

WISE Grant

Interim Insights and Learning Report

Day
Four
Projects

June 2024





Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation Day Four Projects acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.





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For further information or documentation related to the WISE Open Grant Round, please contact Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation (stephen.torsi@lmcf.org.au) or visit www.lmcf.org.au

For further information related to this evaluation, please contact Day Four Projects, at info@dayfourprojects.com.



Executive Summary

Access to financial support is critical for many Work Integrated Social Enterprises (WISE) operating in Australia, yet can be difficult to secure. The WISE Open Grant Round aims to simplify and streamline access to financial support for WISE through bringing together seven of Australia's leading funding agencies.

Through the WISE Open Grant Round, these funding organisations have worked as 'Partner Organisations and navigated both the design of the initiative, as well as its implementation, including all EOI and applicant facing processes and communications, shortlisting and selection procedures. The collaborative nature of the WISE Open Grant Round brought with it the additional requirement of working across the needs and interests of partner organisations, each with their own preferences, contexts, and drivers.

This interim evaluation report of the WISE Open Grant Round explores the initial experiences of Partner Organisations, as well as Grant Applicants and Recipients in working in this new model, and applying to a collaboratively developed opportunity. It seeks to understand the processes involved in mobilising the engagement of diverse funding agencies, how they navigate strategic and operational choices, the challenges in working together, how to balance the need for individual and shared ambitions, and the conditions that are required to foster good funder-funder collaboration. It also seeks to understand the initial experiences of WISE in applying to this open grant round, and the challenges and enablers they encountered in doing so.

This evaluation involved interviews with Partner Organisations, analyses of applicant forms and data, and feedback from successful and unsuccessful WISE. As an interim evaluation report, this document provides an overview of the formation of the collaboration, and the initial experiences of participants: future work will seek to understand how the collaboration has changed over time, and the enduring value and challenges that Partner Organisations derive and encounter from working together.

Findings from this round of data collection suggest that:

- A functional and collaborative process and structure has been created for Partner Organisations to work together, which has facilitated good engagement from a range of funding agencies.
- Strong stewardship and leadership was essential for generating collaborative momentum among Partner Organisations – from the early stages of coming together, through to more operational project work.
- Good collaboration in this context has required significant work from Partner Organisations, and regular dialogue to make shared decisions. The level of required engagement was above what some had expected.
- Meeting the needs and interests of Partner Organisations in shortlisting and selection processes has been challenging, but possible, and has required thoughtful negotiation, debate and deliberation to ensure that funding is administered in ways that align with the varied perspectives of partners.
- Grant applicants have reported that the process has been helpful in streamlining their access to philanthropic funding.
- Unsuccessful applicants (at both the EOI and full application stages) would benefit from further information regarding their applications, including reasons for their lack of success, and opportunities for strengthening applications in the future.

The signs are strong that the WISE Open Grant Round has been welcomed by Partner Organisations and WISE, and that good foundations have been laid for ongoing collaboration to support positive outcomes for philanthropy, and the WISE sector.

Background

The Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) Grant Program is a collaboration between seven Partner Organisations: Paul Ramsay Foundation, Westpac Foundation, Macquarie Group Foundation, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, Minderoo Foundation, and English Family Foundation.

WISE have a notable track record of creating jobs, building skills development, training and education and forging opportunities for marginalised jobseekers. However, WISE face unique and complex challenges including sustainability of their models, nature of required services and the challenges of working with marginalised jobseekers who have often been excluded from the labour market.

The WISE Grant Program is seeking to explore, develop and test a streamlined and more accessible funding model for WISE to lessen some of the complex challenges associated with accessing funding from philanthropies.

Via a two-year grant program, administered on behalf of Partner Organisations by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, the WISE Grant Program is providing \$4.7 million to support core funding of social enterprises seeking to create jobs and employment pathways in Australia. The program involves two tiers of support for WISE: tier one (\$200,000) seeks to support recipients to develop their impact and business models toward greater financial resilience, while tier two (\$500,000) supports recipients in strengthening and preparing them for future growth. Of the 185 organisations that applied to the open grant round in 2023, 24 were shortlisted for application and 14 organisations have been successful grant recipients of funding.

Stakeholder Terminology

For the purpose of this evaluation, the following terms will be used to refer to stakeholder groups.

- Partner Organisation – referring to Philanthropies contributing to the WISE Grant Program.
- Grant Applicant – a WISE organisation that engaged in the first round of Expression of Interests (EOIs) and/or the Application stage.
- Grant Recipient – a WISE organisation that was successful in receiving grant funding and became a Grant Partner.
- Social Enterprise Advisory Group – six WISE representatives who supported the WISE Grant Program by informing the criteria and design of the grant.

Purpose and Objectives

This project is an evaluation of the WISE Open Grant Round. The purpose of this evaluation is to understand to how Partner Organisations worked together in designing and implementing the WISE Open Grant Round, and the benefits and challenges that were experienced by Grant Recipients and Partner Organisations. In doing so the project involves:

- Identifying elements of this new approach to funding that are successful for philanthropies individually, and collectively.
- Identifying elements of this new approach to funding and the associated process that are successful for Grant Recipients.

Note: this evaluation does not focus on the outcomes of individual grants received by Grant Recipients, which will be the focus of another evaluation.

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

Guiding this evaluation are a set of Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) that were developed by the Evaluation Interest group for the WISE Open Grant Round. Over the course of this evaluation, these questions will be answered using a variety of methods and evidence.

- **What were the processes involved in administering the grants** (e.g. communication, application forms, supporting information) and how were these experienced by Grant Applicants at either/or both the EOI stage and Application stage?
- **To what extent did the process generate interest** and applications from an appropriate/diverse range of organisations?
- **What structures and processes** were put in place to build a collaboration amongst Partner Organisations? How were these structures and processes experienced by Partner Organisations?
- **What challenges were experienced** by Grant Applicants, Grant Recipients and Partner Organisations contributing to the grant? What other benefits to Partner Organisations, individually or collectively, did this collaboration foster? Any benefits to the broader sector or at the ecosystem level?
- **How could the process be improved** for Grant Applicants and Partner Organisations contributing to the grant?
- **To what degree were the intended grant outcomes achieved** for Partner Organisations and Grant Applicants? In what ways did the collaboration contribute to those outcomes?





Intended Outcomes

The WISE Open Grant Round specifies a variety of intended outcomes that relate to Partner Organisations, WISE and the broader WISE sector. This evaluation seeks to explore these outcomes through a variety of methods.

- The WISE Grant has helped to **simplify and streamline** access to philanthropic support for earlier stage WISE
- The WISE Grant helped create **stronger philanthropic networks** to support earlier stage WISE to build strong foundations for growth and impact.
- The WISE Grant helped build **understanding and knowledge** of collective funding approaches for WISE
- The WISE Grant helped build a **stronger evidence base** of what works when funding earlier stage WISE
- The WISE Grant helped philanthropic partners to **advocate with and on behalf of the WISE sector** to attract further support and investment in the sector
- The WISE Grant has helped **increase investment** (grants and impact investment) in WISE in Australia.

These outcomes will be explored over the course of this evaluation, recognising that each will accrue at different times and for different stakeholders.

Approach



Multi-round evaluation

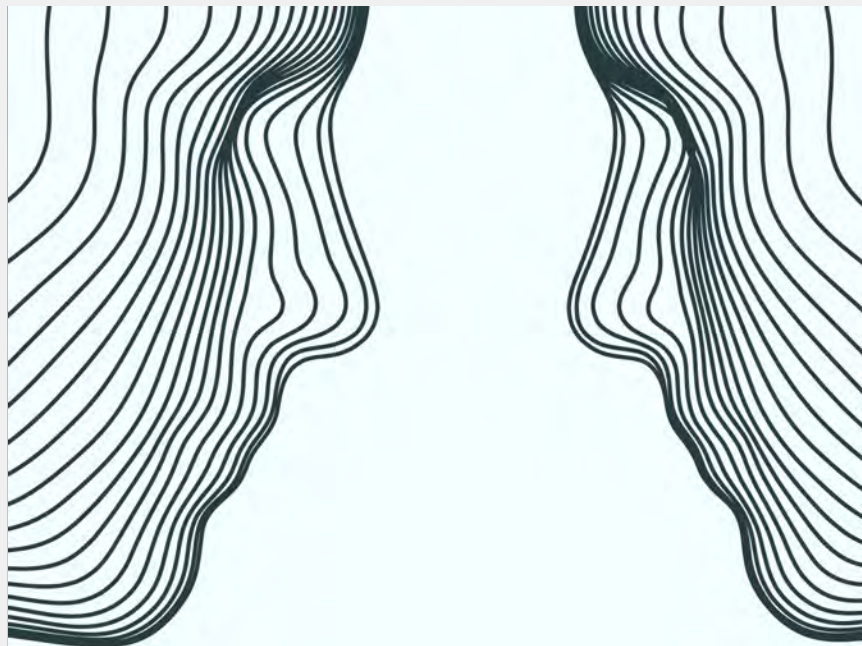
This evaluation is being conducted from January 2024 to June 2025 and includes mid-point and end-of-grant data collection points. As detailed on the following page, data collection involves a variety of methods and approaches, tailored to the KEQs, stakeholder perspective, and intended outcome.

This evaluation report represents the mid-point of the evaluation, and therefore is not a final evaluation of the WISE Open Grant Round.

Round 1 Data Collection

This round of data collection is the primary data collection process in this project. It involved the following four elements:

- **Review of existing data and documents:** we conducted a review of all applicant organisations received through the EOI process, and analysed these applicants according to available parameters. These included location of organisation, target populations served, number of employees, annual revenue, and other parameters as agreed. As part of our review of existing data and documents, we examined partner agreements as well as PIRs completed by Partner Organisations. A brief summary of this review process was created, and discussed with Partner Organisations at an online workshop.
- **Partner Organisation Interviews:** 1:1 interviews were held with Partner Organisations to explore their experiences of the collaboration, agreement practices and procedures, processes of decision-making and reaching alignment, and the quality and nature of collaboration among Partner Organisations (with a particular focus on the health of the collaboration, and the principles of good collaboration among funding agencies). Interviews examined Partner Experiences of the application and selection processes.
- **Grant Recipient Survey:** we conducted three short surveys of Grant Applicants and Recipients, administered via Survey Monkey. The purpose of these surveys was to capture experiences of applying for the WISE Grant, including the EOI phase, support and guidance received during these processes, and the quality of communications (for successful and unsuccessful applicants). For successful Grant Recipients, the survey also examined early onboarding into the initiative.
- **Social Enterprise Advisory Group Interview:** we conducted an interview with members of the Social Enterprise Advisory Group to capture their reflections on their engagement in the initiative, including the value of their role, how their contributions were made, and challenges and successes of their participation.
- **Partner Organisation Workshop:** this online workshop brought Partner Organisations together, and presented insights from the Review of existing data, individual interviews with Partner Organisations, and Grant Partner surveys. The workshop explored what is working well about the collaboration, how and where the principles of good collaboration are present or absent within the work, opportunities for strengthening the quality of relationships that exist among partners, and the experiences and insights of applicants.



Data Collection Methods

- Conducted 9 x Partner Organisation interviews with 13 participants
- Sent surveys to a total of 180 people:
 - a. 180 Expressions of Interest (EOIs)
 - b. 24 Shortlisted Applicants (subgroup of a)
 - c. 14 Successful Applicants (subgroup of b)
- Received survey responses from 58 participants (32%)
 - 39 EOIs
 - 8 Shortlisted Applicants
 - 11 Successful Applicants
- Facilitated a Social Enterprise Advisory Group Discussion with 5 (out of 6) group members (intermediaries and practitioners)
- Reviewed and analysed applicant information in provided documents



Interim Insights

Findings from this interim phase of the evaluation are organised by each KEQ. A high level summary of findings followed by a more in-depth analysis is provided for each KEQ which draws from across data sources, and includes illustrative quotes throughout.

What were the processes involved in administering the grants (e.g. communication, application forms, supporting information) and how were these experienced by Grant Applicants at either/or both the EOI stage and Application stage?

The activity timeline on the following page maps key actions against the phases of the grant program. It should be noted that the grant program is ongoing until 2025, therefore some activities beyond the current period remain yet to be determined. The activities and outputs included are those which were substantive to the collaboration and those that were substantive to Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients.

Genesis Stage

Sept 2022

Westpac Foundation commence first group discussion over breakfast with potential partners at Philanthropy Australia conference.

Oct 2022

Interested CEO's join a call to discuss concept. First collaboration for job creation document developed.

Nov/Dec 2022

PRF and WF put papers to their board for approval of the concept. First co-design working group meeting. Steering Group establish 'ways of working'. Steering Group develop vision, ToC, goals and outcomes. MinterEllison are engaged. Minderoo commit in principle \$500k

Design Stage

Feb/March 2023

Steering Group cadence is established; meetings are coordinated and facilitated by Westpac Foundation. Social Enterprise Advisory Group formed 3 sessions facilitated. Comms sub committee is formed.

May 2023

Assessment criteria developed by PO's and SEAG. MinterEllison provide legal guidance and develop key legal instruments (MOU and Giving Letter). Role of 'Host' is defined.

June 2023

Partners consult individual legal counsel on MOU and Giving Letter. LMCF set up giving accounts. Communications plan finalised (external communications, collaboration communications and EOI form). Finalisation of MOU. Giving Letters for anchor funders signed and confirmed. Anchor funds transferred to LMCF.

EOI Stage

EOI's open

EOI webinar is held

EOIs Close

Application Stage

Nov 2023

Grant agreements finalised

Media release announcing successful applicants

Oct 2023

LMCF Board meeting - grants approved

Successful applicants notified

Oct 2023

Remaining funders payments are transferred to LMCF. POs conduct rating of applicants based upon the assessment criteria. PO's agree upon successful applicants.

Aug 2023

Steering Committee review shortlist. Shortlisted applicants are divided amongst PO's and one-to-one phone calls are made by POs to shortlisted applicants

Aug 2023

Collation of EOI data for POs review. EOI review by PO's. Remaining funders sign. LMCF Giving Account Letter and confirm funds.

June 2023

Comms plan and collateral signed off by all partners.

Shortlisting Stage

Feb 2024

Day Four Projects engaged for evaluation

Round 1 of Data collection

Feb 2024

Interim Findings

MEL Stage

Grant and Evaluation Ongoing

Key Findings

The following sections outline qualitative and quantitative feedback from the survey insights for the **EOI stage** and for the **Application stage**, as well as relevant data collected through group interviews.

Overall, these results suggest that:

- **Supporting information in documentation and the website was valued** for its clarity by Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients.
- **The webinar was a unique and welcomed offering** that assisted both Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients in their preparation at both stages.
- The majority of Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients felt the **Social Enterprises Stages Matrix** was a useful tool that guided their grant writing, whilst some found it difficult to apply to their enterprise.
- **Grant Applicants valued one-to-one support** phone calls made by Partner Organisations at the shortlisting stage.
- Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients **experienced some challenges with the online forms** at both the EOI and Application stages and reported technical glitches.
- Unsuccessful Grant Applicants at both the EOI stage and application stage strongly identified the need for **more timely communication about their application status**. Additionally, they requested more detailed and personalised feedback from funders in order to inform their next grant application.
- A number of Grant Applicants felt the **EOI stage was equally, if not more intensive** as the Application stage.
- Overwhelmingly, **Grant Applicants rated the communication of both processes highly**, however have higher expectations for offboarding and relationship management.

“The information about the grant, including eligibility criteria, application process, and selection criteria, was clearly presented. Key details were easily identifiable. The supporting documentation provided a good understanding of the grant’s purpose and how it aligns with the goals of WISE organizations. The website offered ample resources and FAQs to address potential questions.” EOI Applicant

“The full application was naturally resource intensive and it would have been great to have a bit more detailed feedback about our application. We appreciated the comments about needing to improve our business plan but it would have been very helpful to have more detail about this (were we near / very far etc.) to help us in the future” Grant Applicant

75%

Of applicants agreed or strongly agreed that the application process was **streamlined and simple**

EOI Stage

Survey results suggest that Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients had a positive experience at the EOI stage of the grant process, with respondents rating the quality of communication and support as high, to extremely high. Applicants indicated that they had a good understanding of the purpose and intent of the grant which was clearly communicated through the available supporting documentation. Applicants noted that available information was clear and logically structured.

“The information about the grant, including eligibility criteria, application process, and selection criteria, was clearly presented. Key details were easily identifiable. The supporting documentation provided a good understanding of the grant’s purpose and how it aligns with the goals of WISE organizations. The website offered ample resources and FAQs to address potential questions.” EOI Applicant

Applicants reported that personnel were responsive, citing follow up phone calls and emails from LMCF and other ‘personnel’ as timely and helpful at addressing applicants queries and questions. The webinar was a standout offering that applicants noted as unique and is a welcomed support mechanism for applicants in future grant rounds.

“Communications were very good. Encouraged people to find out more, learn about the partnership and understand the intent of funding” EOI Applicant

“We asked direct questions and the representative was able to provide a quick response.” Grant Recipient

Whilst respondents noted that overall, communications and support was high there was a desire expressed for additional support through further Q&A sessions or one-to-one support. Unsurprisingly, this was more common amongst unsuccessful Grant Applicants rather than Grant Recipients.

“Quality of communication generally good, but more scope for one-on-one Q&A outside of information sessions / appointments would be helpful.” EOI Applicant

The online EOI submission form was noted as clunky, with applicants experiencing technical glitches when entering information. Some applicants expressed frustration at having to re-enter information and not being able to save answers to questions. Additionally, a number of applicants highlighted that visibility of the entire EOI submission form would have aided their preparation and understanding of expectations.

“Consistency across different platforms and further improvements in user-friendliness on the webpage could contribute to a higher rating in the future.” EOI Applicant

Overwhelmingly, respondents rated the communications and supporting documentation as **high quality** however, closing the loop on communications is a point of dissatisfaction across Grant Applicants. The timeliness of unsuccessful communications and detail of feedback included in communications were consistently identified by survey respondents as requiring greater attention from the Grant process. Grant Applicants are seeking a more fulsome understanding as to why their submission was unsuccessful.

The Social Enterprises Stages Matrix provided to Grant Applicants was experienced as an effective, clear and useful tool for self-assessment and helped to focus and guide applicants' grant writing process. Grant Applicants highlighted that it was an unexpected professional development exercise in communicating the value of their organisation and work.

"The self-assessment matrix provided to help in identifying which tier of grant to apply for was an incredibly helpful resource. The descriptors of each organisational stage felt very relevant and realistic, and in addition to helping us determine which tier to apply for, also gave us a new framework for understanding our own level of organisational maturity to a greater extent than we had before."
Grant Recipient

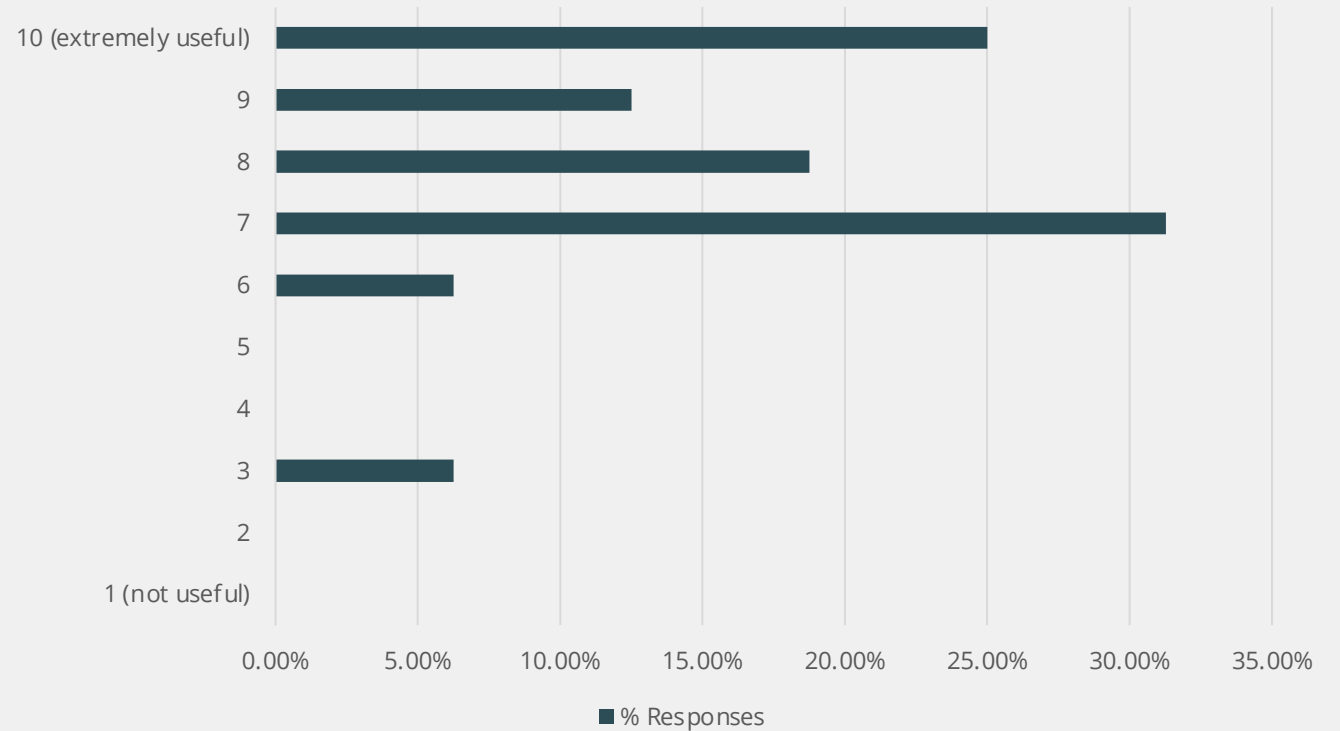
Grant Recipients in particular noted the value to the sector the Social Enterprises Stage Matrix could and already is contributing to the sector ecosystem.

