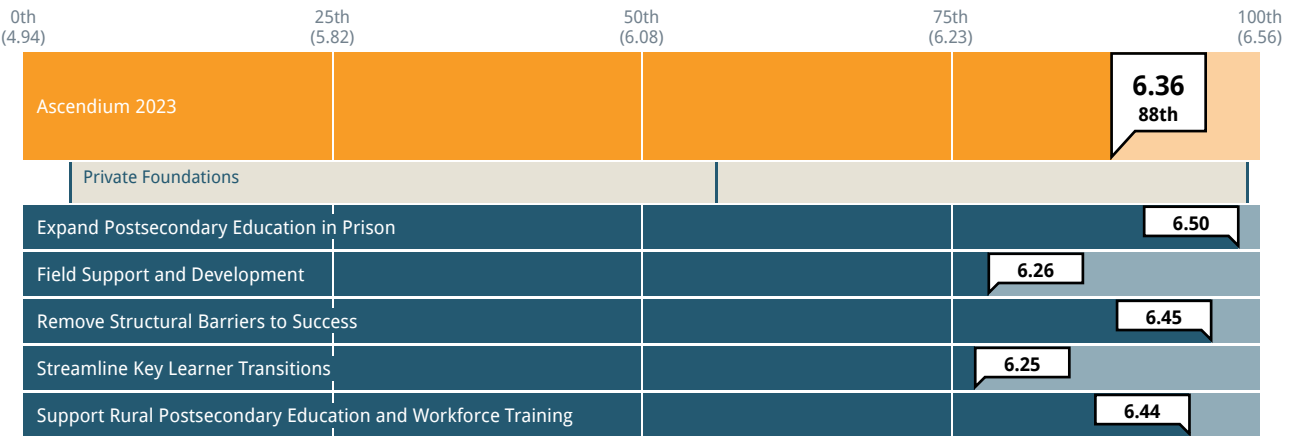
1 = Not at all    4 = Somewhat    7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent did Ascendium exhibit candor about Ascendium's perspectives on your work during this grant?**

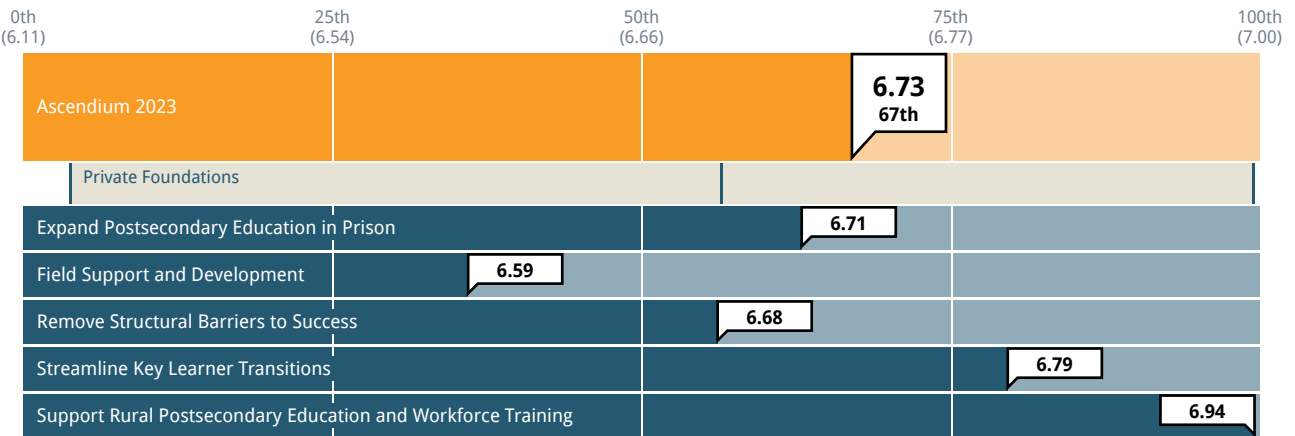
1 = Not at all    4 = Somewhat    7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent did Ascendium exhibit respectful interaction during this grant?**

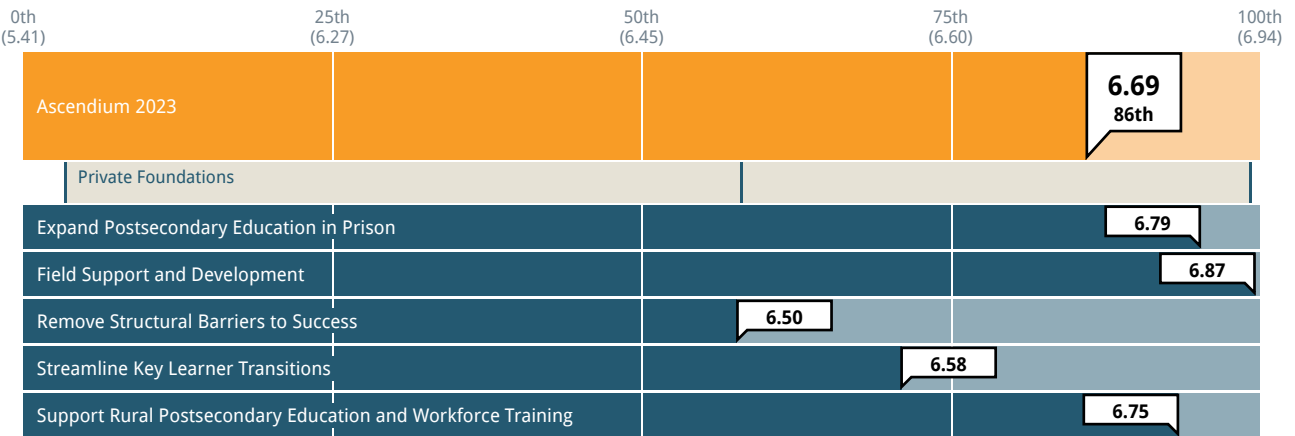
1 = Not at all    4 = Somewhat    7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent did Ascendium exhibit compassion for those affected by your work during this grant?**

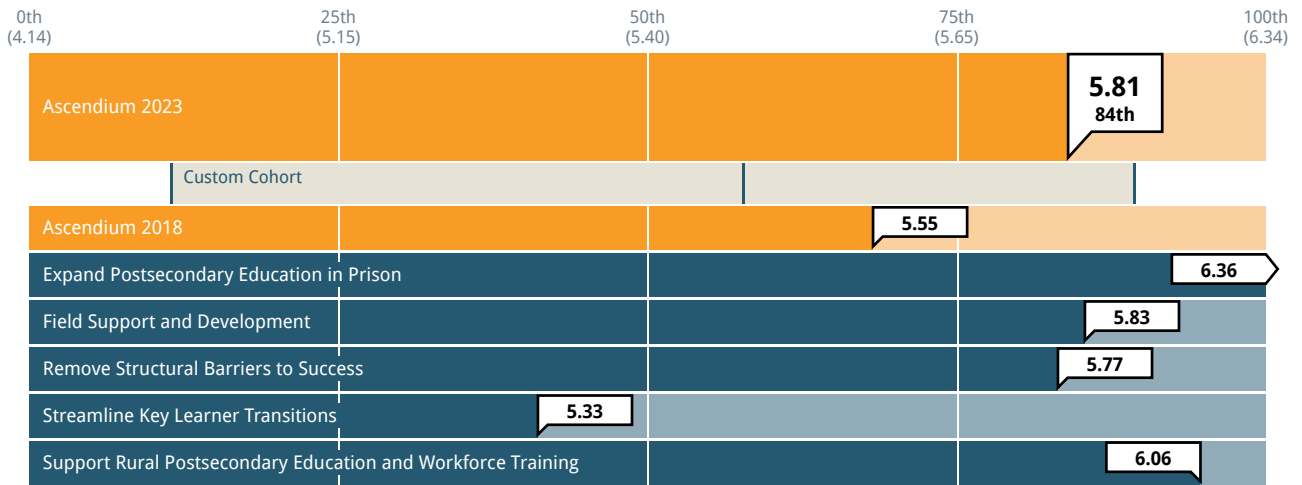
1 = Not at all    4 = Somewhat    7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent is Ascendium open to ideas from grantees about its strategy?**

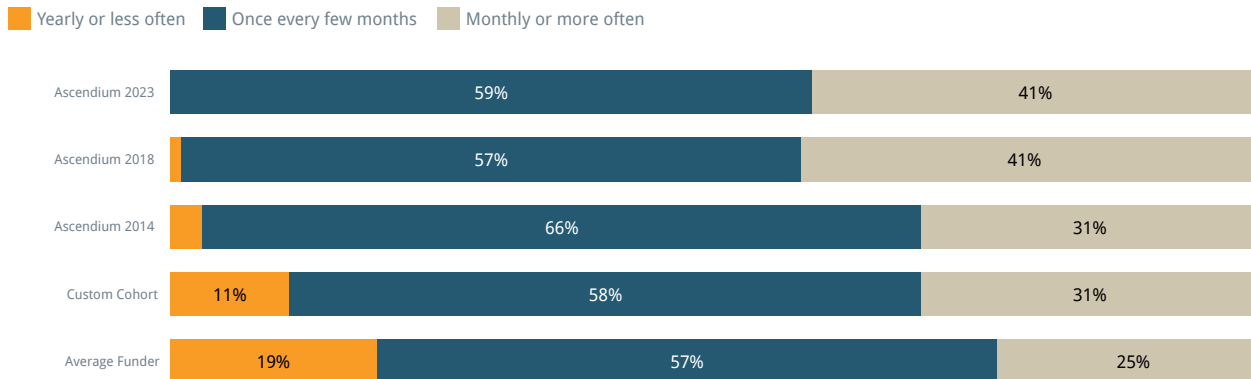
1 = Not at all 7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

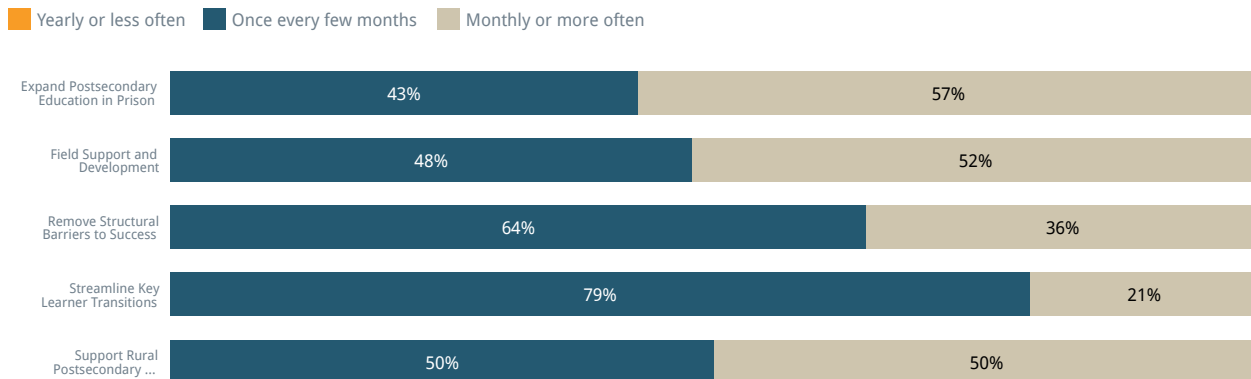
## Interaction Patterns

### How often do/did you have contact with your program officer during this grant?



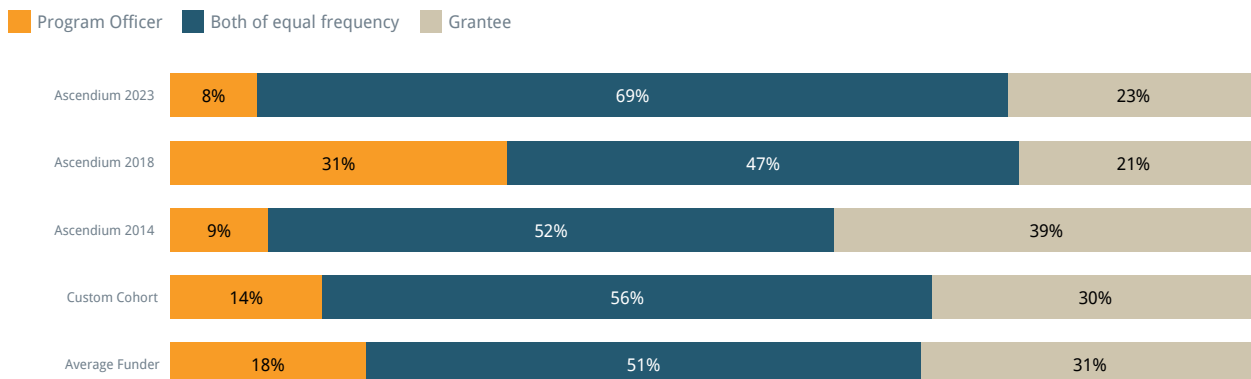
Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on

### How often do/did you have contact with your program officer during this grant? - By Subgroup



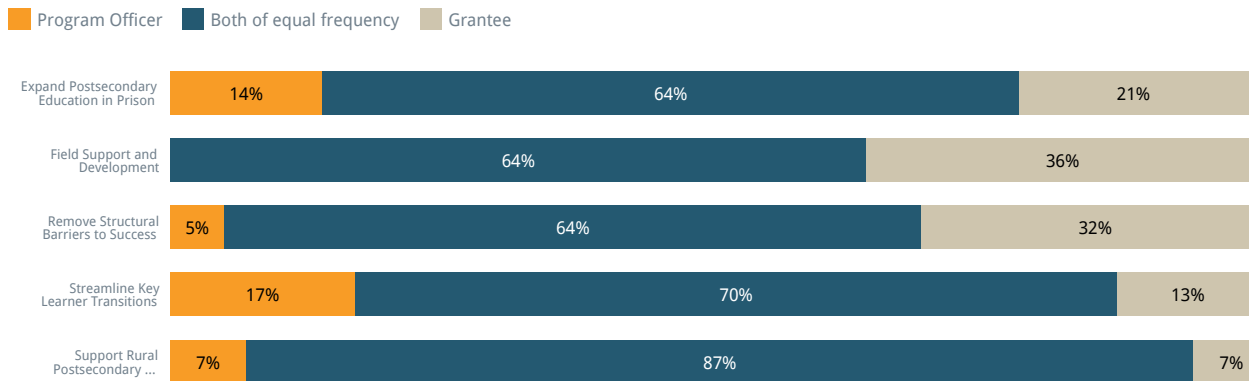
Subgroup: Focus Area

### Who most frequently initiated the contact you had with your program officer during this grant?



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on

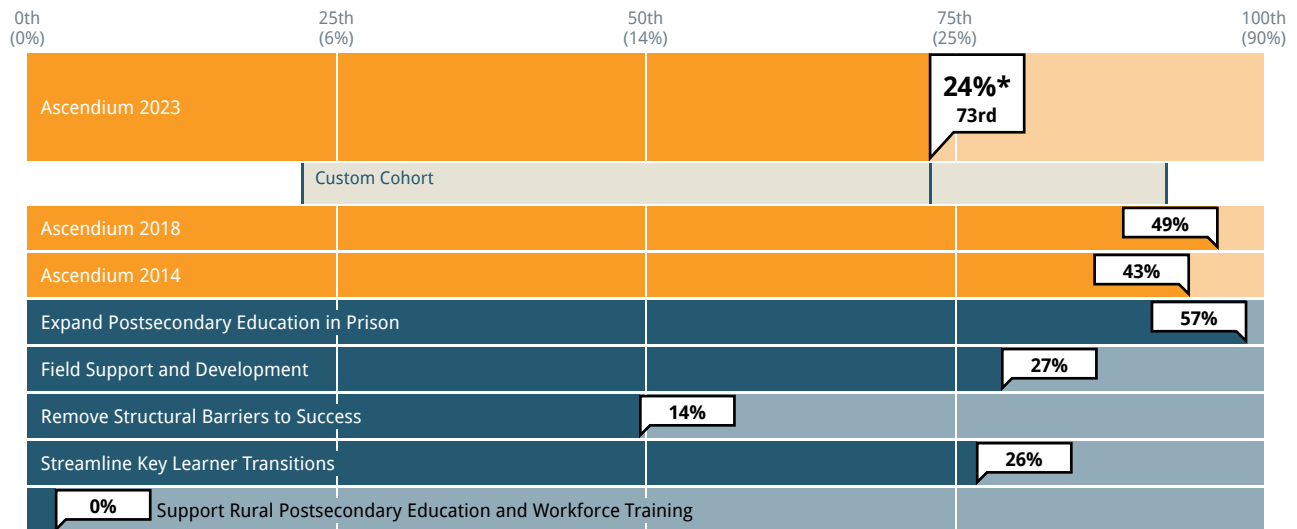
### Who most frequently initiated the contact you had with your program officer during this grant? - By Subgroup



Subgroup: Focus Area

### Has your main contact at Ascendium changed in the past six months?

Proportion of grantees responding 'Yes'



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

Please note that CEP recently modified the following question. The prior question was: "At any point during this grant, including the selection process, did the Foundation staff visit your offices or programs?" The question anchors have not been modified.

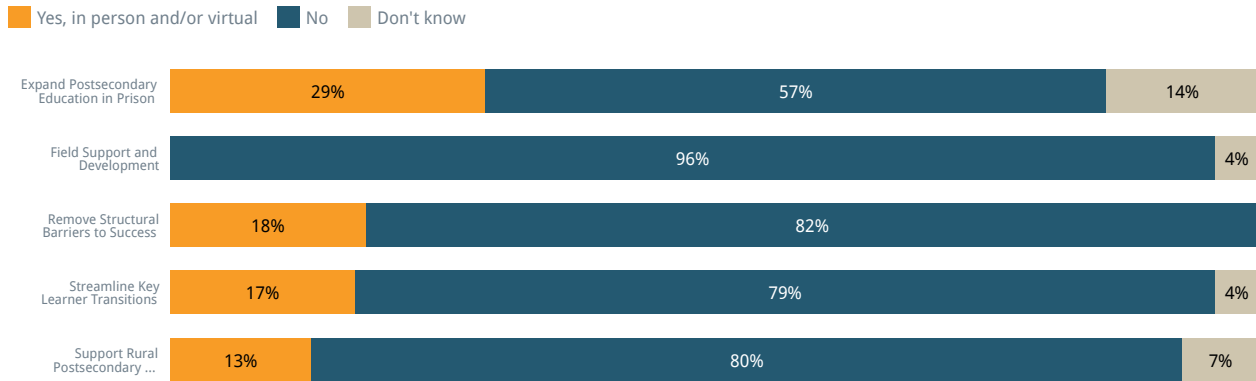
### At any point during this grant, including the selection process, did Ascendium staff conduct a site visit?

