



Community-Based Organization Feedback

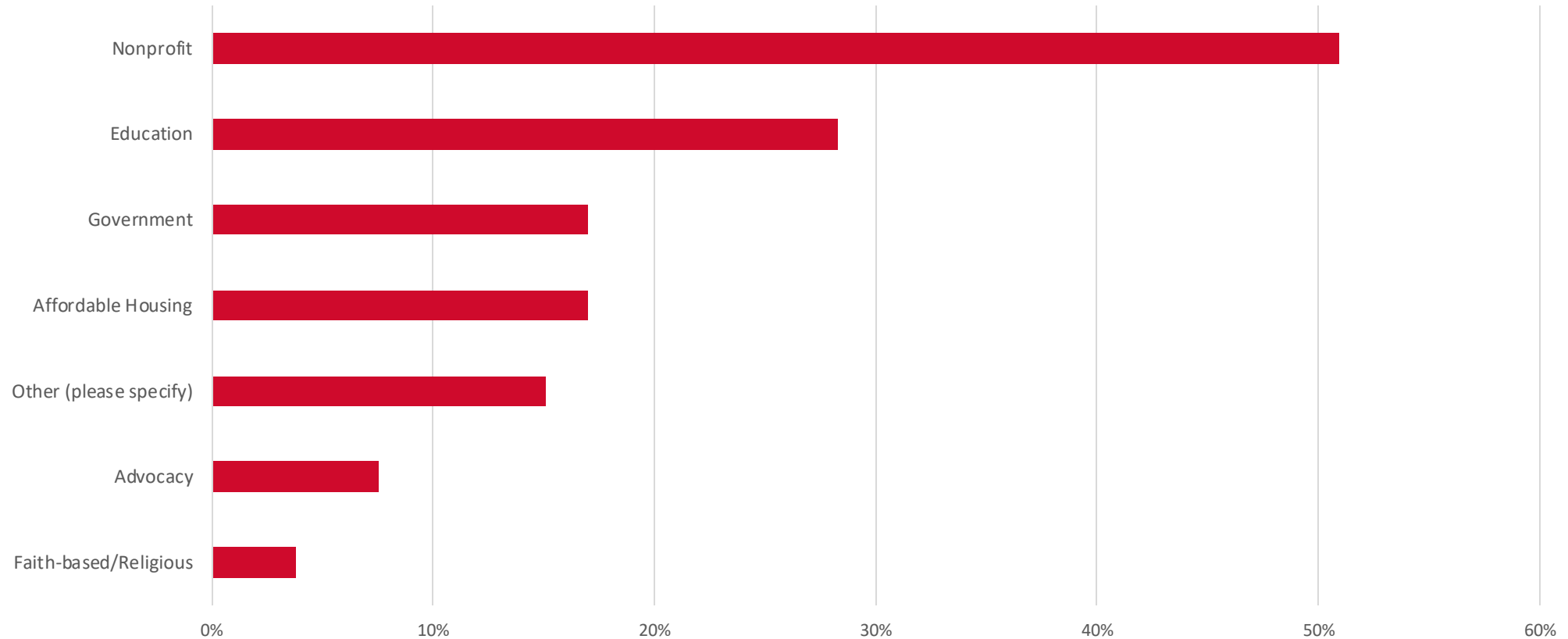
Themes and insights from November 2022

Community-Based Organization Survey Overview

- 53 staff members of community-serving organizations participated in a survey on RTD's proposed fare structure alternatives, policies and programs.
 - The survey was available in English and in Spanish from November 7 to November 30.
 - Respondents were invited to answer questions that felt most relevant to the community members they serve and were not required to respond to every question. One section was designed specifically for staff members who work in affordable housing.
- The survey sought feedback on:
 - Which proposed fare structure would best serve their community members
 - How to improve access to the income-based LiVE discount
 - What additional discounts would make fares more affordable for community members
 - How to design grant and discount programs for nonprofits or community-serving organizations
 - How to design programs for residents of affordable housing communities