"The frameworks developed around social enterprise growth stages were very clear and a good contribution to knowledge in sector as well as useful in terms of writing process" Grant Recipient

Conversely, a small number of survey respondents found the tool difficult to apply to their own unique organisational structures or current stage of organisational development.

"It was difficult to place our organisation into a tier because our management/board/governance structure is different to the options that were presented." Grant Applicant

On a scale of 1-10, how useful was the 'Grant Social Enterprise Stages Matrix' when self-assessing your organization's eligibility for the grant?

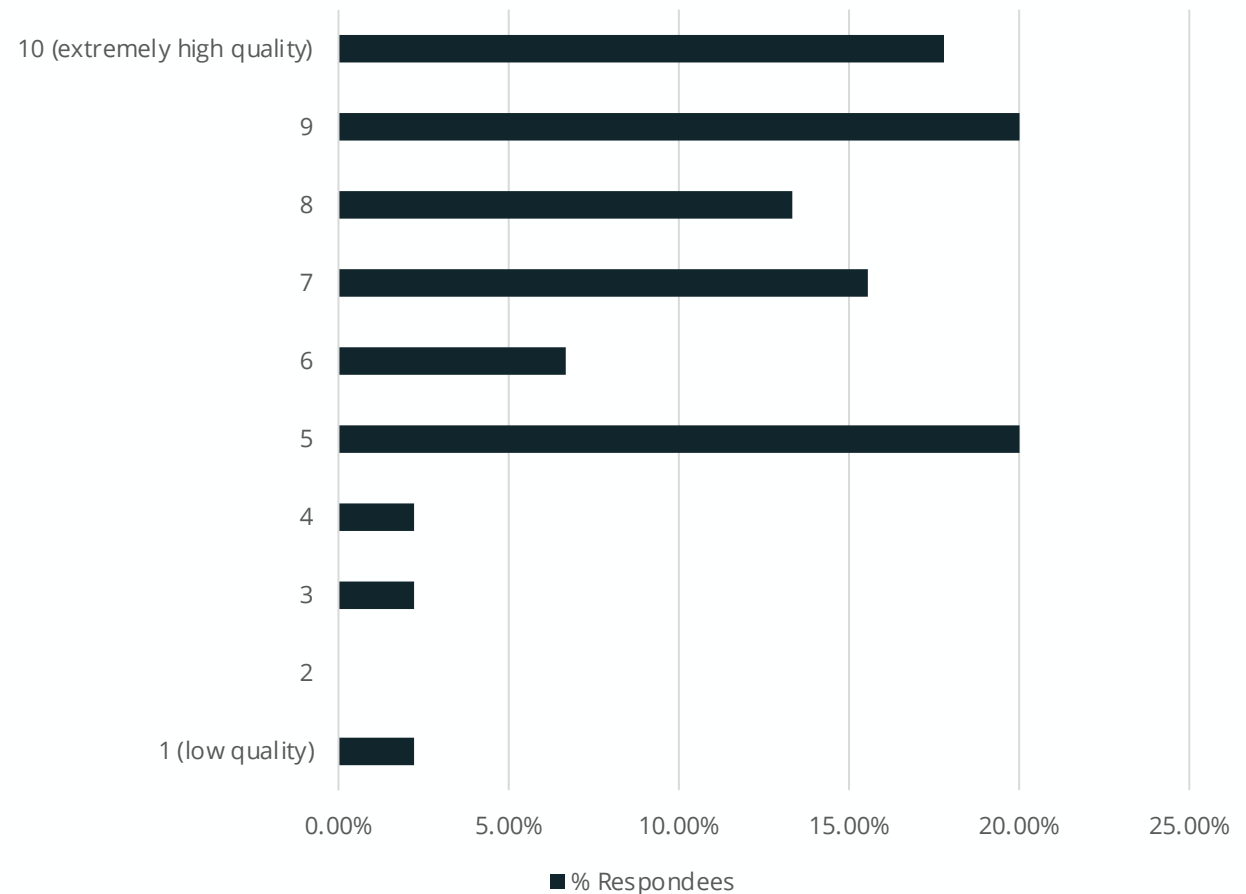
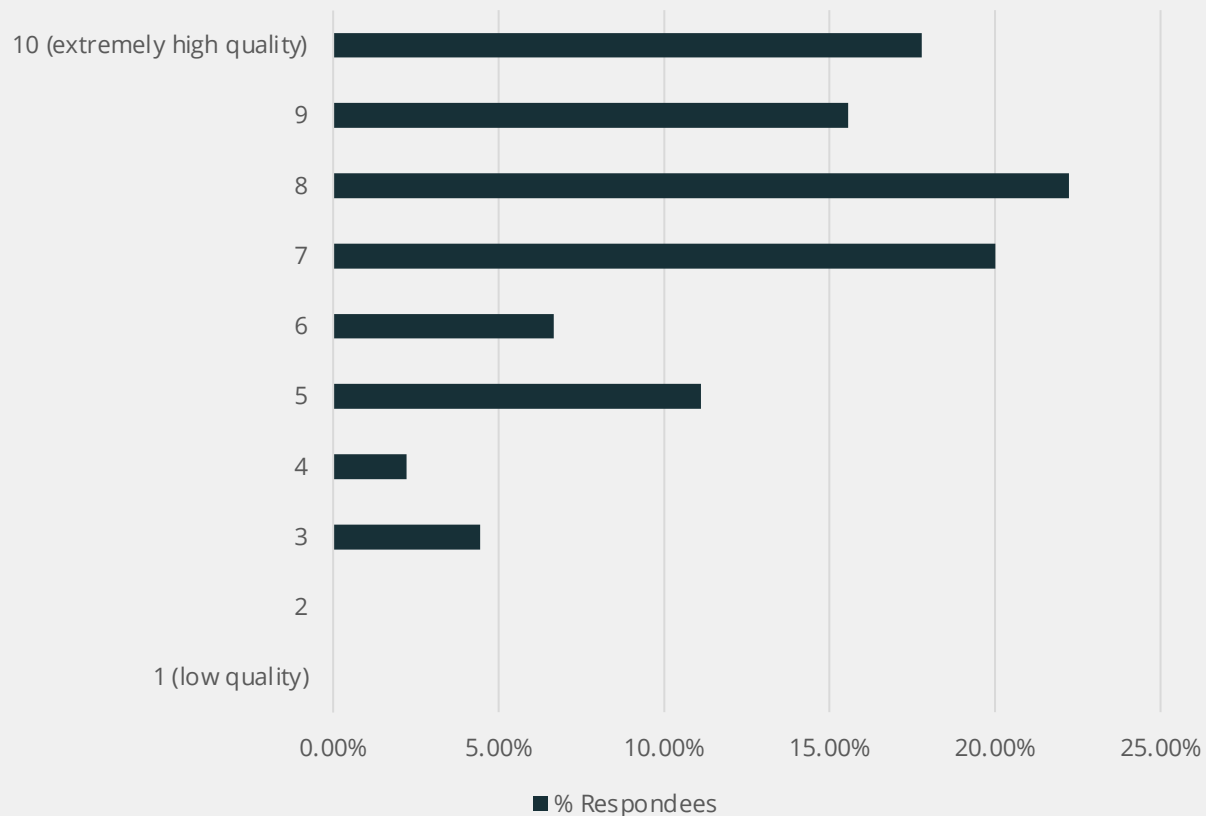


Over 75% of respondents rated **quality of communication** from the WISE Grant Program during the EOI process as between 7 and 10 (extremely high quality)

Over 66% of respondents rated the **level of support** received during the EOI process between 7 and 10 (extremely high quality)

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the quality of communications from the WISE Grant Program as part of the EOI process (e.g. information about the grant, supporting documentation, the webpage)?

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the level of support received during the EOI process?



Application Stage

Unsuccessful Grant Applicants

Unsuccessful shortlisted applicants were less complimentary of the communications and supporting documentation, citing it as 'sufficient'. The application process was experienced as intensive by unsuccessful shortlisted applicants who cited significant demands on resources (primarily investment of time and reallocation from core WISE work). Whilst the application process was reported as demanding, there are indications that this is not the primary point of concern for respondents; rather, participants noted a lack of timely and appropriate communications as the key point of dissatisfaction.

"The full application was naturally resource intensive and it would have been great to have a bit more detailed feedback about our application. We appreciated the comments about needing to improve our business plan but it would have been very helpful to have more detail about this (were we near / very far etc.) to help us in the future" Grant Applicant

Successful Grant Recipients

Successful Grant Applicants rated communications and supporting documentation as extremely high. Similarly to the EOI submission process, the online application form proved challenging for both visibility of the application in its entirety as well as a limited character count that applicants found difficult to stay within. Of note, the key contact point from LMCF was identified as accessible and responsive to applicants' questions and in addition to Partner Organisations, helped to provide preliminary information to assist applications.

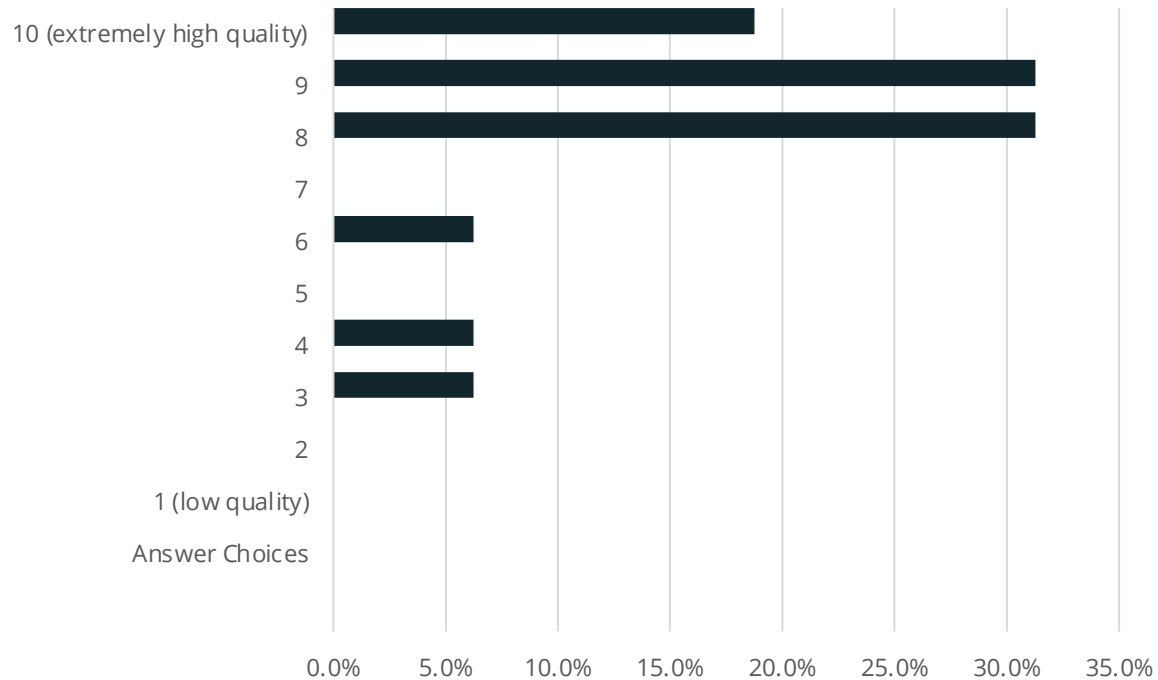
Individual phone calls from Partner Organisations to Grant Applicants were strongly valued and highly rated in by this group. Qualitative survey data indicates that Grant Recipients felt that this was a key step in the process that contributed to their success.

"I particularly appreciated the phone call received from a member of the granting team, during which I was able to talk through some questions and uncertainties I had about our application. The answers provided enabled me to complete the full application with much greater confidence" Grant Recipient

"I rated this experience highly because receiving a phone call from Stephen after our success in the EOI process was extremely helpful. It provided me with valuable insights that supported me in the full application drafting process." Grant Recipient

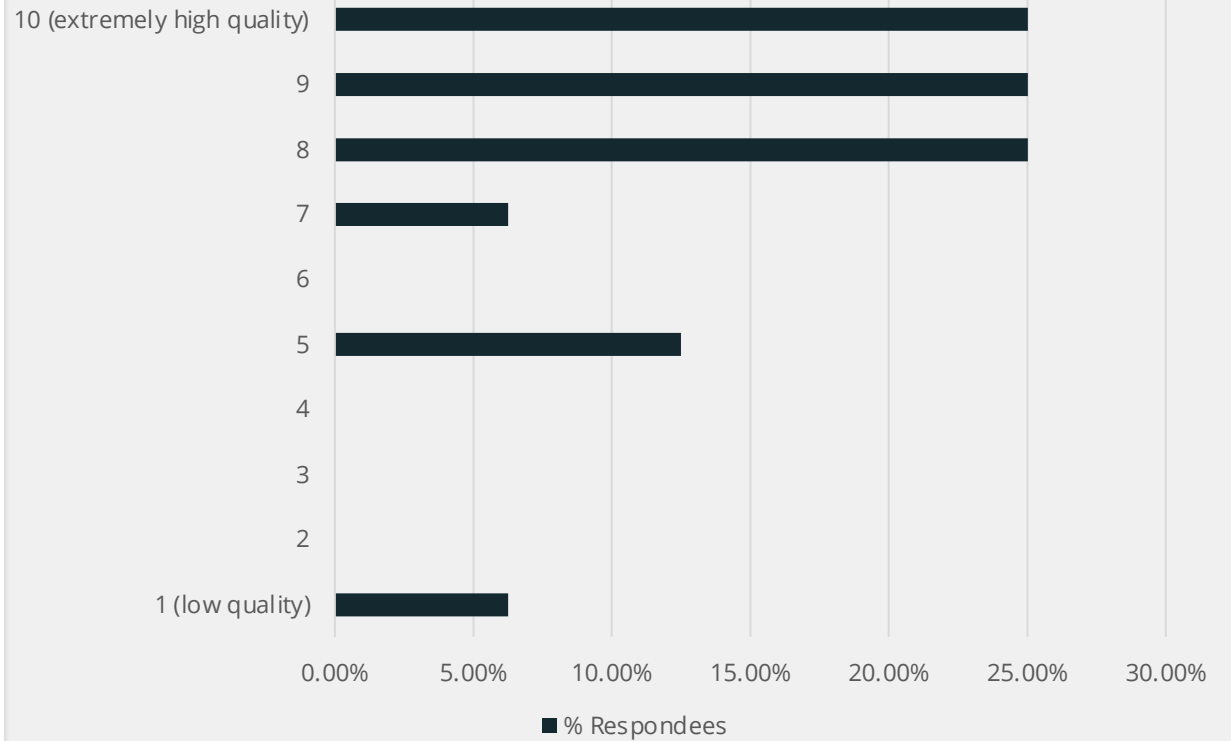
Over 81% of respondents rated **quality of communication** from the WISE Grant Program during the application stage as between 7 (high) and 10 (extremely high quality)

On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate the quality of communications from the WISE Grant Program as part of the grant application process (e.g. information about the grant, guidance documents, other supporting documentation, the webpage etc.)?



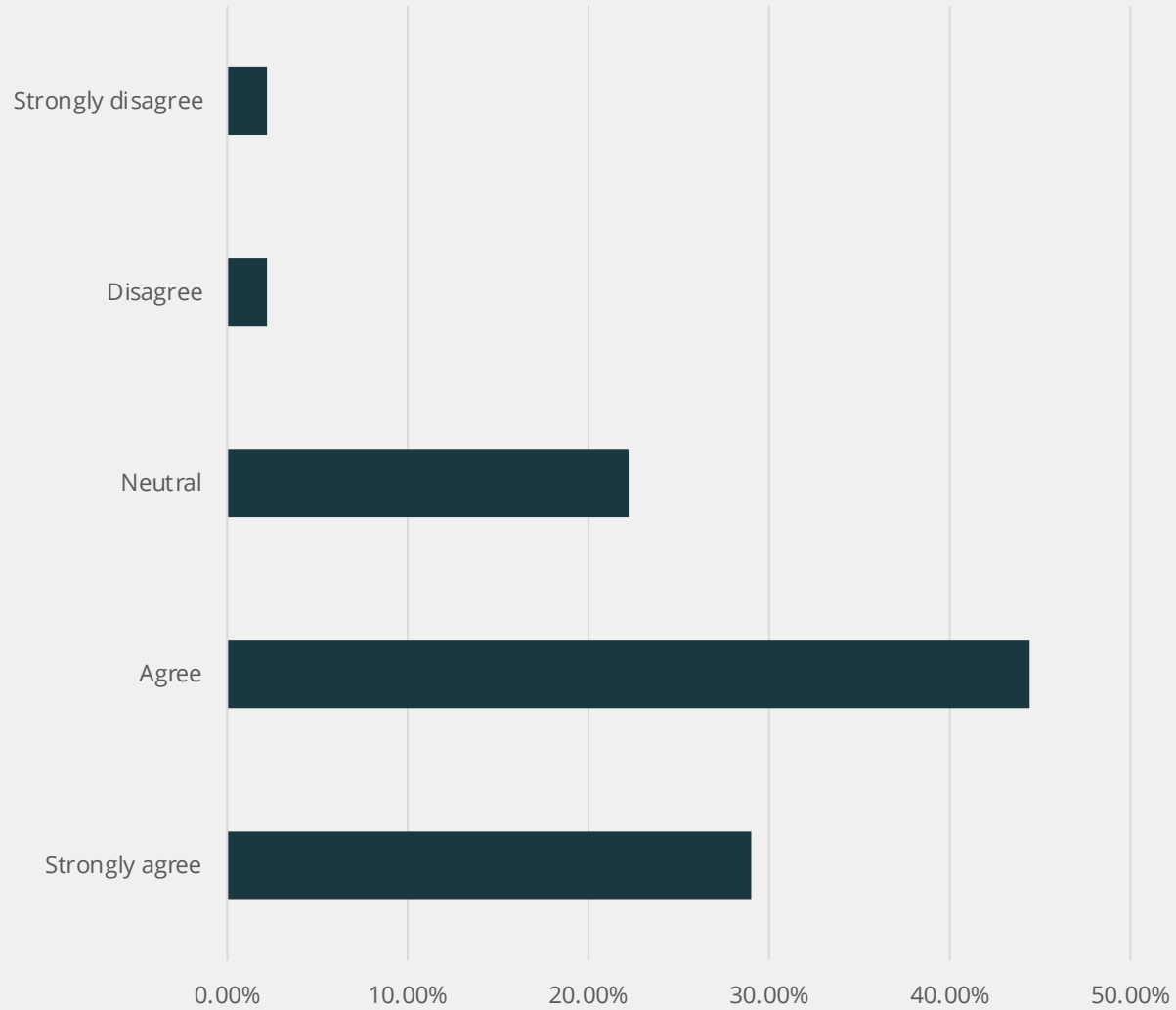
Over 81% of respondents rated **quality of support** from the WISE Grant Program during the application stage as between 7 (high) and 10 (extremely high quality)

On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate the quality of support received during the grant application process (e.g. responsiveness to requests you may have had, assistance in clarifying application requirements, availability of staff etc.)?