Yes, in person and/or virtual (orange) No (dark blue) Don't know (light brown)



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on

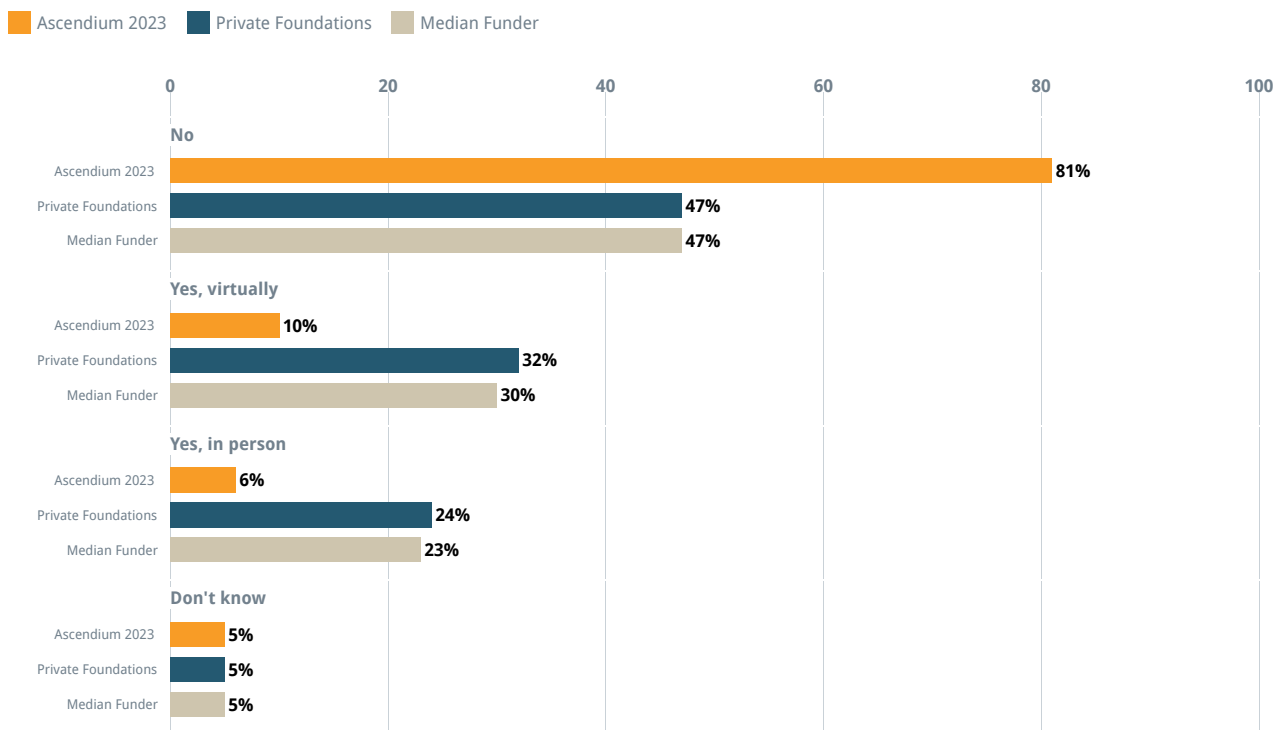
**At any point during this grant, including the selection process, did Ascendium staff conduct a site visit? - By Subgroup**



Subgroup: Focus Area

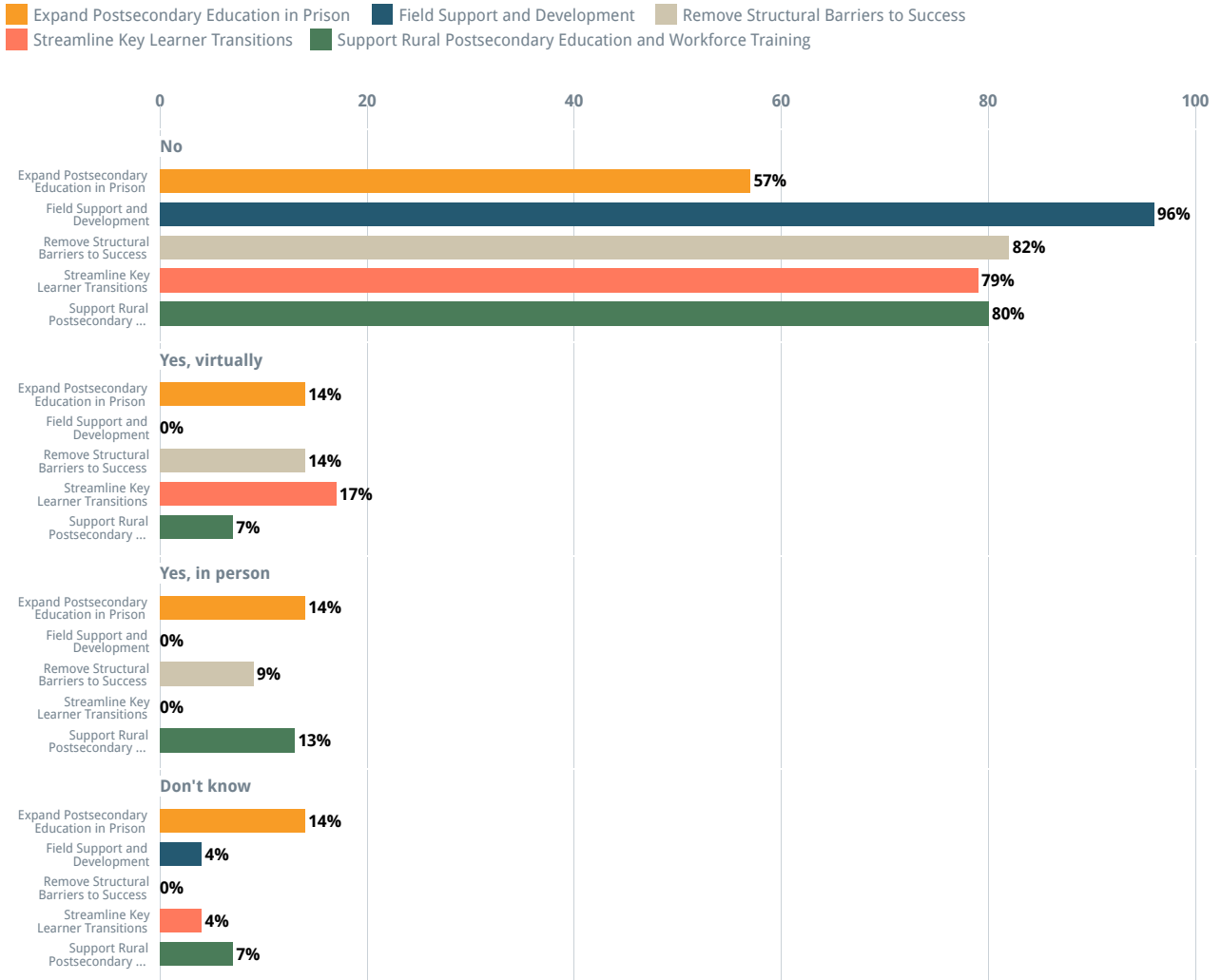
In the survey, respondents were asked the site visit question in a check-all-that-apply format. Therefore, the following charts provide greater detail on the previous site visit question.

**At any point during this grant, including the selection process, did Ascendium staff conduct a site visit?**



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on

**At any point during this grant, including the selection process, did Ascendium staff conduct a site visit? - By Subgroup**



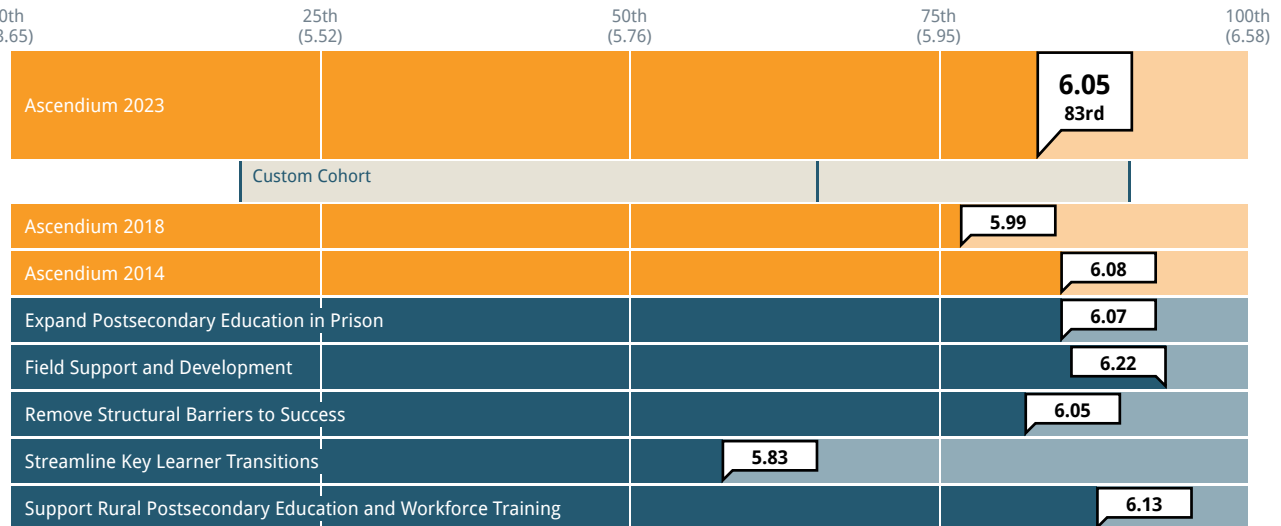
Subgroup: Focus Area



## Communication

### How clearly has Ascendium communicated its goals and strategy to you?

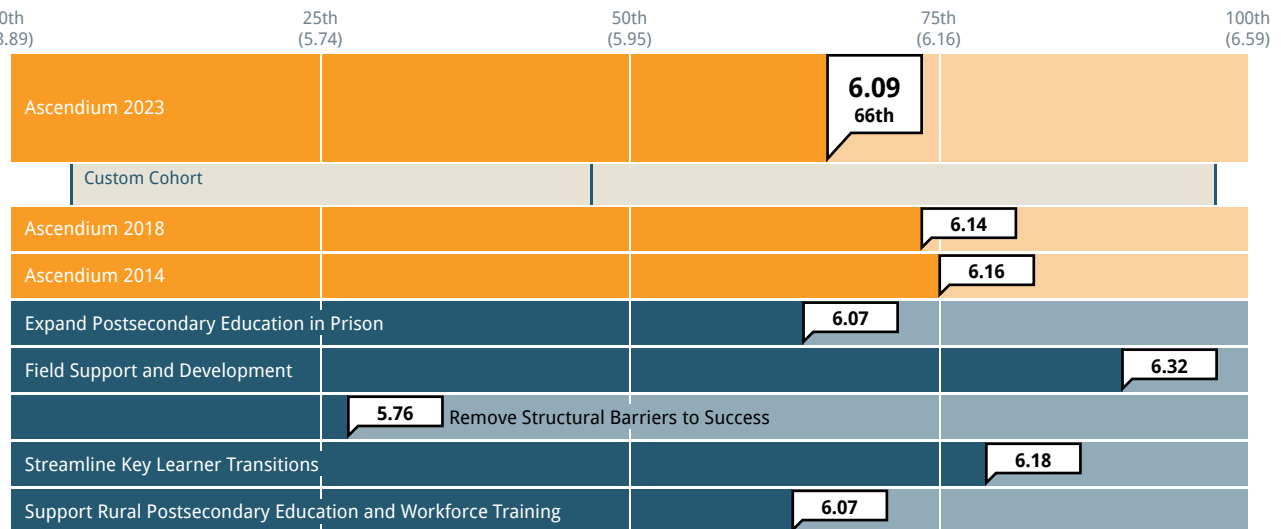
1 = Not at all clearly 7 = Extremely clearly



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

### How consistent was the information provided by different communication resources, both personal and written, that you used to learn about Ascendium?

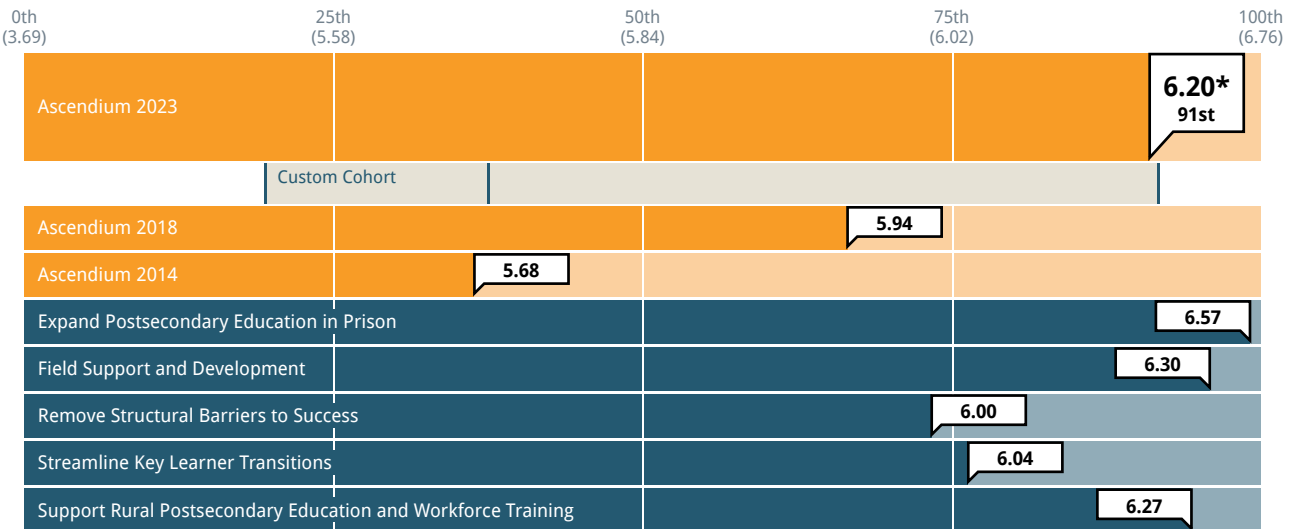
1 = Not at all consistent 7 = Completely consistent



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

Overall, how transparent is Ascendium with your organization?

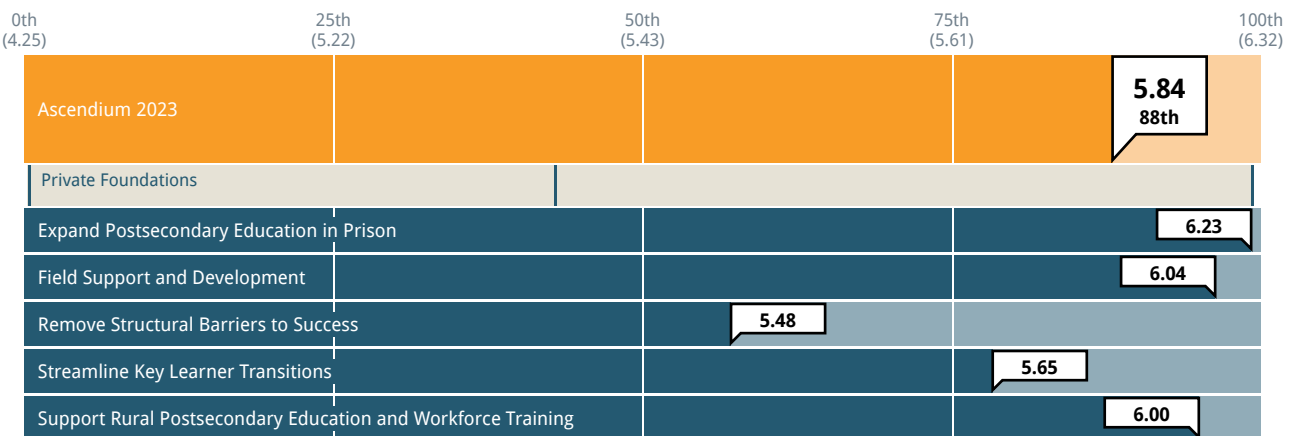
1 = Not at all transparent 7 = Extremely transparent



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

How well do you understand the way in which the work funded by this grant fits into Ascendium's broader efforts?

1 = Limited understanding 7 = Thorough understanding

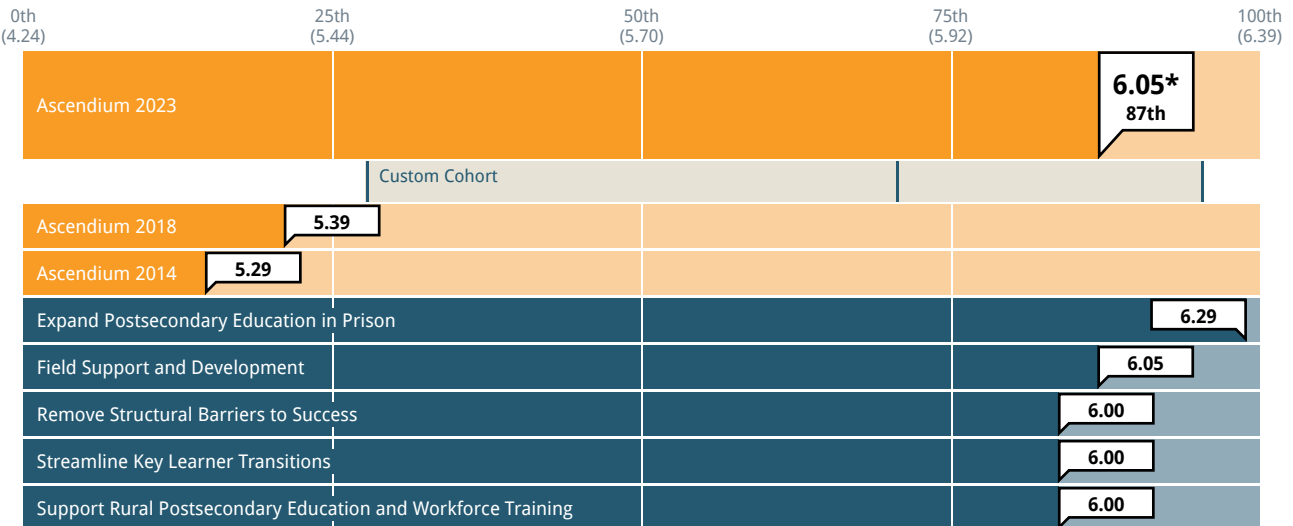


Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

## Contextual Understanding

### How well does Ascendium understand the social, cultural, or socioeconomic factors that affect your work?

1 = Limited understanding 7 = Thorough understanding

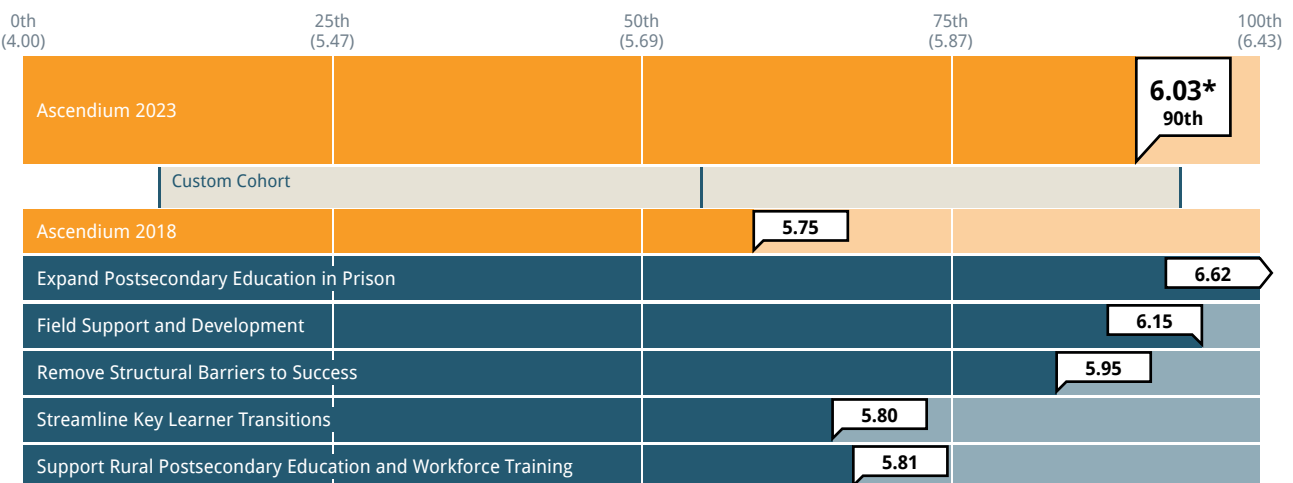


Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

In the following questions, we use the phrase “the people and communities that you serve” to refer to those your organization seeks to serve through the services and/or programs it provides.