Survey Participants: Overview

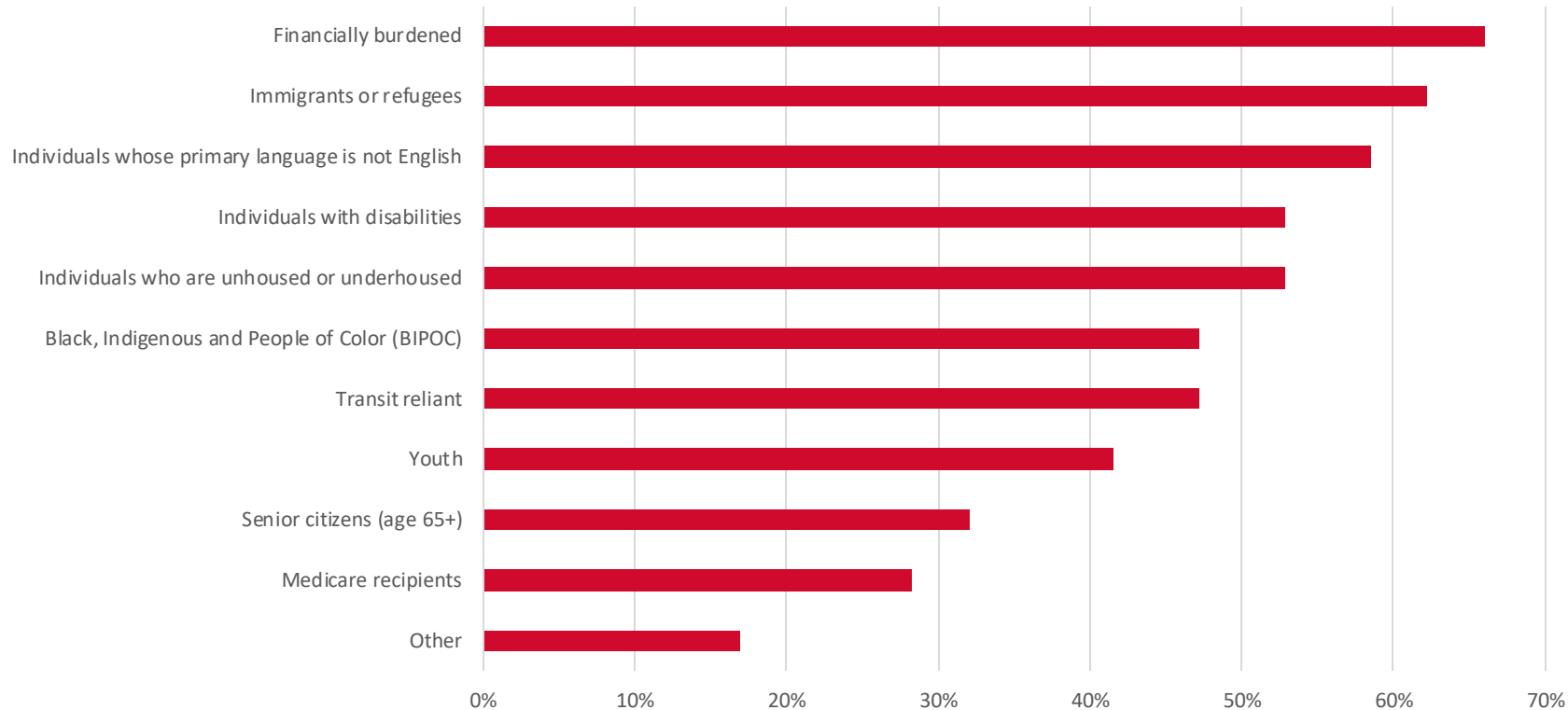
- Respondents represented organizations in the following fields and sectors:



Workforce, healthcare, libraries, homeless shelters, and disability services were additional organizational types and sectors self-described by respondents.

Survey Participants: Community Members Served

- Respondents represented organizations that serve the following community members:



Respondents also indicated that they serve families, guardians, and caregivers; military service members and veterans; recipients of other government assistance; individuals who are transgender or nonbinary; community members experiencing isolation; and individuals involved in the criminal justice system.

