

MINNESOTA LOCAL HISTORY
**FINANCE, MEMBERSHIP,
& POLICIES SURVEY**

2025 REPORT



Created in partnership by:
Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums
& Minnesota Historical Society Local History Services



This project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

Survey Description & Purpose

As part of an established partnership, the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums (MALHM) and the Minnesota Historical Society’s Local History Services (LHS) agreed to complete regular research projects to identify needs and compile information on the state of local history organizations in Minnesota. This information is intended to help both MALHM and LHS better serve local history organizations. It is also shared with the public via the following report.

This survey was developed to collect information along three broad themes: general financial information, membership details, and organizational policies. Survey information shared by local organizations will help inform future projects and outreach.

Survey Response

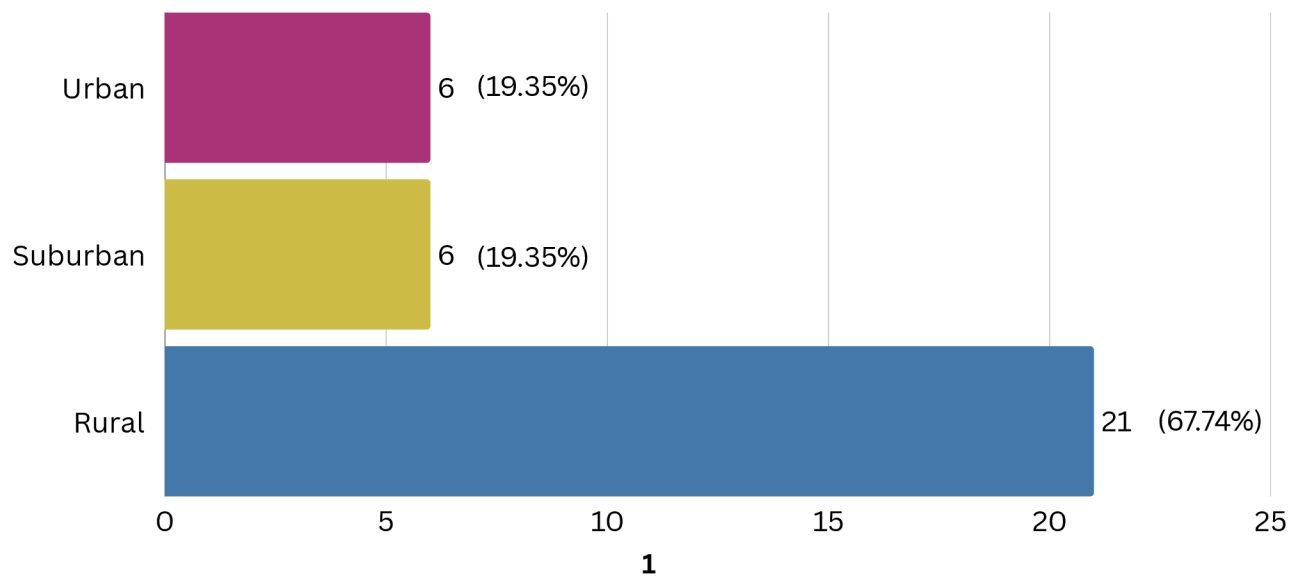
The survey was open to the public from January to March 2025. It was shared by MALHM & LHN on social media, in regular newsletters, and via word of mouth. Organizations were asked to fill out only one response each.

Over the collection period:

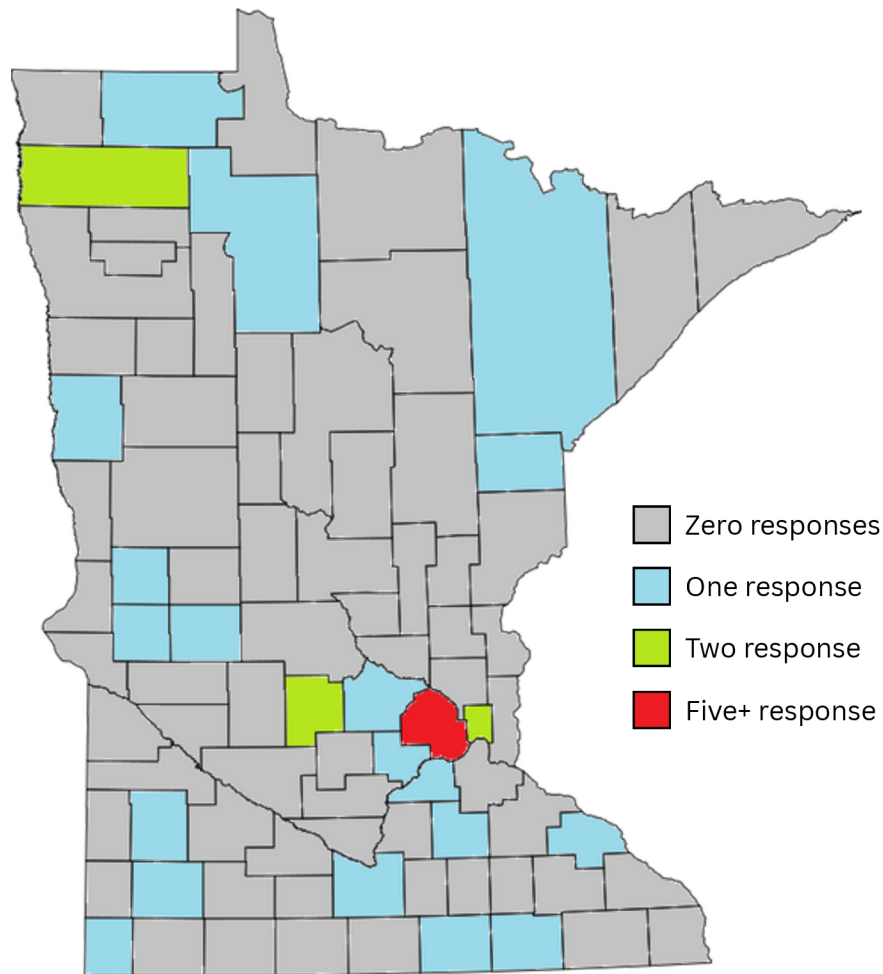
- 44 total responses were collected.
- 32 of the responses were completed beyond the first question of the survey
- 31 responses were from unique organizations

Survey Questions

Q1: Do you consider your organization to be:



Q2: What county are you headquartered in?