### How well does Ascendium understand the needs of the people and communities that you serve?

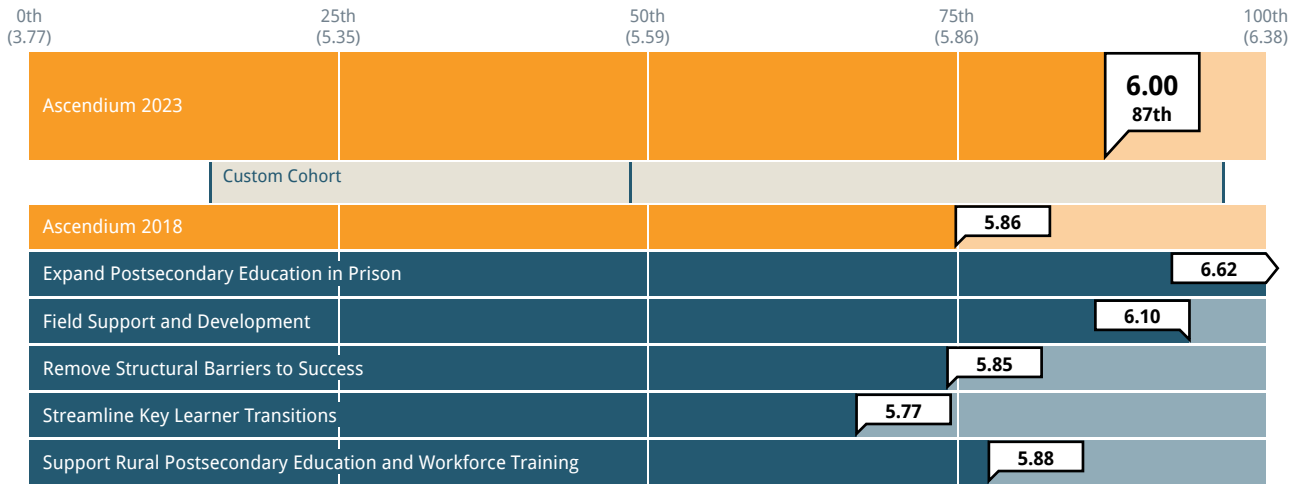
1 = Limited understanding 7 = Thorough understanding



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent do Ascendium's funding priorities reflect a deep understanding of the needs of the people and communities that you serve?**

1 = Not at all 7 = To a great extent



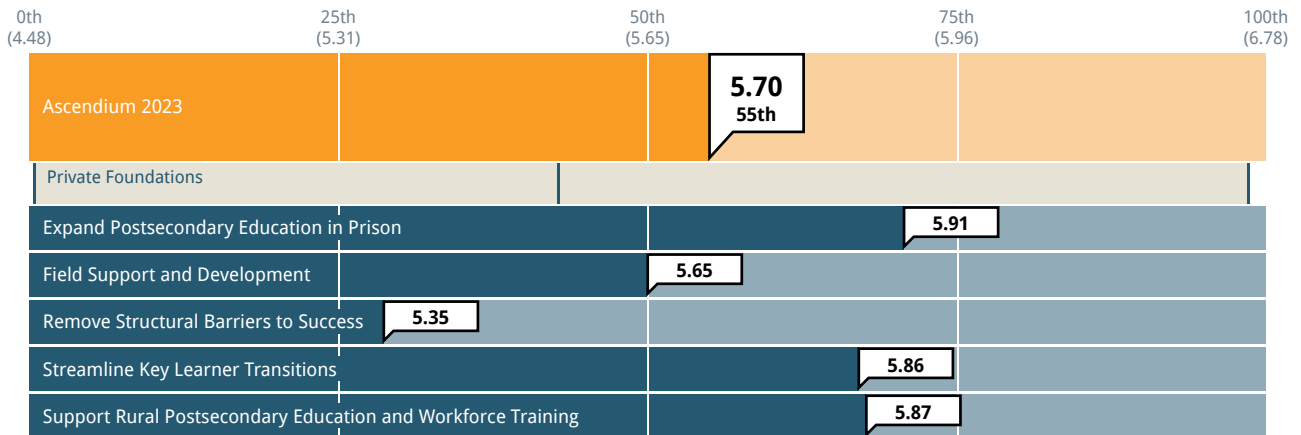
Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about diversity, equity, and inclusion:

### Ascendium has clearly communicated what diversity, equity, and inclusion means for its work

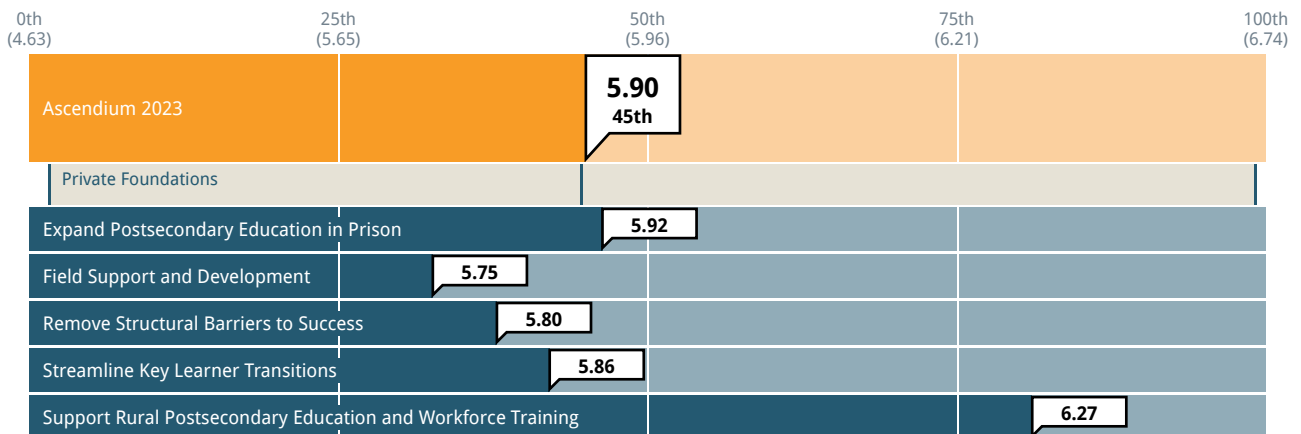
1 = Strongly disagree    4 = Neither agree nor disagree    7 = Strongly agree



Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

### Overall, Ascendium demonstrates an explicit commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in its work

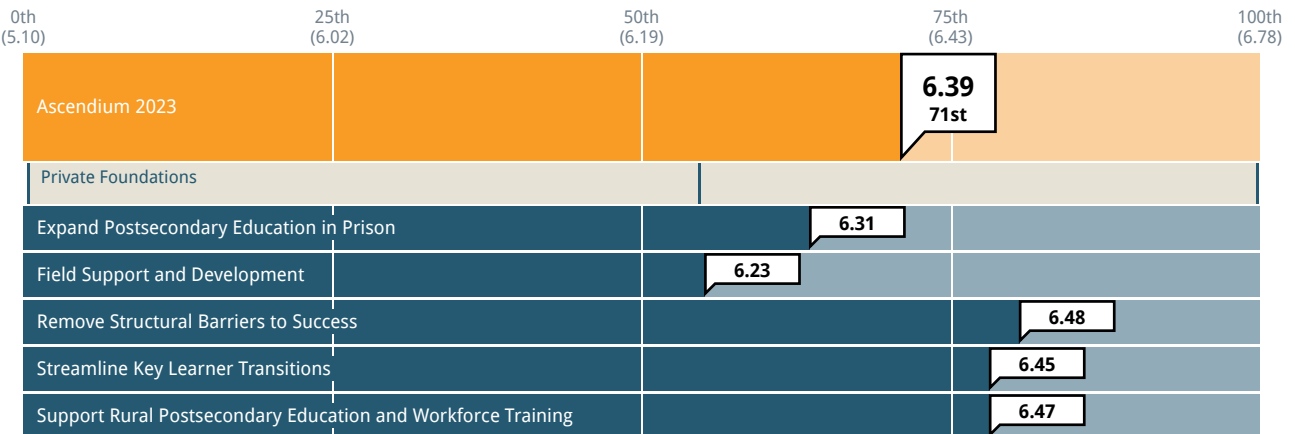
1 = Strongly disagree    4 = Neither agree nor disagree    7 = Strongly agree



Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

**Overall, most staff I have interacted with at Ascendium embody a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion**

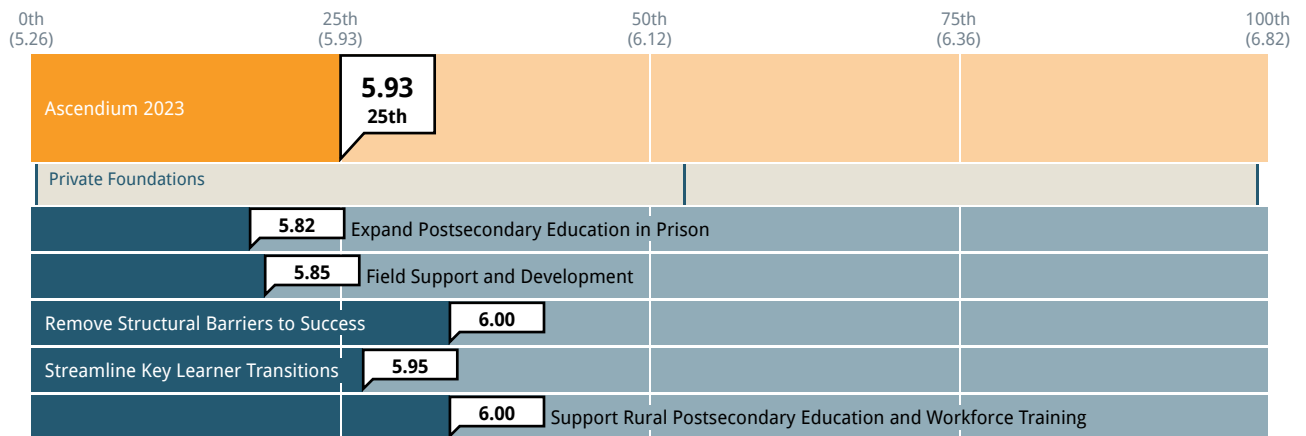
1 = Strongly disagree    4 = Neither agree nor disagree    7 = Strongly agree



Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

**I believe that Ascendium is committed to combatting racism**

1 = Strongly disagree    4 = Neither agree nor disagree    7 = Strongly agree

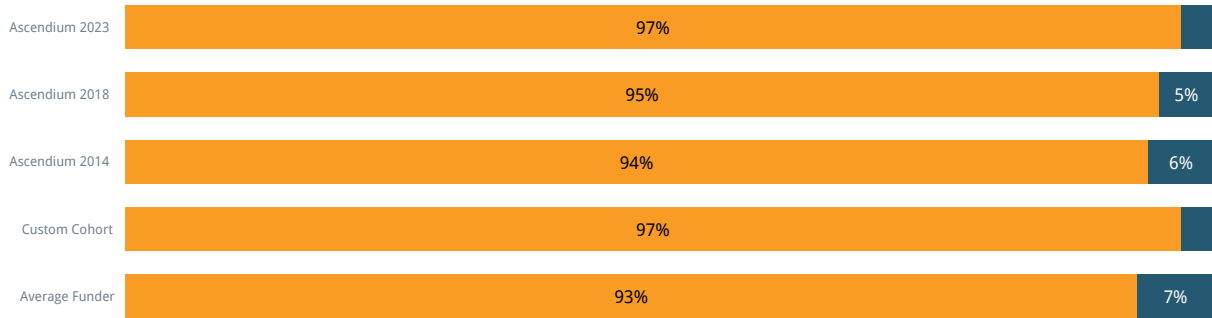


Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

## Grant Processes

### Did you submit a proposal to Ascendium for this grant?

Submitted a proposal    Did not submit a proposal



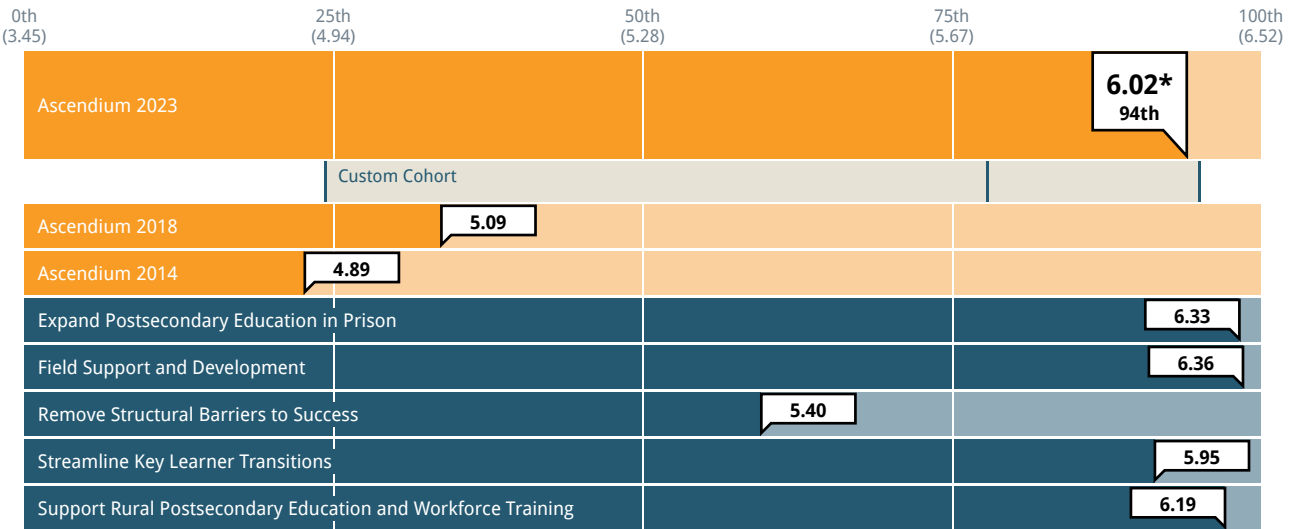
Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on

## Selection Process

Please note that CEP modified the following question in 2022. The prior question text was: "How helpful was participating in the Foundation's selection process in strengthening the organization/program funded by the grant?" The corresponding anchors were "not at all helpful" and "extremely helpful."

### To what extent was Ascendium's selection process a helpful opportunity to strengthen the efforts funded by this grant?

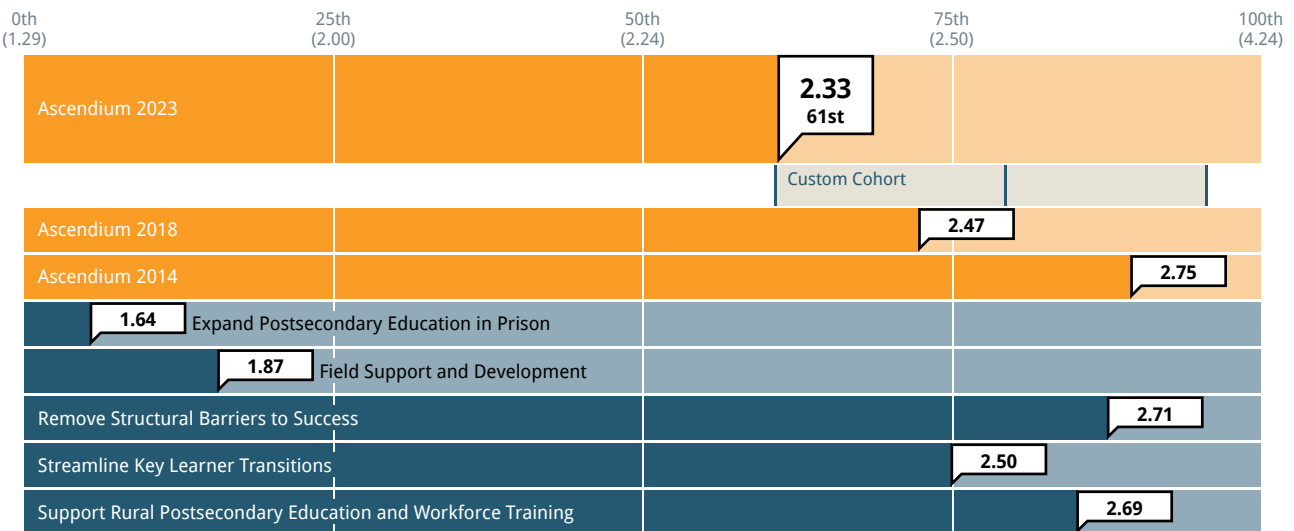
1 = Not at all 7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

### As you developed your grant proposal, how much pressure did you feel to modify your organization's priorities in order to create a grant proposal that was likely to receive funding?

1 = No pressure 7 = Significant pressure

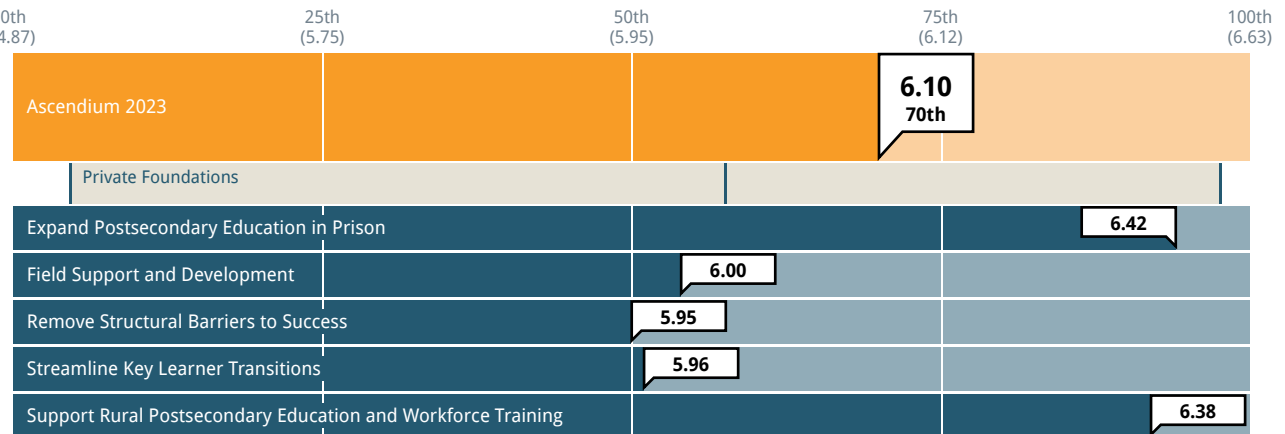


Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area



**To what extent was Ascendium's selection process an appropriate level of effort given the amount of funding received?**

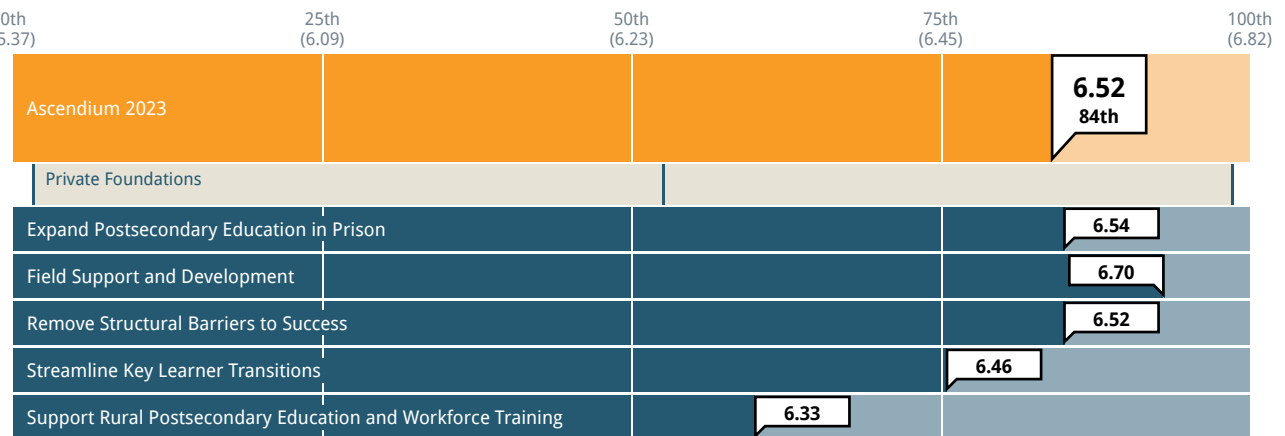
1 = Not at all 7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent was Ascendium clear and transparent about the selection process requirements and timelines?**

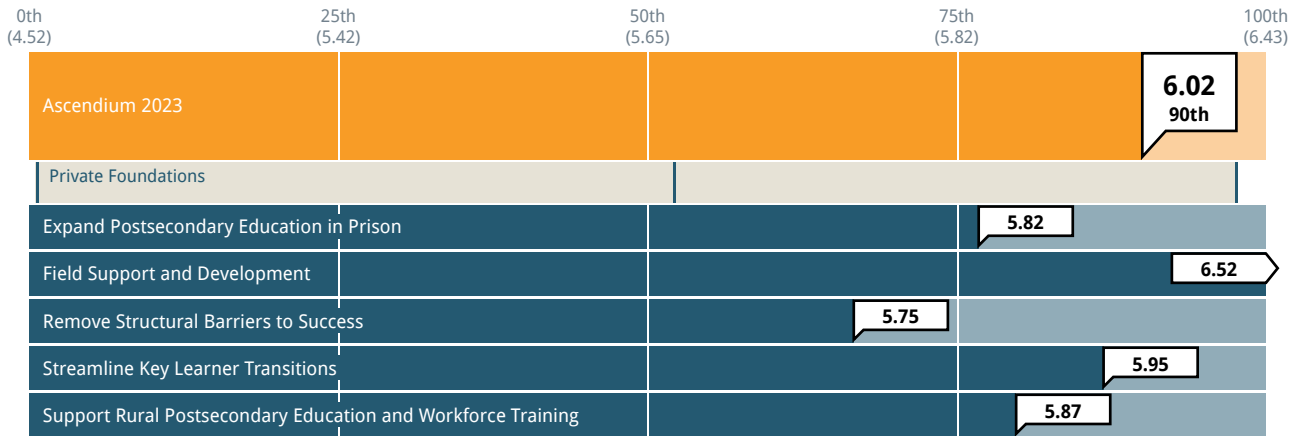
1 = Not at all 7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent was Ascendium clear and transparent about the criteria Ascendium uses to decide whether a proposal would be funded or declined?**

1 = Not at all    7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Private Foundations    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

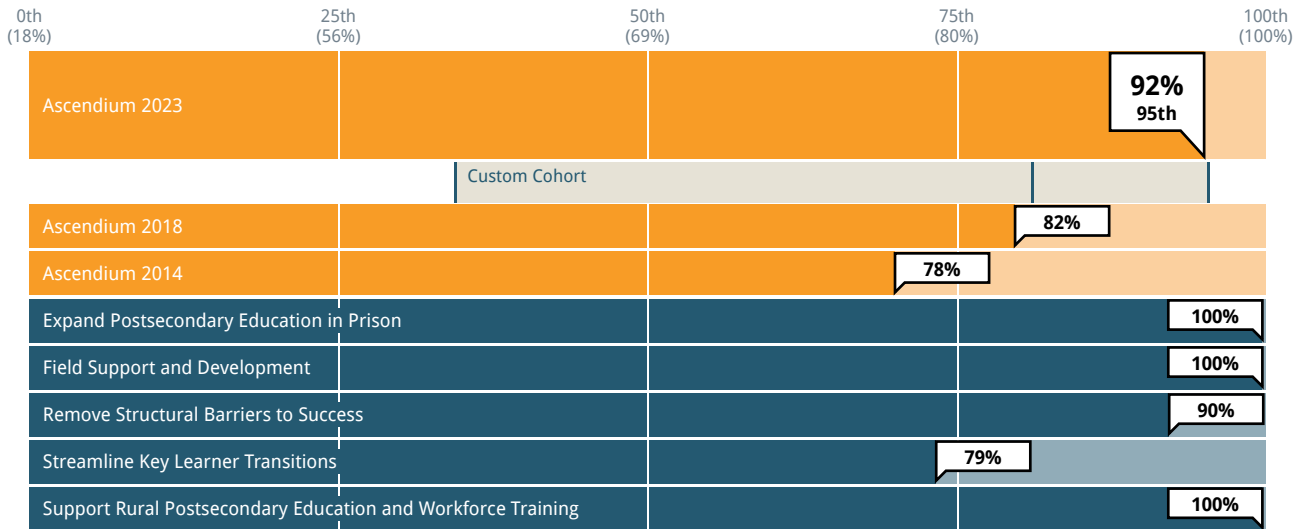
## Reporting and Evaluation Process

### Definition of Reporting and Evaluation

- "Reporting" - Ascendium's standard oversight, monitoring, and grant reporting.
- "Evaluation" - formal activities *beyond reporting* undertaken by Ascendium to assess or learn about a grant, a program, or Ascendium's efforts.