Fare Study Insights

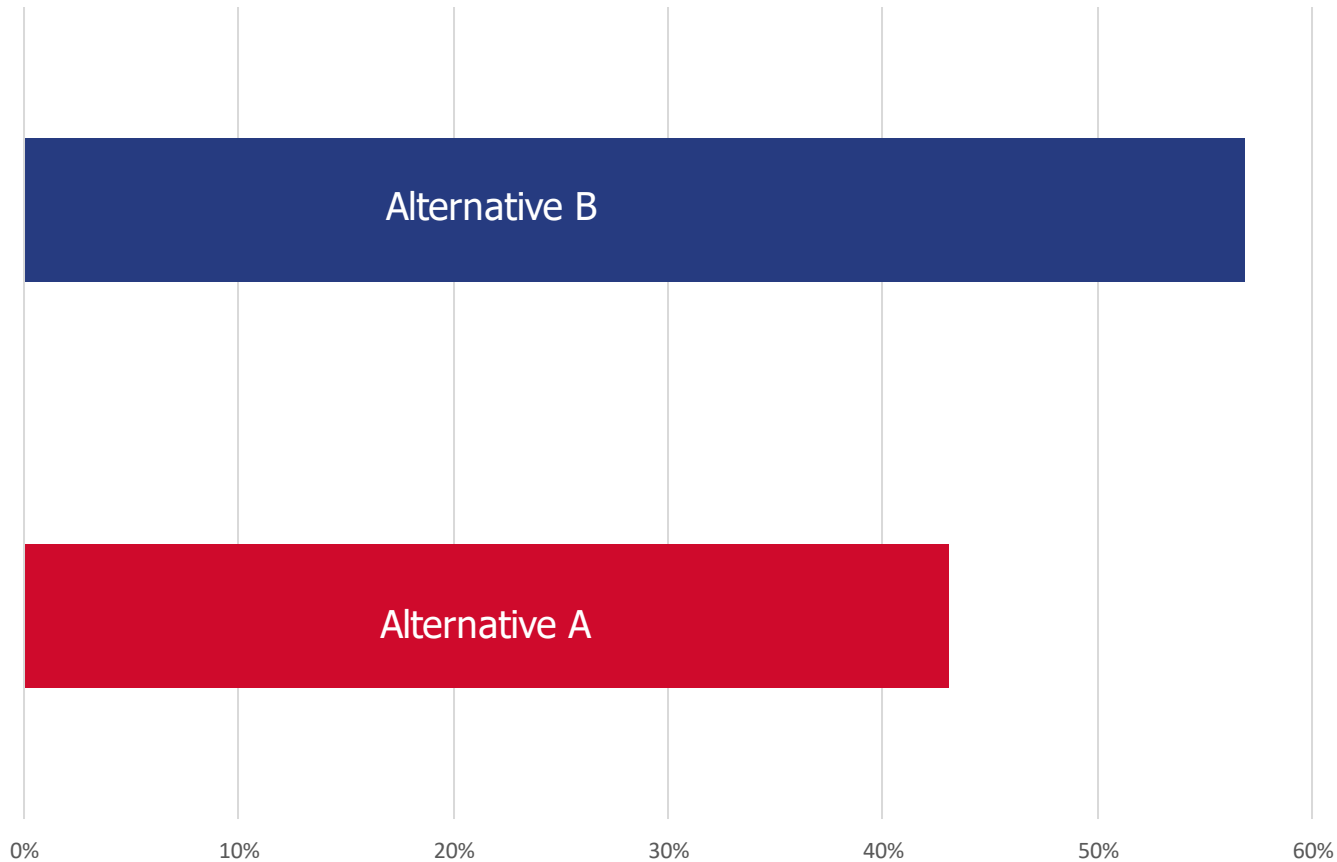
Feedback on proposed Fare Alternatives, Policies and Programs

Fare Alternatives

Which proposed fare alternative would best support community members

Fare Structure Alternative Preferences

- Out of 51 staff members who identified a preferred alternative:
 - 57% indicated that Alternative B would better support the community members they serve
 - 43% indicated that Alternative A would best serve their community members