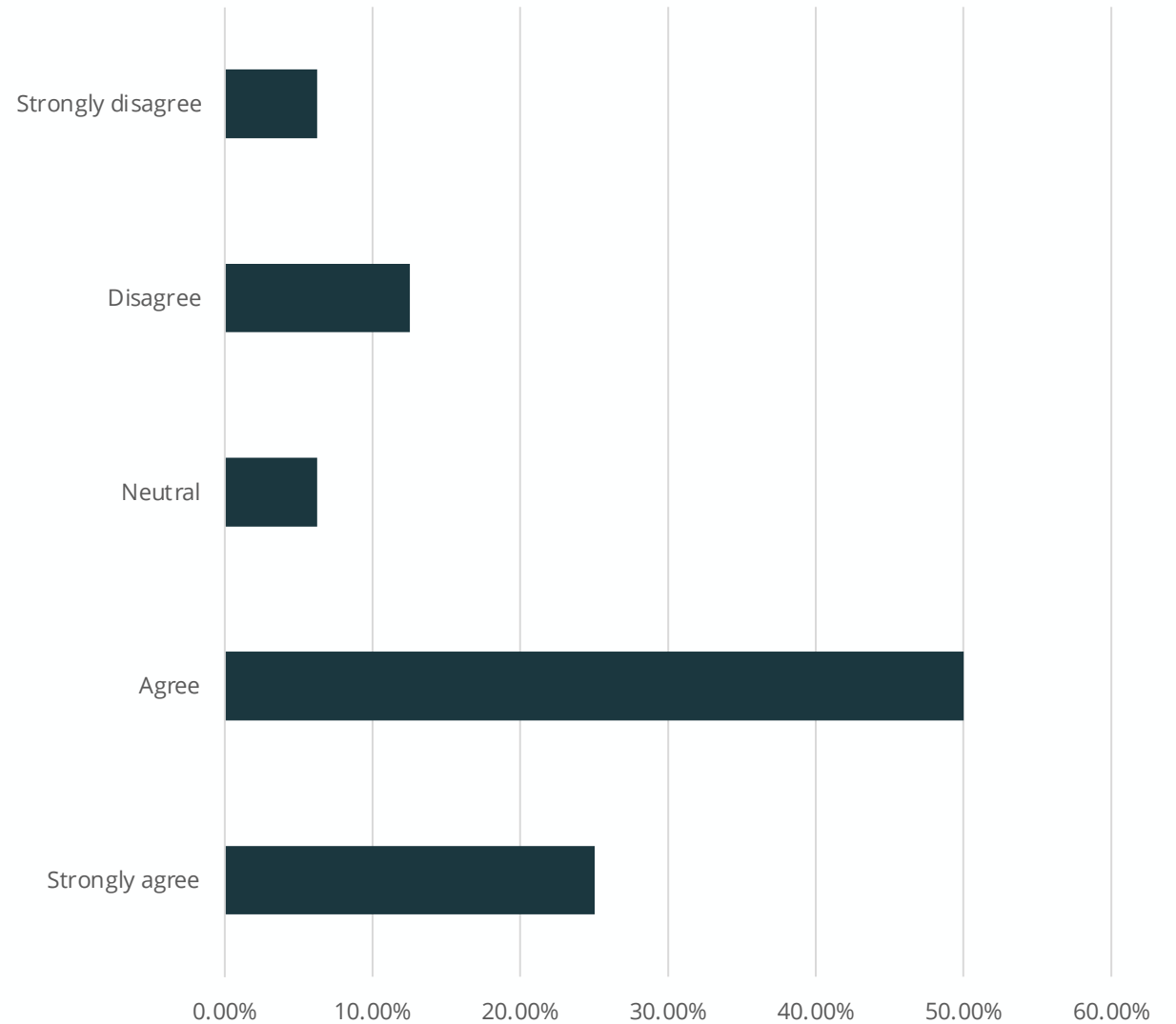
73% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the WISE Grant **EOI** process was **simple and streamlined**

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The WISE Grant **EOI** process was **simple and streamlined**"



75% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the WISE Grant **application** process was **simple and streamlined**

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The WISE Grant **application** process was **simple and streamlined**"

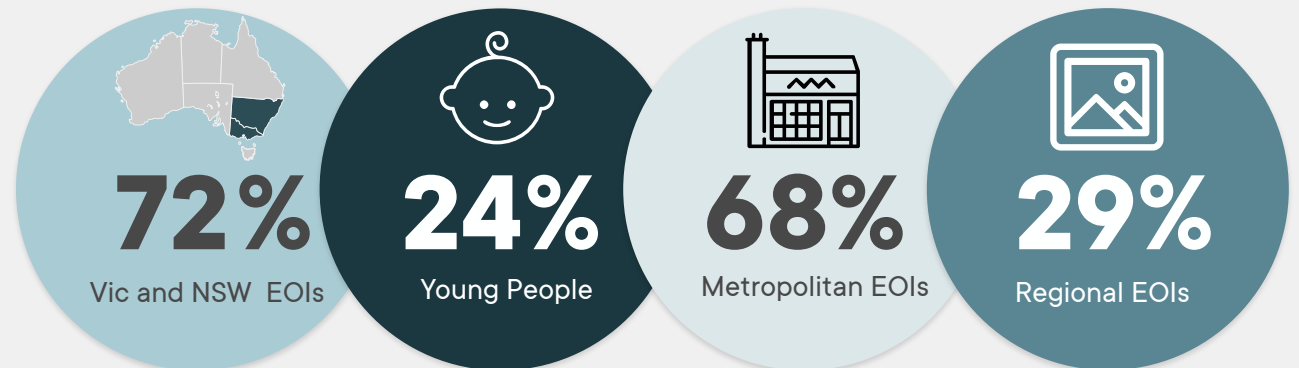




To what extent did the process generate interest and applications from an appropriate/diverse range of organisations?

The following pages outline how EOI and Successful Applicants varied according to a range of parameters. Overall, these results suggest that:

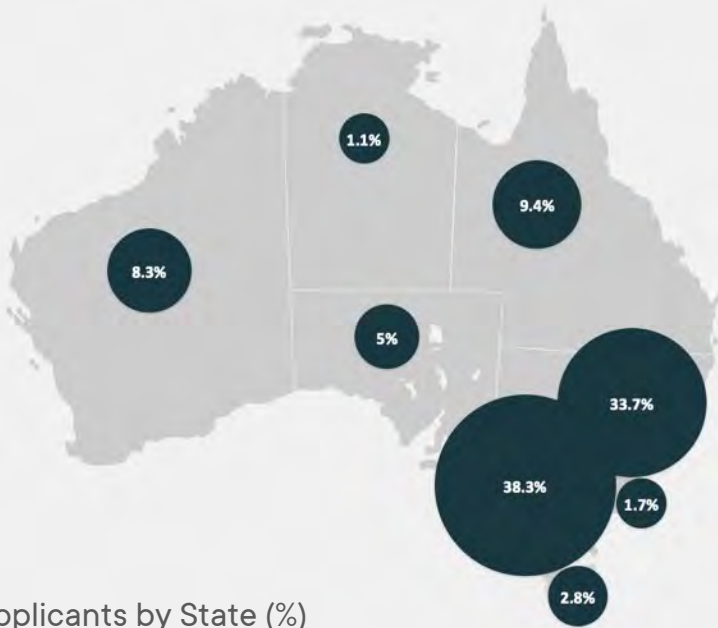
- While 72% of EOI applicants were based in Victoria and New South Wales, 42% of successful applicants were based in these locations. There were no successful applications received from candidates in South Australia, the Northern Territory or the ACT.
- Between 60% - 70% of EOI and Successful applicants **primarily delivered programs in Metropolitan regions**, with a significantly smaller number focusing on remote areas. However, there was a strong focus among Applicants on **delivering services in areas experiencing significant disadvantage**.
- Applicants target **a variety of population groups**, with intersecting identities and needs, with the most common being young people (24%), people living with a disability (34%), and women experiencing disadvantage (13%).
- Almost half of successful applicants (43%) reported an annual revenue of \$1,000,001 to \$5,000,000.



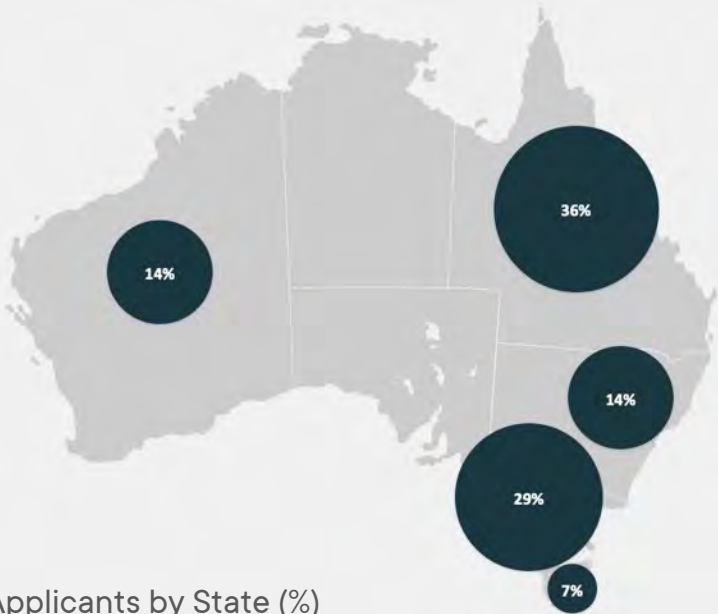
Location of Applicants

Reflections

- **72%** of EOI Applicants are from **Victoria** and **NSW**, while **42%** of Successful Applicants are based in these locations.
- **Queensland** had quadruple, and **Western Australia** and **Tasmania** approximately double, the amount of Successful Applicant representation compared to their EOI Applicants.
- **Northern Territory, South Australia, and ACT** had no Successful Applicants.



EOI Applicants by State (%)
NB. Of 180 Applicants



Successful Applicants by State (%)
NB. Of 14 Applicants

Applicant Target Groups & Sectors

- **Applicants reported working with a variety of target groups.** The most commonly reported groups targeted by EOI Applicants were young people (24%), People living with a disability (34%), and Women experiencing disadvantage (13%). Successful Applicant target groups were broadly similar, though focused more on Refugees & asylum seekers (15%) and less on Young people (17%).
- **Applicants reported working with a variety of different sectors.** Most EOI applicants operate in Health Care & Social Assistance (24%), and while Successful Applicants also have a large presence in this sector (21%), they're most active in Retail Trade (29%).
- The multiple target groups and sectors reflect Applicants **work with intersectional groups** from a rich range of backgrounds, areas of lived disadvantage, age and gender demographics and localities, rather than focusing on one group or sector.

Top 7 EOI Applicant Sectors (%)



NB: Of 180 Applicants

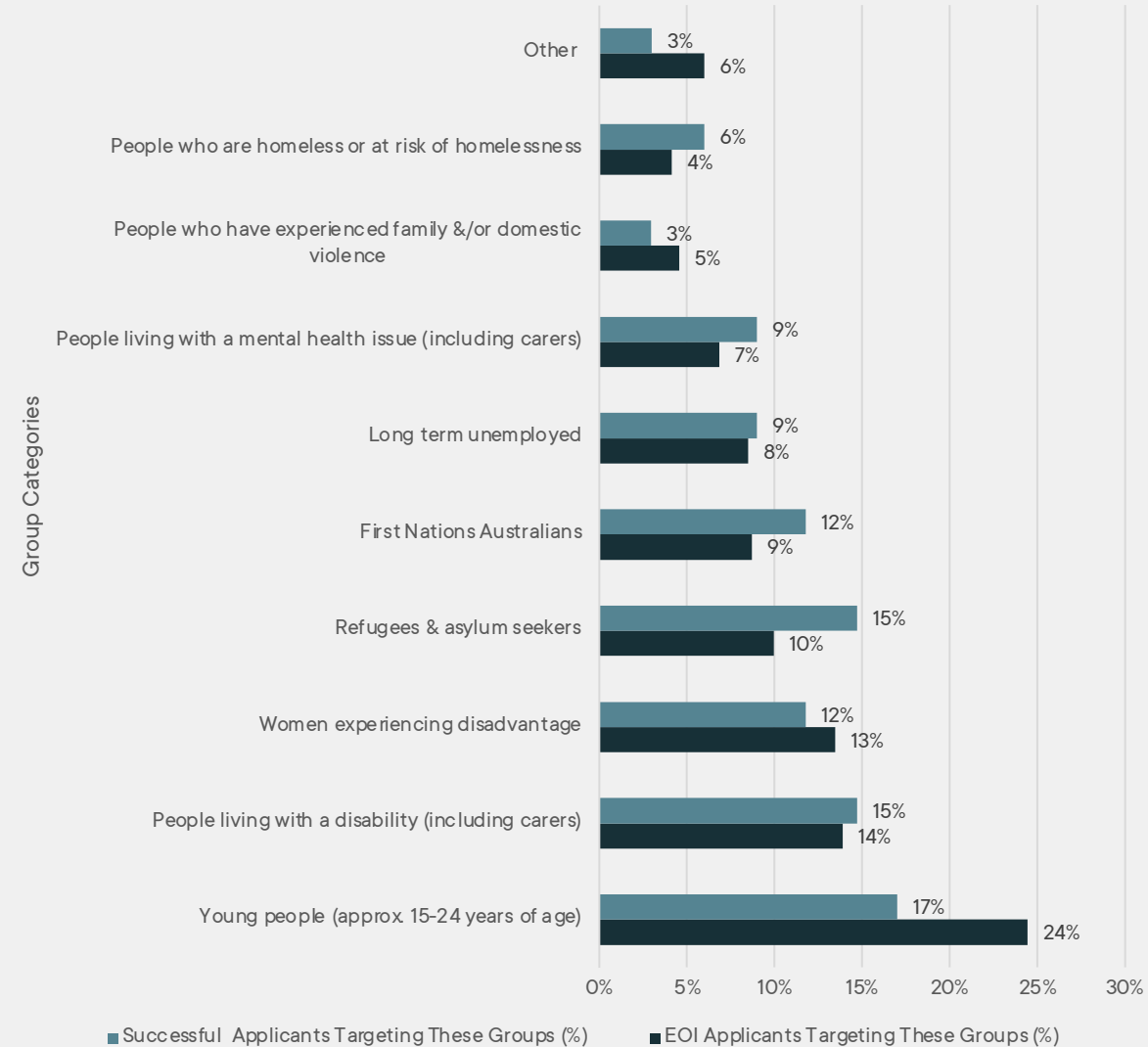
Top 7 Successful Applicant Sectors (%)



NB: Of 14 Applicants

Target Groups (%)

NB. Applicants could select multiple categories: amongst 14 successful applicants, there were 34 nominations for these target groups; amongst 180 EOI applicants, there were 483 nominations for these target groups.

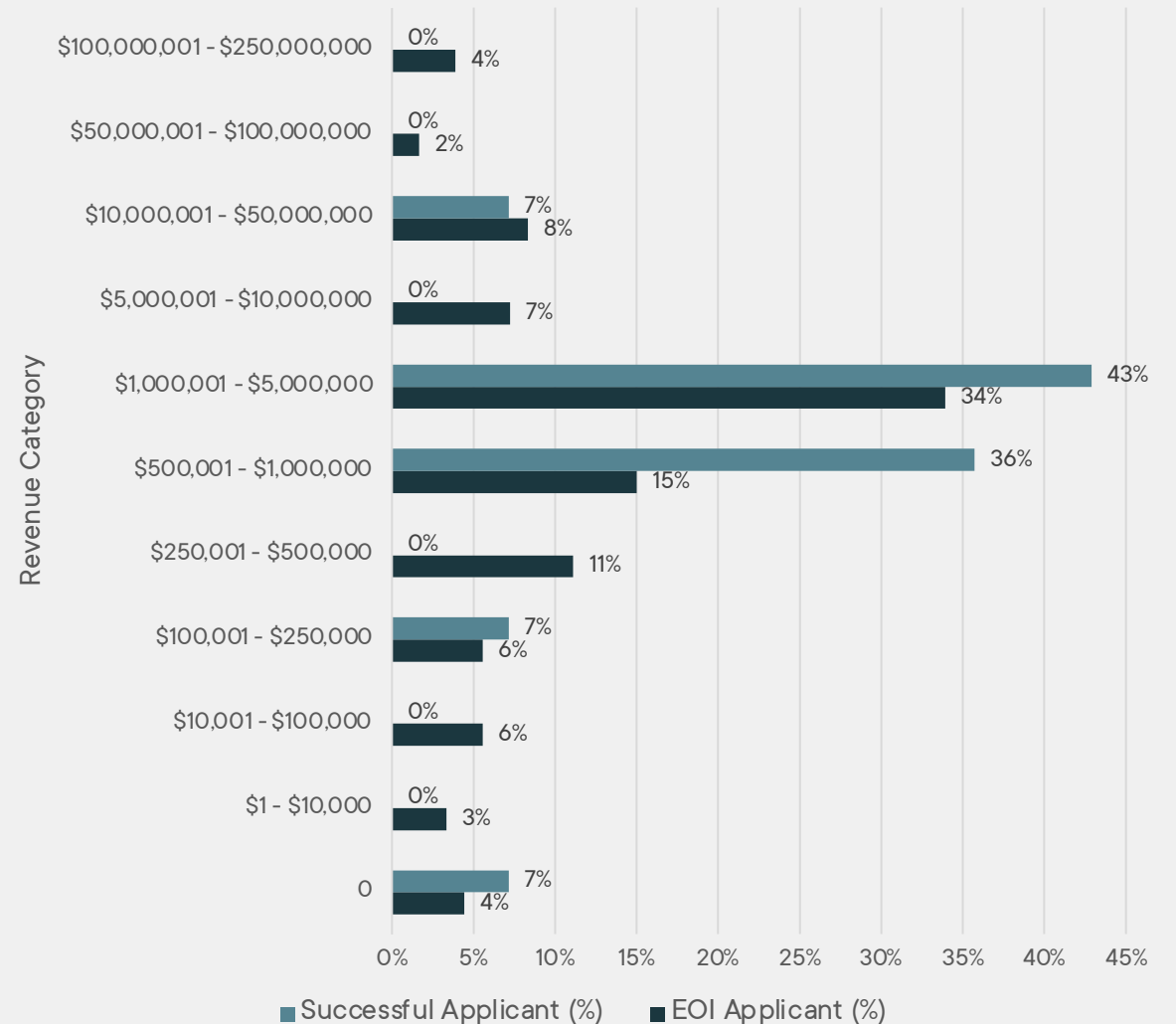


Applicant Revenue

Applicants with an Annual Revenue between \$500,001 and \$5,000,000 were **most likely to be successful** in their grant application.

- 30% of EOI Applicants have an Annual Revenue of **less than \$500,000**, compared to 14% of Successful Applicants
- 79% of Successful Applicants have an Annual Revenue of **between \$500,001 and \$5,000,000**, compared to 49% of EOI Applicants
- 21% of EOI Applicants have an Annual Revenue of **between \$5,000,001 and \$250,000,000**, compared to 7% of Successful Applicants

Applicant Annual Revenue (%)
 NB. Of 14 Successful Applicants and 180 EOI Applicants

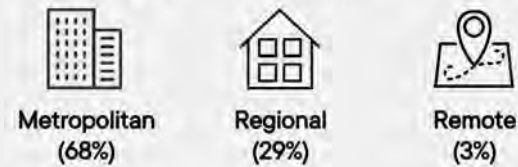


State & Place programs delivered

Reflections

- 74% of EOI Applicants primarily deliver programs in **Victoria** and **NSW**, while only 43% of Successful Applicants primarily deliver programs in these locations.
- **Queensland** had quadruple, and **Western Australia** and **Tasmania** approximately double, the amount of Successful Applicant representation compared to their EOI Applicants.
- No Successful Applicants primarily deliver programs in the **Northern Territory**, **South Australia**, and **ACT**
- Approximately **two-thirds of EOI and Successful Applicant programs are primarily delivered in Metropolitan settings**, one-third in the Regions, and considerably smaller proportion in Remote locations.