**At any point during the proposal or the grant period, did Ascendium and your organization exchange ideas regarding how your organization would assess the results of the work funded by this grant?**

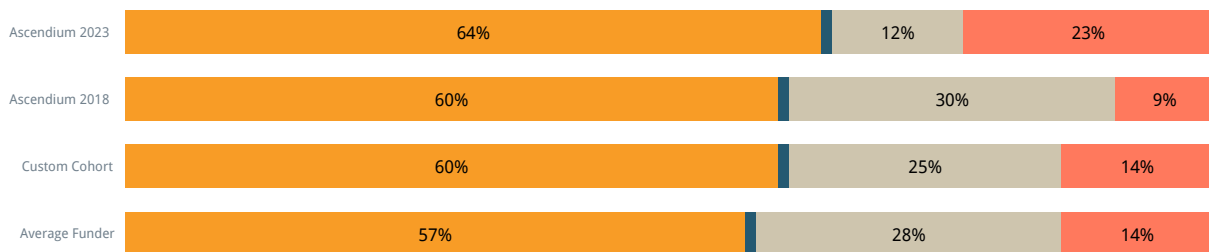
Proportion of grantees responding 'Yes'



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

### Participation in Reporting and/or Evaluation Processes

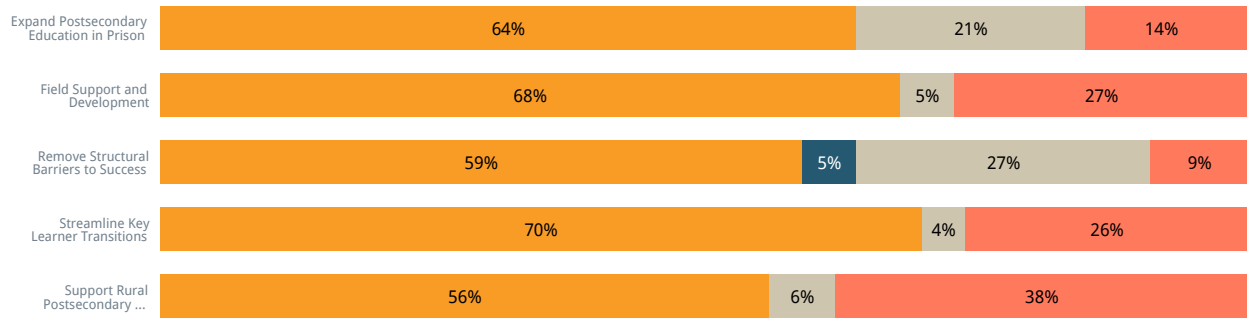
- Participated in a reporting process only
- Participated in an evaluation process only
- Participated in both a reporting and an evaluation process
- Participated in neither a reporting nor an evaluation process



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on

**Participation in Reporting and/or Evaluation Processes - By Subgroup**

■ Participated in a reporting process only 
 ■ Participated in an evaluation process only 
 ■ Participated in both a reporting and an evaluation process 
 ■ Participated in neither a reporting nor an evaluation process



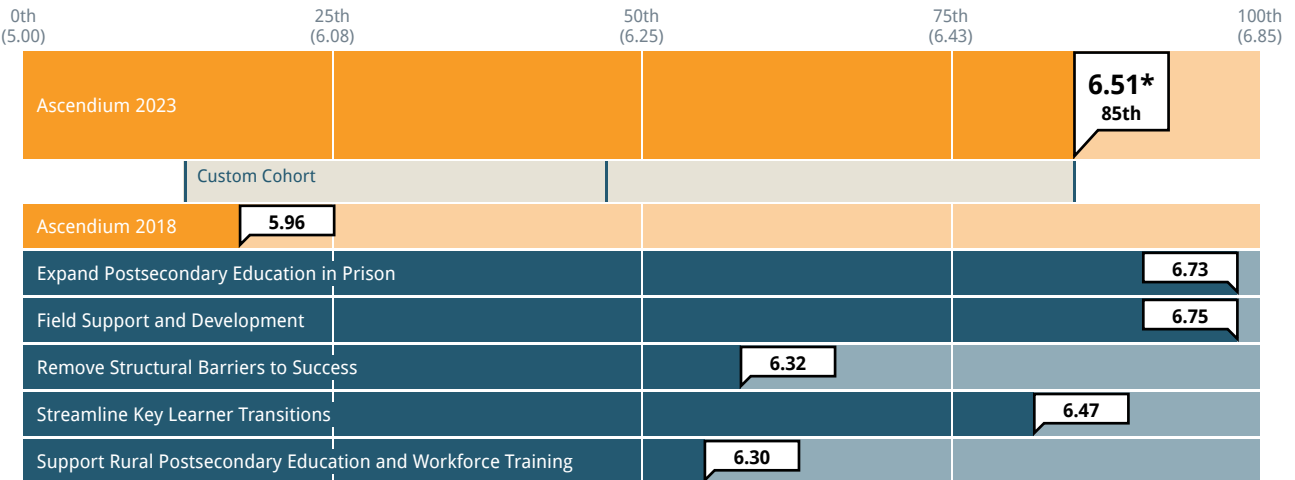
**Subgroup:** Focus Area

## Reporting Process

The following questions were only asked of grantees that indicated having participated in a reporting process. See the "Reporting and Evaluation Process" page for data on the proportion of grantees participating in this process.

### To what extent was Ascendium's reporting process straightforward?

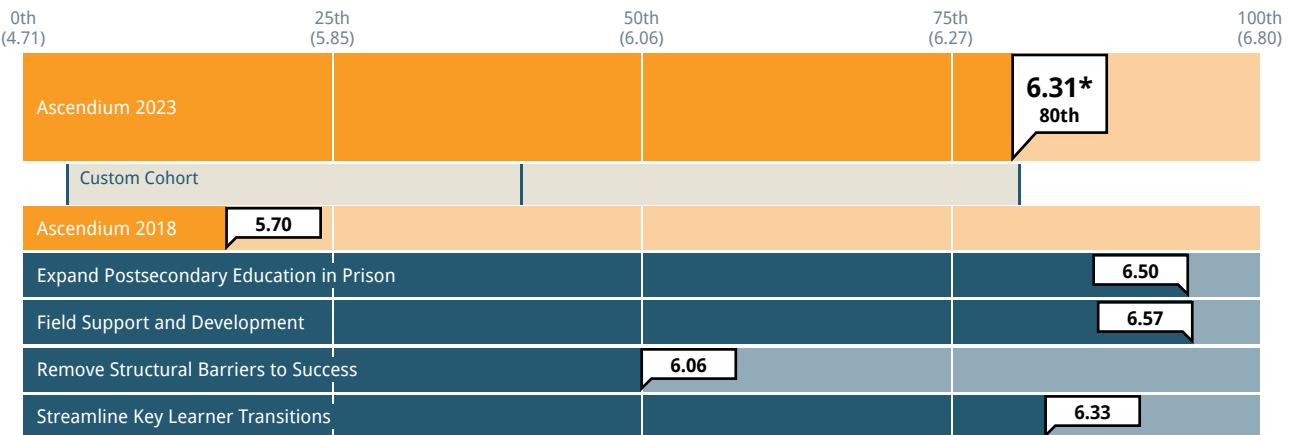
1 = Not at all 7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

### To what extent was Ascendium's reporting process adaptable, if necessary, to fit your circumstances?

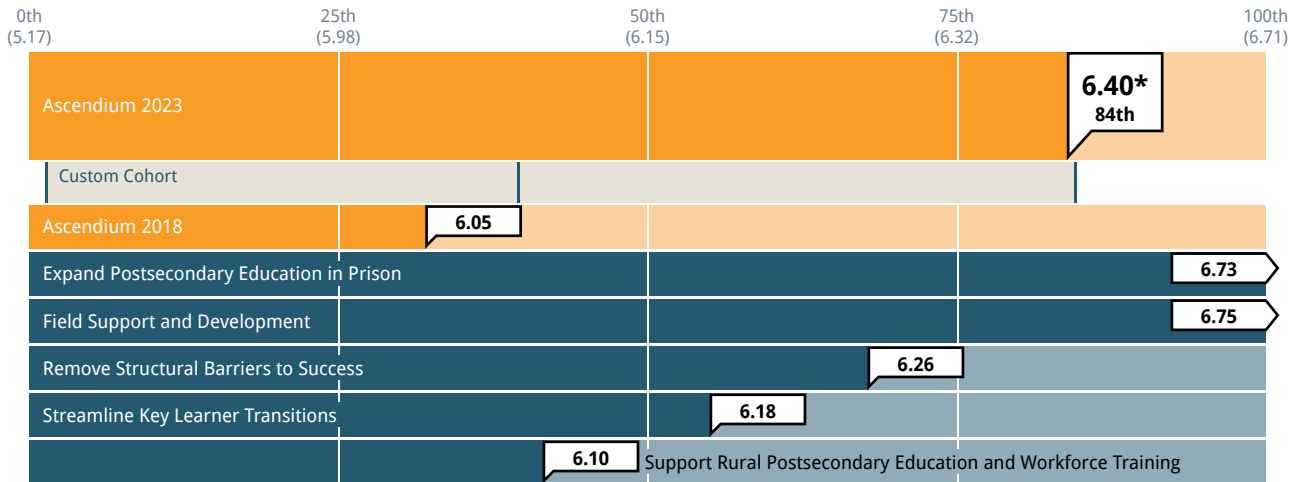
1 = Not at all 7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent was Ascendium's reporting process relevant, with questions and measures pertinent to the work funded by this grant?**

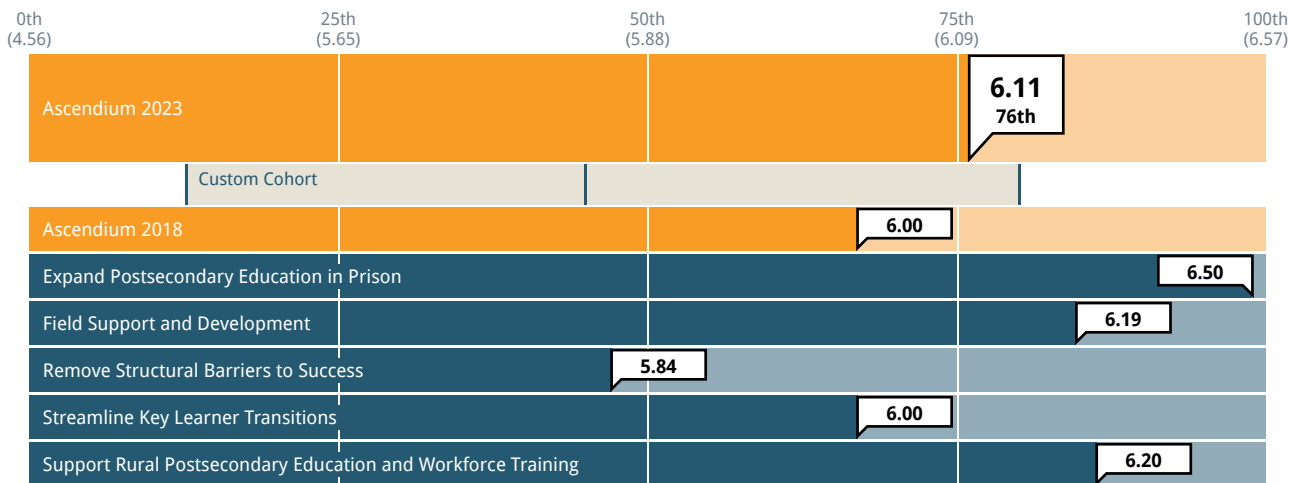
1 = Not at all    7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent was Ascendium's reporting process a helpful opportunity for you to reflect and learn?**

1 = Not at all    7 = To a great extent



Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

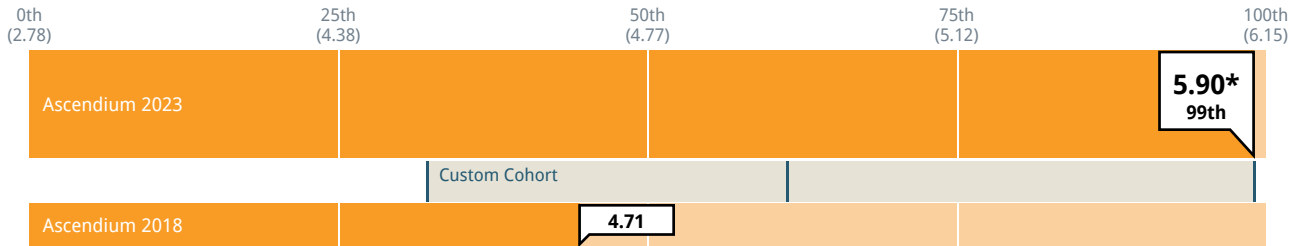
## Evaluation Process

The following question was only asked of grantees that indicated having participated in an evaluation process. See the "Reporting and Evaluation Process" page for data on the proportion of grantees participating in this process.

There were not enough respondents to the question "To what extent did the evaluation incorporate input from your organization in the design of the evaluation" to display responses to this question.

### To what extent did the evaluation result in your organization making changes to the work that was evaluated?

1 = Not at all    7 = To a great extent

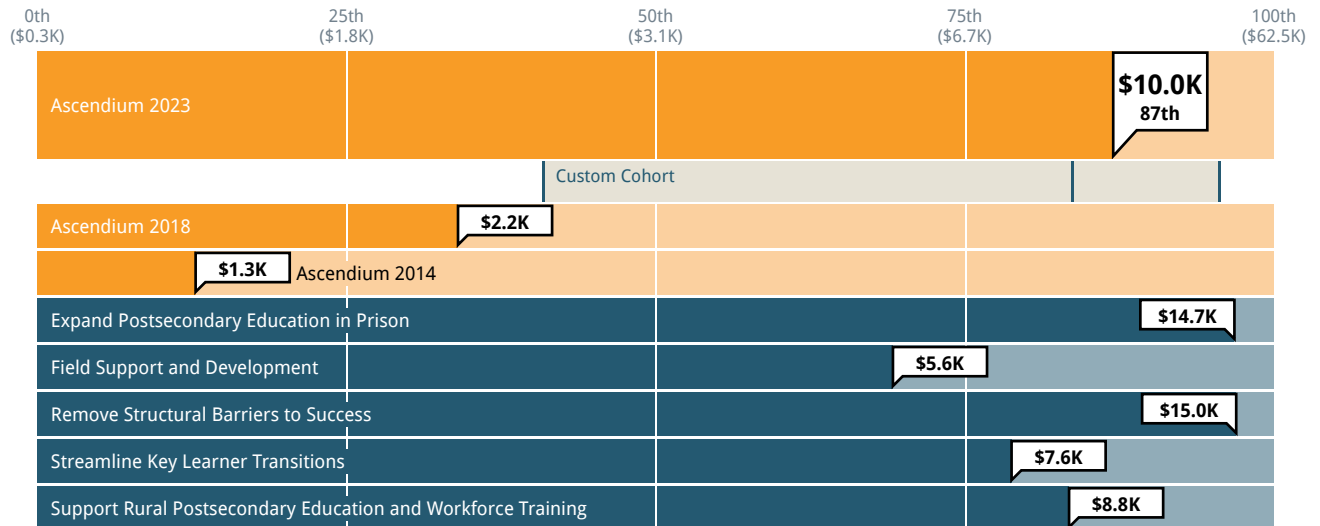


Cohort: Custom Cohort    Past results: on    Subgroup: Focus Area

## Dollar Return and Time Spent on Processes

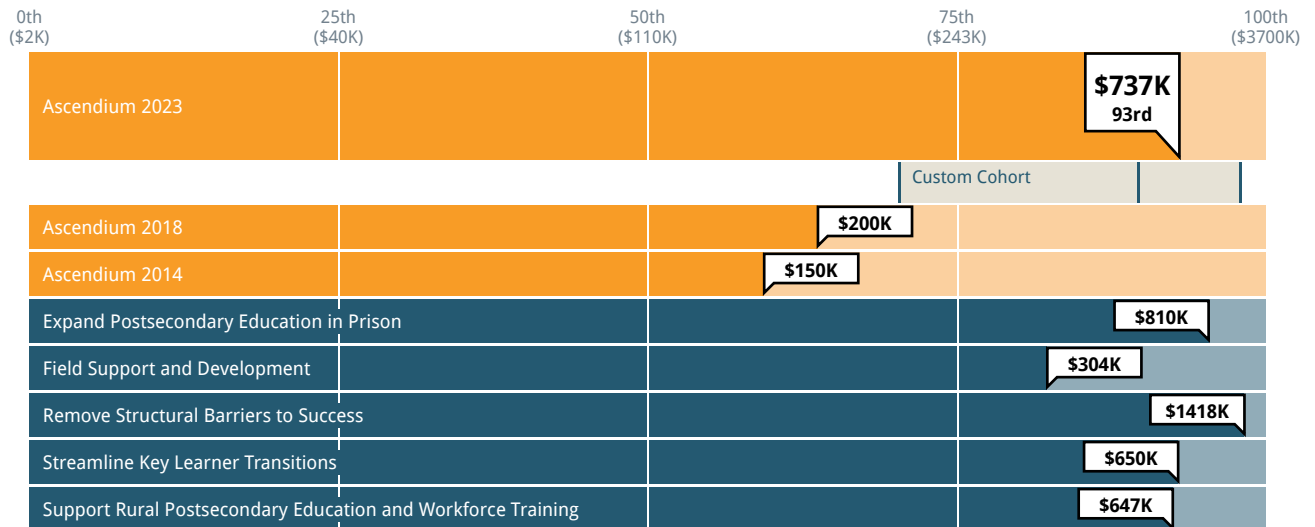
### Dollar Return: Median grant dollars awarded per process hour required

Includes total grant dollars awarded and total time necessary to fulfill the requirements over the lifetime of the grant