Beltrami: 1
 Blue Earth: 1
 Carlton: 1
 Carver: 1
 Clay: 1
 Freeborn: 1
 Grant: 1
 Hennepin: 6
 Lyon: 1
 Marshall: 2
 Meeker: 2
 Mower: 1
 Murray: 1
 Pope: 1
 Ramsey: 2
 Rice: 1
 Rock: 1
 Roseau: 1
 Scott: 1
 St. Louis: 1
 Stevens: 1
 Wabasha: 1
 Wright: 1

Notes

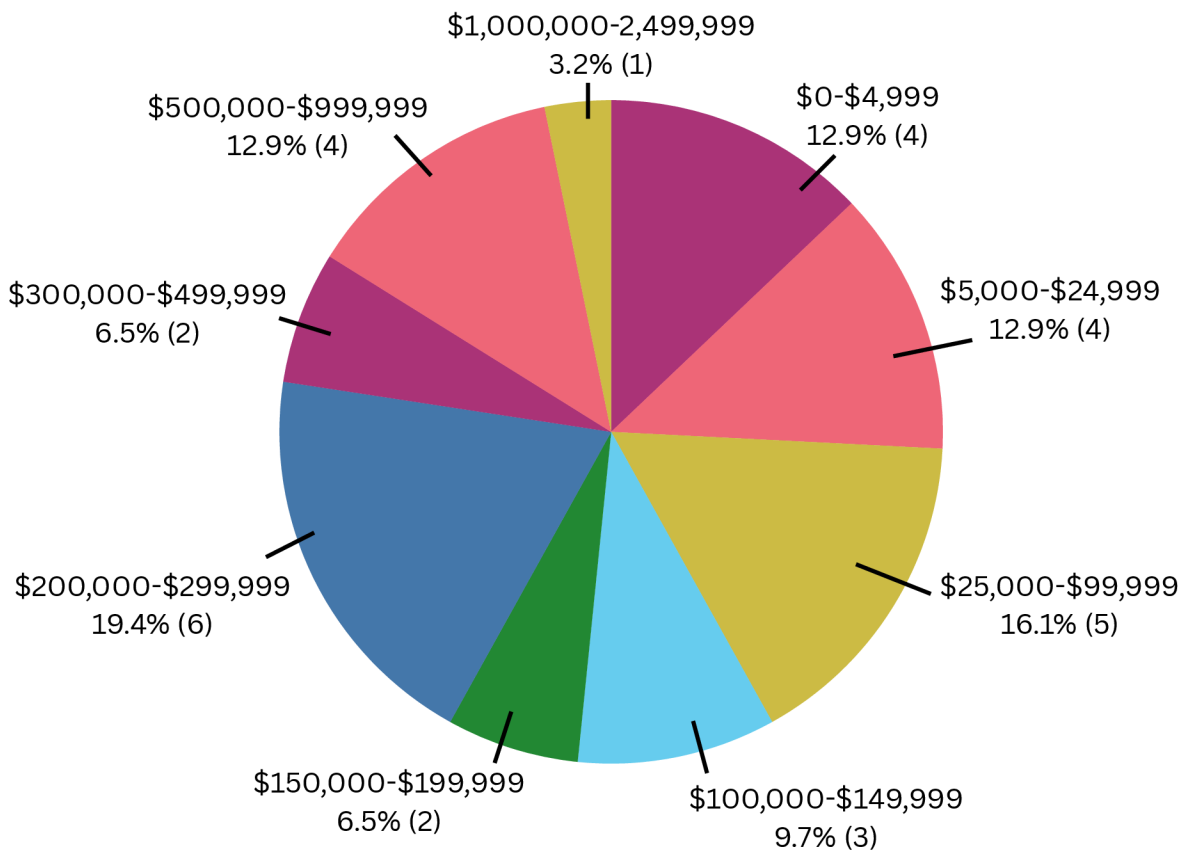
The collected responses represented all areas of the state of Minnesota besides the north central section. Broadly, the regional breakdown of responses is:

- Northwest: 5 (Roseau, Beltrami, Marshall, & Clay)
- Northeast: 2 (St. Louis & Carlton)
- Central: 5 (Grant, Stevens, Pope, & Meeker)
- Metro: 9 (Wright, Scott, Hennepin, & Ramsey)
- Southeast: 4 (Rice, Wabasha, Freeborn, & Mower)
- Southwest: 4 (Rock, Murray, Lyon, & Blue Earth)

Finances

Survey respondents were asked to answer financial questions using information from their most recently completed fiscal year. The survey suggested using an audited statement, internal records, or IRS filings.

Q3: Income for the year.

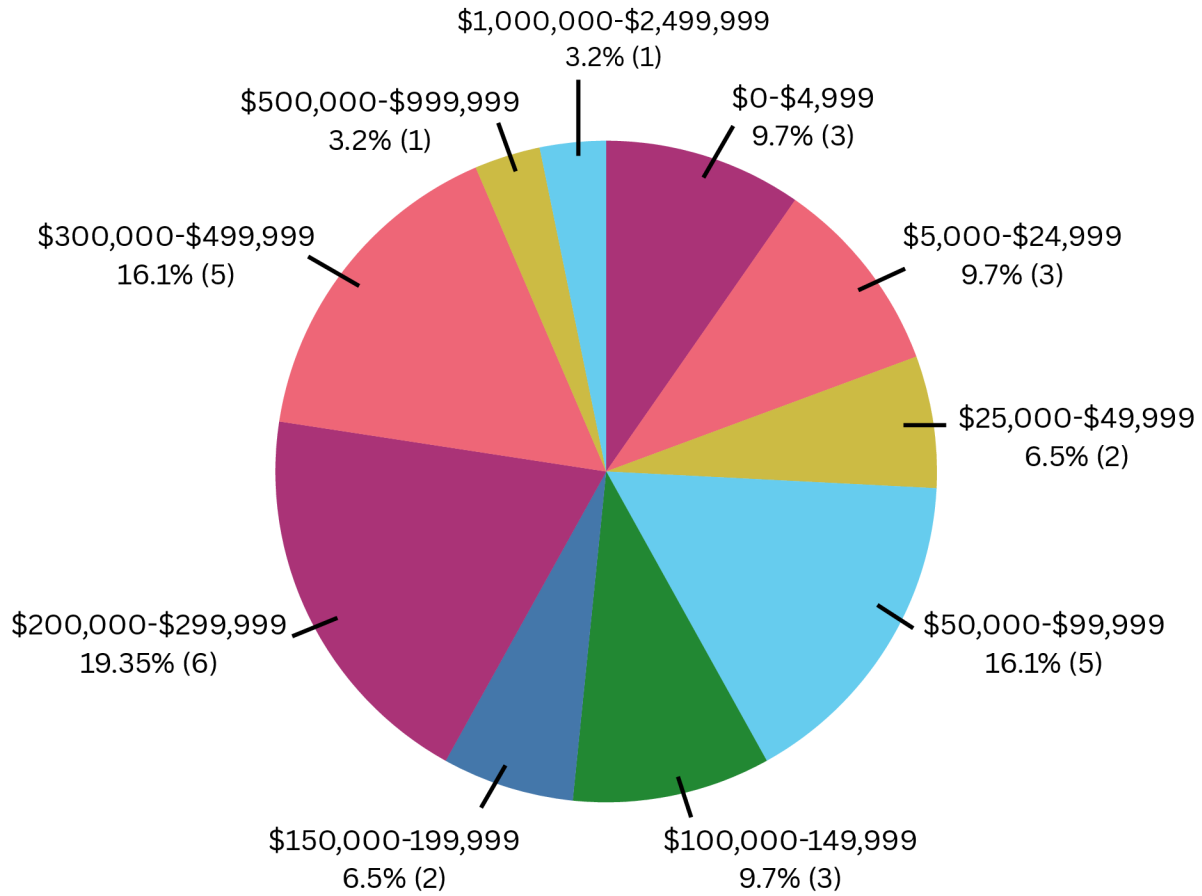


Notes

In the original survey, a mistake was made when listing income tiers. Respondents were given the choice of selecting \$5,000-\$24,999 or \$50,000-\$99,999. The range between \$24,999 and \$50,000 was not available and this is reflected in the chart above.