Place EOI Applicant Programs Primarily Delivered (%)

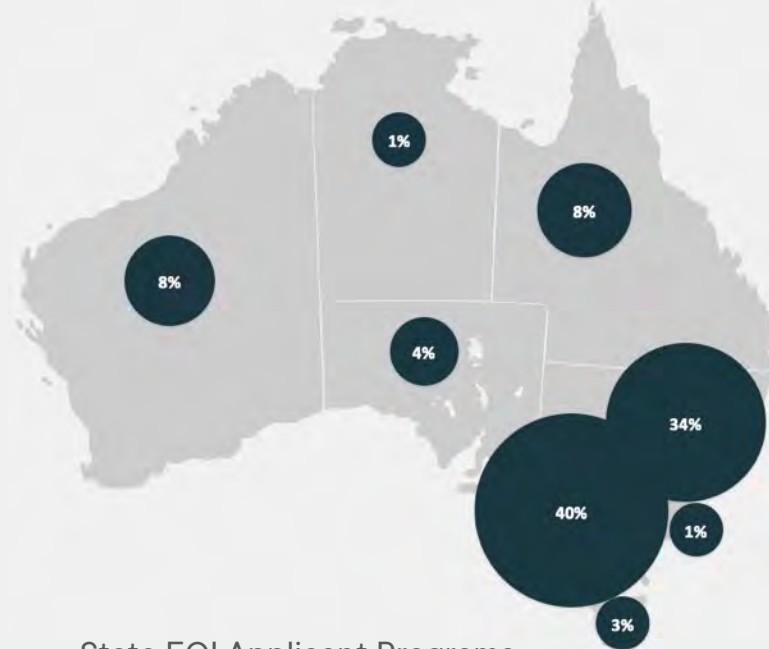


NB. Of 180 Applicants

Place Successful Applicant Programs Primarily Delivered (%)

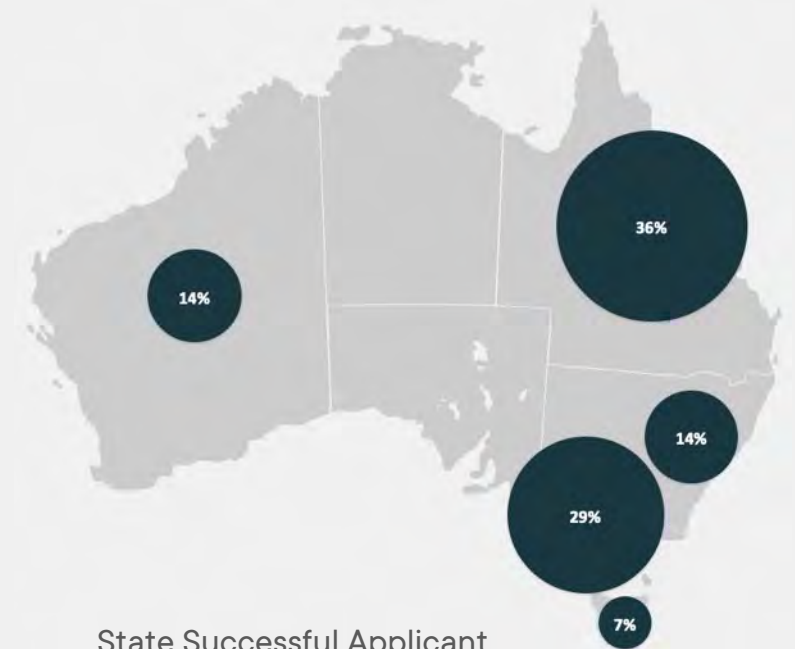


NB. Of 14 Applicants



State EOI Applicant Programs Primarily Delivered (%)

NB. Of 180 Applicants



State Successful Applicant Programs Primarily Delivered (%)

NB. Of 14 Applicants

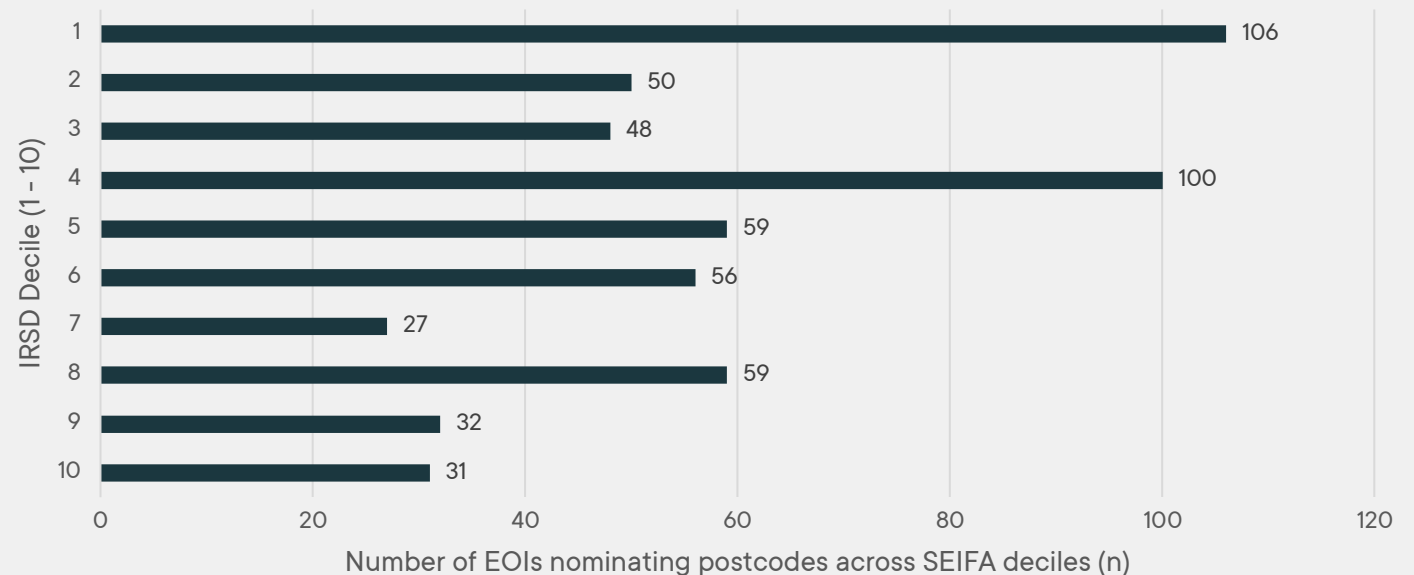
Applicant ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

Reflections

- **419 (74%) of the 568 EOI Applicant postcodes worked in are in the lower half of the Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage postcodes.**
- A lower score indicates greater disadvantage and a lack of advantage in general. For example, an area could have a low score if there are:
 - many households with low incomes
 - many people in unskilled occupations
 - few households with high incomes
 - few people in skilled occupations
- A higher score indicates lack of disadvantage and greater advantage in general. For example, an area may have a high score if there are:
 - many households with high incomes
 - many people in skilled occupations
 - few households with low incomes
 - few people in unskilled occupations

Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSD) of postcodes in which EOI Applicants are active (n)

*NB. Applicants could select multiple postcodes: amongst 180 EOI applicants, there were 568 nominations for postcodes across 10 deciles**



*ABS Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), 2021

Grant Tiers Applied For & Activities Sought

Which Applicant Activities are most sought after?

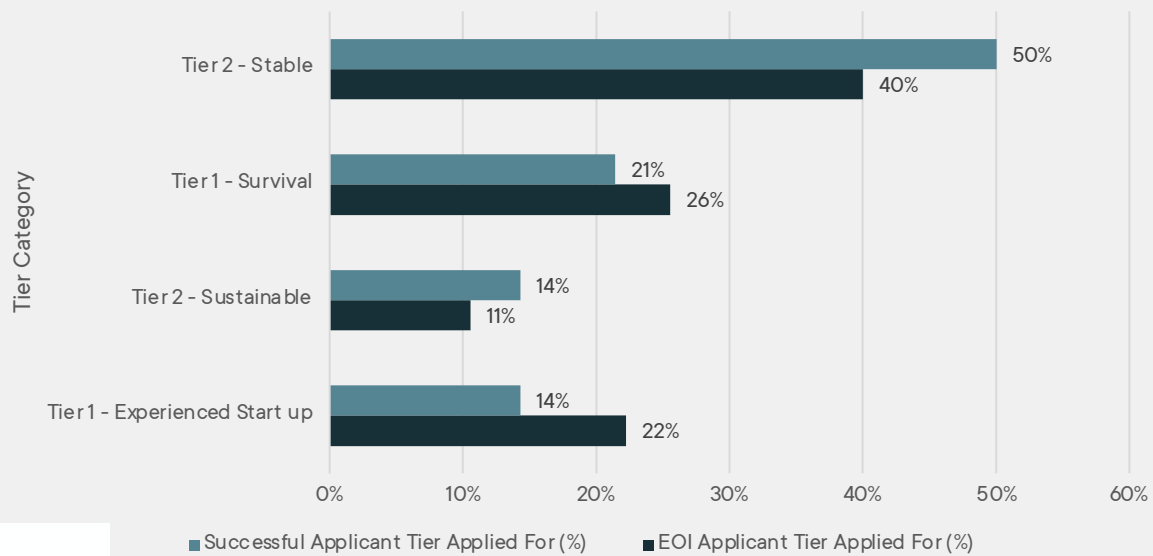
The two most popular activities sought by EOI Applicants were *Resourcing wrap-around support of employees (24%)* and *Core operation costs (24%)*, while Successful Applicants prioritised *Enterprise/organisational development (24%)* and *Business/financial planning (23%)*.

What Tier did Applicants apply for?

Approximately 33% more EOI Applicants applied for the *Tier 1 – Experienced Start-up* than Successful Applicants, and 25% more Successful Applicants applied for the *Tier 2 – Stable* category than EOI applicants.

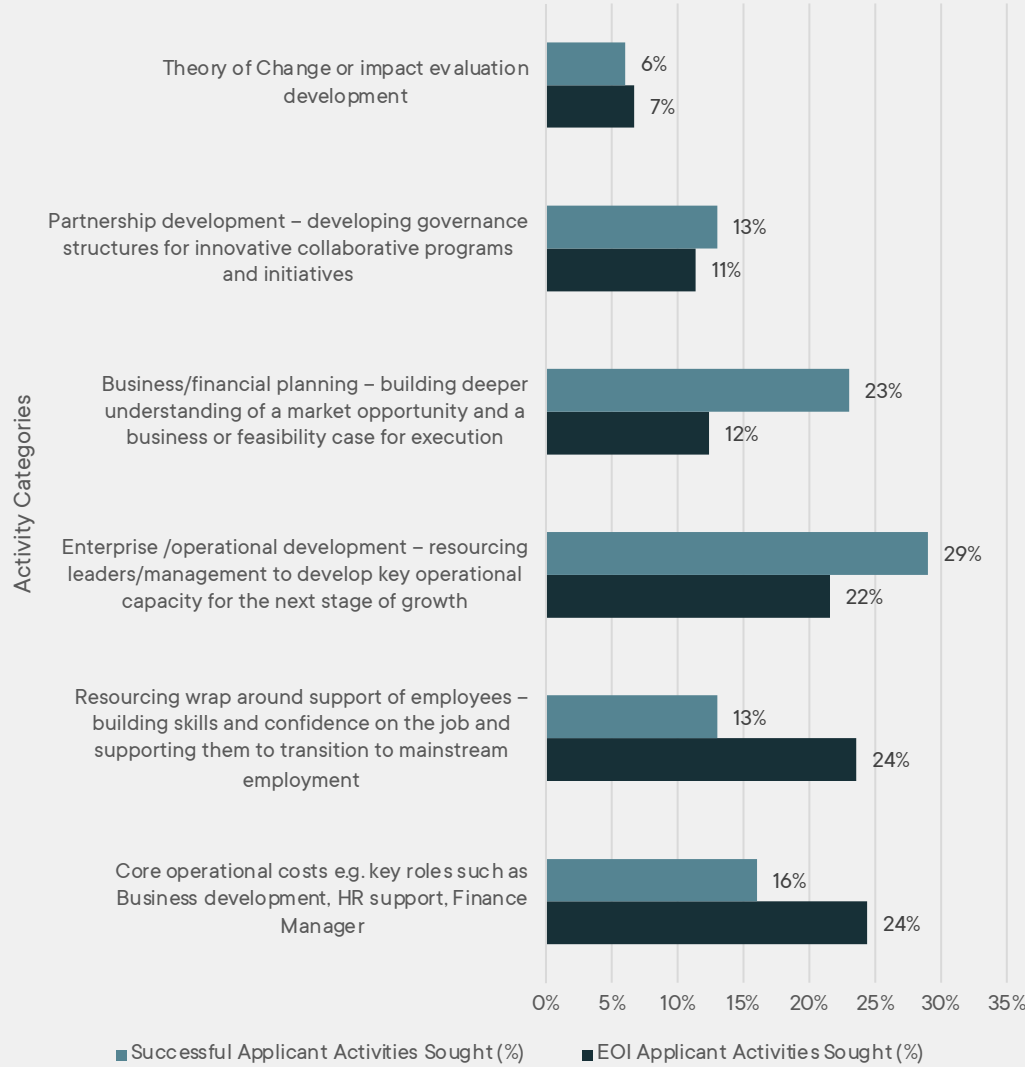
Tier Applied For (%)

NB. Of 14 Successful Applicants and 180 EOI Applicants



Applicant Activities Sought (%)

NB. Applicants could select multiple categories: amongst 31 Successful Applicants, there were 31 nominations for these target groups; amongst 180 EOIs, there were 492 nominations for these target groups.

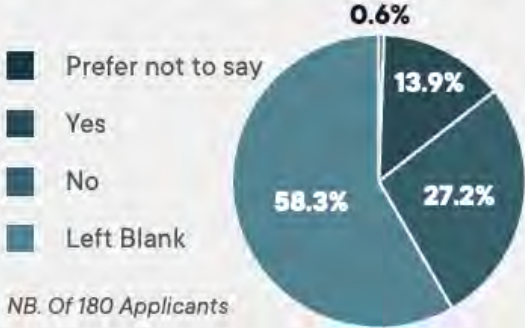


Social Trader Certification & ATSI Owner-Controlled Data

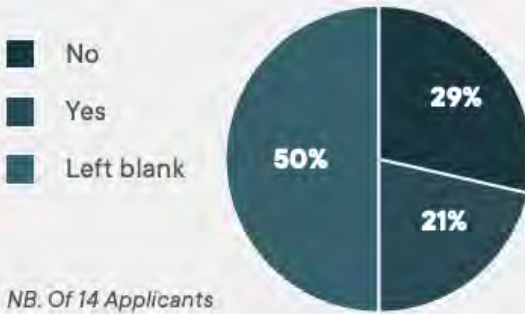
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples Owner Controlled

29% of Successful Applicants reported being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Owner Controlled, compared to 13.9% of EOI Applicants (13.9%) – however the majority of respondents left this field blank.

EOI Applicants – ATSI Owned Controlled (%)



Successful Applicants – ATSI Owned Controlled (%)

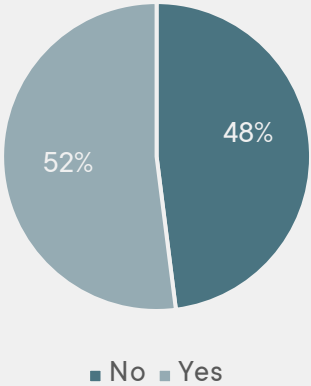


Social Trader Certification

57% of Successful Applicants reported holding Social Trader Certification, compared to 52% of EOI Applicants.

EOI Applicant Social Trader Certification (%)

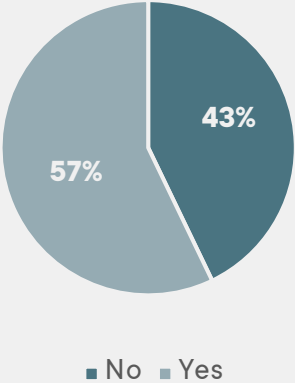
NB. Of 180 Applicants



Successful Applicant Social Trader Certification (%)

(%)

NB. Of 14 Applicants



What structures and processes were put in place to build a collaboration amongst Partner Organisations? How were these structures and processes experienced by Partner Organisations?

The WISE Open Grant Round has provided an important mechanism for bringing together Partner Organisations from across philanthropy. The following are noted as key elements for mobilising collaboration among these Partner Organisations, and reflect much of what is known about building good collaborations. Each element is further expanded upon in subsequent pages, accompanied by illustrative quotes from participants in this evaluation.



We now have a governance structure determined with an MOU, you can start to build a consortium, that's a huge move forward - Partner Organisation

Regular and collaborative ways of working: Partner Organisations valued the frequency and collaborative approach to working together as it encouraged accountability, however workloads and schedules were at times very demanding and exceeded initial expectations.



Host, stewardship and leadership: Partner Organisations consistently and repeatedly emphasised the high quality of the coordination and management of the project, and the stewardship and spirit of collaboration in which the project was lead.

Legal instruments, agreements and expertise: all Partner Organisations emphasized the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as an instrumental structure and process of the collaboration. The MOU was viewed as a substantive blueprint for future funding collaborations by Partner Organisations.



Social Enterprise Advisory Group: the Social Enterprise Advisory Group (SEAG) provided valuable advice and guidance in the design phase of the grant; perspectives were valued for cross-checking, guiding, and providing alternative view points. It was noted that there was some “awkwardness” when members of the SEAG applied and were unsuccessful.

Financial/funding structures and frameworks: all Partner Organisations reported the importance of the financial structures and frameworks provided by Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation (LMCF) as being critical to enabling the collaboration to progress from the genesis and design phases.



Co-designing assessment and application criteria: Partner Organisations reported that the process of co-designing application and assessment criteria built an initial foundation of mutual understanding and transparency between collaborators.



Regular and collaborative ways of working

There is strong evidence to indicate that regular and collaborative ways of working were highly valued by Partner Organisations. The *collaborative nature* of the initiative was evident across all phases, starting with **working group ideation** and brainstorming during the genesis phase, to the **co-design approach of the grant program** and its associated structures and processes. Decisions were made by **group consensus** and a mechanism of **iterative feedback** via emails, contributions to **shared documentation** and dialogue at **weekly to fortnightly meetings**. Disagreements or divergence of opinions were visible in **detailed meeting minutes**, shared **program documentation** and **meeting spaces**. Partner Organisations reported **feeling equal** to other Partners and that their **voices were heard**, understood and their contributions or opinions were addressed by fellow collaborators. Partner organisations also valued the **regularity of engagement** which enabled Partners and Host to raise and address emergent issues or decision points. This created a sense of **momentum and accountability** to project timelines, milestones and outputs, as well as a sense of **responsibility** to fellow collaborators. The commitment to upholding and prioritising ways of working by the Hosts was highlighted as maintaining continuity during implementation.

“It was very iterative, everyone got a chance to input, people played to their strengths, spreading of the intellectual load.” Partner Organisation

“We had a lot of process of dealing and documenting issues as they came up.” Partner Organisation

The WISE Grant Program was experienced as an **intensive collaboration** by Partner Organisations. Cadences of working such as fortnightly to weekly meetings, document review and feedback schedules were highlighted as **time and resource intensive**. Workloads and schedules were sometimes experienced as overly **demanding and exceeded initial expectations** of their required commitment and contributions to the project. Whilst the collaboration was demanding for some Partner Organisations, it had a propelling effect on the shared work by creating **accountability to delivering upon project deadlines and milestones**. The early establishment, socialisation and consistent implementation of collaborative ways of working, and their regularly fostered a strong sense of **trust, transparency and accountability** between collaborators.

Legal instruments, agreements and expertise

All Partner Organisations emphasized the **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** as both a critical *structure* and key *process* of the collaboration. Partner Organisations strongly **valued the process of developing the MOU**, reporting that it created a *center of gravity* for negotiations between collaborators on the individual and shared legal, governance funding requirements. The MOU was a mechanism used to **engage individual organisational structures and processes**, which substantially varied across Partner Organisations. Partner Organisations noted that the timing of the MOU in the early stages of the collaboration **supported the socialization of the Grant Program** with individual boards of governance and executives. It was a mechanism through which collaborators were able to view and understand their **shared and individual risk** and was considered critical in **formalizing partners goodwill** into a binding agreement that defined individual organizational mandates.

External legal expertise, guidance and management was regarded as exceptional by Partner Organisations. Services provided **pro-bono** were considered generous and imperative given the available project budget. Previous experience working with the philanthropies created a foundation for understanding the needs and challenges that Partner Organisations were navigating to bring forward a shared agreement.

“But it was also very well supported by Minters in developing the MOU. And then we had a group agreement as well, that was a real process where we were willing to sign on the line.” Partner Organisation

The MOU is viewed by Partner Organisations as a **substantive blueprint** for future funding collaborations, one that could be shared more widely and built upon.

“We now have a governance structure determined with an MOU, you can start to build a consortium, that’s a huge move forward” Partner Organisation





Financial and funding structures

As host, LMCF provided and managed the financial and technical funding structures required for the Grant Program. This was enabled by LMCF's DJR1 status, and involved **establishment and administration of giving accounts, co-development of the letter of giving** with Minter Ellison and the subsequent **grant agreements** with successful applicants. Partner Organisations spotlighted that LMCF was uniquely positioned to provide and manage the financial and funding structures required for a collaborative funding arrangement of this nature. Partners emphasised that LMCF's **willingness to mobilise their organisations financial and funding structures** for the benefit of the collaboration was critical to the realisation of the program's vision as no other Partner had the necessary structures.