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

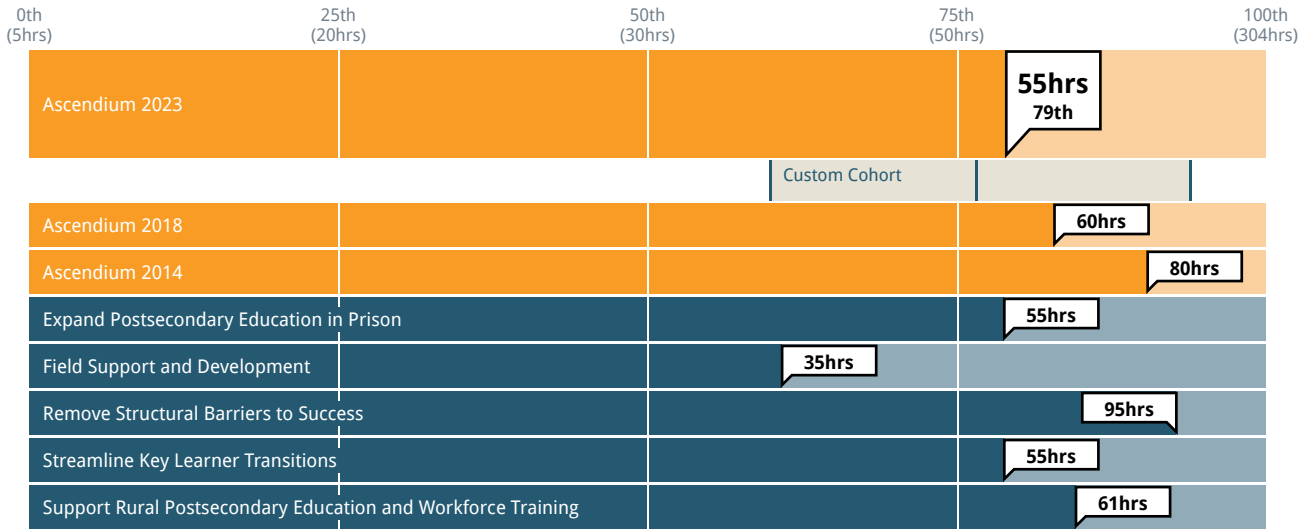
### Median Grant Size



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area



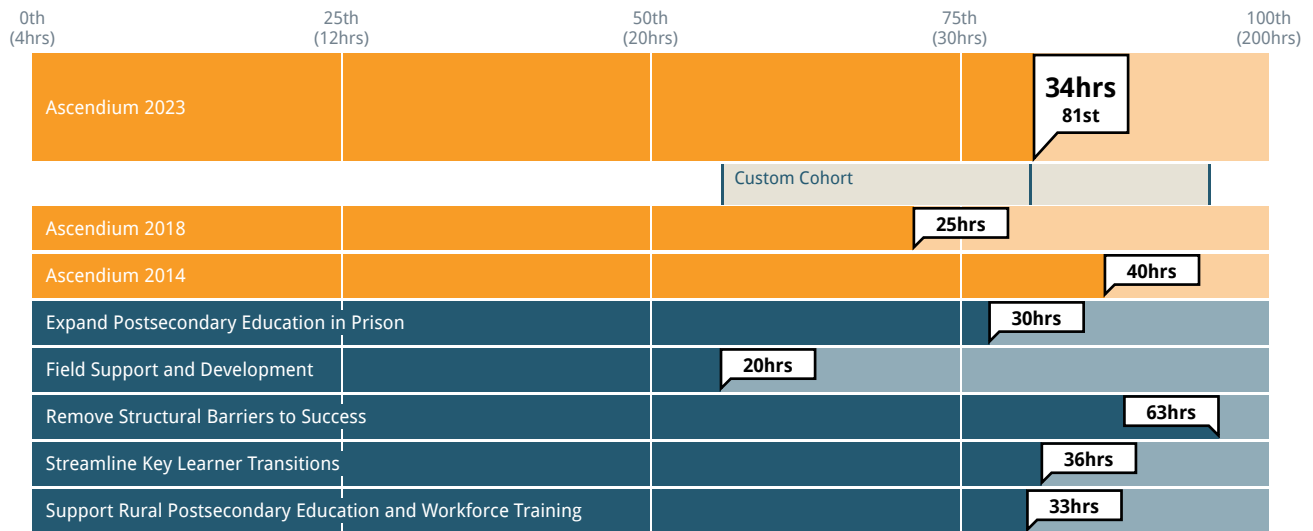
Median hours spent by grantees on funder requirements over grant lifetime



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

## Time Spent on Selection Process

### Median Hours Spent on Proposal and Selection Process



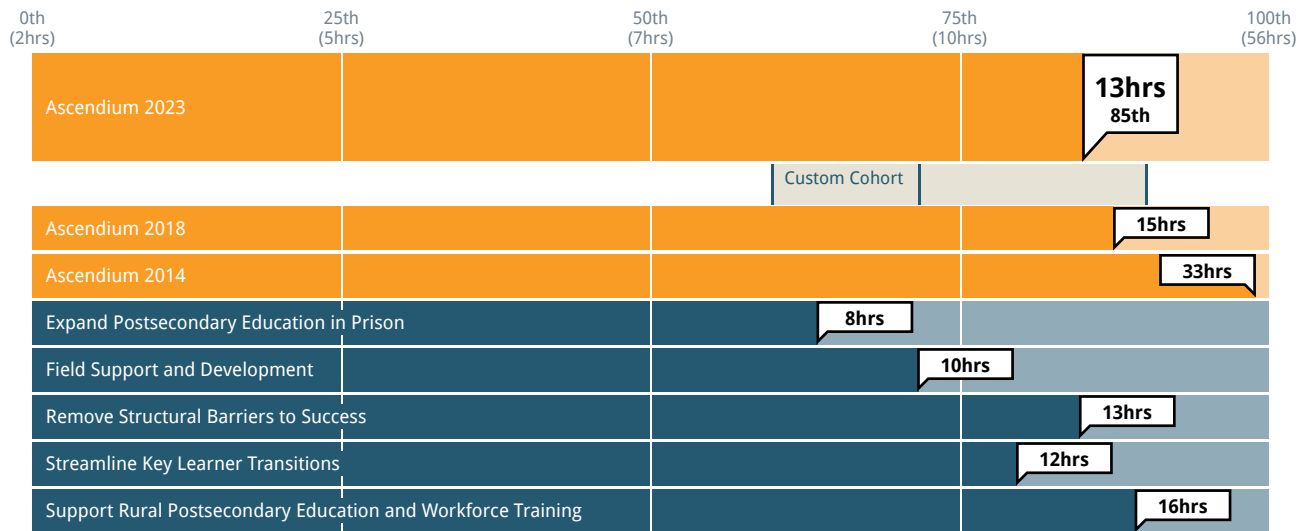
Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Time Spent On Proposal and Selection Process	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Average Funder	Custom Cohort
1 to 9 hours	6%	13%	5%	25%	11%
10 to 19 hours	15%	16%	16%	22%	15%
20 to 29 hours	19%	23%	15%	17%	19%
30 to 39 hours	11%	8%	8%	7%	8%
40 to 49 hours	11%	10%	21%	11%	15%
50 to 99 hours	21%	22%	21%	10%	16%
100 to 199 hours	13%	5%	8%	6%	10%
200+ hours	4%	4%	5%	3%	5%

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Time Spent On Proposal and Selection Process (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
1 to 9 hours	8%	17%	0%	0%	6%
10 to 19 hours	15%	13%	5%	23%	19%
20 to 29 hours	23%	30%	20%	9%	12%
30 to 39 hours	8%	9%	0%	18%	19%
40 to 49 hours	23%	4%	15%	14%	0%
50 to 99 hours	15%	13%	40%	18%	19%
100 to 199 hours	8%	0%	20%	18%	19%
200+ hours	0%	13%	0%	0%	6%

## Time Spent on Reporting and Evaluation Process

### Median Hours Spent on Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Process Per Year



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Time Spent On Monitoring, Reporting, And Evaluation Process (Annualized)	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Average Funder	Custom Cohort
1 to 9 hours	40%	33%	19%	56%	43%
10 to 19 hours	28%	22%	8%	19%	24%
20 to 29 hours	16%	11%	19%	10%	14%
30 to 39 hours	5%	3%	8%	3%	5%
40 to 49 hours	3%	4%	15%	3%	4%
50 to 99 hours	3%	12%	12%	5%	5%
100+ hours	5%	14%	19%	4%	4%

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Time Spent On Monitoring, Reporting, And Evaluation Process (Annualized) (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
1 to 9 hours	55%	47%	35%	35%	30%
10 to 19 hours	18%	24%	25%	41%	30%
20 to 29 hours	27%	12%	10%	18%	20%
30 to 39 hours	0%	6%	15%	0%	0%
40 to 49 hours	0%	0%	5%	0%	10%
50 to 99 hours	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%
100+ hours	0%	12%	0%	6%	10%

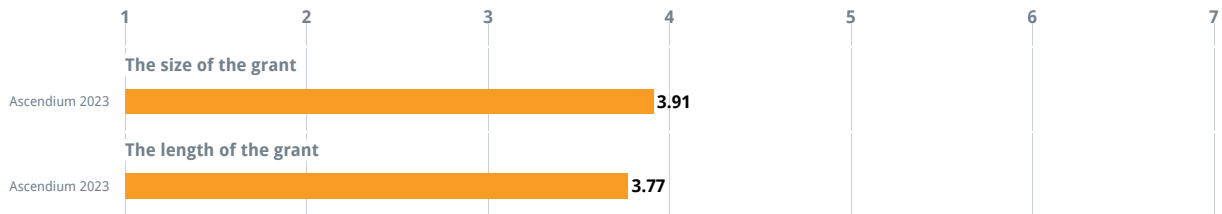
## Customized Questions

**Note:** The scale in the following question is different from most other questions in this survey. In this case, a rating of a 4 indicates "about right," while a 1 indicates "too little" and a 7 indicates "too much."

### How would you rate the size of the grant and the length of the grant as they related to achieving the specific, expected results?

1 = Too little    4 = About right    7 = Too much

Ascendium 2023

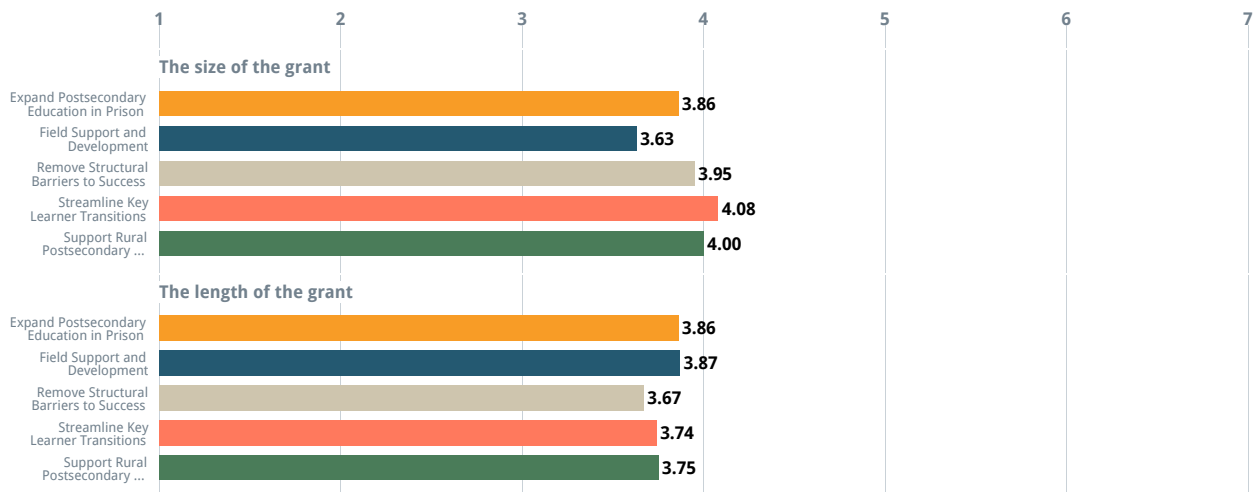


Cohort: None    Past results: on

### How would you rate the size of the grant and the length of the grant as they related to achieving the specific, expected results? - By Subgroup

1 = Too little    4 = About right    7 = Too much

Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison    Field Support and Development    Remove Structural Barriers to Success  
 Streamline Key Learner Transitions    Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training

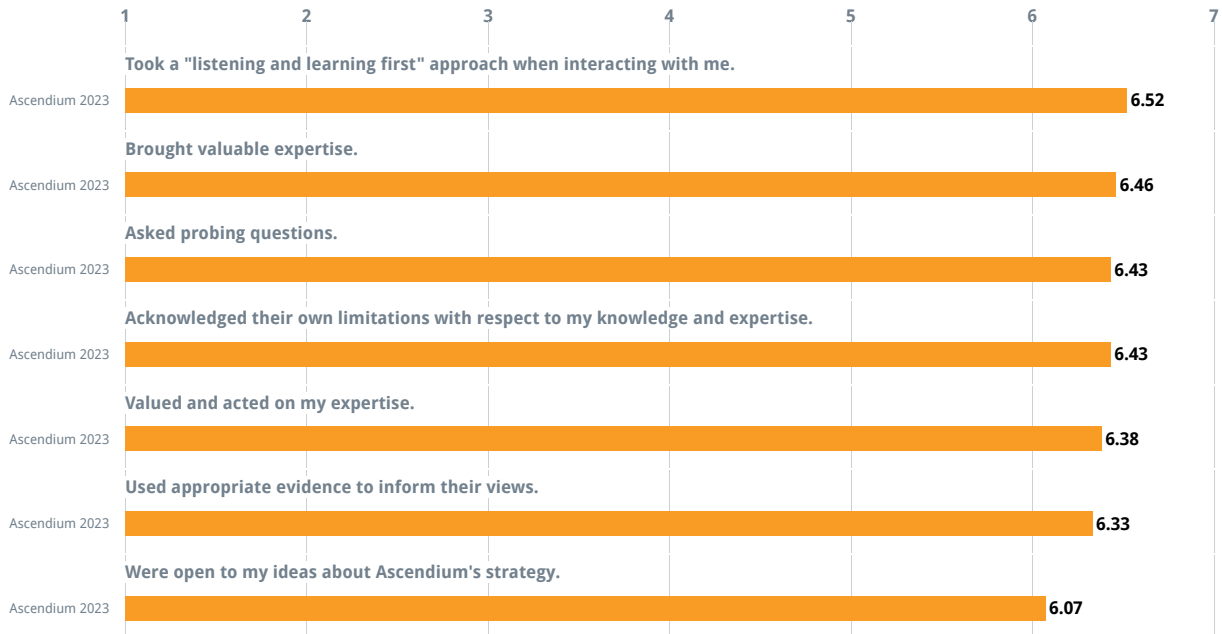


Subgroup: Focus Area

The following question presents statements about Ascendium team members' orientations and behaviors needed to create and sustain learning. Thinking about the past year, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Ascendium staff...

1 = Strongly disagree    4 = Neither agree nor disagree    7 = Strongly agree

Ascendium 2023

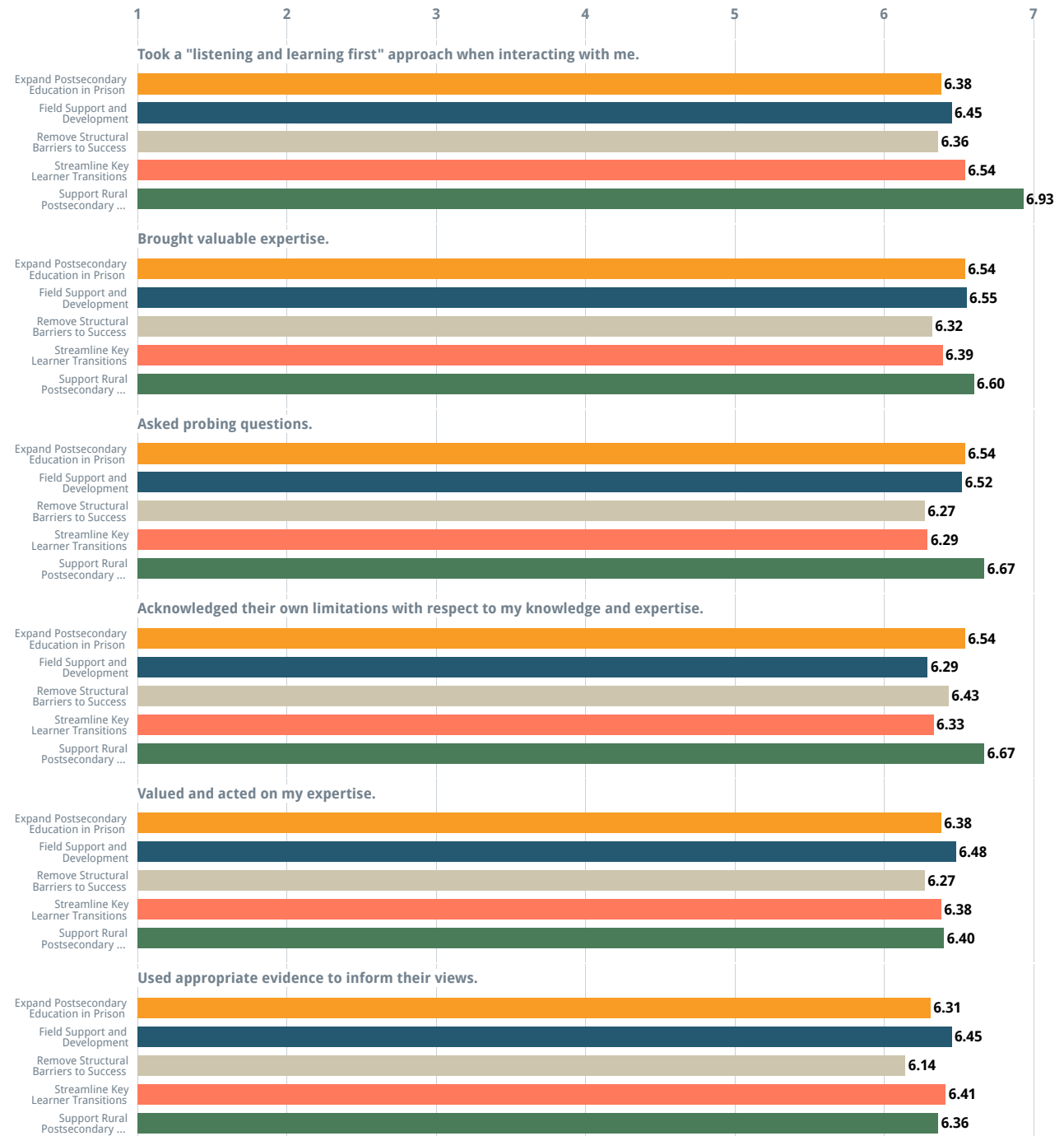


Cohort: None    Past results: on

The following question presents statements about Ascendium team members' orientations and behaviors needed to create and sustain learning. Thinking about the past year, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Ascendium staff... - By Subgroup

1 = Strongly disagree 4 = Neither agree nor disagree 7 = Strongly agree

- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



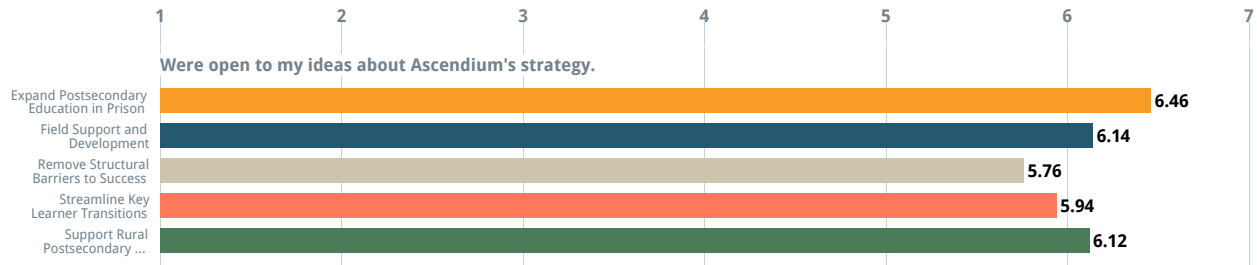
Subgroup: Focus Area



The following question presents statements about Ascendium team members' orientations and behaviors needed to create and sustain learning. Thinking about the past year, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Ascendium staff... - By Subgroup (cont.)