The collected responses spanned all listed income ranges, minus the highest \$2,500,000+ option. No one income range was a significant outlier from the others, with the possible exception of the \$1,000,000-2,499,999 range which only received one response.

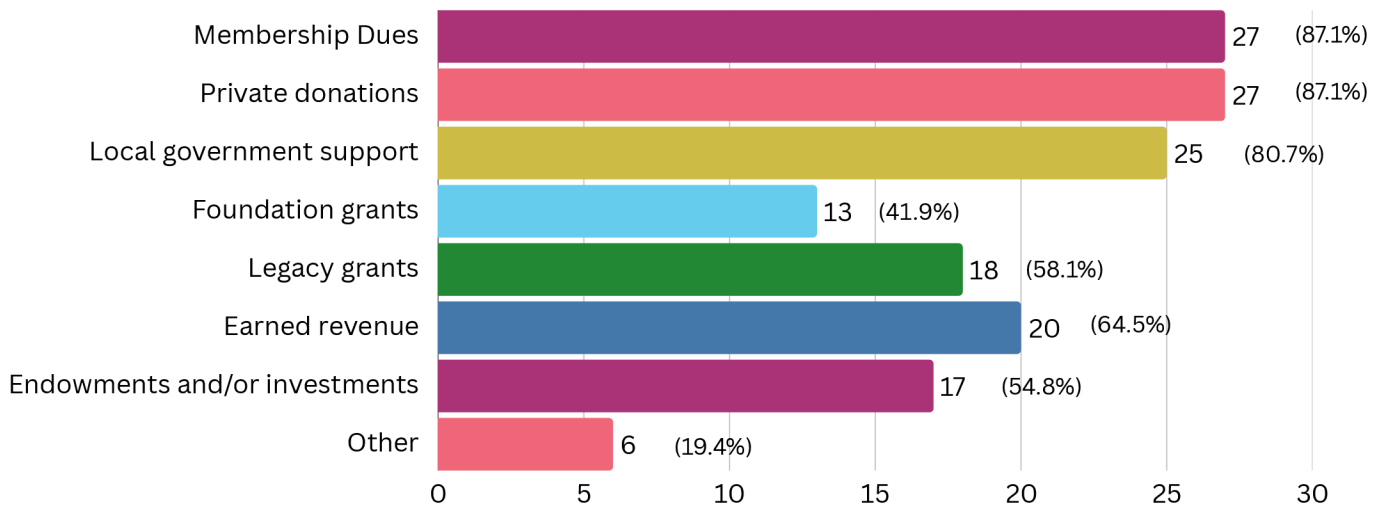
Q4: Expenses for the year.



Notes

In comparison to the previous income question, all income tiers were correctly represented in this survey question. Once again, no answers were received for the highest \$2,500,000+ option.

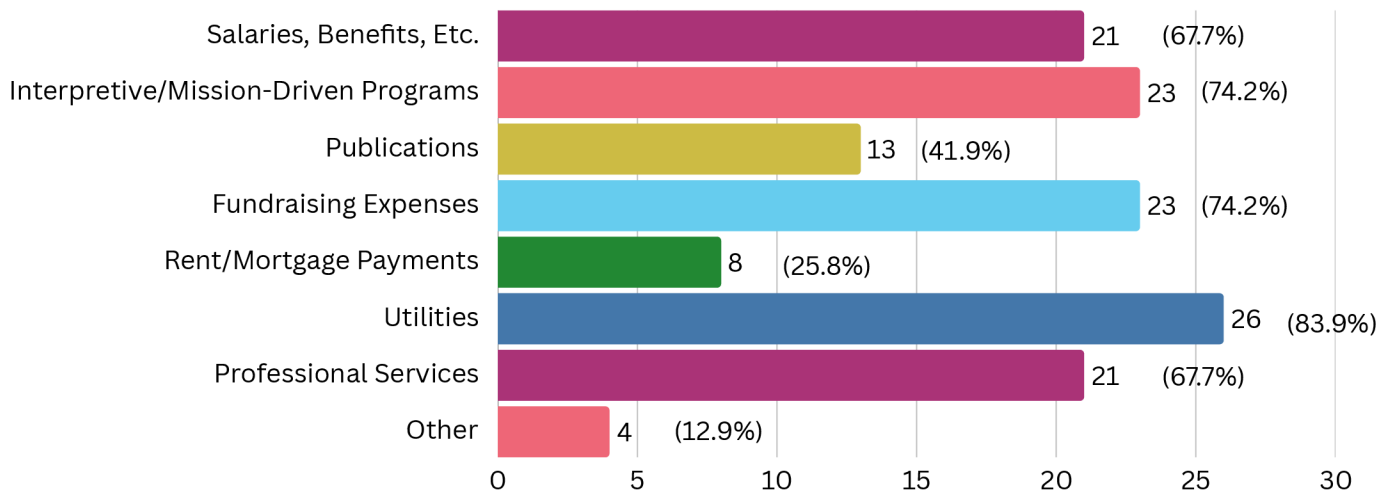
Q5: Income Sources



Other Responses:

- Holiday Open House and Annual Meeting Auction fundraisers
- Township support
- Contract research; archives consulting
- City in-kind donation of space and utilities
- Fund drive
- University support

Q6: Expense Types



Other Responses:

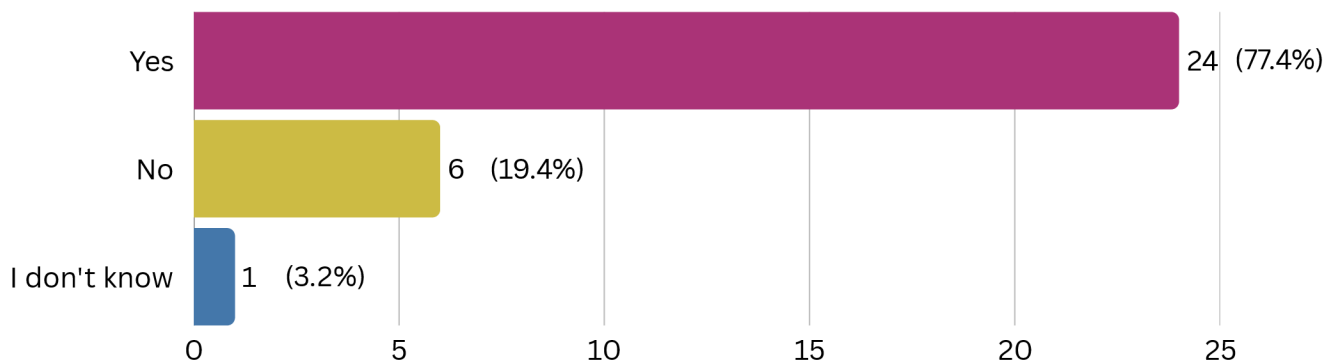
- Maintenance (roof replacement, window replacement)
- Maintenance
- Northern Bedrock Historic Preservation Corps
- Maintenance