"Lord Mayors were fundamental and critical to this, a fund (DJR1) that we could all fund. Stephen lead the meetings, they had strong infrastructure to cope with that level of grants. LMCF deal with open grant rounds, not all foundations can, it took that level of technical infrastructure. Stephen held that." Partner Organisation

"Funders putting together co-funding is unique, there's no precedent. Someone had to hold the money." Partner Organisation

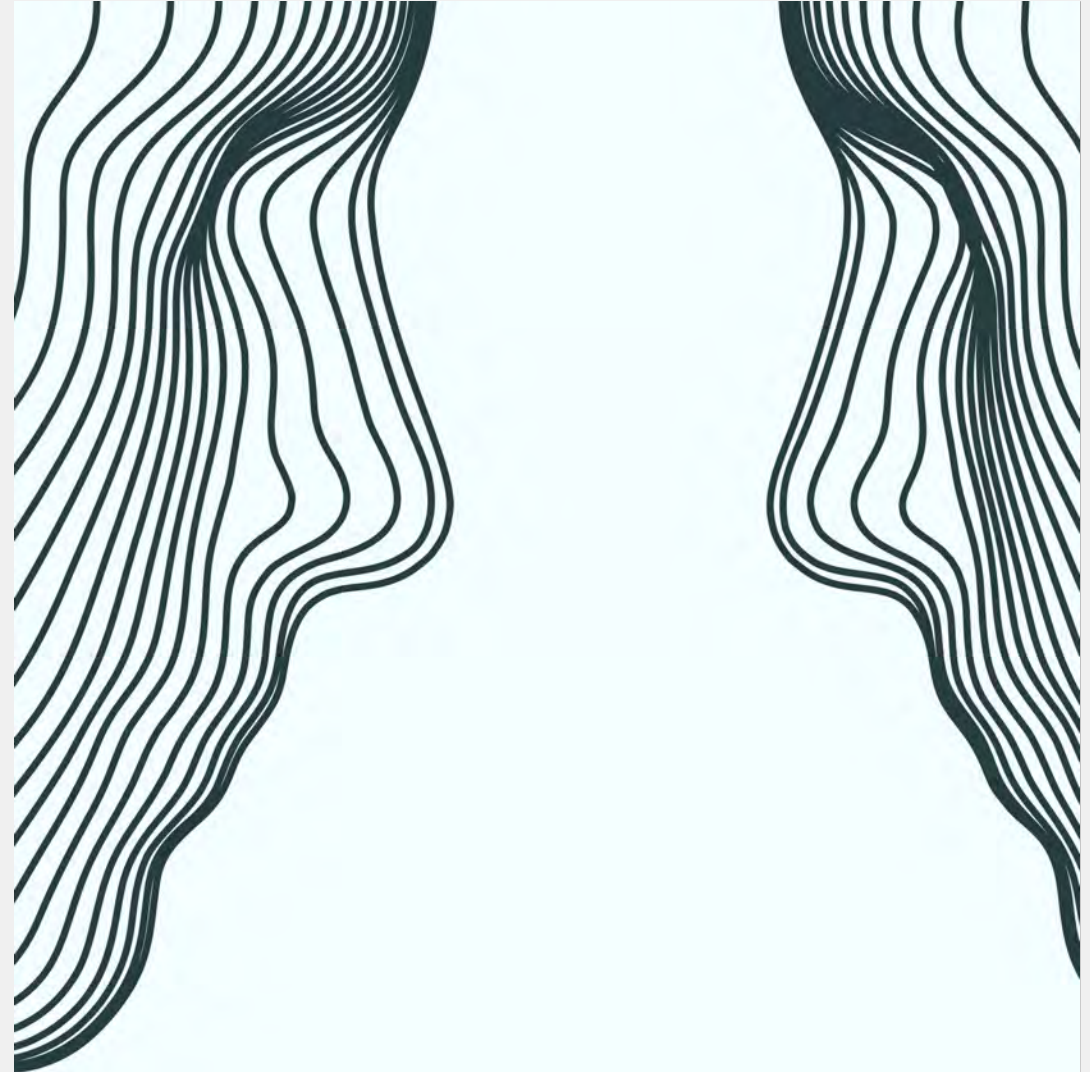
All Partner Organisations noted the intensive time and resources provided by LMCF to establish, manage and administer the grant program on behalf of the collaboration. It is noted that these were underestimated by LMCF and Partner Organisations in the initial stages of developing the Grant Program, and at times placed pressure on budgets and capacity particularly regarding administrative workloads and unique legal counsel to support the risks and responsibilities associated with hosting structures.

Host, stewardship and leadership

Partner Organisations consistently emphasised the high-quality coordination and management of the project, citing communication, administration, facilitation and logistics as being consistently exceptional. Initially led by the Westpac Foundation, the stewardship of the genesis and design phases was noted as innovative and generous. Partner Organisations who engaged in the working group often referred to the **sense of good will** that was present from the outset, and the **spirit and intent** in which the project was initiated. Partner Organisations reported building **positive and authentic working relationships** with Westpac Foundation and LMCF, with a high level of **confidence and trust** in their leadership. These sentiments continued when LMCF formally took on the role of host and continued through the phases of the collaboration. Partner Organisation's noted time and effort allocated by individuals from LMCF and Westpac Foundation to **building relationships, resolving conflicts and disagreements and ensuring individuals felt comfortable** and were on board.

“Westpac very helpful in taking a lead – LMCF would step in later and take that lead” Partner Organisation

The overall stewardship of the project was in the **spirit of collaboration** much of the success of this is **attributed to individuals** in LMCF and Westpac Foundation with the **backing of strong organisational commitment**. It was noted that these roles were experienced as intensive and required individuals and their teams to go ‘above and beyond’ initial expectations.





Social Enterprise Advisory Group

Interviews with Partner Organisations indicated that the Social Enterprise Advisory Group (SEAG) provided **valuable advice and guidance** in the design phase of the grant. Group members were composed of intermediaries and practitioners (who also met application criteria) and were paid a consultant rate for their time. SEAG perspectives were overwhelmingly valued for cross-checking, guiding, and providing alternative perspectives that could help **inform the design phase** of the collaboration.

“I think we agreed it would be a great idea to get input from WISES on the design of the grant. We agreed we should pay them for their time. We had two face to face meetings over that time, some was more email based. We were working at pace at that time. It was a quick come together get your advice and support. Be interesting to see if you could sustain that over time. They felt like we took on their advice, but also a bit awkward because there were three SEs that joined and who all applied for the grant but were not successful.”

It was noted that there was some “awkwardness” when members of the SEAG applied and were ultimately unsuccessful. Some SEAG members confirmed that they’d **felt confused as to why their application was unsuccessful** in the EOI or shortlisting stage despite meeting the assessment and application criteria and the feedback they received was through funder relationships outside of the formal grant program process. Despite this, there was an appreciation of the opportunity to **pull back the curtain** on assessment and application processes that they noted were often opaque or unclear when applying for grant funding from philanthropies:

“More generally, it’s an interesting experience and experiment for a foundation and more than one to engage with the sector more broadly . Because essentially philanthropy is quite opaque. And it can be hard for not for profits to get known to the big philanthropists. You don’t know if you should be applying for everything – there’s a big power imbalance” SEAG member

Co-designing assessment and application criteria

Partner Organisations reported that the process of co-designing the application and assessment criteria **built an initial foundation of mutual understanding and transparency** between collaborators. They appreciated the co-design *process*, specifically **dialogue and discussion** and the subsequent points of divergence and convergence resulting in a **shared set of tools**. Developing the assessment criteria and matrix in the early stages of the project and the engagement in this process built a foundation of **mutual understanding** that was helpful during more challenging points of the collaboration. Partner organisations reported **feeling valued, equal and that the process was transparent**, and this helped during the shortlisting and successful applicant stages.

SEAG perspectives **valued the experience of co-designing** the assessment and application criteria. They reported that their opinions and advice were listened to, taken onboard and incorporated into the design of the grant program as well as the assessment and application criteria and tools.

“We saw the EOI and it was obvious that what we discussed got taken on board.” SEAG member

SEAG members felt a sense of ownership and a feeling of having added value to the design of the grant program, however, commented that the final communications products didn't acknowledge these contributions.

“I know I contributed to that, but there's no reference back to that ever. The IP isn't owned by us, or that we co-created it. So I think it was highly effective, I hope that its visible. The risk is that it presents itself as being something more academic. It would be nice if it had a little thing that said it was created by the sector.” SEAG member



What challenges were experienced by Partner Organisations?

The following page provides a topline summary of the challenges experienced by Partner Organisations. In the pages thereafter, challenges are discussed in further detail.

Navigating dual project roles

For the Host Organisation, managing hosting roles as well as Partner Organisation roles was not always easy, especially in relation to managing power and multiple priorities.

Individual vs Collective Needs

Navigating individual organisational needs alongside collective needs, particularly in the selection process.

Internal governance and decision-making

Navigating internal organisational governance and decision-making processes to deliver shared collaborative processes posed challenges, particularly in relation to internal structures, timings and milestones.

Systems and Processes

Aligning individual organisational systems and processes with the program's administrative/technological requirements was challenging. Grant administration, data management and communication was often manual and time consuming.

Workload

Time and effort spent establishing, designing and coordinating partners collaborative effort often exceeded Partner Organisations expectations. Partner Organisations hope that this investment in the pilot will have established a blueprint for the future.

Art vs Science

Partner Organisations highlighted the challenge of balancing the 'art and science' of grant making, and noted this as a tension.

Uncertainty

Uncertainty about the final pool of available funding made shared decision-making challenging for some Partner Organisations.



“The experience from the beginning was – it was hard because we were trying to come together to bring our own internal processes, streamlined into one process. We all do things differently. Have different appetites. We’re different sizes.” Partner Organisation

Partner Organisations

Partner Organisations experienced a high work load and demanding schedule; this varied depending upon their participation and/or role at the various stages of the grant. The time and effort spent establishing, designing and coordinating partners collaborative effort often exceeded Partners' initial expectations. This was challenging for individuals to manage both the work of the collaboration in addition to their other individual work deliverables. Whilst collaborative processes took more input to establish than Partner Organisations expected, they felt that this was an innovative and pioneering exercise. Partner Organisations hope that this investment in this pilot collaboration will help to establish a blueprint for future collaborations and will minimise the time and capacity required from individuals in design stages in the future.

“If I had known at the start what I, how much work it would be. I probably wouldn't have put my hand up.” Partner Organisation

“Went into it with a mindset to rinse and repeat, spent a lot of time to build the template, a big time commitment.” Partner Organisation

Some Partner Organisations incurred unforeseen capacity and resourcing demands to support the collaboration and the program. In particular, LMCF provided project support with the recruitment and induction of new staff and additional legal costs associated with the role of host. Moreover, some Partner Organisers engaged individual legal counsel.

Aligning individual organisational systems and processes with the program's administrative/technological requirements was challenging for Partner Organisations, especially those with greater management and administrative responsibilities. Grant administration, data management and communication was often manual and time consuming and experienced as inefficient and frustrating. Whilst there was an appreciation of learning lessons together as they emerged, there was a sense that administrative and technological systems lacked agility or adaptability to meet some of those lessons.

“Thinking about the LMCF time frames – I think we underestimated the time it took to develop. Was based on LMCF forms, but we needed to adapt the forms. But in our time frames we underestimated that at the time.” Partner Organisation

“Barriers to technology wasn't something they even thought about when they went to source partners. Our tech wasn't part of that consideration. No one was asked to go and find solutions. We just had to make do with what we had. That became a very manual process, way more manual than it needed to be.” Partner Organisation

As host, LMCF absorbed some of these unforeseen of system and process inefficiency costs beyond the allocated administrative fee. These costs were both financial as well as in allocated human resources.

Navigating internal organisational governance and decision-making processes to deliver upon shared collaborative processes posed timing challenges. Sometimes feedback from individual Partner Organisations was delayed, affecting timelines and delivery of key milestones. Project leadership adapted by extending project timelines and shifting timing of deliverables, prioritising the outcomes of the collaboration sometimes over timelines.

“The experience from the beginning was – it was hard because we were trying to come together to bring our own internal processes, streamlined into one process. We all do things differently. Have deferent appetites. We're different sizes.” Partner Organisation

Navigating individual organisational needs alongside collective needs was an acknowledged tension that was held during the design, EOI and shortlisting stages. To varying degrees, Partner Organisations experienced a balancing act where they needed to deliver upon the goals, strategy and mandate of their own organisation and marry it with the the broader collective needs of the collaboration. This surfaced during the selection process of Grant Recipients where Partner Organisations brought forward the needs of their organisation.

“We had to find something that they could fund – [Partner Organisation] and [Partner Organisation] weren't going to fund until they saw something that they could fund. Quite a lot of robust discussion around that phase.” Partner Organisation.

Partner Organisations reported extensive dialogue, negotiation during the Grant Recipient selection stage to deliver outcomes for the grant program and their individual organisations.

Partner Organisations highlighted the challenge of balancing the ‘art and science’ of grant making and noted this as a tension. The development of the application criteria, the assessment criteria and co-designed structures and processes were the scientific nuts and bolts which were frontloaded in the early stages of the program. Following the assessment of applicants, Partner Organisations valued the opportunity to apply their own individual organizational lens to the applications. This included pre-existing or former funding relationships, organizational funding mandates and requirements and areas of organizational interest, some of which were already known by fellow Partner Organisations.

“This is where it got interesting – people had strong views about organisations that they might have had experiences with, but they weren’t the ones who had been asked to judge or assess the EOI. So, if you looked at it based on the EOI, but someone had a personal experience with that organisation, they could go into bat for them. It was a combo of art and science.” Partner Organisation

“There was the formal lens, an EOI assessment matrix. As part of that matrix, you had certain geographies and cohorts – I think it was about having 20 across that continuum and matrix. A certain number across geography and cohort. But then there is an informal component where people discuss their experiences - that happens. There’s an element of subjectivity, can never be 100% objective.” Partner Organisation

Whilst most Partner Organisations noted the ‘art’ of this process as beneficial and necessary to secure the total pool of funding, issues of subjectivity, bias, and an ‘informal’ assessment criteria – which was unknown to applicants – likely reduces the transparency of the process for applicants.

Navigating dual project roles (Partner Organisation and Host), managing power and multiple priorities was an acknowledged tension. Much of the success of these roles as been attributed to the collaborative and collegiate nature of LMCF and individual personnel. Partner Organisations were effusive in their support of LMCF as Host and collaborator but nonetheless, acknowledge the challenges of managing systems and processes, delivering upon both individual and collective needs, that needed to be held and navigated by an organisation holding this dual role.

“Holding two roles as a collaborative partner and a host, there’s tension, it’s different and tricky if you didn’t have one of the collaborative partners, separating them out, you wouldn’t get the same quality, of insight investment and intent.”

Whilst Partner Organisations overwhelmingly praised the work of LMCF as Host, some Partner Organisations would invite the opportunity to explore roles and efficiencies for future collaborations.

Uncertainty about the final pool of available funding sometimes made decision making challenging for Partner Organisations. Some Partner Organisations reserved the right to approve funding dependent upon applicants that met their organizational funding mandates. This was noted as both a strength of the collaboration and a challenge. Partner Organisations wrestled with budget uncertainty which was at times challenging to navigate. Partner Organisations attribute much of the success of these decisions to the stewardship of LMCF and Westpac.

“The other thing that wasn’t ideal – it wasn’t until 24 hours before the final meeting to make the selection that we knew how big the pool was. We kept asking, what’s our number? LMCF did a fantastic job of that. We didn’t know what the pool was so that then meant there were 10 different combos of grants we could have awarded. We were shuffling around applicants into different categories to meet the requirements.”

What challenges were experienced by Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients?

While Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients were generally positive about their experience of the EOI and Application process, there were some challenges noted. Among the most frequently raised concern was a lack of clarity regarding the reasons for unsuccessful applications, and a desire for improved communication from the WISE Grant Team. These challenges are described further in the following pages.



However, following submission there were no comms, despite follow ups and email requests for info. The lack of feedback makes it difficult for NFP charities to assess how to improve our chances of being successful-
Grant Applicant

Lack of oversight

Applicants felt that being able to **view all sections of the EOI and application stage** would be helpful for preparation and understanding expectations.

Lack of clarity

EOIs and unsuccessful shortlisted applicants expressed **confusion, frustration** and a **lack of clarity** as to why they were unsuccessful.

Time and effort

Applicants felt that whilst the EOI process was clear, **it still required substantial time and effort** to apply and that this took resources away from their core work.

Fitting in the matrix

Shortlisted applicants found it **difficult to categorise themselves** neatly into the matrix.

Uncertainty

Some unsuccessful applicants noted that they'd been approached by Partner Organisations but were unclear or confused as to **the status of future opportunities**.

Grant Applicants and Recipients

There is substantive evidence from this first round of data collection that indicates that unsuccessful Grant Applicants experienced **confusion** and **frustration** as to why their applications were unsuccessful. This challenge was consistently and repeatedly expressed in qualitative survey responses. Timing of communication notifying the outcome, and depth and specificity of feedback explaining why Grant Applicants had not met the criteria were experienced as insufficient.

“However, following submission there were no comms, despite follow ups and email requests for info. The lack of feedback makes it difficult for [grant applicant] to assess how to improve our chances of being successful.” Grant Applicant

“We understand these are very competitive grants, however, feedback is a VITAL part for WISEs to understand where submissions fell short.” Grant Applicant

“It would be very useful for feedback to be provided for unsuccessful applications. It takes NFPs a lot of time to write applications and the feedback is vital for the ensuring stronger applications and/or better choices about where to put efforts.” Grant Applicant

“It would so help to receive meaningful feedback on why we did not win the grant. Applications take a significant investment of our time and work, gaining feedback would help us understand our fit for the foundation and improve for future applications”

Applicants felt that whilst the EOI process was clear, **it still required substantial time and effort** to apply and that this took resources away from their core work. SEAG members noted that whilst they felt that funders had taken on their advice, **the EOI was in fact more resource intensive** than expected. Grant Applicants highlighted the investment of resources into grant writing and the preparation and collation of information for applications. There is an indication of an imbalance of resources invested by Grant Applicants and the reciprocity of funders in resourcing.

“It felt like the EOI was more heavy, or onerous than the application itself.” Grant Applicant

“Yes, we spent a lot of time on the EOI. I find the application process is very formative for our organization. It’s a sales process. And to me its useful, as painful as it is to receive a no, but I always see value in an application. It can be really helpful in forming your thinking.” Grant Applicant

This is a collaboration involving some of Australia’s most reputable philanthropic funders. Subsequently, there are signals that Grant Applicants **held high expectations** for this funding opportunity. There are indications that applicants invested a greater amount of resourcing into their applications given that they were being ‘seen’ by many, rather than one funder in the sector. There are indications that expectations from Grant Applicants from Partner Organisations on communication and feedback may have been greater than when applying to a single funder.



Applicants felt that being able to **view all sections of the online EOI and application form** would be helpful for planning, preparing and collating information and grant writing. There is a sense that this would help Grant Applicants to better understand funders' expectations and developing a more fulsome picture of the application process.

"The application was unable to be saved during the process of filling it out and later pages were unable to be seen until all information was complete on other pages. There was no drafting copy to allow you to prepare, so multiple versions were needed to be entered over many sessions to enable the applicant to find and draft information for the application." Grant Applicant

"While there was a slight challenge to stay within the character count, I understand this was necessary as the committee had to review numerous applications." Grant Applicant

Whilst the data indicates that Grant Applicants found the Grant Social Enterprise Stages matrix to be helpful, many found it **difficult to categorise** their organisation's unique structures and stage of development neatly into the matrix. There was a sense this was a point of much discussion for some WISEs and that there was a lack of clarity as to whether this had affected their application.

"It felt like we were not completely within one category in the way the Matrix suggested" Grant Applicant

"It was difficult to place our organisation into a tier because our management/board/governance structure is different to the options that were presented." Grant Applicant

Some unsuccessful Grant Applicants noted that they were unclear or confused as to **the status of future opportunities** with funders. Grant Applicants had an expectation that Partner Organisations were likely to engage WISEs regarding other funding opportunities. Indications from the data suggest that this hasn't occurred and some WISEs are still waiting to hear back.

"We would like to participate in future Grant opportunities but without feedback unsure if our veteran support services NFP charity has any chance of future consideration and/or success."

Partner Organisations also expressed confusion as to whether they could pursue relationships for future funding with WISEs outside of the collaboration.



How could the process be improved for Grant Applicants and Partner Organisations contributing to the grant?

Partner Organisations

- **Streamlined** meeting agendas.
- Consideration of **automating IT and communication systems** and processes associated with grant administration.
- **Additional budget allocation** for associated costs to project management, coordination and legal counsel.
- **Clarity on relationship management** and funding opportunities of unsuccessful grant applicants/unfunded WISEs
- **Increased pool of anchor funding** to support a more certain decision-making context

Grant Applicants

- **Less intensive** EOI requirements.
- **Visibility** of the entire form/application to support preparation.
- **Visibility** of Partner Organisation selection criteria.
- **Greater individual support** available for applicants developing EOI submissions.
- **Improved feedback** on unsuccessful EOI submissions and applications.
- **Social Enterprise Advisory Group** members are selected from peak bodies.

Partner Organisations

Outcomes driven meeting agendas that are shorter and focused on project deliverables and milestones. Partner Organisations noted value in more streamlined meeting agendas, with less time spent on introductory items and agenda framing– however, it is acknowledged that this would require a commitment from Partners to prepare for meetings, and to be across the content for discussion and decision. This would need to be balanced with workloads, schedules and project timelines.

Improvements to the technological systems used to administer the grants would be welcomed to improve efficiencies in both the timeliness of communications for recipients and the resources required to distribute them. Investing in technology to support the administration of grant finances, communication and operations would minimise manual administration time of staff. Future collective funding arrangements that are likely to attract a large number of EOIs should consider budget for upgrading Host systems and processes required for these operational functions.

Additional budget allocation for associated costs to project management, coordination and legal counsel, especially for the role of Host. Budgeting in the pilot grant program did not account for induction of grant program staff and did not anticipate costs associated with seeking individual legal counsel for advice pertaining to the legal and financial obligations associated with the Host role. Moreover, Partner Organisations would benefit from anticipating budget allocation for consultation of legal counsel if required for letters of giving and the MOU.