1 = Strongly disagree 4 = Neither agree nor disagree 7 = Strongly agree

- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training

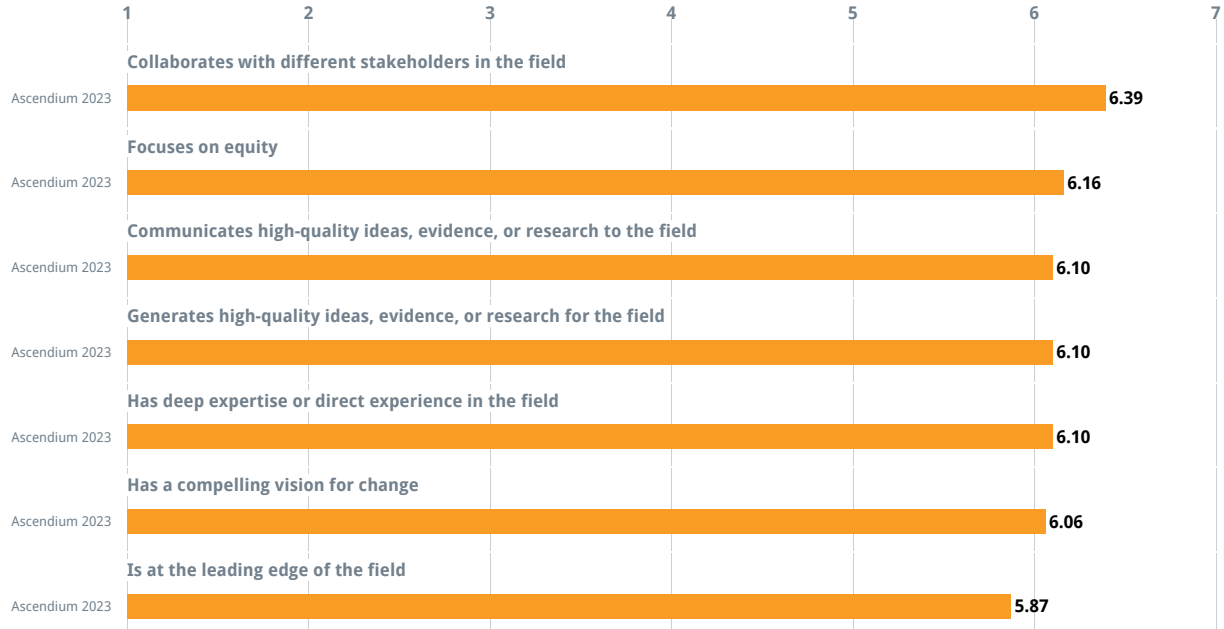


Subgroup: Focus Area

To what extent does Ascendium staff exhibit the following qualities of a thought leader or thought partner?

1 = Not at all 4 = Somewhat 7 = To a great extent

Ascendium 2023

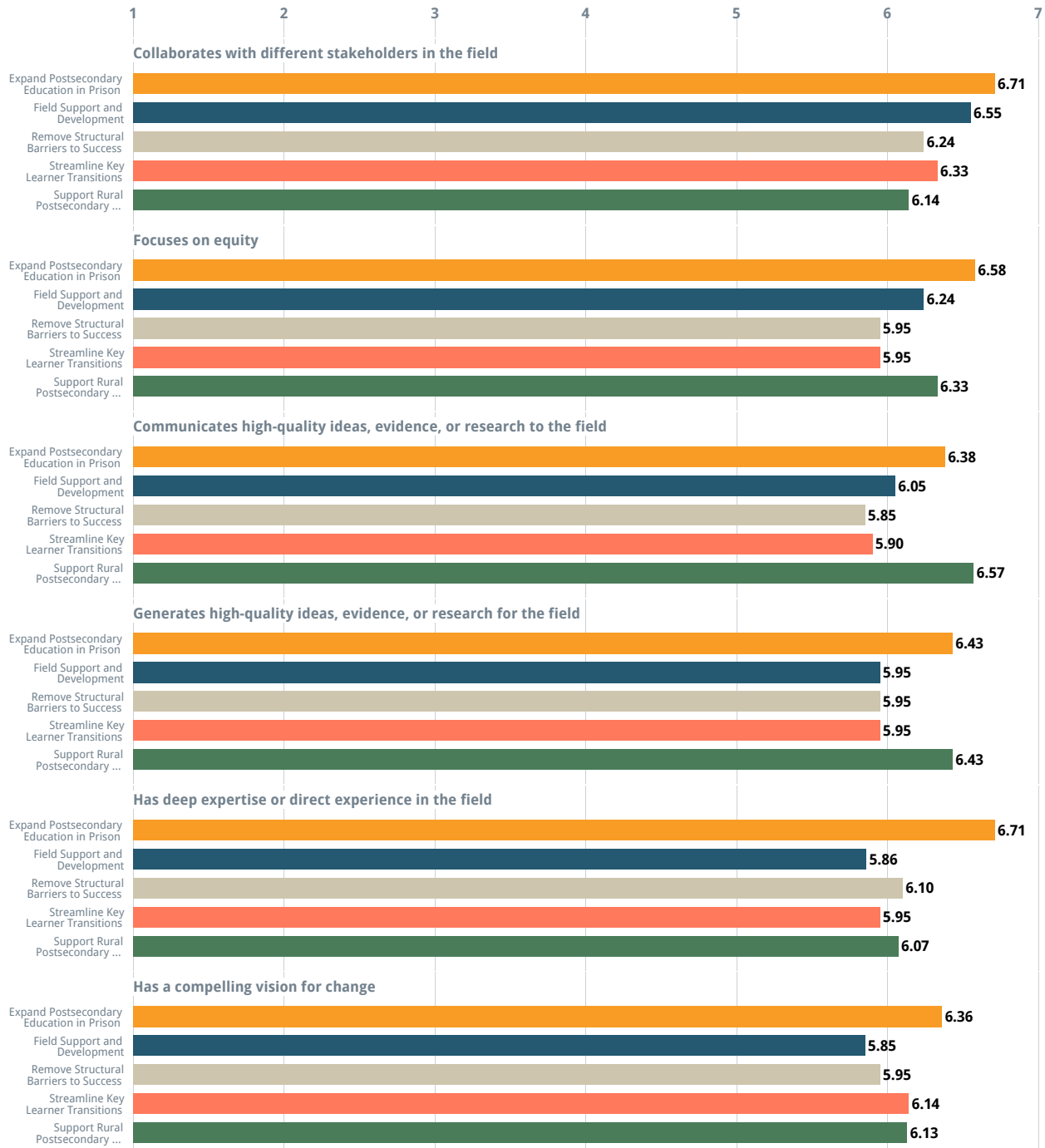


Cohort: None Past results: on

**To what extent does Ascendium staff exhibit the following qualities of a thought leader or thought partner? - By Subgroup**

1 = Not at all    4 = Somewhat    7 = To a great extent

■ Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison    
 ■ Field Support and Development    
 ■ Remove Structural Barriers to Success  
■ Streamline Key Learner Transitions    
 ■ Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training

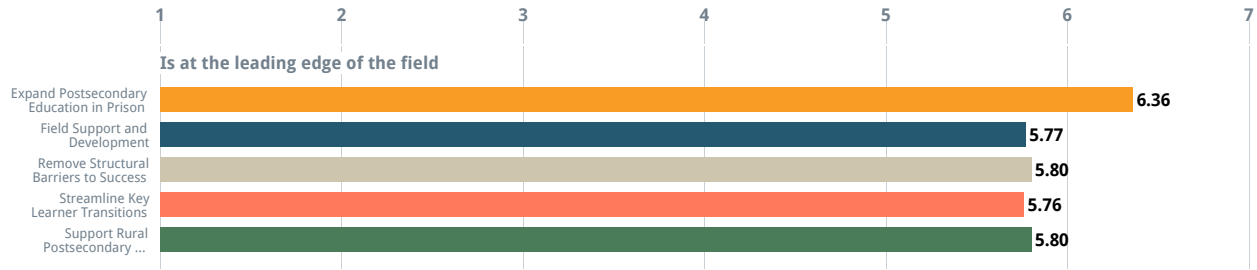


Subgroup: Focus Area

**To what extent does Ascendium staff exhibit the following qualities of a thought leader or thought partner? - By Subgroup (cont.)**

1 = Not at all    4 = Somewhat    7 = To a great extent

- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



Subgroup: Focus Area

## Grantees' Written Comments

In Ascendium's Grantee Perception Report survey, CEP asks four written questions:

1. "Please comment on the quality of Ascendium's processes, interactions, and communications."
2. "Thinking beyond the grant you received, please comment on how Ascendium influences your field, community, or organization."
3. "What specific improvements would you suggest that would make Ascendium a better funder?"
4. "What is the most significant gap you see in Ascendium's current strategies related to postsecondary and workforce success of learners from low-income backgrounds?"

To download the full set of grantee comments and suggestions, please refer to the "Attachments" dropdown menu at the top right of your report. Please note that some comments may be redacted or removed to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

### CEP's Qualitative Analysis

CEP thoroughly reviews each comment submitted and conducts comprehensive qualitative analysis on two of these questions in the GPR.

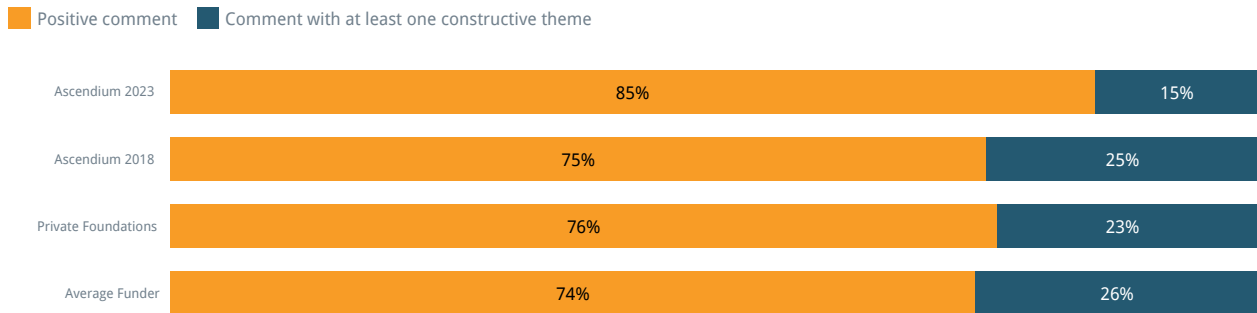
The following pages outline the results of CEP's analyses.

## Quality of Processes, Interactions and Communications

Grantees were asked to comment on the quality of Ascendium's processes, interactions, and communications. Their comments were then categorized by the nature of their content, specifically whether the content is positive, neutral or constructive.

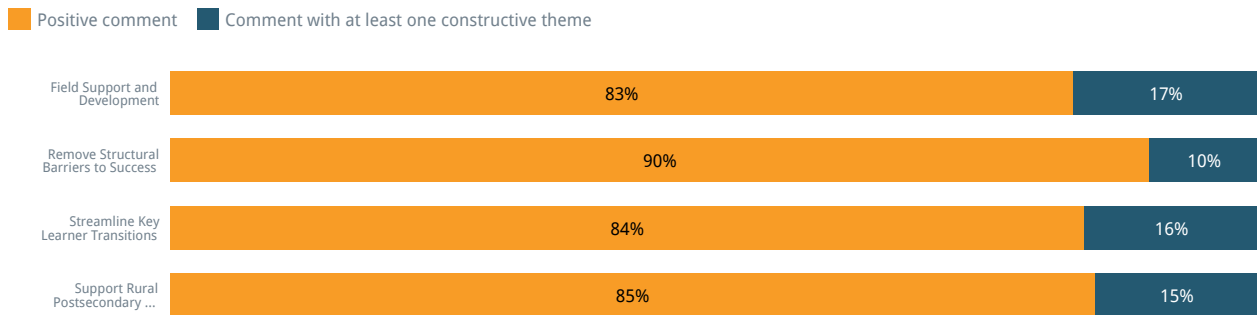
For a comment to be categorized as constructive, there must have been at least one constructive topic in its content.

### Positivity of Comments about the Quality of Ascendium's Processes, Interactions, and Communications



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on

### Positivity of Comments about the Quality of Ascendium's Processes, Interactions, and Communications - By Subgroup



Subgroup: Focus Area

## Suggestion Topics

Grantees were asked to provide any suggestions for how Ascendium could improve. The 99 grantees that responded to the survey provided 30 constructive suggestions. These suggestions were thematically categorized by CEP and grouped into the topics below.

### Proportion of Grantee Suggestions by Topic

Topic of Suggestion	Proportion
Assistance Beyond the Grant	37%
Ascendium's Communications	30%
Selection Process	13%
Ascendium's Grantmaking Approach	10%
Other	10%

## Suggestions

Grantees were asked to provide any suggestions for how the Foundation could improve. The 99 grantees that responded to the survey provided a total of 30 distinct suggestions. These suggestions were thematically categorized by CEP and grouped into the topics below.

### Assistance Beyond the Grant (37% N=11)

- More Opportunities for Grantee Convenings and Collaboration (N = 7)
  - "Use your convening power. Our organization has significantly benefited from being connected with other Ascendium-funded groups working in adjacent spaces. Ascendium should consider holding an annual summit that brings together its partners for intentional learning, sharing of work, and connecting."
  - "Creating opportunities for grantees to learn from one another and share more directly."
  - "Grantee convenings (grantee field building) to learn about how grantees address the challenges they face and innovative strategies they use."
  - "It would be powerful to have more convenings of Ascendium's grantee portfolio so we can learn from each other's work and perhaps create programmatic connections."
  - "Please convene similarly-focused organizations that you are funding. Serendipity is too important to leave to chance."
  - "The ability to physically convene grantees annually for cross pollination of ideas and collaboration."
  - "It would be nice to... have a way to connect as an Ascendium community."
- Build Grantees' Capacity (N = 2)
  - "Combine specific project funding with organizational capacity building."
  - "We could have used the non-monetary supports referenced in this survey. Those would have been extremely helpful to the project and to our organization. Perhaps those sorts of supports can be more universally offered to grantees."
- Champion Grantees' Work (N = 2)
  - "Also - I would appreciate introductions and support in additional fundraising from Ascendium (i.e. introductions to other funders, strategic planning support, etc)."
  - "Help us disseminate and communicate about the work... Going beyond sharing/reposting our work would be very helpful in creating the change we are all working towards."

### Ascendium's Communications (30% N=9)

- Clearer and More Transparent Communications about Funding Goals and Strategy (N = 4)
  - "Greater clarity on their strategy and intended impact."
  - "It would be nice to hear about more of the grants being awarded...."
  - "It would also be helpful to be educated about the organization itself, key staff we may or may not engage with, and the overall funding strategy."
  - "Virtual communications with Ascendium senior staff to hear first-hand about their plans and opportunities to broaden and deepen our work as grantees (big picture-future perspectives)."
- Greater Clarity around Grantees' Fit into Ascendium's Strategy (N = 3)
  - "Ascendium can sometimes go into multiple strategic planning modes, which often means a pause on new investments that can be hard to plan around."
  - "I think I might want to know more about their strategy and future plans, and how our work fits in... Our program officer could perhaps mention more often what their priorities are and how we can contribute or improve to better align with those priorities."
  - "It would be helpful if they continued to be transparent about their expectations. Having that level of clarity makes a big difference in our work moving forward."
- Ascendium's Leadership Role (N = 2)
  - "Ascendium could play a larger role in helping traditional higher education accept that education is changing and that institutions need to adapt or die."
  - "Confidence in the role they want to play in the field."

### Selection Process (13% N=4)

- Clearer Timelines for Selection Process (N = 2)
  - "Even more clarity around what elements of the grant have flexibility (timelines, no-cost extensions) and which do not."
  - "There could have been a bit more transparency about timelines during the proposal development and approval process."
- Streamline the Selection Process (N = 2)
  - "A more structured and streamlined pre-proposal process."
  - "Although our organization greatly benefited from Ascendium's rigorous proposal development process, we can appreciate how that process might feel overwhelming to some smaller organizations.... If this doesn't already happen, it might be useful to consider abbreviating some portions of the full grant process for smaller grants/grantees."

### Ascendium's Grantmaking Approach (10% N=3)

- Adjustments to Ascendium's Approach and Strategy (N = 3)
  - "Ask (through surveys, focus groups and interviews) college practitioners who have been beneficiaries of grantees' work to better understand the impact and areas for improvement."
  - "I understand that some projects are funded so Ascendium can learn from these about moving forward with future funding. However, I find that funders of Ascendium's size and scope often don't understand how the organizations they fund can (or cannot) influence the target population or the extent of that influence. Often projects and organizations are funded that seem well-liked, based on questionable research (if any), or boutique programs that aren't designed to have an impact sizable enough to make a difference."
  - "Incorporate more strategies from participatory grant-making to engage practitioners in distributing resources and building collective impact projects."

**Other (10% N=3)**

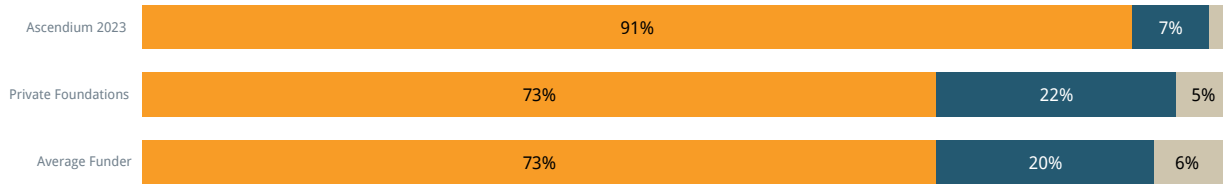
- Other Comments (N = 3)
  - "I encourage all funders to consider making general operating support grants instead of project grants."
  - "One thing I would really appreciate is more hands-on collaboration, and talking through the real challenges of the work, that acknowledges the difficulty and the great need for on-going learning."
  - "Get on the road more. We have invited our program officer to several of our grant-funded program activities but they have not been able to attend. They do attend others. Their presence matters and is a signal to me of how much they value our partnership."