State Statue Compliance & Financial Support

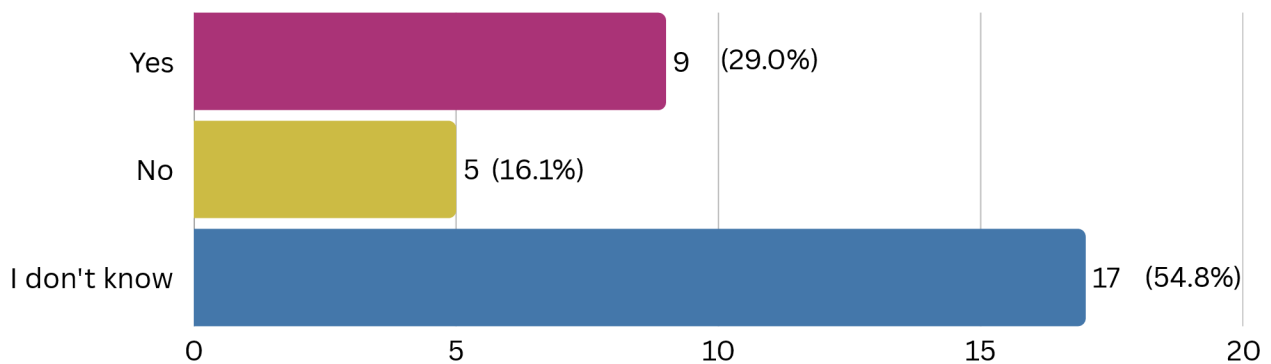
State Statue 138.053 is the legal mechanism that allows Minnesota counties, cities, and townships to provide financial support to local history organizations. The statue says this support can happen if the organization is “affiliated with and approved by the Minnesota Historical Society.” MNHS defines this with three criteria: 1) the organization is an institutional member of MNHS, 2) the Local History Services Office has a copy of the organization’s current bylaws on file, and 3) there has been some form of contact with MNHS in the previous year.

Respondents were asked if their organization meets these criteria.

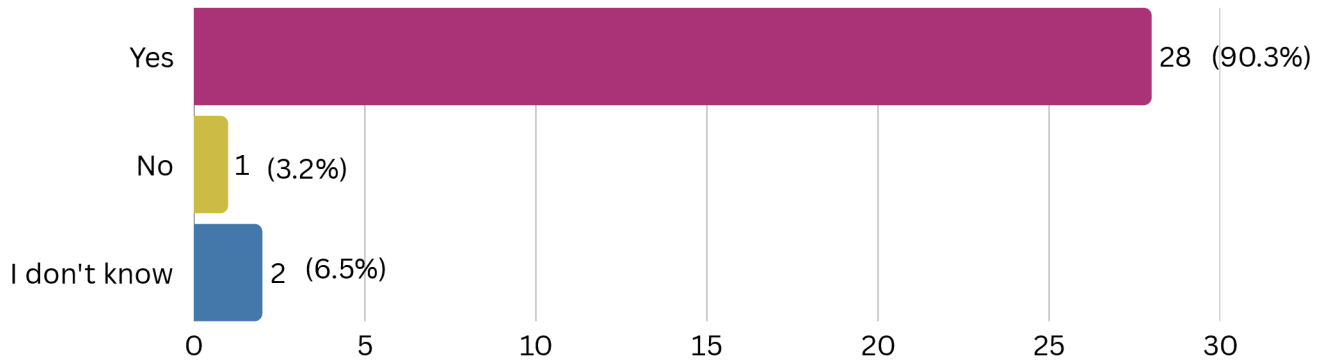
Q7: My organization in an institutional member of the Minnesota Historical Society



Q8: A copy of our organization’s current bylaws has been provided to MNHS’s Local History Services Office



Q9: Our organization has had some form of contact with MNHS’s Local History Services in the prior year (this can include a site visit, emails/phone calls, sending a copy of your newsletter or annual report, etc.)



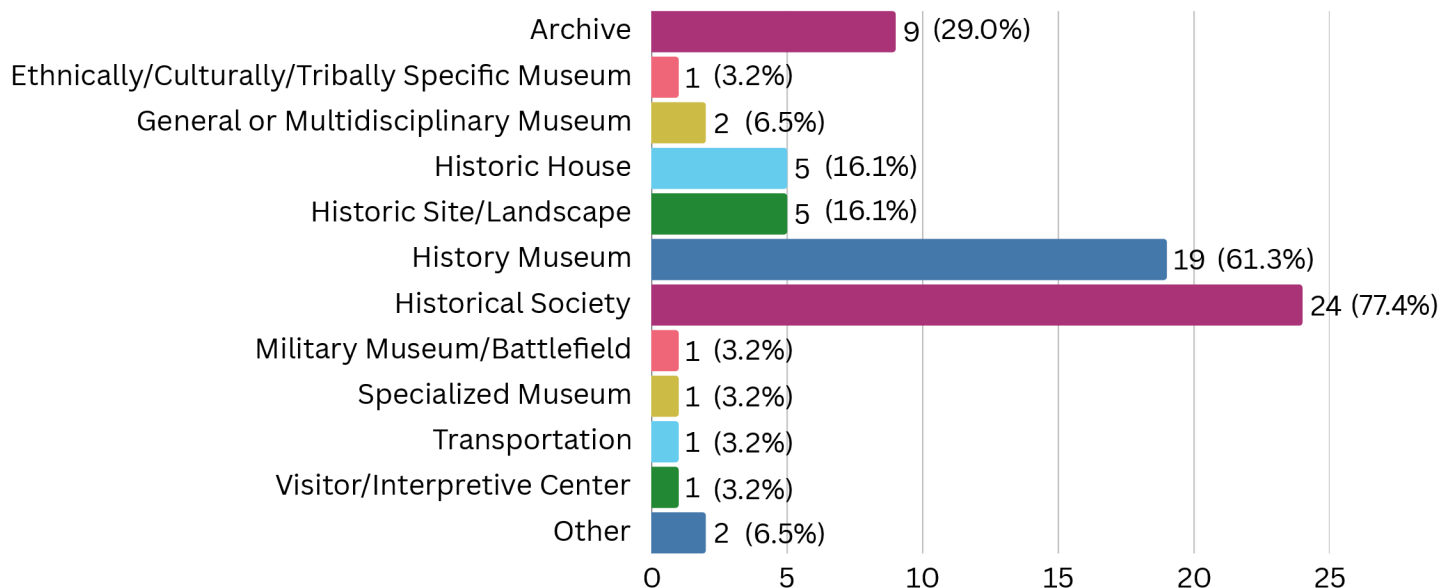
Notes

Overall, most respondents seemed confident in their organization’s compliance with the requirements of MNHS membership and contact with MNHS’s Local History Services. However, there appears to be significant uncertainty around the sharing of bylaws.

Local History Services will consider reminding organizations of the requirements and encouraging anyone who’s uncertain to reach out.