Clarity on relationship management and funding opportunities of unsuccessful Grant Applicants/unfunded WISEs amongst Partner Organisations. Partner Organisations are unclear as to whether it is appropriate to engage unfunded WISEs in individual funding relationships beyond the Grant Program. Whilst there's a sense of ownership from Partner Organisations with pre-existing funding relationships, there's a lack of clarity about engaging those WISEs that are new to Partner Organisation networks.

An increase in committed anchor funding to support a more certain decision-making context for Partner Organisations. Greater certainty on the total funding pool available for distribution to Grant Recipients would minimise scenario planning and surface inexplicit selection criteria earlier.



Grant Applicants

Improved communications and feedback on unsuccessful applications was the most frequently requested improvement from Grant Applicants. Faster response times to notify Grant Applicants that they were unsuccessful would help with expectation management and a protracted feeling of hopefulness. Additionally, Grant Applicants strongly expressed a need for feedback on unsuccessful applications that is **personalised and detailed**. This is to support applications into future grant rounds, as well as help WISEs to understand whether their organisation and work appeals to specific funders, and is noted for the resourcing requirements that it may place on Partner Organisations.

Pre-mapped onboarding and offboarding pathways for unsuccessful applicants at EOI and application stages may assist in future grant round communication, feedback and relationship management steps. This may also help plan and manage Grant Applicant's expectation management when it comes to a collective funding collaboration of this nature, particularly one involving some of the nation's largest funding institutions.

Less intensive EOI requirements and higher application requirements was suggested by a number of Grant Applicants who felt that the EOI submission was extensive and required significant resourcing. The overall 2-step EOI and application process had strong support, however in a resource constrained sector further efficiencies might be made in this first step.

Grant Applicants reported that visibility of the complete online EOI and application form would support their preparation and understanding of administrative requirements. Grant Applicants had a strong preference for viewing and considering the entire submission or application forms prior to commencing preparation of information. Additionally, it would support their understanding of funder expectations when it came to the overall process of grant writing approach, structure and length.

Greater individual support made available for applicants when developing EOI submissions in open grant rounds. Grant Applicants at this stage expressed a strong desire for the opportunity to discuss and ventilate ideas and proposed approaches prior to re-directing resourcing from their core work into a submission. Given the wider net the open grant round cast, and targeted early stage WISE cohort, it may be appropriate to allocate additional resourcing to providing individual support at the EOI stage for smaller and less experienced WISEs,

Whilst **Social Enterprise Advisory Group** members had positive experiences, group members suggested that future advisory groups be selected from peak bodies rather than intermediaries. Many of the practitioners representing peak bodies had prior experience as WISE intermediaries and therefore, the group felt had the experience and perspectives required. Intermediaries again identified resourcing as a significant barrier to participation, and whilst the consultant rate was valued, members felt peak bodies could best resource an advisory group of this nature.

We note that some Grant Applicants expressed a preference to be invited to apply for grant rounds given the investment of resources required to deliver a grant application as well as a perceived higher probability of success in closed grant rounds. Grant Applicants noted that in **closed grant rounds** there had already been backgrounding and understanding of the work and enterprise prior to application. There was a sense that applicants had a better chance of success given a pre-existing understanding between them and the funder.

To what degree were the intended grant outcomes achieved for Partner Organisations and Grant Applicants? In what ways did the collaboration contribute to those outcomes?

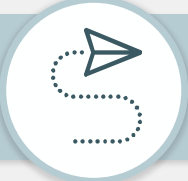
The following page provide a topline summary of the progress towards outcomes. In the pages thereafter, outcomes as identified by the WISE Grant Program are listed with a summary of progress to date. It's important to note that a more fulsome picture about outcomes achieved and the collaboration's contribution to them will likely surface as grant implementation and evaluation matures.



Partner Organisations reported both **strengthening pre-existing and building new philanthropic relationships** individually and at an organizational level.



There is a strong **sense of goodwill and optimism** amongst Partner Organisations and a keen **interest in future collective funding opportunities.**



Partner Organisations attributed the WISE Grant Program to having **mapped a blueprint** for collaborative approaches and methodologies; having a greater understanding of what and how to collaborate amongst funders.



Partner Organisations voiced feeling part of a new **community of practice** that they can draw upon.



Successful grant applicants reported that the **application process was simple and streamlined.**



All of these people met fortnightly. You're building much deeper relationships. And ultimately that leads to greater relationships between organisations. You feel much more comfortable in picking up the phone and saying "we're working on this" etc. There are times that we were meeting every week – regularly seeing each other, talking to each other etc. I was new, and it gave me a good understanding. The regular interactions helped to strengthen relationships - Partner Organisation



Simplified and streamlined access to philanthropic support for early stage wise

There is progress in the direction towards achieving this outcome, with 73% of Grant Applicants and Grant Recipients both reporting that the EOI submission and application process was simple and streamlined. There is support for a 2-stage application process where the detail is requested in the full application, rather than at earlier stages. The webinar, individual phone calls, responsive communications during submission and application stages is a well received offering which substantively supports early stage WISEs in understanding grant expectations and crafting applications. However, early stage WISEs are resource poor and lack the grant writing capacity of other more developed organisations and so may require further support and coaching activities from philanthropies.



Stronger philanthropic networks among partner organisations

There is strong evidence to suggest that Partner Organisations have developed new philanthropic relationships and strengthened existing ones via the WISE Open Grant round. Partner Organisations reported calling one another for advice, informal conversations and problem solving in relation to the work of the WISE Grant Program and their philanthropic work more broadly:

“We’ve developed stronger relationships across the foundations.” Partner Organisation

“All of these people met fortnightly. You’re building much deeper relationships. And ultimately that leads to greater relationships between organisations. You feel much more comfortable in picking up the phone and saying “we’re working on this” etc. There are times that we were meeting every week – regularly seeing each other, talking to each other etc. I was new, and it gave me a good understanding. The regular interactions helped to strengthen relationships.” Partner Organisation

These relationships are embedded in a strong sense of goodwill and optimism amongst Partner Organisations and a keen interest in future collective funding opportunities.



Increased understanding and knowledge of collective funding approaches among partner organisations

Partner Organisations voiced feeling part of a new community of practice that they can draw upon. Partner Organisations attributed the WISE Grant Program to having mapped a blueprint for a collaborative approach and methodology; having a greater understanding of what and how to collaborate amongst funders. Additionally, there is a sense of developing best practice and standards for collaborative funding arrangements into the future. Partner Organisations reported a feeling of “having been in the trenches of collaboration” with one another and having come out over the top with a viable and replicable product.

“Refreshingly beautiful practice, it built a community of practice between us, there’s high expectations, collaborations like this to participate equally. Yes there were technical expertise at various points, there was no one foundation. Leaving your ego at the door and being open to changing your mind.”



Stronger evidence base of what works

The WISE Open Grant Round is providing important insights into what works for mobilising relationships among funding agencies, as well as deploying a jointly developed funding mechanism that supports applicants and grantees. These insights include the structure and importance of a 2-stage application processes, the needs of early stage WISEs and how these can be accommodated in a collaborative funding approach, the administrative, operational and legal requirements for funders to collaborate, the time and resources required to support good funder-funder collaborations, and where challenges (and solutions) might be encountered when seeking to build funder-funder relationships. As the evaluation continues into its second year, it will be important explore and understand how relationships among funders through this mechanism have evolved.



Improved advocacy efforts among partner organisations

The current available data suggests that it's too early to determine whether there has been improved advocacy efforts among Partner Organisations via the WISE Open Grant Round. Future data collection rounds will seek to surface insights into this outcome.



Increased investment into WISE

The WISE Open Grant Round mobilised \$4.7M of funding from some of Australia's leading funding institutions into early stage WISE. While it is unclear if this level of funding would have been mobilised without the Open Grant Round, it is encouraging that this first pilot exercise was successful in raising this amount of funding. As the program evolves, this outcome will be revisited to determine if Partner Organisations have continued, expanded or reduced their investment in WISE, and the role of the collaborative open grant round in those investment decisions.



What other benefits to Partner Organisations, individually or collectively, did this collaboration foster? Are there any benefits to the broader sector or at the ecosystem level?

There are some early signals of benefits to the WISE grant funding ecosystem. To a greater degree early insights suggest that there have been individual benefits to Partner Organisations and collective benefits for the broader philanthropic sector. These insights are emergent and future data collection coupled with grant maturity will surface a more fulsome picture. Some top level insights are identified in the pages following.



Development of sector tool

Partner Organisations, intermediaries from the Social Enterprise Advisory Group and Grant Applicants reported seeing the Social Enterprise Assessment Matrix in other grant applications in the sector.



Reputational benefits

Partner Organisations noted the benefits to their individual organisational reputation as a funder that is open to alternative funding approaches and is collaborative.



Delivering on organizational goals

Participating in the WISE Grant Program, contributed to Partner Organisations delivering on individual organisational goals, while also operating within a collaborative environment.



Expanded network of WISEs

Partner Organisations reported having a broadened pool of WISEs now in their networks.

Development of sector tool

Partner Organisations, SEAG intermediaries and Grant Applicants reported that the Social Enterprise Assessment Matrix is being used in other grant applications within the WISE grant making sector. As the assessment matrix is socialised more broadly, it is possible that this may contribute to a standardised categorisation of WISEs across the sector.

Delivering on organizational goals

Participating in the WISE Grant Program, contributed to Partner Organisations delivering on individual organisational goals and delivered shared organisational learnings on collective funding and collaboration.

“It’s enabled us to achieve our strategic intent for the year, right at the beginning, the four or five factors speak to so much of the work we’d do. It’s one of the pieces of work nearly everyone in [Partner Organisation] had something to do with, heavily involved, it was one piece of work that everyone had to put work into.” Partner Organisation

Reputational benefits

Partner Organisations noted the benefits to their individual organisational reputation - that is, being seen as a funder that is open to alternative funding approaches and is collaborative. Partner Organisations are sharing the story of the innovative collaboration and their role in it to the sector.

“Telling the story of what kind of funder [Partner Organisation] is. It’s just helps us with our narrative we’re not just so traditional” Partner Organisation

With increasing interest in collaborative funding approaches within the Philanthropic sector, participation and experiences in collaborations such as the WISE Open Grant Round may change how funders are perceived by each other, and those they support.

Expanded network of WISEs

Partner Organisations reported having a broadened pool of WISEs now in their networks. The Open Grant Round has resulted in 166 unfunded WISEs of varying degrees of enterprise development, impact and target demographics and of varying degrees of interest to Partner Organisations. Within this pool, it was reported that there are unfunded high-quality applications and a significant opportunity to engage with these WISEs into the future. There is an appetite amongst Partner Organisations to explore next steps regarding relationship management and engagement.



Implications and conclusions

What do these findings mean?

The WISE Open Grant Round aimed to streamline the processes for WISE to apply for philanthropic funding – findings from this evaluation would suggest that in large part, this has been achieved. Opportunity exists to further increase the transparency and simplicity of the EOI and Application process, and to strengthen the feedback and communication that is provided to applicants to support their future efforts in securing funding for their work.

The processes to develop the collaboration among Partner Organisations required considerable time and effort, which for some, was beyond their expectations. Partners had to navigate their own internal contexts, needs and ways of working and to align these with those of others. A strong shared vision, commitment to open and transparent ways of working, and effective leadership and stewardship for the partnership, were noted as important enablers of collaboration. Moreover, in such collaborative initiatives, collaborating in developing robust legal partnership agreements, are themselves an important vehicle for strengthening collaborative practice. Foundations of trust, goodwill and shared understanding have now been strengthened among Partner Organisations participating in the WISE Open Grant Round, and are expected to be important for building further collaborative work into the future.

As with any partnership, challenges were encountered in navigating shared spaces, and ensuring that individual and collective needs were met. This was particularly important in the context of meeting funder areas of interest, including support for specific population groups, thematic areas of interest, and geographic locations. Partners therefore had to carefully negotiate the final selection of successful applicants, ensuring that they represented a mix of partner interests and needs. This required a degree of ‘give and take’, flexibility on the behalf of funders, and a willingness to reorient from individual to collective relationships with Grantees. How this influences Partner Organisations – including how to communicate with Grantees and celebrate their successes, will be important to explore into the future.

The WISE Open Grant Round brought together funders of different sizes and scales, which translated into different funding amounts provided to this collaborative opportunity. In some circumstances, higher amounts of funding could be seen as conferring greater authority or power to those funders. In the WISE Open Grant Round, this was not the case: regardless of funding provided, Partner Organisations chose to operate as equals, and arrive at mutually agreed decisions and choices. If and when additional funders participate in the collaboration in the future, this will likely require attention and discussion.



Conclusions

This Interim Evaluation Report aimed to provide insights into the early experiences of designing and implementing the WISE Open Grant Round. Through analyses of applicant details, interviews with Partner Organisations, and feedback from grant applicants on the EOI and application process, there is strong evidence to suggest that the initiative has achieved, or is on track to achieve, its core objectives and outcomes.

While collaborations among funders are becoming increasingly popular, there remain nuances and challenges in how to navigate these relationships. Transparency among Partner Organisations is key, as is transparency in the processes they are creating for applicants for financial support. The collaborative efforts among Partner Organisations in this collaboration have been enabled by a strong shared vision, effective leadership, and a willingness to negotiate with each other to ensure that individual and collective needs were met. This came as the result of much hard work among Partner Organisations; which is not always factored into decision making when entering into collaborative efforts.

Future data collection will help to understand and explore how the collaborative foundations built through this process have held or changed, and the opportunities that might lay ahead for Partner Organisations to continue supporting the important work of WISE in Australia.

Acknowledgements

Partner Organisations would like to acknowledge the contributions of some key partners; MinterEllison for their invaluable pro bono legal work; Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation for stepping into the role of Host and operationalizing it with such generosity; and all the participants of this evaluation who have contributed their time, perspectives and energy.

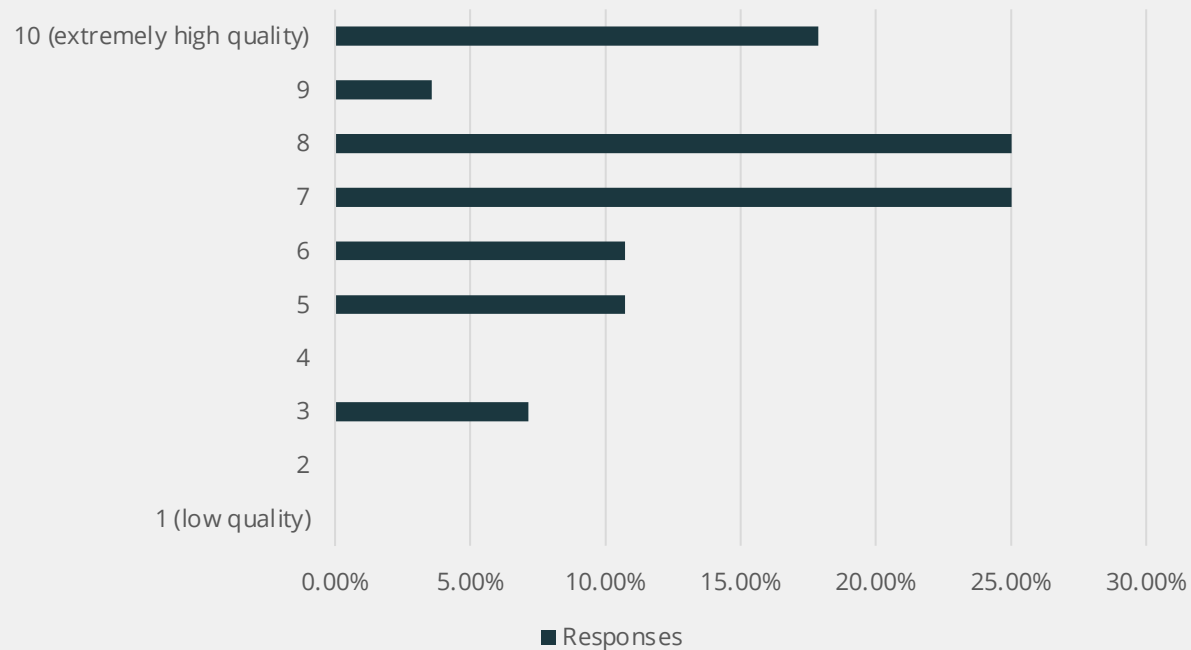


Annex

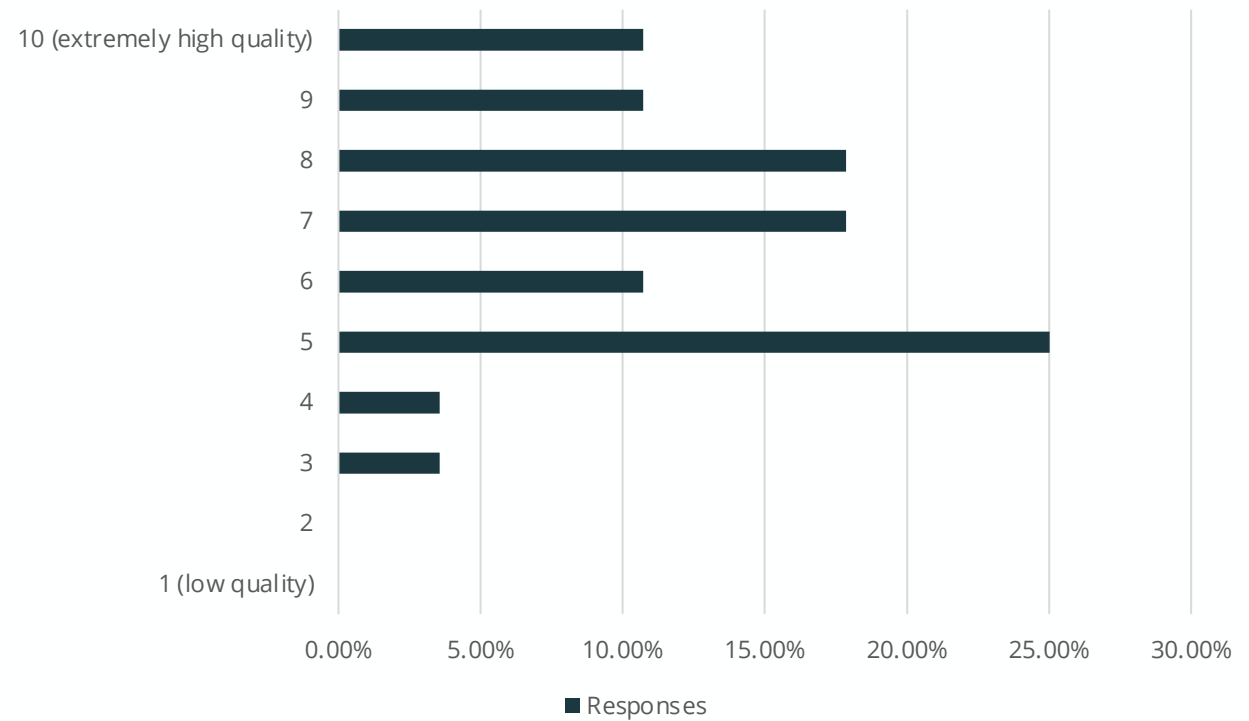
Annex A: EOI Submission Survey Responses

The following data in Annex A represents survey responses from the 39 EOI participants.

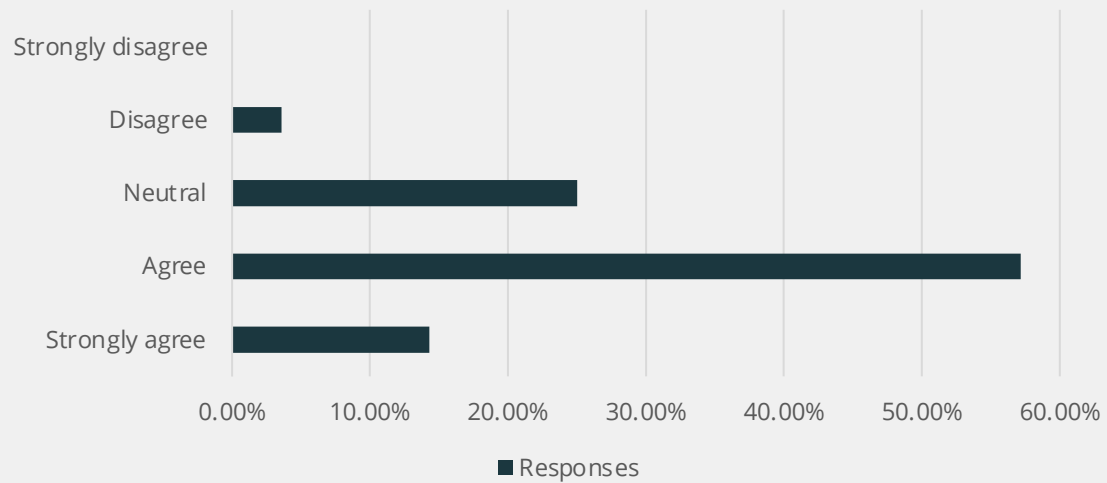
On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the quality of communications from the WISE Grant Program as part of the EOI process (e.g. information about the grant, supporting documentation, the webpage)?