## Respondents and Communities Served

### Are the efforts funded by this grant primarily meant to benefit historically disadvantaged groups?

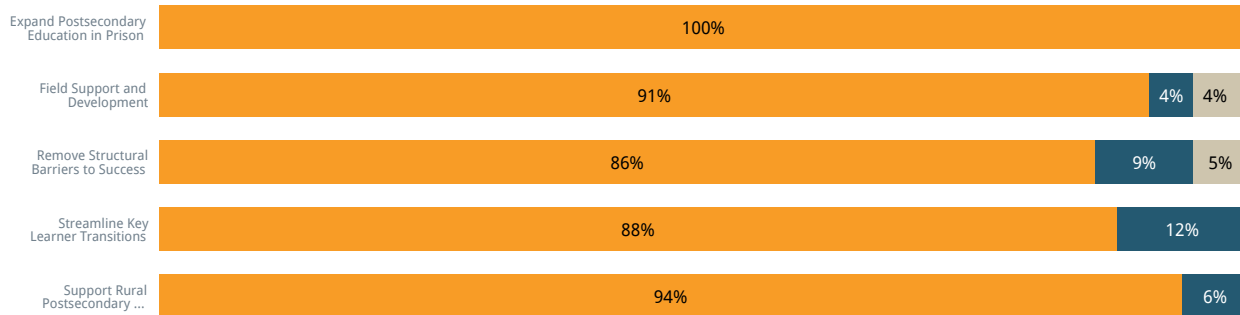
Yes No Don't know



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on

### Are the efforts funded by this grant primarily meant to benefit historically disadvantaged groups? - By Subgroup

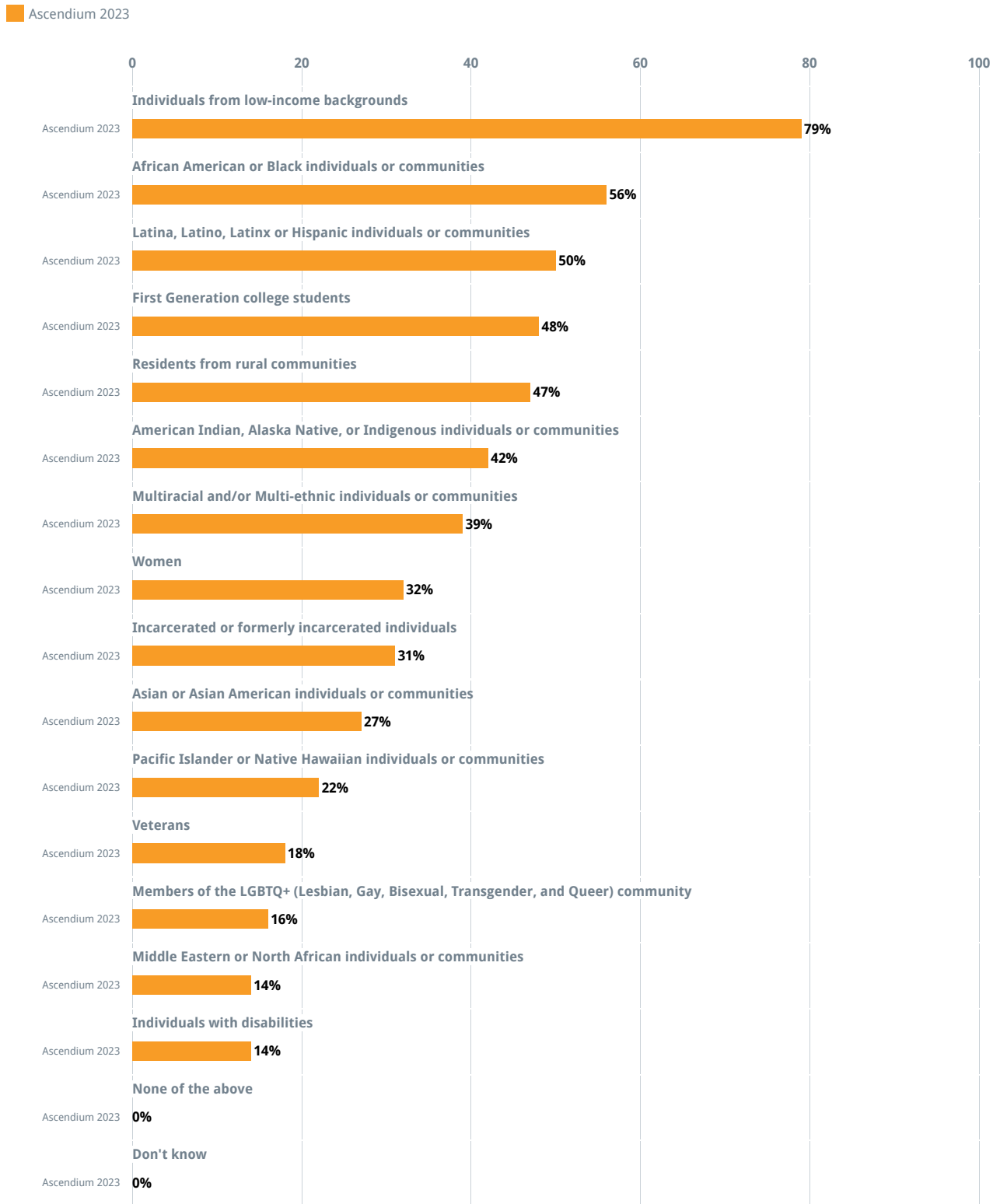
Yes No Don't know



Subgroup: Focus Area

The following question is asked only of grantees who answered "yes" to the question "Are the efforts funded by this grant primarily meant to benefit historically disadvantaged groups?"

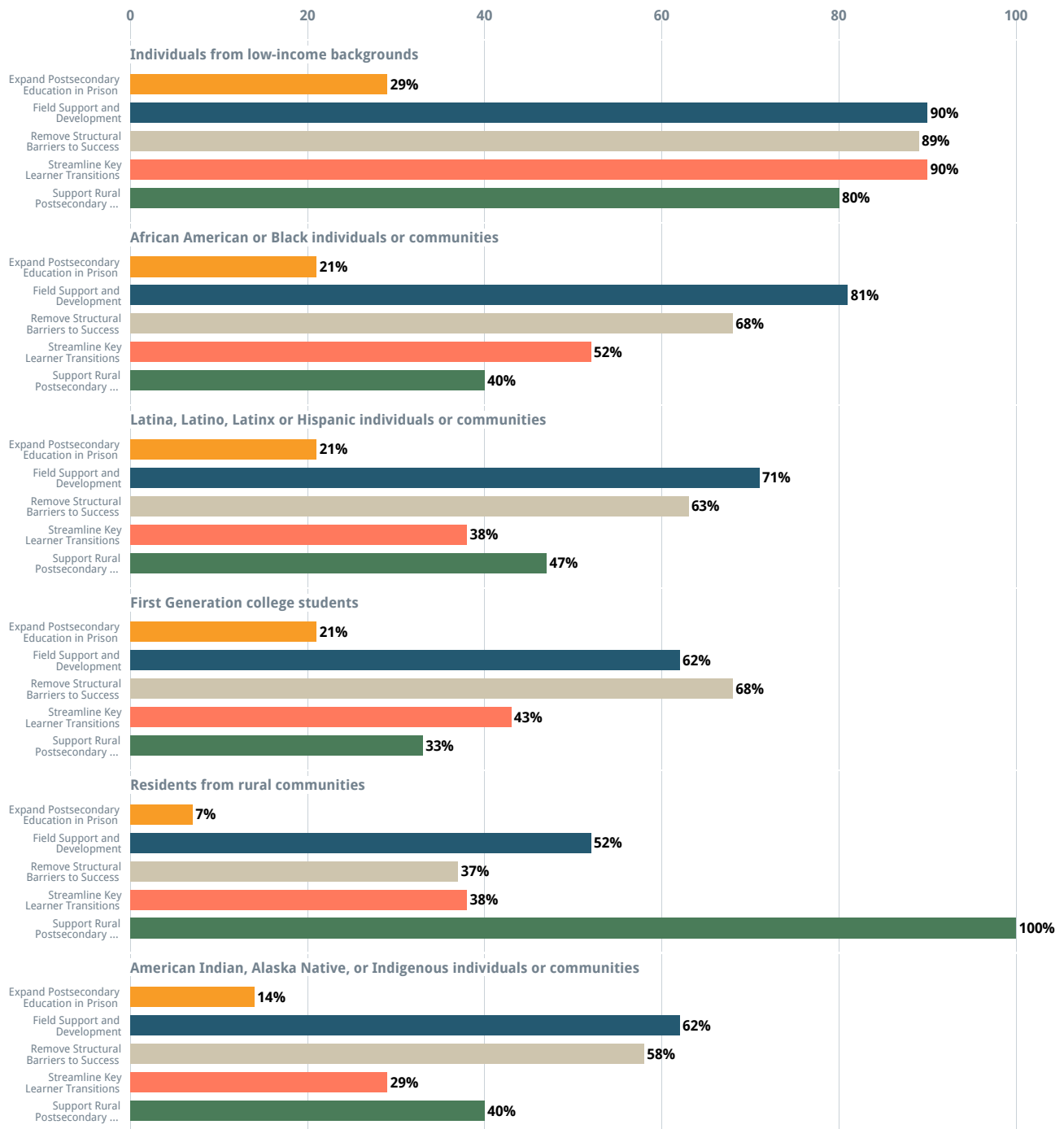
Specifically, are any of the following populations the primary intended people and/or communities served by the efforts funded by this grant?



Cohort: None Past results: on

**Specifically, are any of the following populations the primary intended people and/or communities served by the efforts funded by this grant? - By Subgroup**

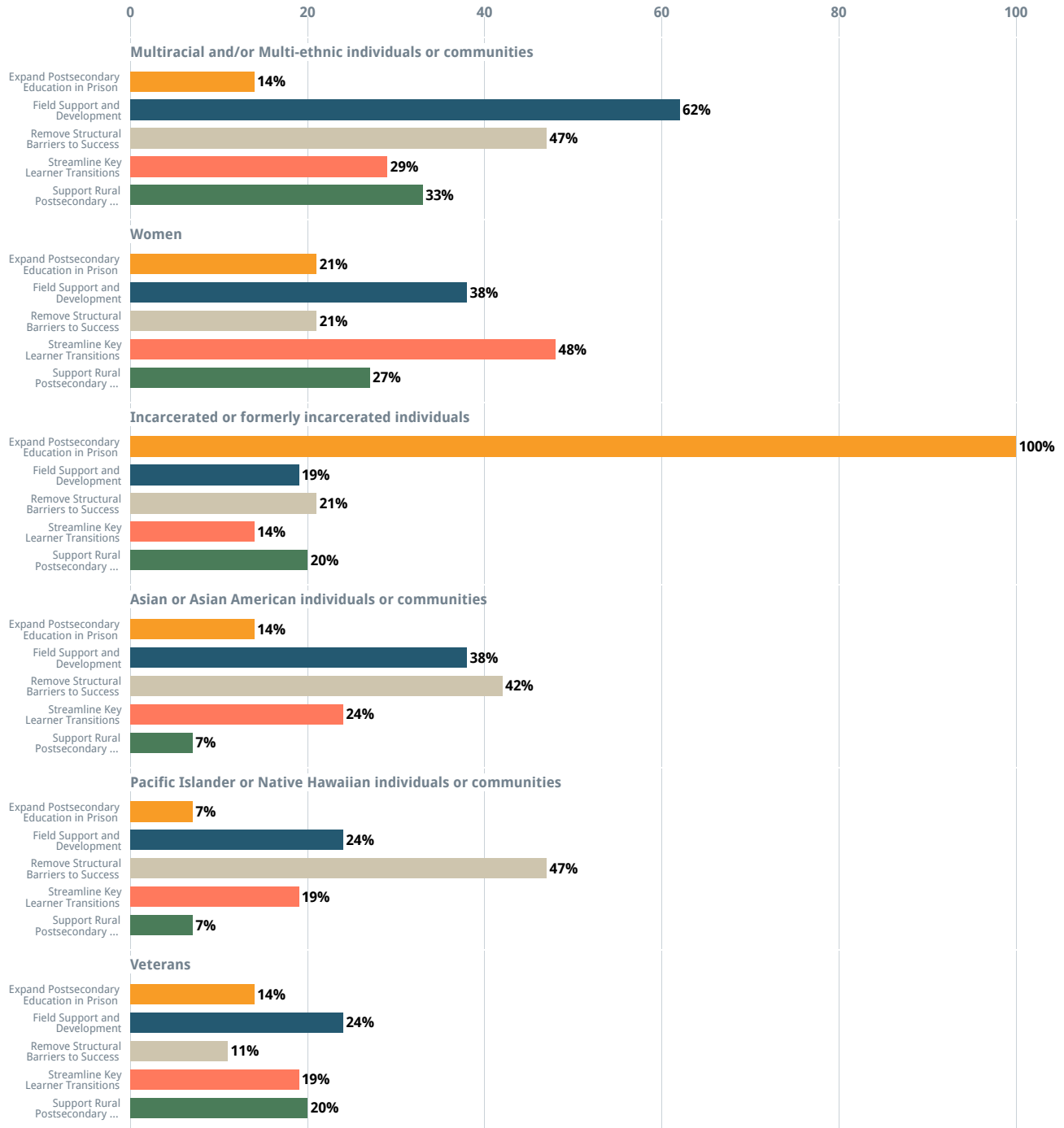
- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



Subgroup: Focus Area

**Specifically, are any of the following populations the primary intended people and/or communities served by the efforts funded by this grant? - By Subgroup (cont.)**

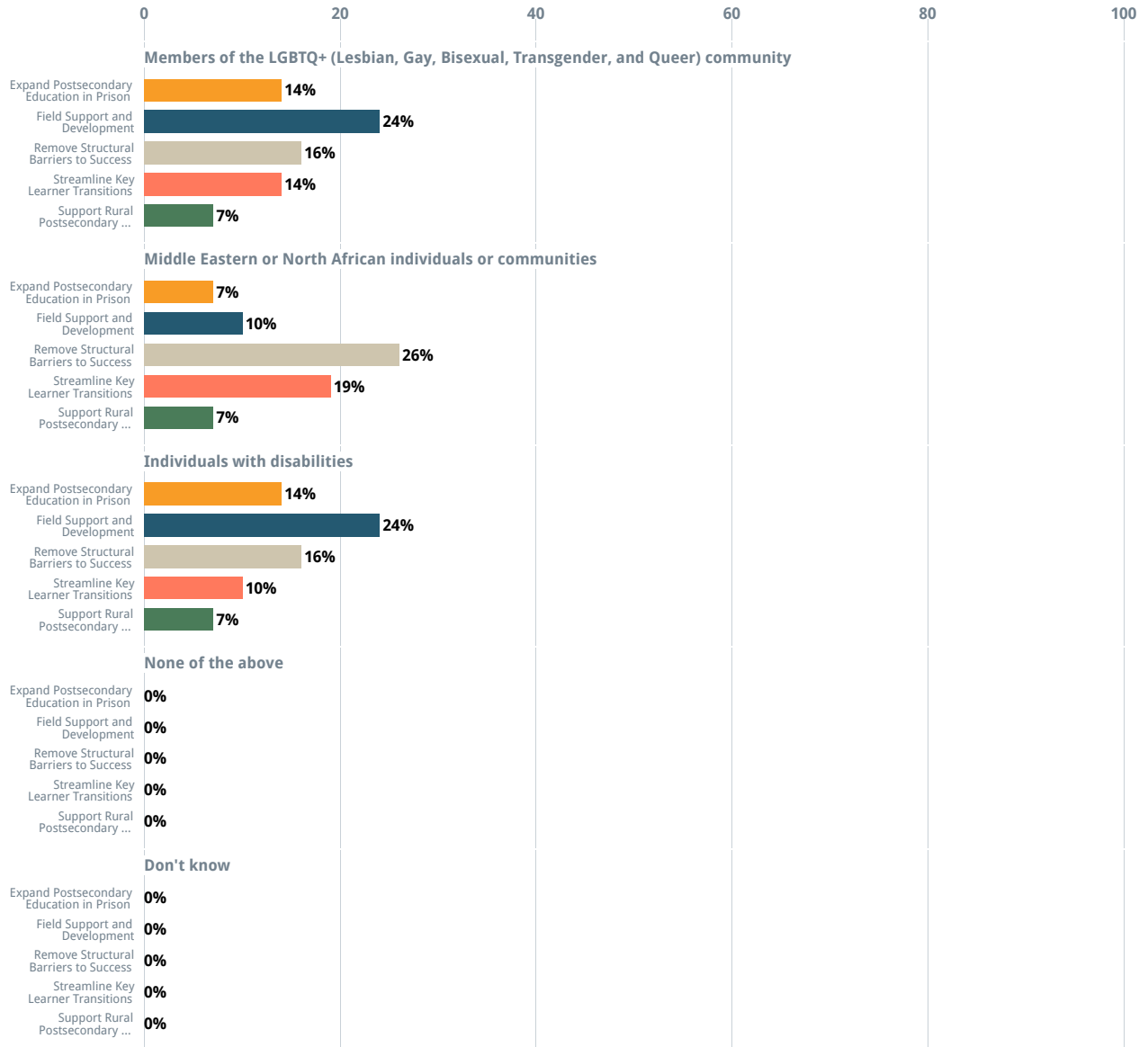
- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



Subgroup: Focus Area

**Specifically, are any of the following populations the primary intended people and/or communities served by the efforts funded by this grant? - By Subgroup (cont.)**

- Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison
- Field Support and Development
- Remove Structural Barriers to Success
- Streamline Key Learner Transitions
- Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training



Subgroup: Focus Area

## Respondent Demographics

Note: Survey language and response options for questions about race and ethnicity are guided by best practices shared by [National Institutes of Health](#), [Pew Research Center](#), [Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research](#), and the [US Census Bureau](#).

Survey language and response options for questions about gender and LGBTQ+ identity are guided by best practices shared by [Fundations For LGBTQ Issues](#), [HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools](#), and the [Williams Institute of the University of California – Los Angeles School of Law](#).

Survey respondents are asked to share their gender identities in a check-all-that-apply question. Each chart has the option of showing the average ratings of respondents who selected only "man," only "woman," multiple gender identities, "gender non-conforming or non-binary," "prefer to self-identify," and "prefer not to say" - as long as that response option had at least 10 respondents.

## Differences in Ratings by Respondent Demographics

It is CEP's standard practice to analyze responses for differences by the following demographics characteristics:

### **Gender Identity**

There are no significant differences in grantees' ratings according to their gender identity.

### **Person of Color Identity**

Grantees who identify as a person of color rate significantly higher than those who do not identify as a person of color on some measures in the report, including:

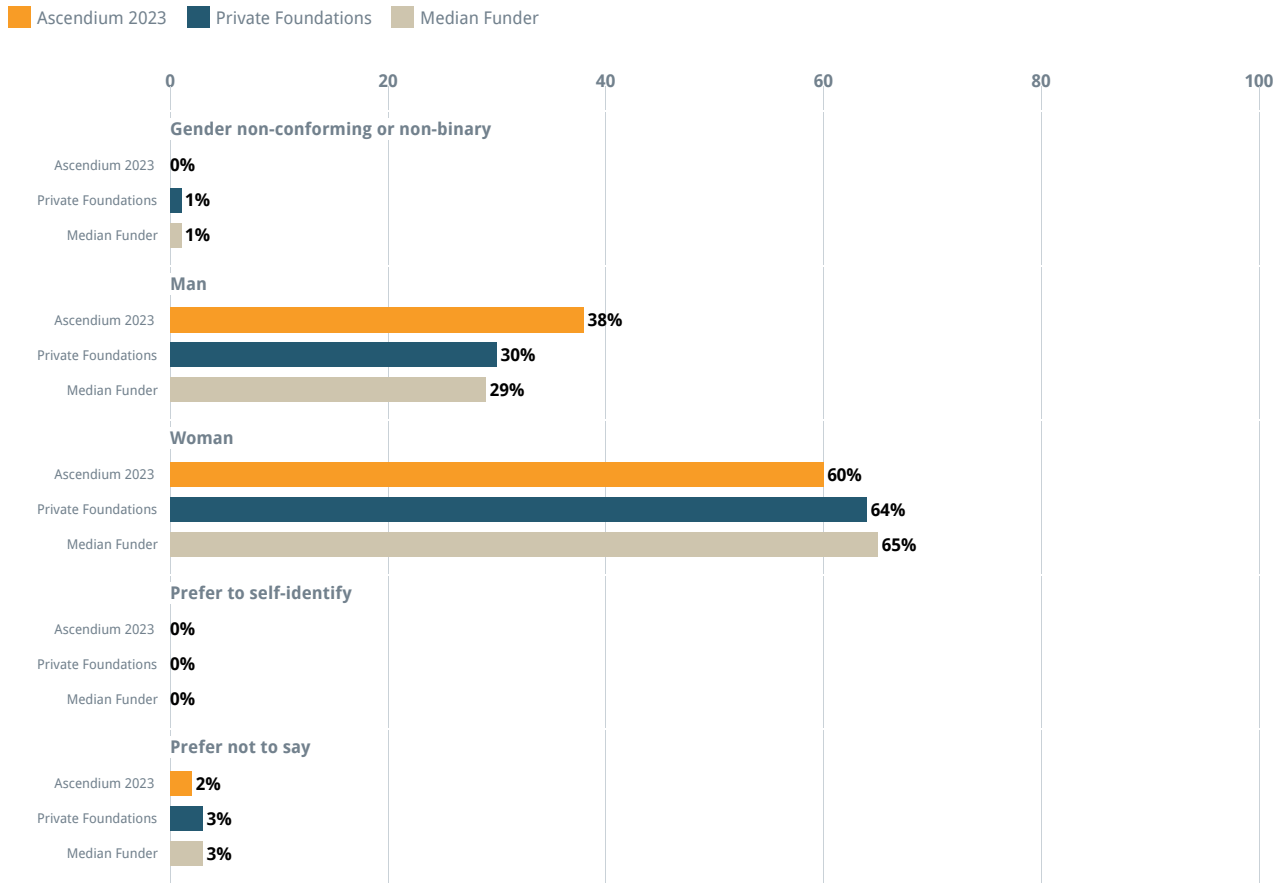
- Ascendium's impact on grantees' fields and local communities
- Ascendium's understanding of grantees' local communities
- The extent to which Ascendium's funding priorities reflect an understanding of the needs of the people and communities that grantees serve
- Ascendium's awareness of grantees' challenges
- The clarity of Ascendium's communications about its goals and strategy

### **LGBTQ+ Identity**

There are no consistent, significant differences in grantees' ratings according to their LGBTQ+ identity.