Organizational Structure

Q10: What best describes your organization? (Check all that apply)



Other Responses:

- Contract research organization, sole proprietorship
- Center for social and cultural activities for the area

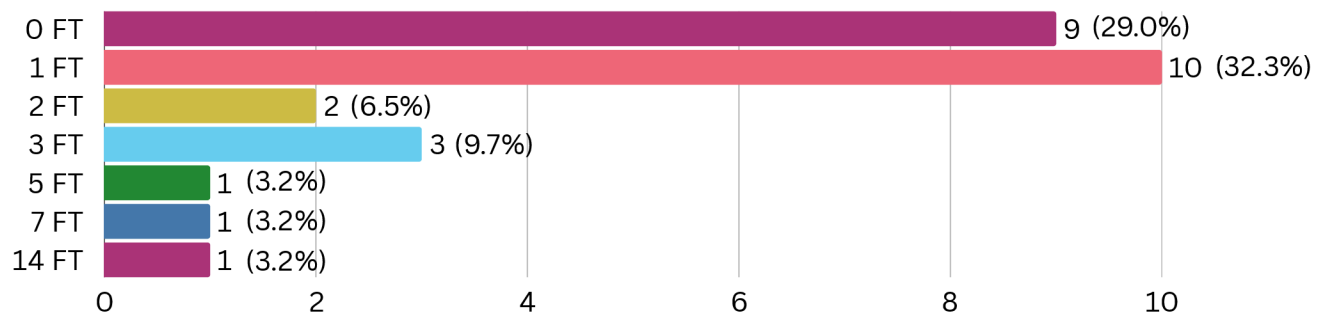
Notes

Organizational categories were modeled off of those commonly used by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). The categories also match data collected in previous MALHM-LHS surveys.

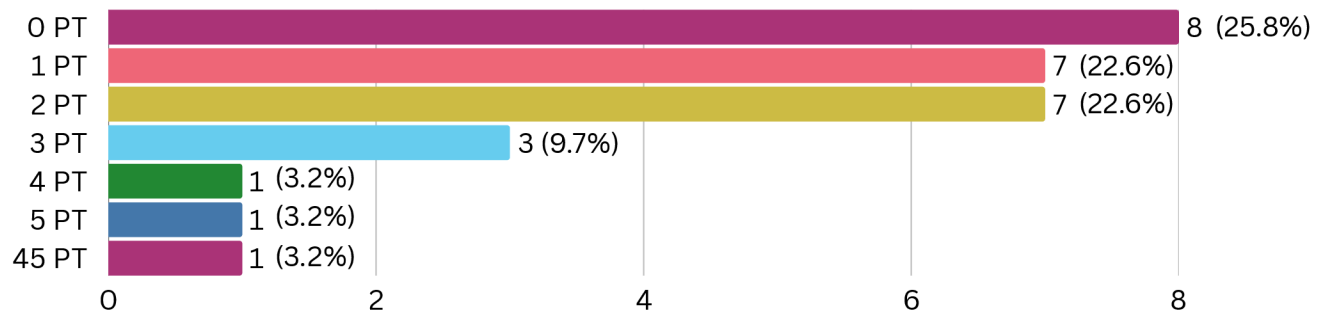
Category divisions appear in line with answers received during the 2022 MALHM-LHS Salary Survey, although the 2022 survey collected individual instead of institutional responses. As one of the most notable differences to the previous survey, no respondents identified with the “Archive” category at that time.

Q11: Total Number of Paid Staff

Full Time



Part Time

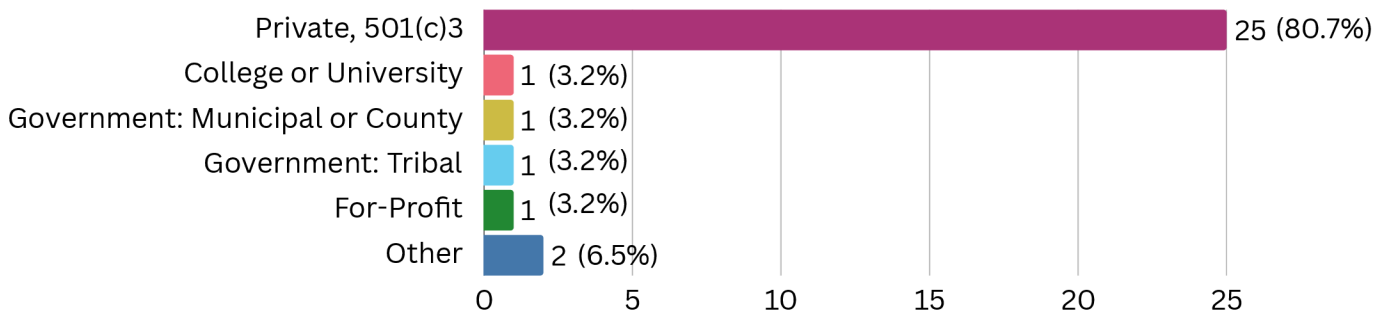


Notes

Respondents were given the opportunity to manually fill in the number of full time and part time staff their organizations employ. In total, the 31 respondent organizations employ 49 full time and 84 part time employees, for a total of 133 employees.

Certain employee numbers are not represented in the charts above when no response was received. It is also notable that one organization was a significant outlier— with 14 full time employees and 45 part time employees.

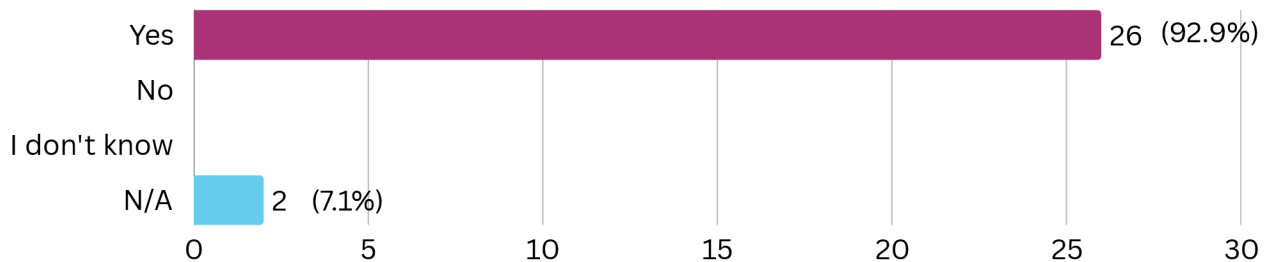
Q12: What best describes your governance structure?