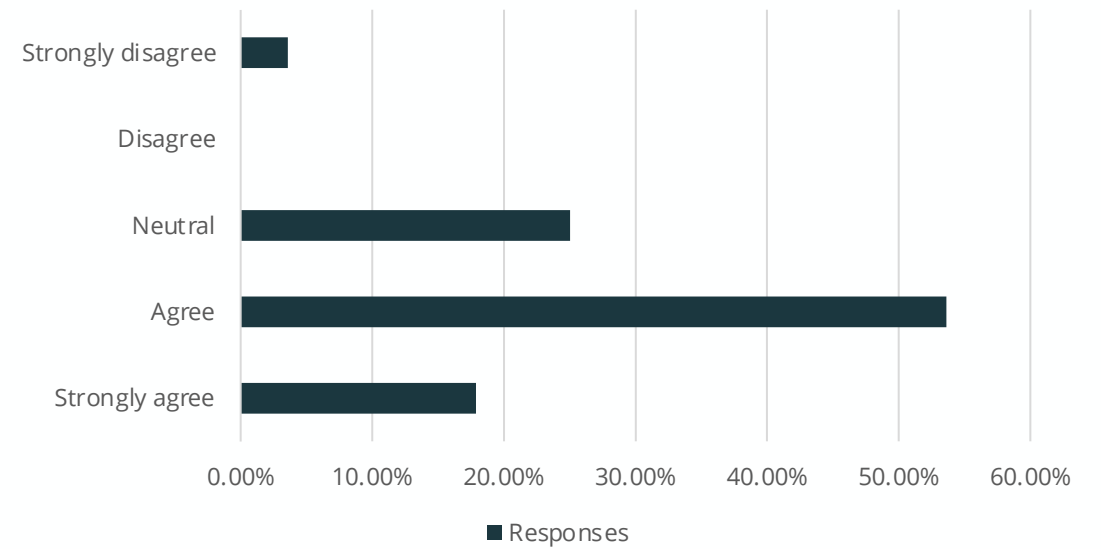
On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the level of support received during the EOI process?



Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The information provided from the WISE Grant assisted my EOI"



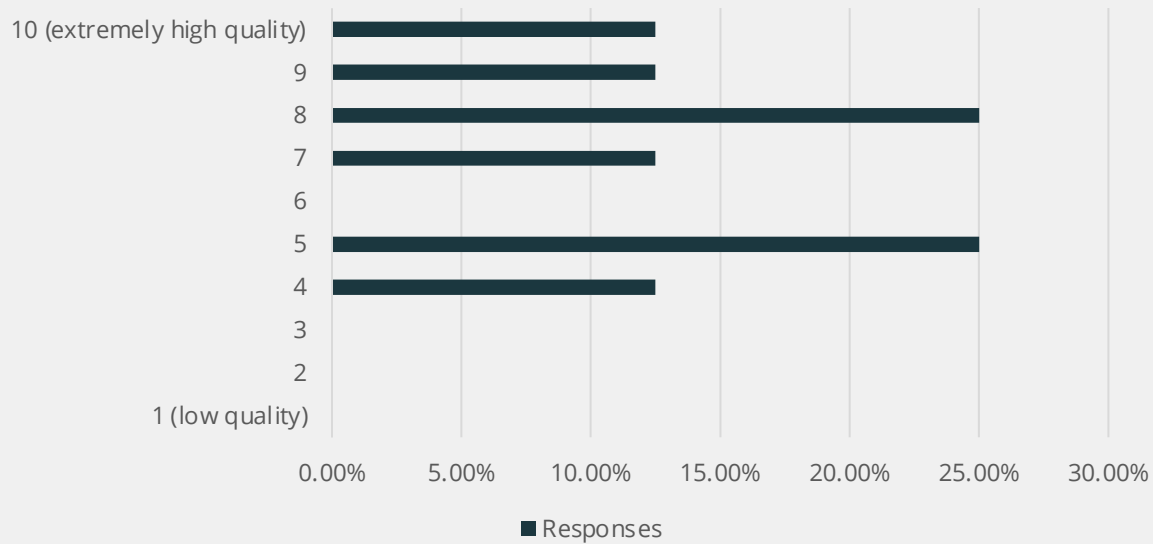
Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The WISE Grant EOI process was simple and streamlined"



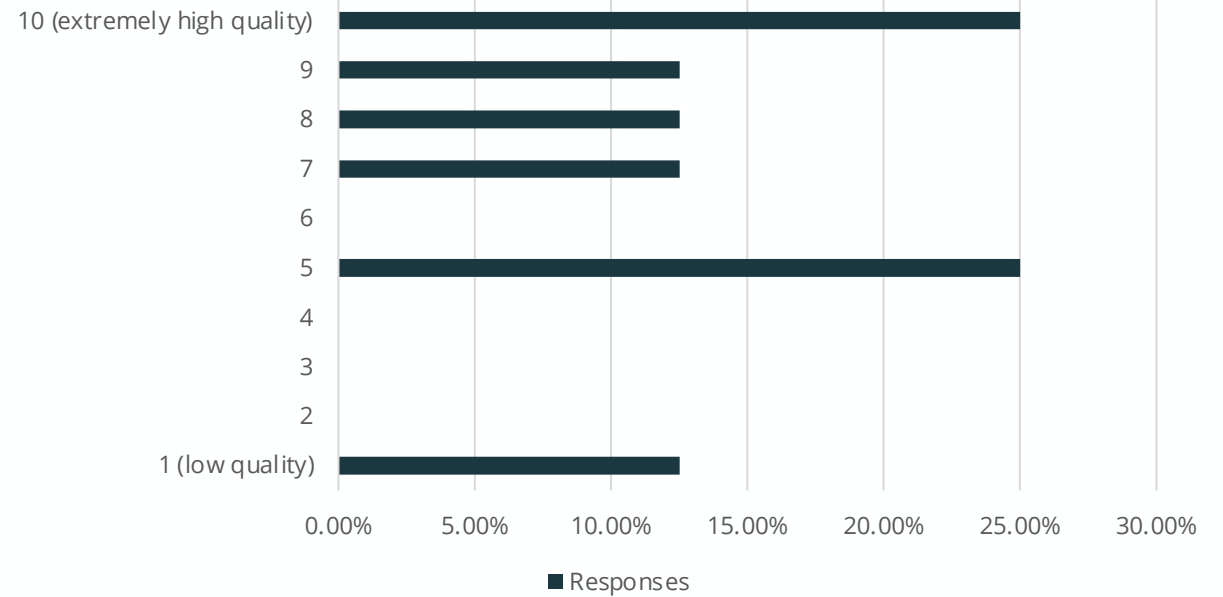
Annex B: Grant Applicant Survey Responses

The following data in Annex B represents survey responses from the 8 Shortlisted Applicants participants.

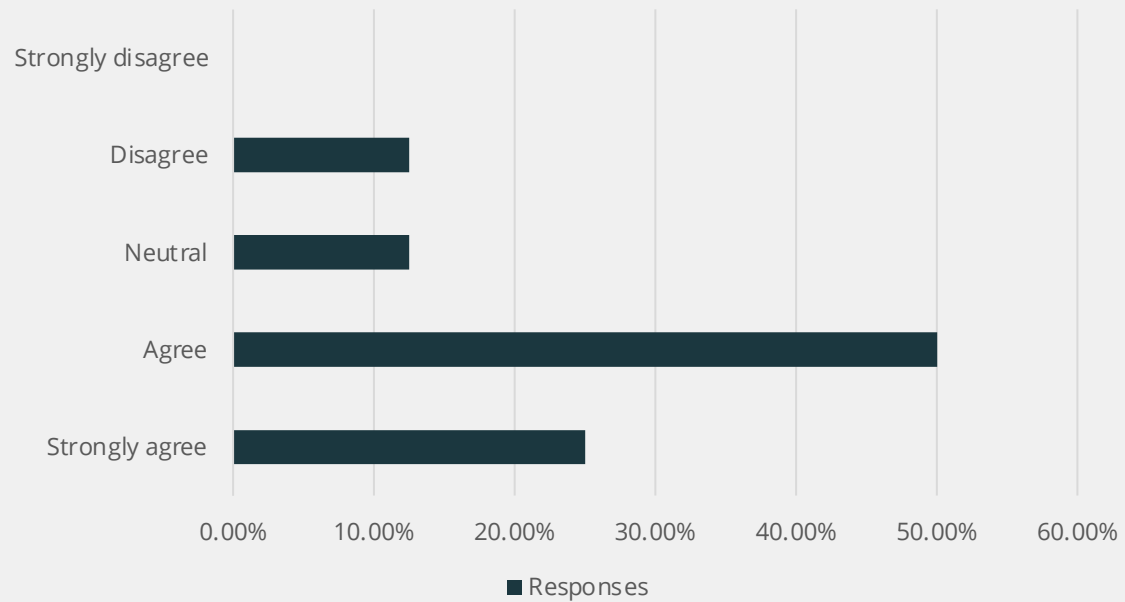
On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the quality of communications from the WISE Grant Program as part of the EOI process (e.g. information about the grant, supporting documentation, the webpage)?



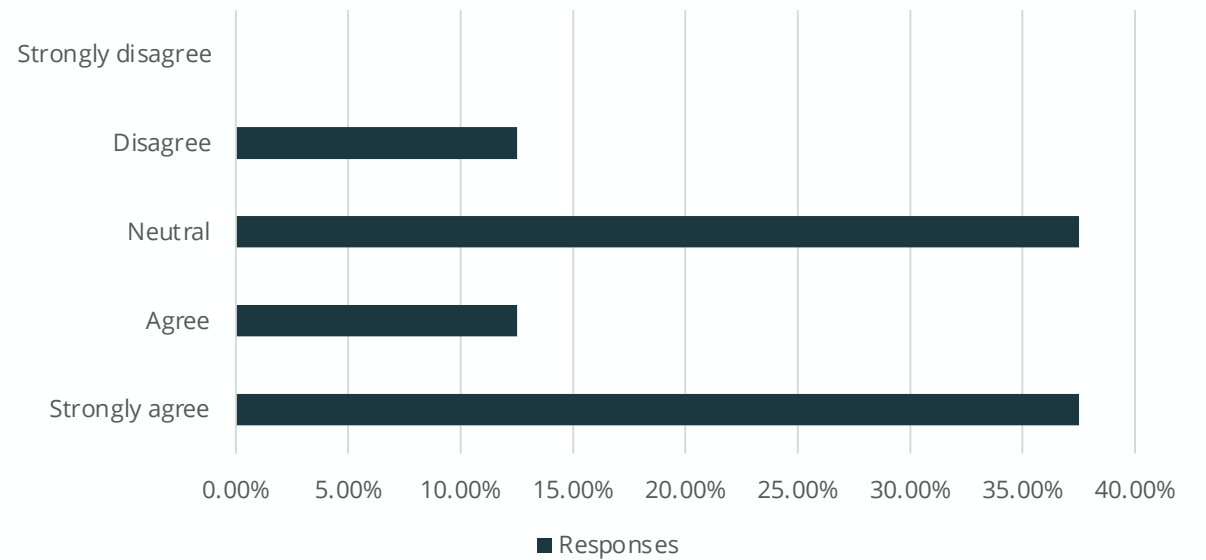
On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the level of support received during the EOI phase?



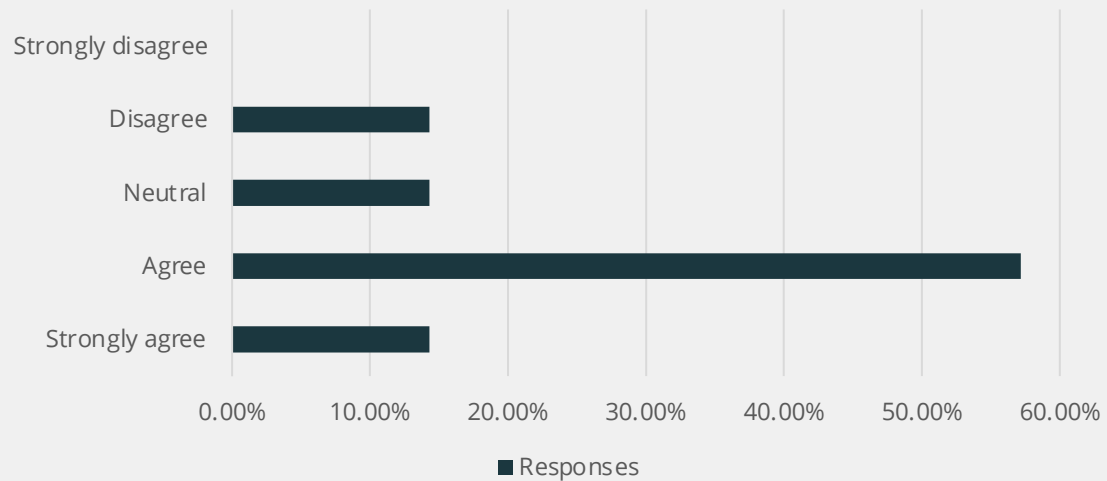
Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The information provided from the WISE Grant assisted my EOI"



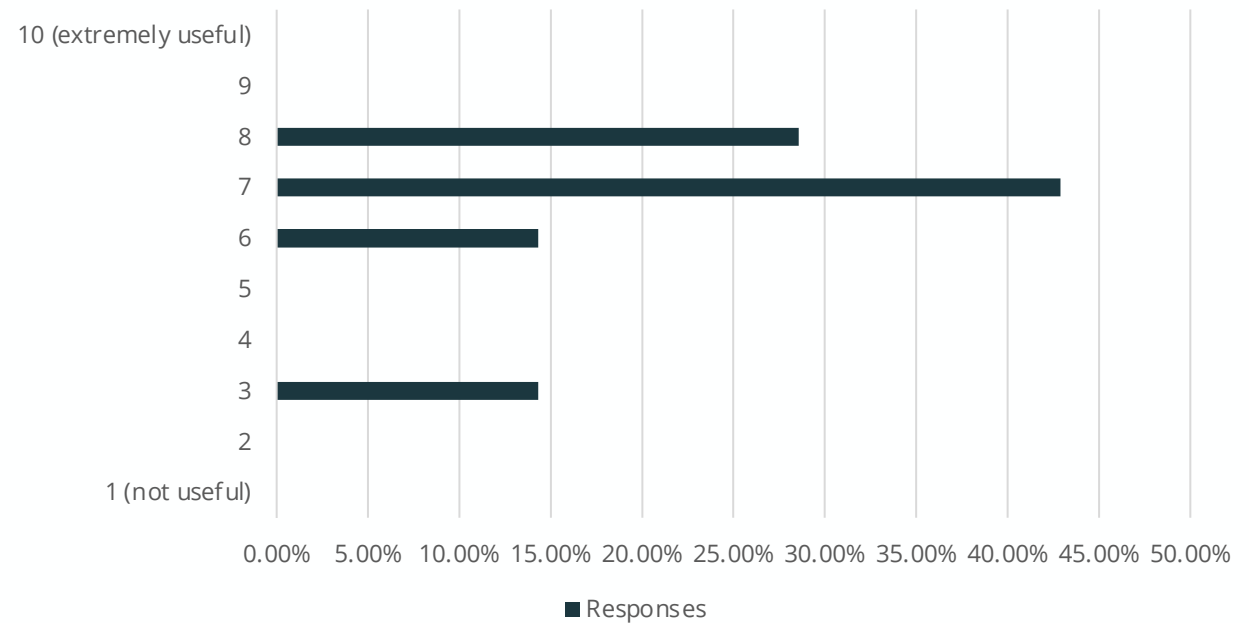
Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The WISE Grant EOI process was simple and streamlined"



Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The WISE Grant application form was simple to fill out."



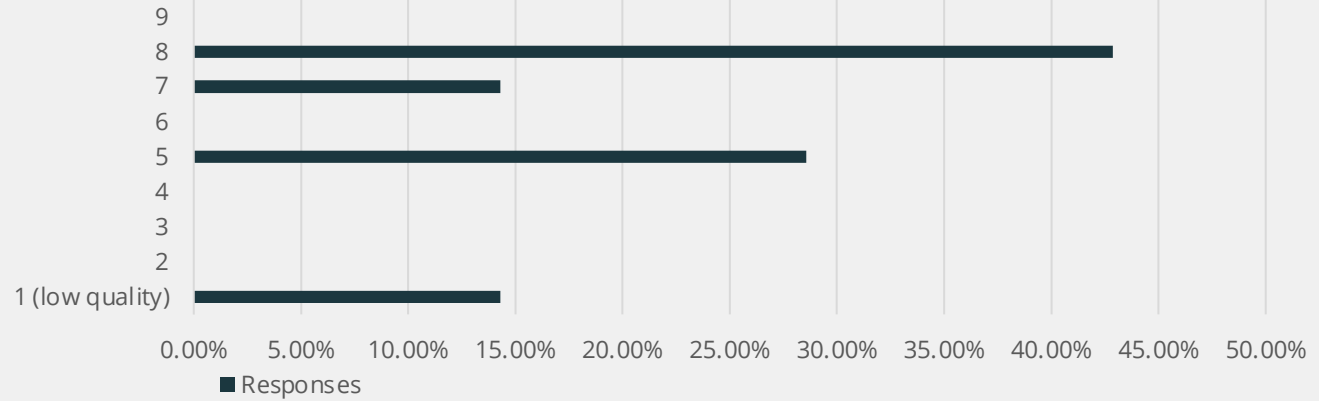
On a scale of 1-10, how useful was the 'Grant Social Enterprise Stages Matrix' when self-assessing your organization's eligibility for the grant?



On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate the quality of support received during the grant application process (e.g. responsiveness to questions you may have had, assistance in clarifying application requirements, availability of staff etc.)?

Please provide any other comments about the quality of support received during...

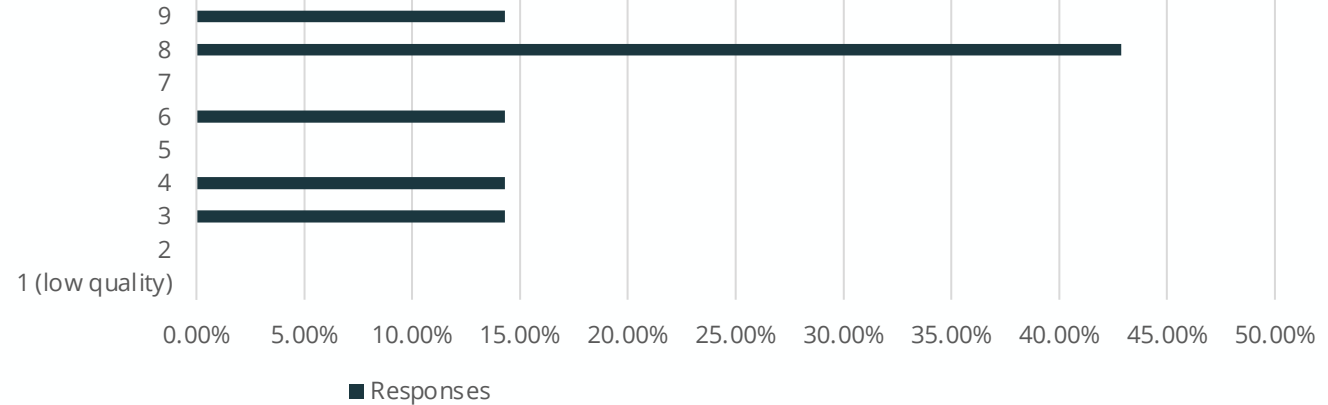
10 (extremely high quality)



On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate the quality of communications from the WISE Grant Program as part of the grant application process (e.g. information about the grant, guidance documents, other supporting documentation, the webpage etc.)?

Please provide any other comments about the quality of the...