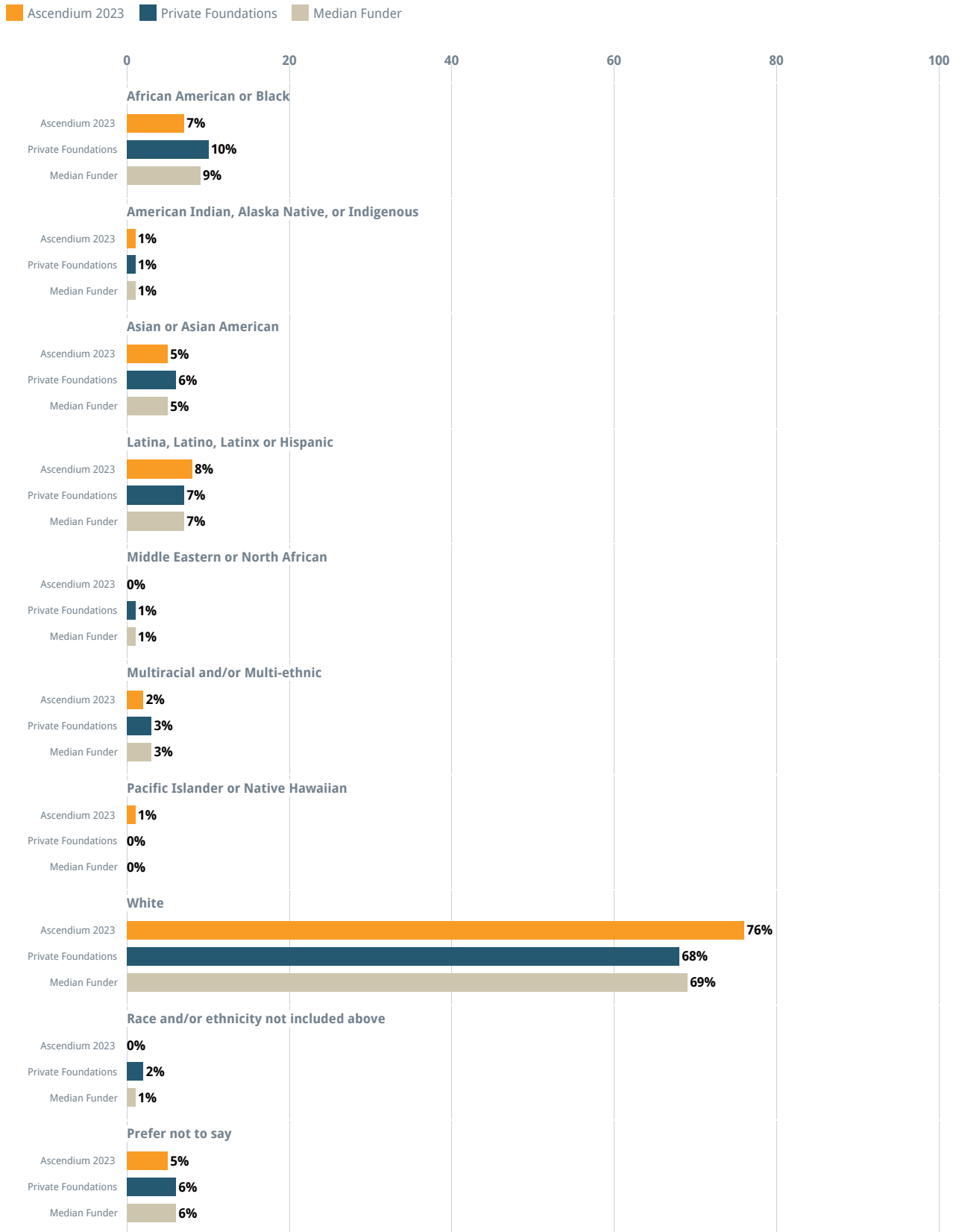
**Note:** There were not enough respondents who identified as transgender or having a disability to run analyses on these demographic characteristics.

Please select the option that represents how you describe yourself:



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on

How would you describe your race and/or ethnicity?



Cohort: Private Foundations Past results: on



Selected Cohort: None		
Do you identify as a person of color?	Ascendium 2023	Average Funder
Yes	24%	24%
No	73%	71%
Prefer not to say	3%	5%

Selected Cohort: None		
Are you transgender?	Ascendium 2023	Average Funder
Yes	0%	1%
No	98%	96%
Prefer not to say	2%	4%

Selected Cohort: None		
Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) community?	Ascendium 2023	Average Funder
Yes	15%	11%
No	80%	84%
Prefer not to say	5%	5%

Selected Cohort: None		
Do you have a disability?	Ascendium 2023	Average Funder
Yes	5%	6%
No	87%	89%
Prefer not to say	8%	5%

## Respondent Job Title

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Job Title of Respondents	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Average Funder	Custom Cohort
Executive Director/CEO	24%	13%	8%	47%	31%
Other Senior Team (i.e., reporting to Executive Director/CEO)	36%	30%	19%	19%	29%
Project Director	27%	42%	45%	12%	22%
Development Staff	9%	14%	16%	16%	14%
Volunteer	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Other	3%	0%	12%	5%	4%

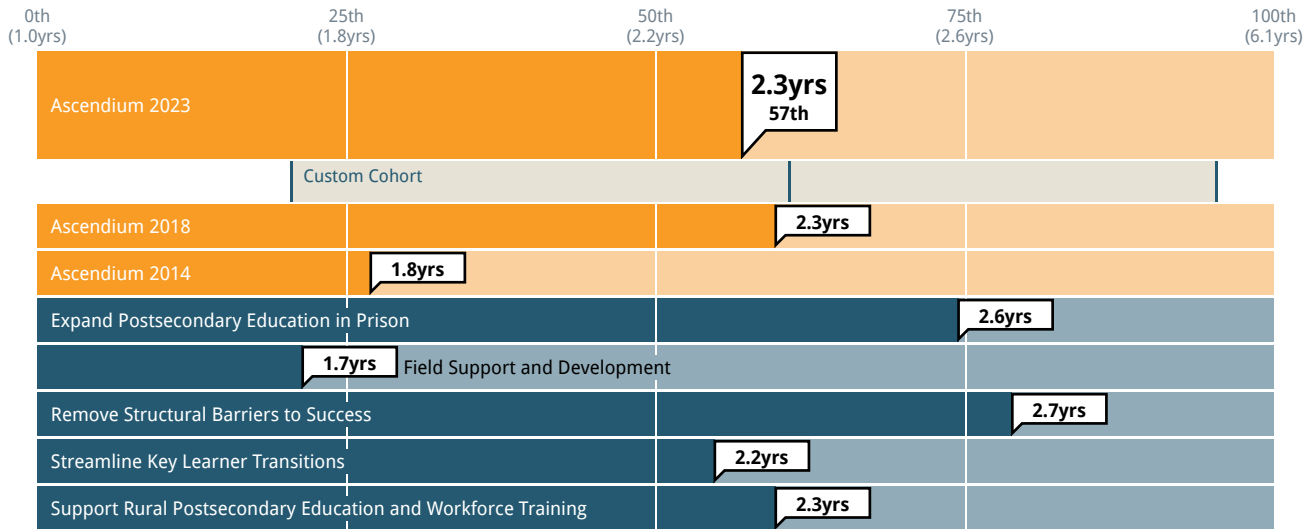
**Note:** In 2018 and 2014, grantees could select "Development Director" or "Other Development Staff." In 2023, these two categories have been combined into "Development Staff."

## Contextual Data

Please note that all information below is based on self-reported data from grantees.

## Grantmaking Characteristics

### Average Grant Length



Cohort: Custom Cohort Past results: on Subgroup: Focus Area

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Length of Grant Awarded	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder	Custom Cohort
Average grant length	2.3 years	2.3 years	1.8 years	2.2 years	2.3 years

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Length of Grant Awarded	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Average Funder	Custom Cohort
0 - 1.99 years	32%	19%	57%	48%	28%
2 - 2.99 years	21%	49%	21%	22%	32%
3 - 3.99 years	42%	26%	21%	19%	27%
4 - 4.99 years	5%	2%	0%	3%	6%
5 - 5.0 years	0%	4%	2%	8%	7%

Selected Cohort: None		
Proportion of Unrestricted Funding	Ascendium 2023	Average Funder
No, this funding was not restricted to a specific use (i.e., general operating, core support)	4%	27%
Yes, this funding was restricted to a specific use (e.g., supported a specific program, project, capital need, etc.)	96%	73%

### Grantmaking Characteristics - By Subgroup

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Length of Grant Awarded (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
Average grant length	2.6 years	1.7 years	2.7 years	2.2 years	2.3 years

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Length of Grant Awarded (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
0 - 1.99 years	14%	57%	14%	38%	25%
2 - 2.99 years	14%	17%	19%	17%	44%
3 - 3.99 years	71%	22%	57%	42%	25%
4 - 4.99 years	0%	4%	10%	4%	6%
5 - 50 years	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Proportion of Unrestricted Funding (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
No, this funding was not restricted to a specific use (i.e., general operating, core support)	14%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Yes, this funding was restricted to a specific use (e.g., supported a specific program, project, capital need, etc.)	86%	91%	100%	100%	100%

### Grant Size

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Grant Amount Awarded	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder	Custom Cohort
Median grant size	\$737K	\$199.8K	\$150K	\$110K	\$500K

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Grant Amount Awarded	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Average Funder	Custom Cohort
Less than \$10K	0%	0%	2%	8%	1%
\$10K - \$24K	0%	1%	5%	11%	1%
\$25K - \$49K	1%	12%	5%	12%	3%
\$50K - \$99K	9%	25%	27%	14%	7%
\$100K - \$149K	3%	5%	8%	10%	5%
\$150K - \$299K	11%	18%	37%	16%	20%
\$300K - \$499K	10%	19%	11%	10%	17%
\$500K - \$999K	27%	12%	6%	9%	22%
\$1MM and above	38%	9%	0%	10%	24%

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Median Percent of Budget Funded by Grant (Annualized)	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder	Custom Cohort
Size of grant relative to size of grantee budget	4%	1%	3%	4%	4%

### Grant Size - By Subgroup

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Grant Amount Awarded (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
Median grant size	\$810K	\$303.6K	\$1417.9K	\$650K	\$646.9K

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Grant Amount Awarded (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
Less than \$10K	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
\$10K - \$24K	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
\$25K - \$49K	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%
\$50K - \$99K	0%	35%	5%	0%	0%
\$100K - \$149K	0%	4%	0%	8%	0%
\$150K - \$299K	15%	9%	5%	21%	6%
\$300K - \$499K	8%	13%	5%	8%	19%
\$500K - \$999K	46%	13%	19%	25%	44%
\$1MM and above	31%	26%	67%	33%	31%

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Median Percent of Budget Funded by Grant (Annualized) (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
Size of grant relative to size of grantee budget	3%	3%	8%	4%	4%



## Grantee Characteristics

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Operating Budget of Grantee Organization	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder	Custom Cohort
Median Budget	\$9M	\$11M	\$6.9M	\$1.6M	\$6M

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Operating Budget of Grantee Organization	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Average Funder	Custom Cohort
<\$100K	0%	3%	3%	8%	1%
\$100K - \$499K	7%	5%	24%	18%	9%
\$500K - \$999K	8%	5%	8%	13%	8%
\$1MM - \$4.9MM	22%	21%	16%	30%	28%
\$5MM - \$24MM	30%	31%	8%	19%	25%
>=\$25MM	33%	35%	42%	12%	28%

## Grantee Characteristics - By Subgroup

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Operating Budget of Grantee Organization (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
Median Budget	\$21M	\$11M	\$5M	\$5M	\$9M

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Operating Budget of Grantee Organization (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
<\$100K	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
\$100K - \$499K	0%	15%	0%	5%	13%
\$500K - \$999K	25%	5%	10%	5%	0%
\$1MM - \$4.9MM	17%	5%	38%	33%	13%
\$5MM - \$24MM	8%	50%	29%	19%	40%
>=\$25MM	50%	25%	24%	38%	33%

### Funding Relationship

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Funding Status	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder	Custom Cohort
Percent of grantees currently receiving funding from Ascendium	89%	87%	71%	82%	85%

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Pattern of Grantees' Funding Relationship with Ascendium	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Average Funder	Custom Cohort
First grant received from Ascendium	48%	45%	44%	29%	33%
Consistent funding in the past	32%	39%	37%	53%	46%
Inconsistent funding in the past	20%	16%	19%	18%	21%

### Funding Relationship - by Subgroup

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Funding Status (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
Percent of grantees currently receiving funding from Ascendium	100%	87%	91%	79%	94%

Selected Subgroup: Focus Area					
Pattern of Grantees' Funding Relationship with Ascendium (By Subgroup)	Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison	Field Support and Development	Remove Structural Barriers to Success	Streamline Key Learner Transitions	Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training
First grant received from Ascendium	62%	39%	36%	54%	56%
Consistent funding in the past	31%	48%	45%	12%	19%
Inconsistent funding in the past	8%	13%	18%	33%	25%

## Funder Characteristics

Selected Cohort: Custom Cohort					
Financial Information	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder	Custom Cohort
Total assets	\$1000M	\$571.4M	\$270.2M	\$281.7M	N/A
Total giving	\$122M	\$26.1M	\$6.6M	\$20.5M	\$93.5M

Selected Cohort: None				
Funder Staffing	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder
Total staff (FTEs)	20	11	7	17
Percent of staff who are program staff	98%	53%	57%	44%

Selected Cohort: None				
Grantmaking Processes	Ascendium 2023	Ascendium 2018	Ascendium 2014	Median Funder
Proportion of grants that are invitation-only	100%	33%	5%	52%
Proportion of grantmaking dollars that are invitation-only	100%	70%	3%	68%

## Additional Survey Information

On many questions in the grantee survey, grantees are allowed to select “don’t know” or “not applicable” if they are not able to provide an alternative answer. In addition, some questions in the survey are only displayed to a select group of grantees for which that question is relevant based on a previous response.

As a result, there are some measures where only a subset of responses is included in the reported results. The table below shows the number of responses included on each of these measures. The total number of respondents to Ascendium’s grantee survey was 99.

Question Text	Number of Responses
Overall, how would you rate Ascendium's impact on your field?	95
How well does Ascendium understand the field in which you work?	96
To what extent has Ascendium advanced the state of knowledge in your field?	83
To what extent has Ascendium affected public policy in your field?	67
Overall, how would you rate Ascendium's impact on your local community?	54
How well does Ascendium understand the local community in which you work?	57
How well does Ascendium understand your organization's strategy and goals?	94
Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the non-monetary support you received from Ascendium:	
The non-monetary support I received met an important need for my organization and/or program	61
The non-monetary support I received strengthened my organization and/or program	61
Ascendium's non-monetary support was a worthwhile use of the time required of us	61
I felt Ascendium would be open to feedback about the non-monetary support it provided	61
Who most frequently initiated the contact you had with your program officer during this grant?	96
Has your main contact at Ascendium changed in the past six months?	96
At any point during this grant, including the selection process, did Foundation staff conduct a site visit?	98
How consistent was the information provided by different communication resources, both personal and written, that you used to learn about Ascendium?	94
How well do you understand the way in which the work funded by this grant fits into Ascendium's broader efforts?	96
How well does Ascendium understand the social, cultural, or socioeconomic factors that affect your work?	95
How well does Ascendium understand the needs of the people and communities that you serve?	90
To what extent do Ascendium's funding priorities reflect a deep understanding of the needs of the people and communities that you serve?	91
Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about diversity, equity, and inclusion:	
Ascendium has clearly communicated what diversity, equity, and inclusion means for its work	87
Overall, Ascendium demonstrates an explicit commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in its work	88
Overall, most staff I have interacted with at Ascendium embody a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion	93
I believe that Ascendium is committed to combatting racism	84
Did you submit a proposal to Ascendium for this grant?	98
To what extent was Ascendium's selection process a helpful opportunity to strengthen the efforts funded by the grant?	92
To what extent was Ascendium's selection process an appropriate level of effort given the amount of funding received?	94
To what extent was Ascendium clear and transparent about the selection process requirements and timelines?	96
To what extent was Ascendium clear and transparent about the criteria Ascendium uses to decide whether a proposal would be funded or declined?	91
Have you participated in a reporting or evaluation process?	97
At any point during the proposal or the grant period, did Ascendium and your organization exchange ideas regarding how your organization would assess the results of the work funded by this grant?	90
To what extent was Ascendium's reporting process straightforward?	73

Question Text	Number of Responses
To what extent was Ascendium's reporting process adaptable, if necessary, to fit your circumstances?	67
To what extent was Ascendium's reporting process relevant, with questions and measures pertinent to the work funded by this grant?	73
To what extent was Ascendium's reporting process a helpful opportunity for you to reflect and learn?	74
To what extent did the evaluation incorporate your input in the design of the evaluation?	9
To what extent did the evaluation result in you making changes to the work that was evaluated?	10
Are you currently receiving funding from Ascendium?	99
Which of the following best describes the pattern of your organization's funding relationship with Ascendium?	98
Primary Intended People and/or Communities	
Are the efforts funded by this grant primarily meant to benefit historically disadvantaged groups?	99
Specifically, are any of the following the primary intended people and/or communities served by the efforts funded by this grant?	90
Custom Questions	
How would you rate the size of the grant and the length of the grant as they related to achieving the specific, expected results?	
The size of the grant	92
The length of the grant	97
Thinking about the past year, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Ascendium staff...	
Took a "listening and learning first" approach when interacting with me.	96
Asked probing questions.	97
Were open to my ideas about Ascendium's strategy.	84
Brought valuable expertise.	95
Acknowledged their own limitations with respect to my knowledge and expertise.	91
Valued and acted on my expertise.	97
Used appropriate evidence to inform their views.	90
To what extent does Ascendium staff exhibit the following qualities of a thought leader or thought partner?	
Has a compelling vision for change	93
Is at the leading edge of the field	92
Has deep expertise or direct experience in the field	91
Generates high-quality ideas, evidence, or research for the field	89
Communicates high-quality ideas, evidence, or research to the field	88
Collaborates with different stakeholders in the field	90
Focuses on equity	92

## About CEP and Contact Information

### Mission:

CEP provides data, feedback, programs, and insights to help individual and institutional donors improve their effectiveness. We do this work because we believe effective donors, working collaboratively and thoughtfully, can profoundly contribute to creating a better and more just world.

### Vision:

We seek a world in which pressing social needs are more effectively addressed.

We believe improved performance of philanthropic funders can have a profoundly positive impact on nonprofit organizations and the people and communities they serve.

Although our work is about measuring results, providing useful data, and improving performance, our ultimate goal is improving lives. We believe this can only be achieved through a powerful combination of dispassionate analysis and passionate commitment to creating a better society.

### About the GPR:

Since 2003, the Grantee Perception Report® (GPR) has provided funders with comparative, candid feedback based on grantee perceptions. The GPR is the only grantee survey process that provides comparative data, and is based on extensive research and analysis. Hundreds of funders of all types and sizes have commissioned the GPR, and tens of thousands of grantees have provided their perspectives to help funders improve their work. CEP has surveyed grantees in more than 150 countries and in 8 different languages.

The GPR's quantitative and qualitative data helps foundation leaders evaluate and understand their grantees' perceptions of their effectiveness, and how that compares to their philanthropic peers.

## Additional CEP Resources

### Assessment Tools

**Donor Perception Report (DPR):** The Donor Perception Report provides community foundations with comparative data on their donors' perceptions, preferences for engagement, and giving patterns. Based on research and guidance from a group of community foundation leaders, the DPR is the only survey process that provides comparative data for community foundations.

**Staff Perception Report (SPR):** The Staff Perception Report explores foundation staff members' perceptions of foundation effectiveness and job satisfaction on a comparative basis. The SPR is based on a survey specific to foundations that includes questions related to employees' impressions of their role in philanthropy, satisfaction with their jobs, their foundation's impact, and opportunities for foundation improvement.

### Advisory Services

CEP's data-driven, customized advising leverages CEP's knowledge and experience to help funders answer pressing questions about their work, address existing challenges, hear from valued constituents, and learn and share with peers. Learn more at [cep.org/advisoryservices](https://cep.org/advisoryservices).

### Research

CEP's research projects delve into issues that are central to funder effectiveness, examining common practice and challenging conventional wisdom. Our research is informed by rigorous quantitative and qualitative analysis of large-scale data sets, in-depth qualitative interviews with philanthropic leaders, as well as by profiles of high-performing organizations and staff.

CEP's resource library offers resources for grantmakers, individual donors, and more. Explore the full range of resources available in CEP's resource library at [cep.org/resources](https://cep.org/resources).

### YouthTruth Student Survey

YouthTruth supports school systems in gathering and acting on student and stakeholder feedback, helping schools, districts, and education funders think through the ins-and-outs of actionable insights to drive improvement. Learn more at [youthtruthsurvey.org](https://youthtruthsurvey.org).

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