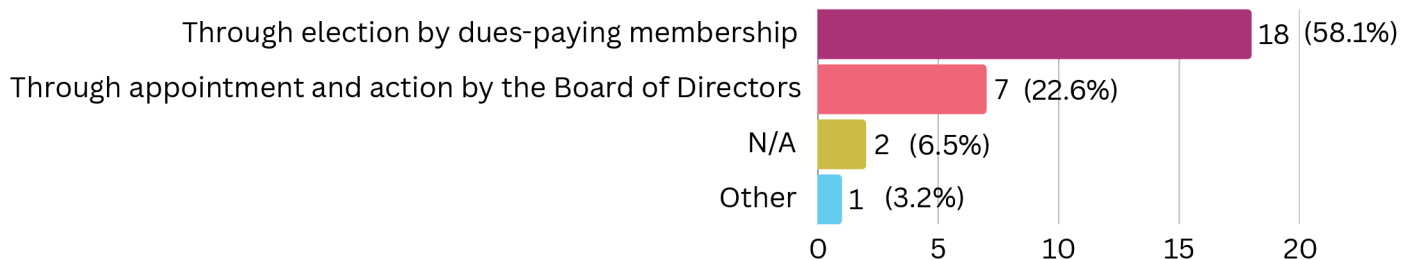
Other Responses:

- “Public 501(c)3”
- “The Historical Society is a 501(c)3 and has a board of directors. The County owns the building, pays the staff salaries, and pays for all non-collections and programing costs as they are part of the county budget.”

Q13: If you selected Private, 501(c)3, do you have a Board of Directors?



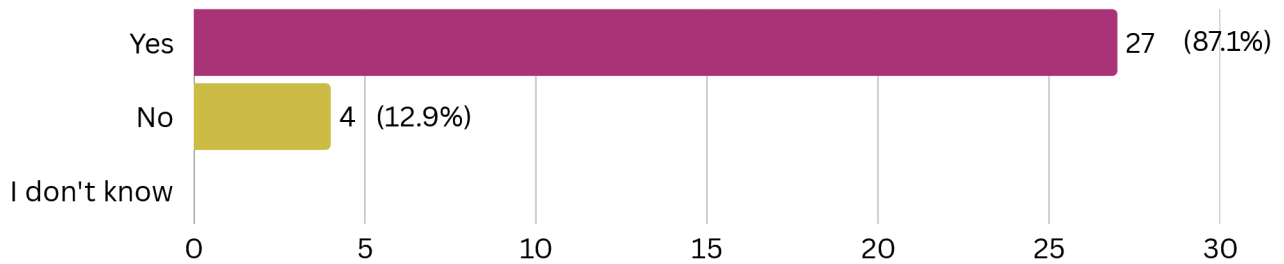
Q14: If you have a Board of Directors, how are individuals installed on the board?



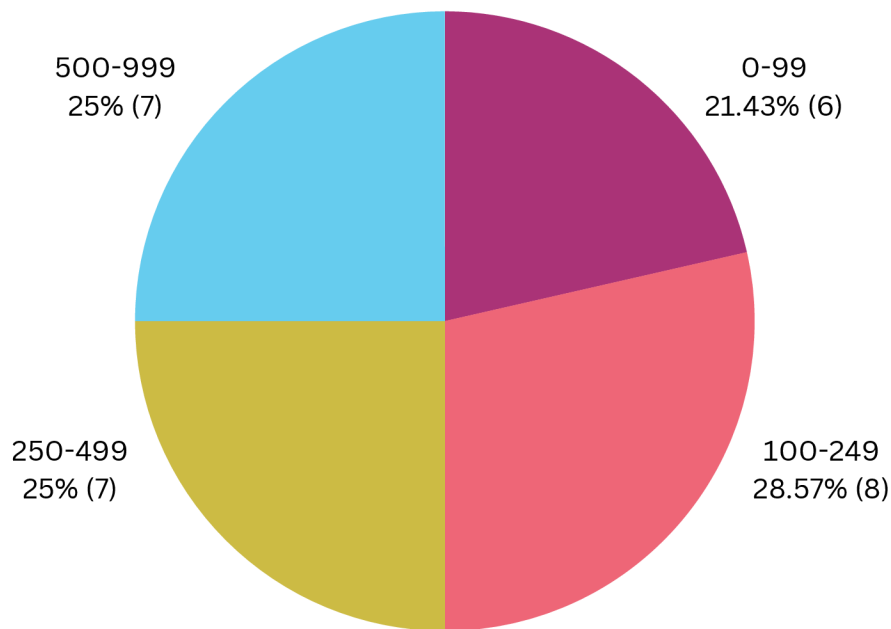
Other Response:

- “Through appointment and action by the Board of Directors. The membership ratifies the action at the following annual meeting.”

Q15: Do you have dues-paying members?



Q16: How many active, dues-paying members do you currently have?



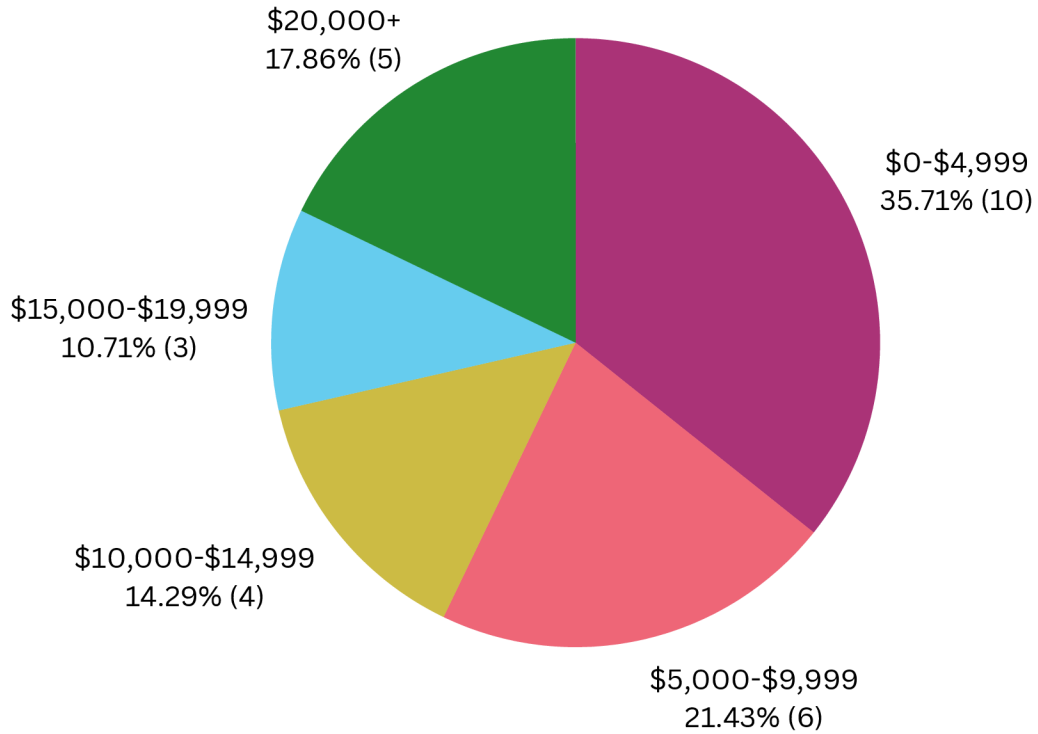
Notes

Overall, low membership numbers coincide with low membership revenue (see next question). Connections with overall income are less clear.