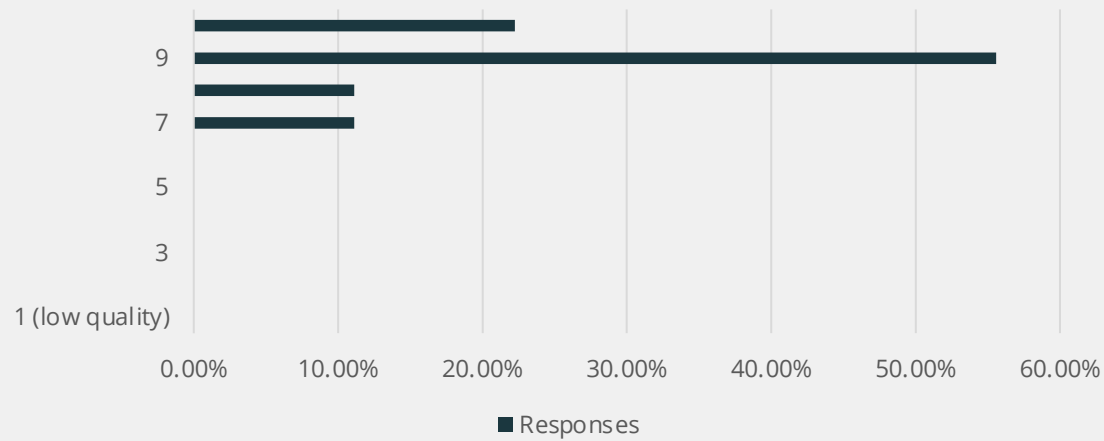
10 (extremely high quality)



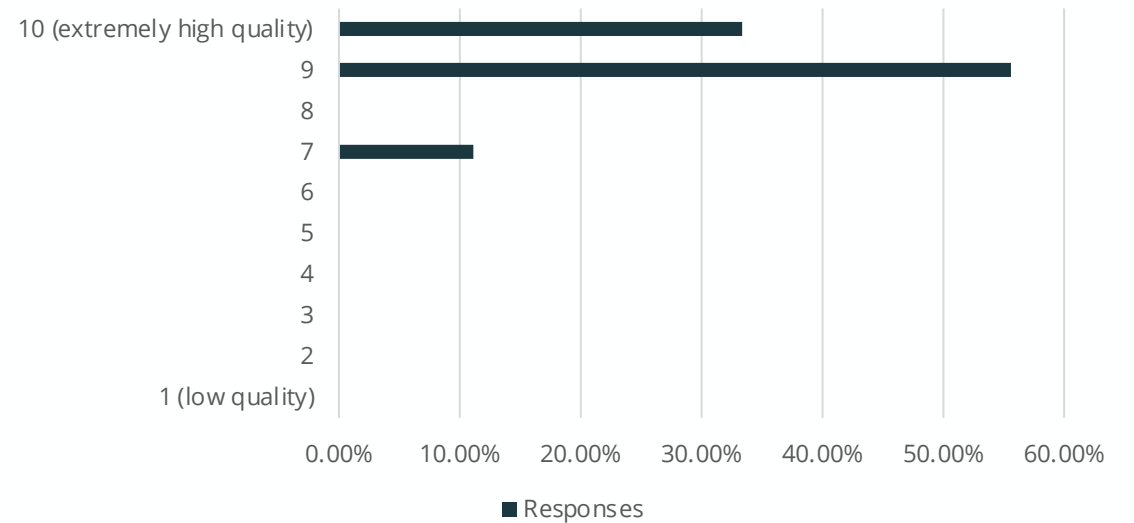
Annex C: Grant Recipient Survey Responses

The following data in Annex C represents survey responses from the 11 Successful Applicant participants.

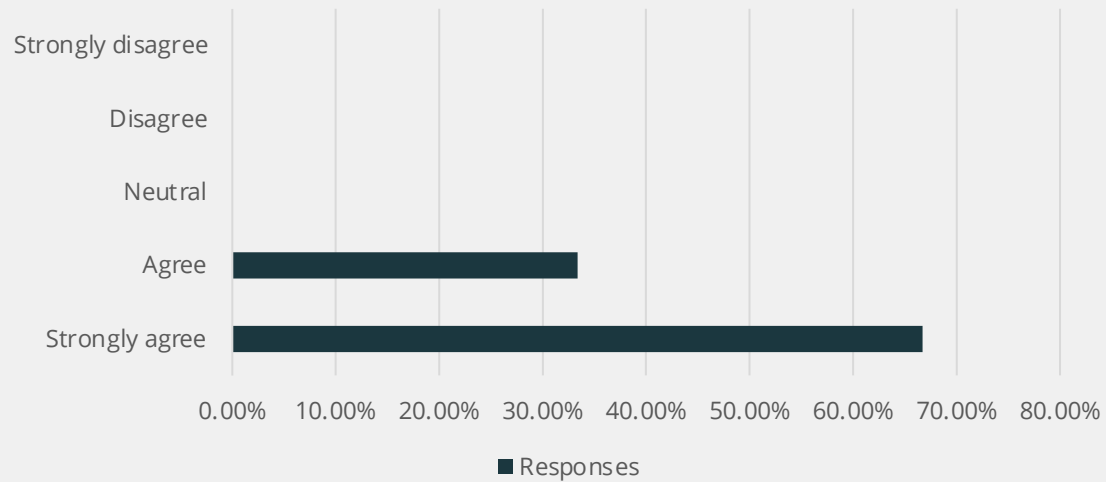
On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the quality of communications from the WISE Grant Program as part of the EOI process (e.g. information about the grant, supporting documentation, the webpage)?



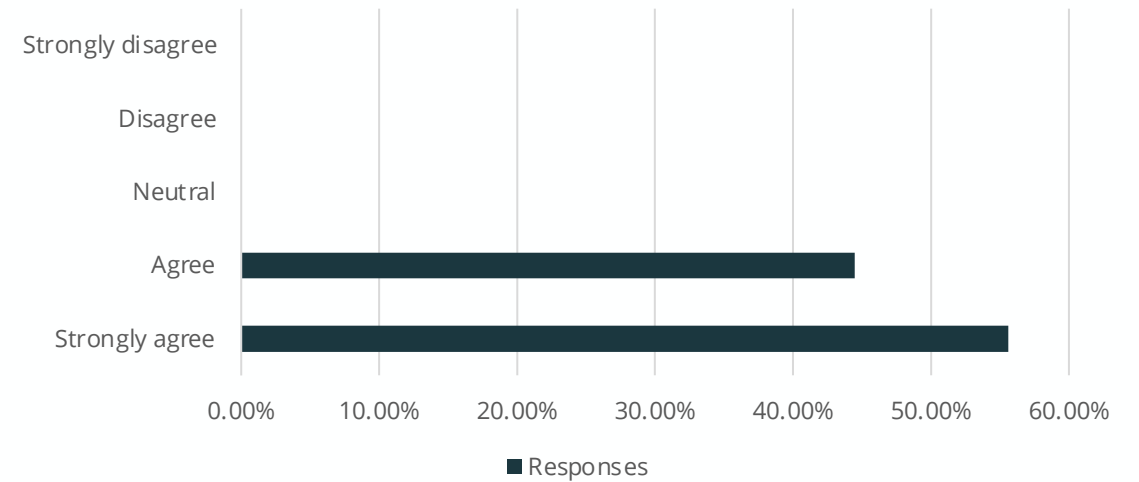
On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the level of support received during the EOI phase?



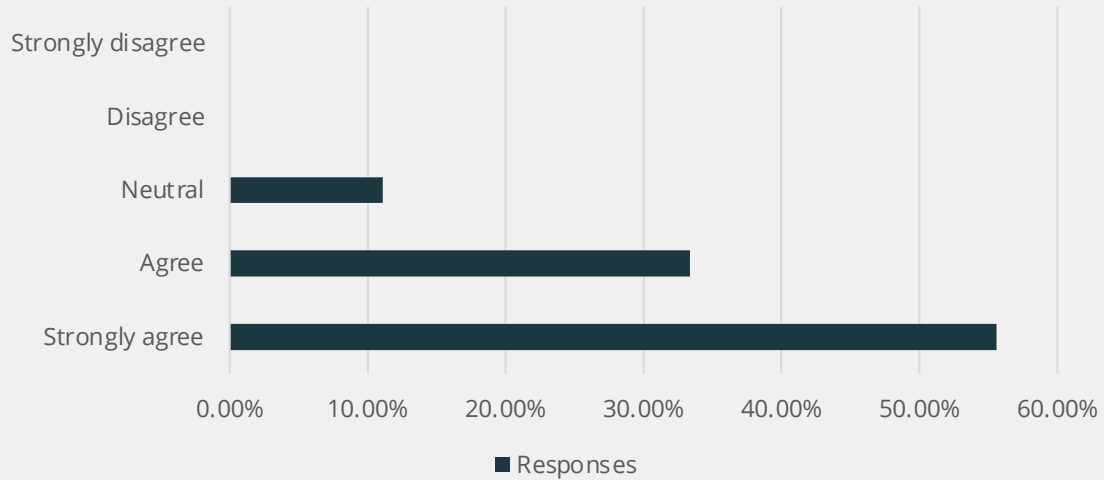
Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The information provided from the WISE Grant assisted my EOI"



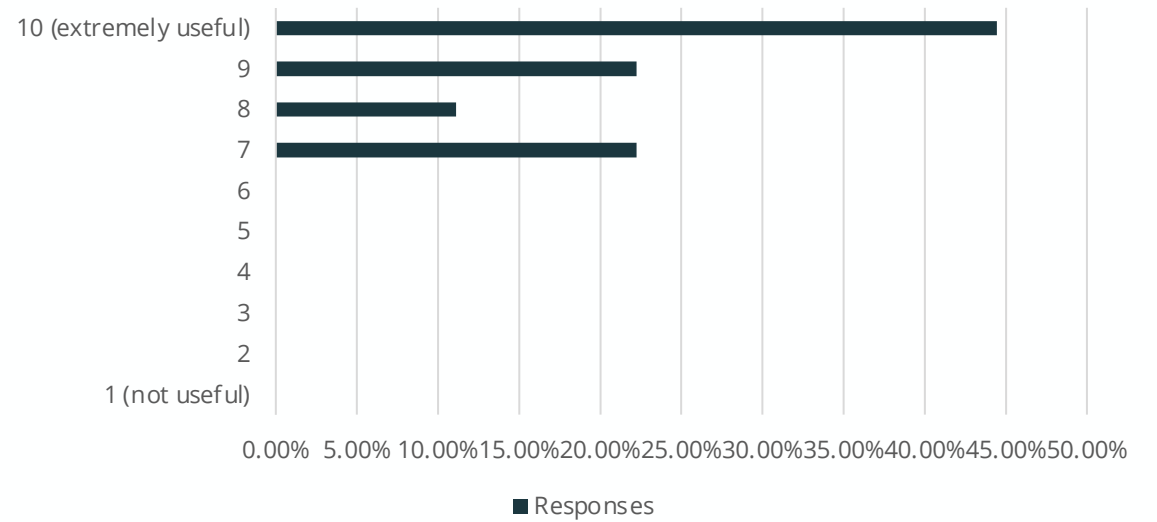
Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The WISE Grant EOI process was simple and streamlined"



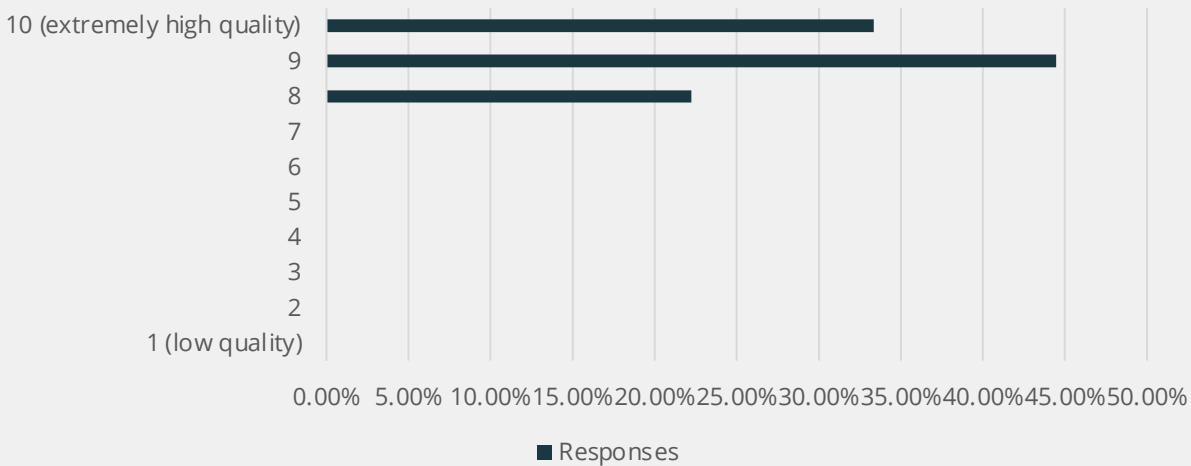
Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The WISE Grant application form was simple to fill out."



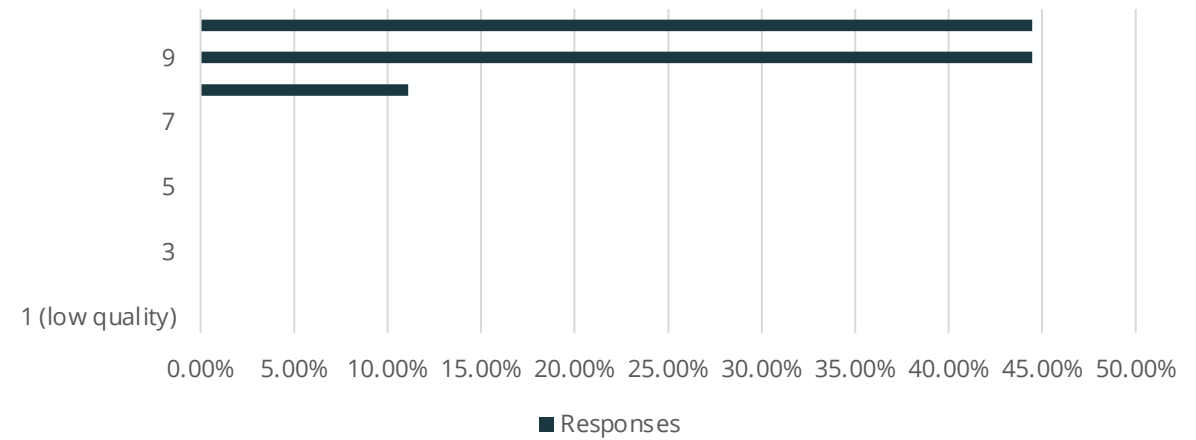
On a scale of 1-10, how useful was the 'Grant Social Enterprise Stages Matrix' when self-assessing your organization's eligibility for the grant?



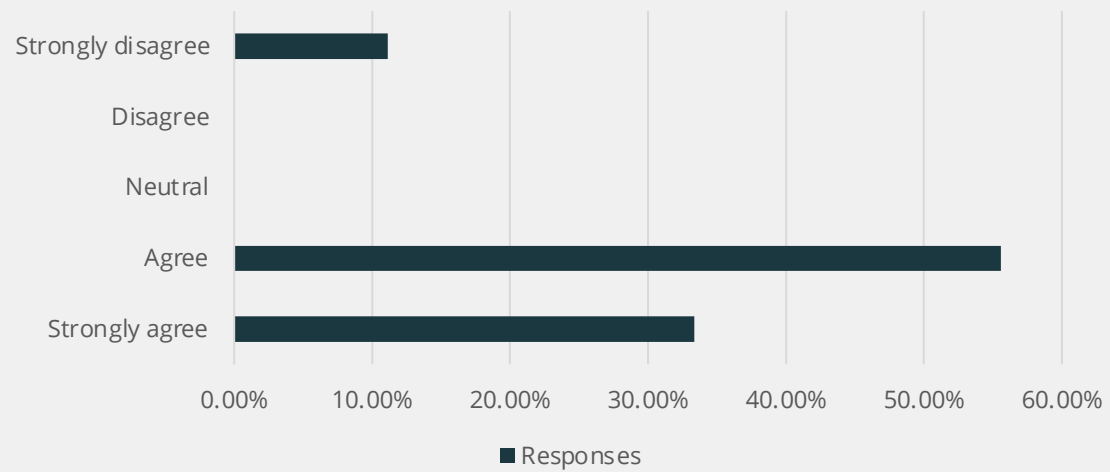
On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate the quality of communications from the WISE Grant Program as part of the grant application process (e.g. information about the grant, guidance documents, other supporting documentation, the webpage etc.)?



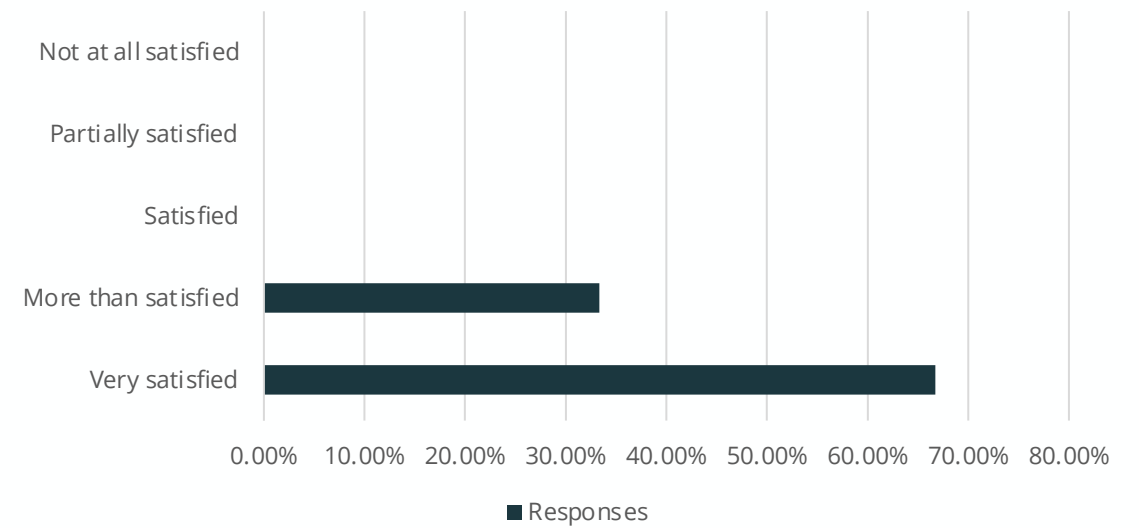
On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate the quality of support received during the grant application process (e.g. responsiveness to questions you may have had, assistance in clarifying application requirements, availability of staff etc.)?



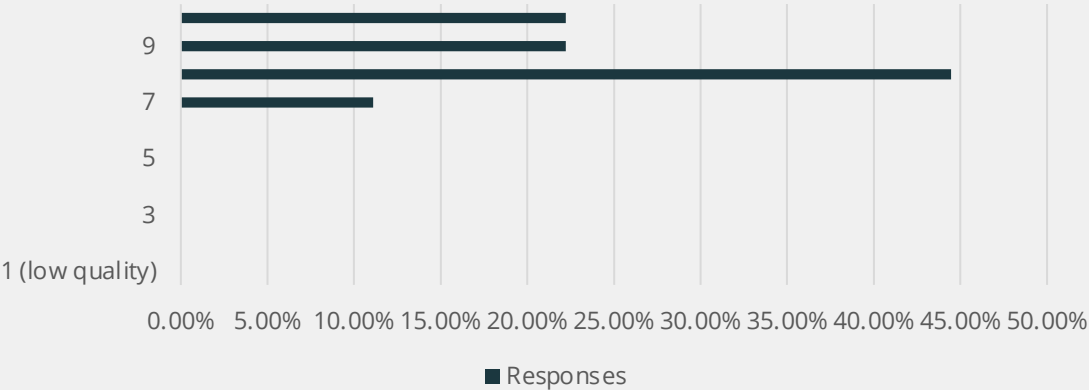
Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The WISE Grant application process was simple and streamlined"



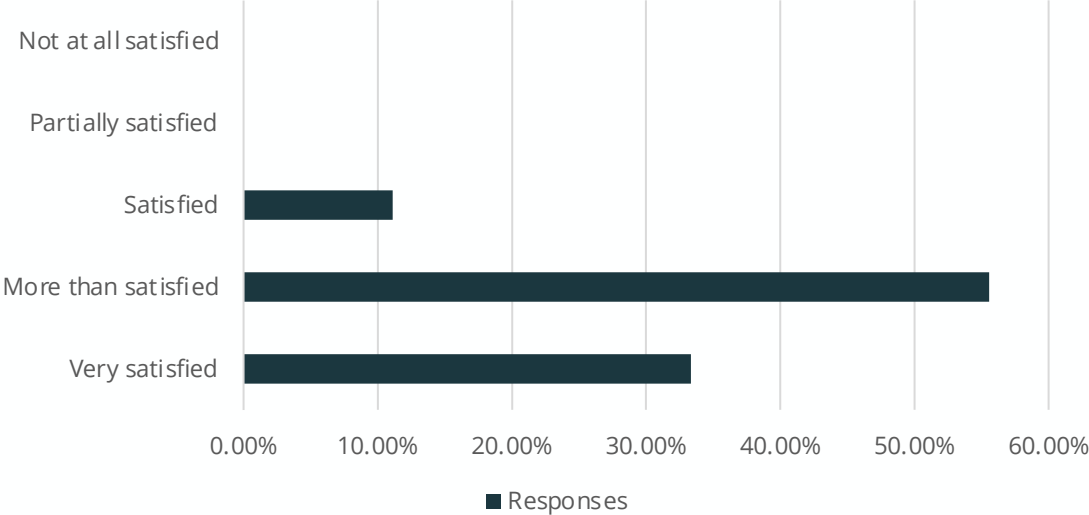
How satisfied were you with the overall grant application process?



On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate the quality of communications from the WISE Grant Program during the grant establishment process (e.g. initial contact with the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, providing relevant details, receiving funds etc.)?



How satisfied were you with the overall grant establishment process?



Annex D: WISE Grant Governance



*Source: WISE Grant Background Information lmcf.org.au/WISEGrant Page 3