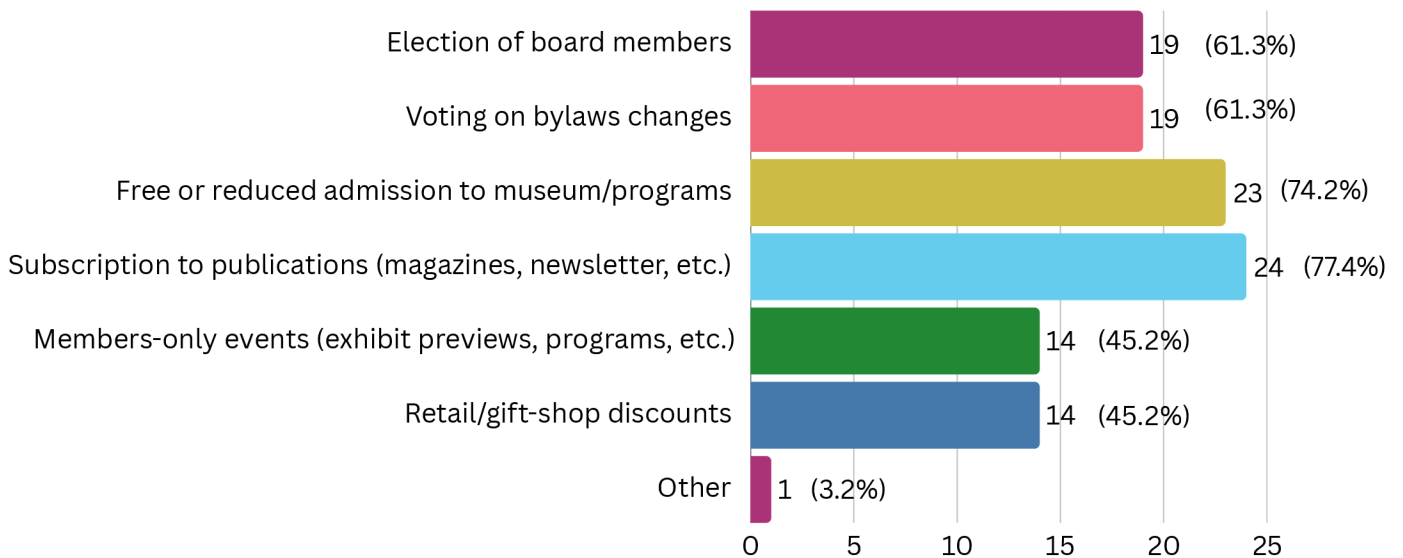
For example, five of seven organizations with 0-99 members indicated overall income less than \$24,999, and four of the seven had income less than \$4,999 (Q3). However, the remaining two organizations with 0-99 members reported total income in the \$200,000-\$299,999 range.

The only membership range with a possible correlation to overall income was organizations with 250-499 members. Although membership revenue (Q17) varied with these respondents, none reported a total income of less than \$100,000, which cannot be said for any of the other categories of active, dues-paying members.

Q17: Approximately how much revenue do you generate annually from member dues?



Q18: If you have dues-paying members, what are the benefits and privileges of membership? (Check all that apply)



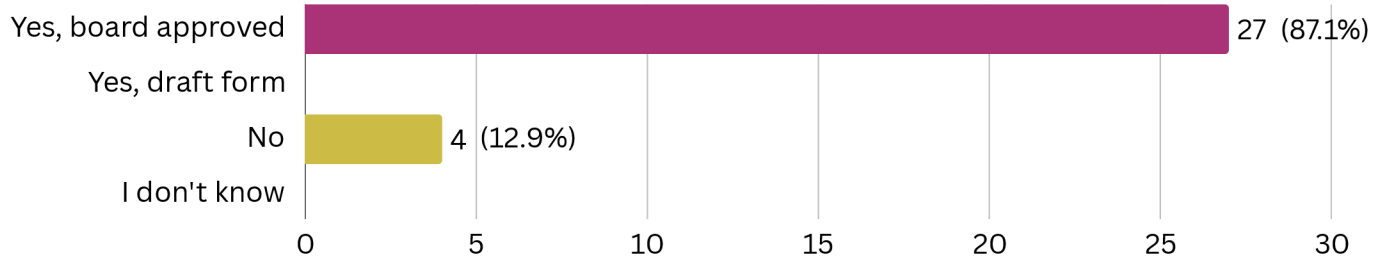
Other Response:

- “Ten free photocopies, free hour of staff research, free research”

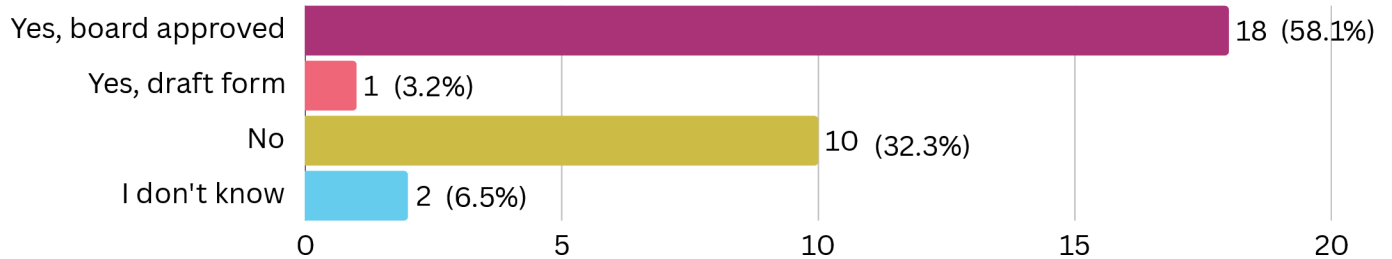
Organizational Policies

Respondents were asked to share if their organizations had the following policies common with museums, historical societies, and nonprofit organizations.

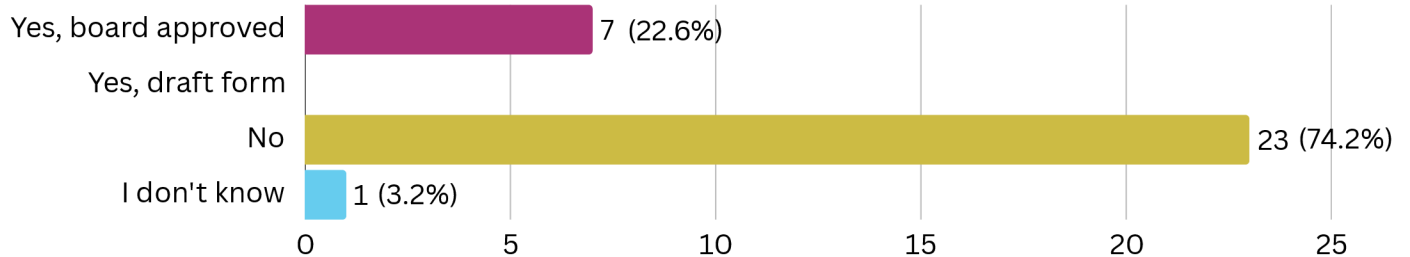
Q19: Mission Statement?



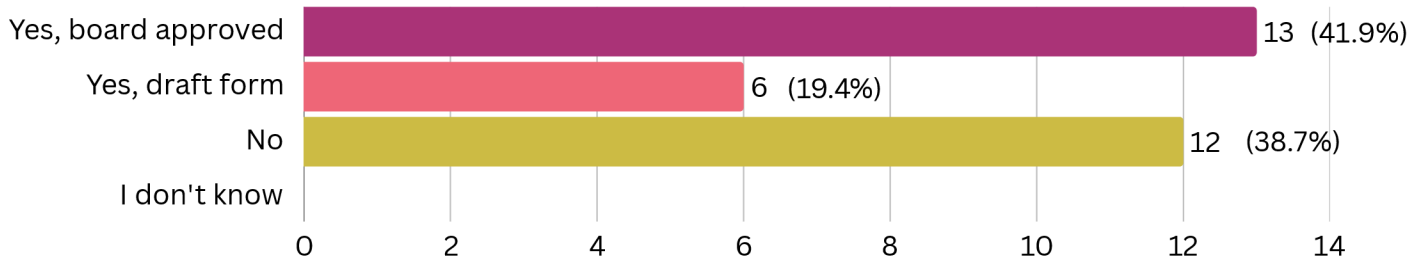
Q20: Institutional Code of Ethics?



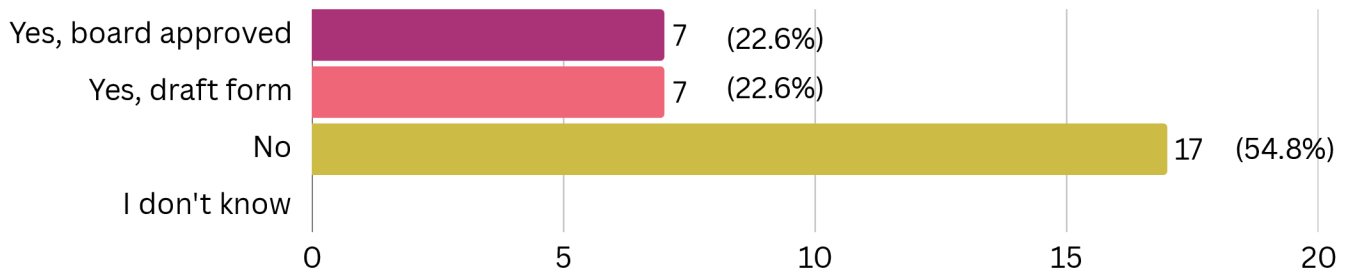
Q21: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Policy or Statement?



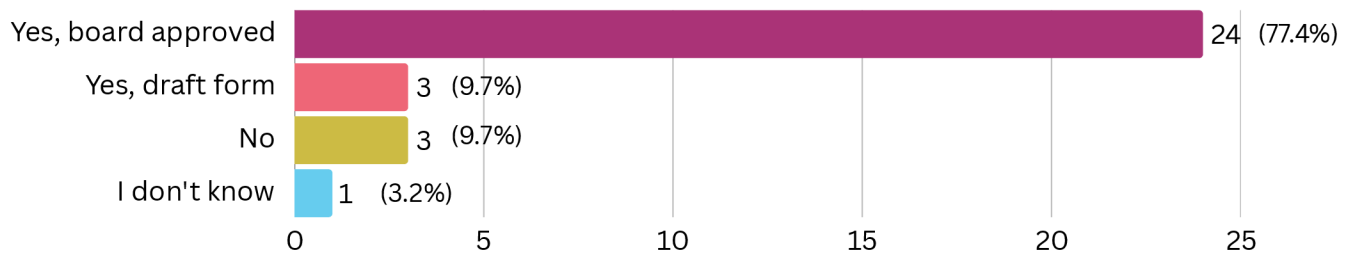
Q22: Strategic Plan?



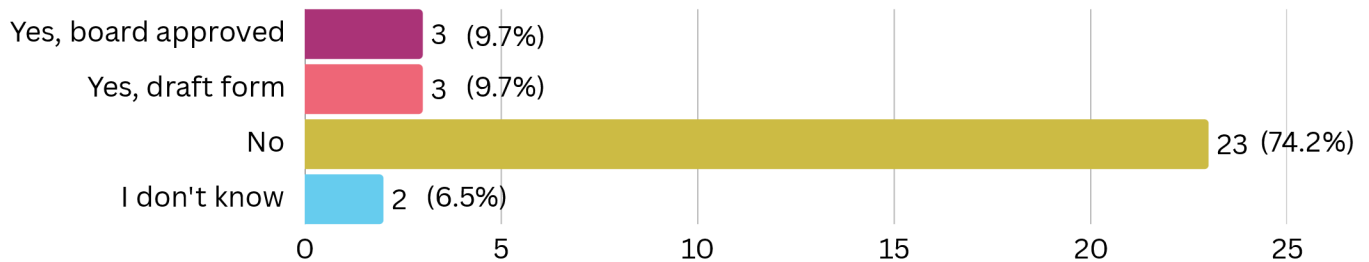
Q23: Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan?



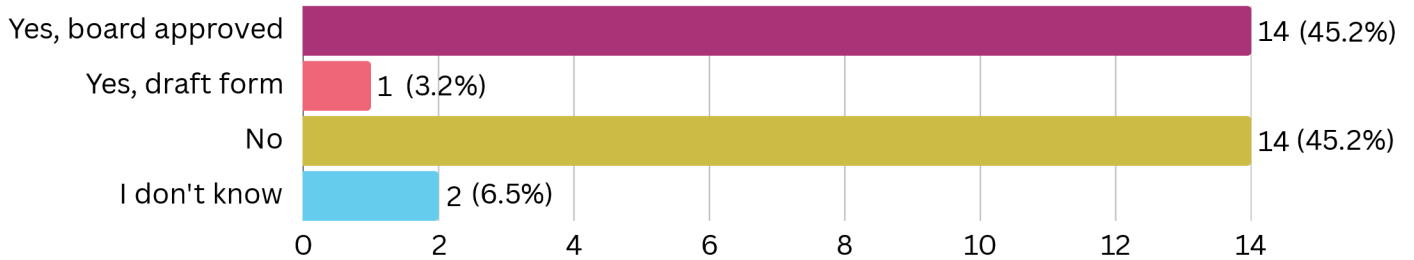
Q24: Collections Management Policy?



Q25: Interpretive Plan?



Q26: Human Resources Policy?



Notes

Institutional policies from most in-use (responded “Yes, board approved” and “Yes, draft form”) to least in-use:

1. Mission Statement (27 board approved / 87.1%)
2. Collections Management Policy (24 board approved, 3 drafted / 87.1%)
3. Institutional Code of Ethics (18 board approved, 1 drafted / 61.3%)
4. Strategic Plan (13 board approved, 6 drafted / 61.3%)
5. Human Resources Policy (14 board approved, 1 drafted / 48.4%)
6. Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan (7 board approved, 7 drafted / 45.2%)
7. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Policy or Statement (7 board approved / 22.6%)
8. Interpretive Plan (3 board approved, 3 drafted / 19.4%)

MALHM may consider future outreach around some of these policies, particularly disaster preparedness and emergency response plans, which have been the topic of previous projects & workshops.