Fare Structure Alternatives Feedback

Respondents explained their preferences for Alternative A or B:

Alternative A

- Least expensive Day Pass
- Lower barrier for financially burdened customers
- Best option for families with multiple riders and for people with disabilities
- More affordable for community members who mainly use Local fare/only need to travel short distances

Alternative B

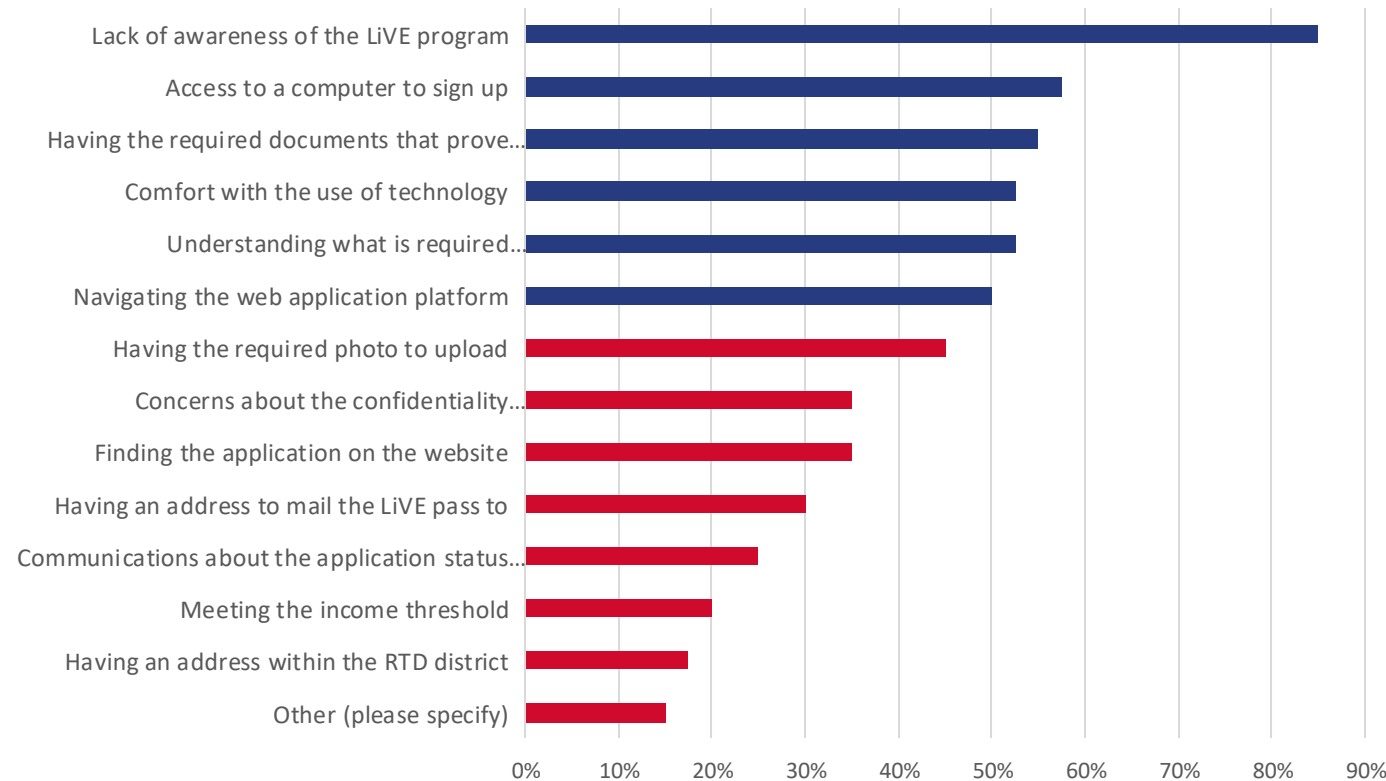
- Opportunity to travel further for one price
- Simpler fare structure with a single price for both Local and Regional fares
- Provides access to regional transportation to places of employment
- Better for customers who pay in cash and do not have exact change

Discount Programs

Recommendations on increases to discounts and expanded discount program access

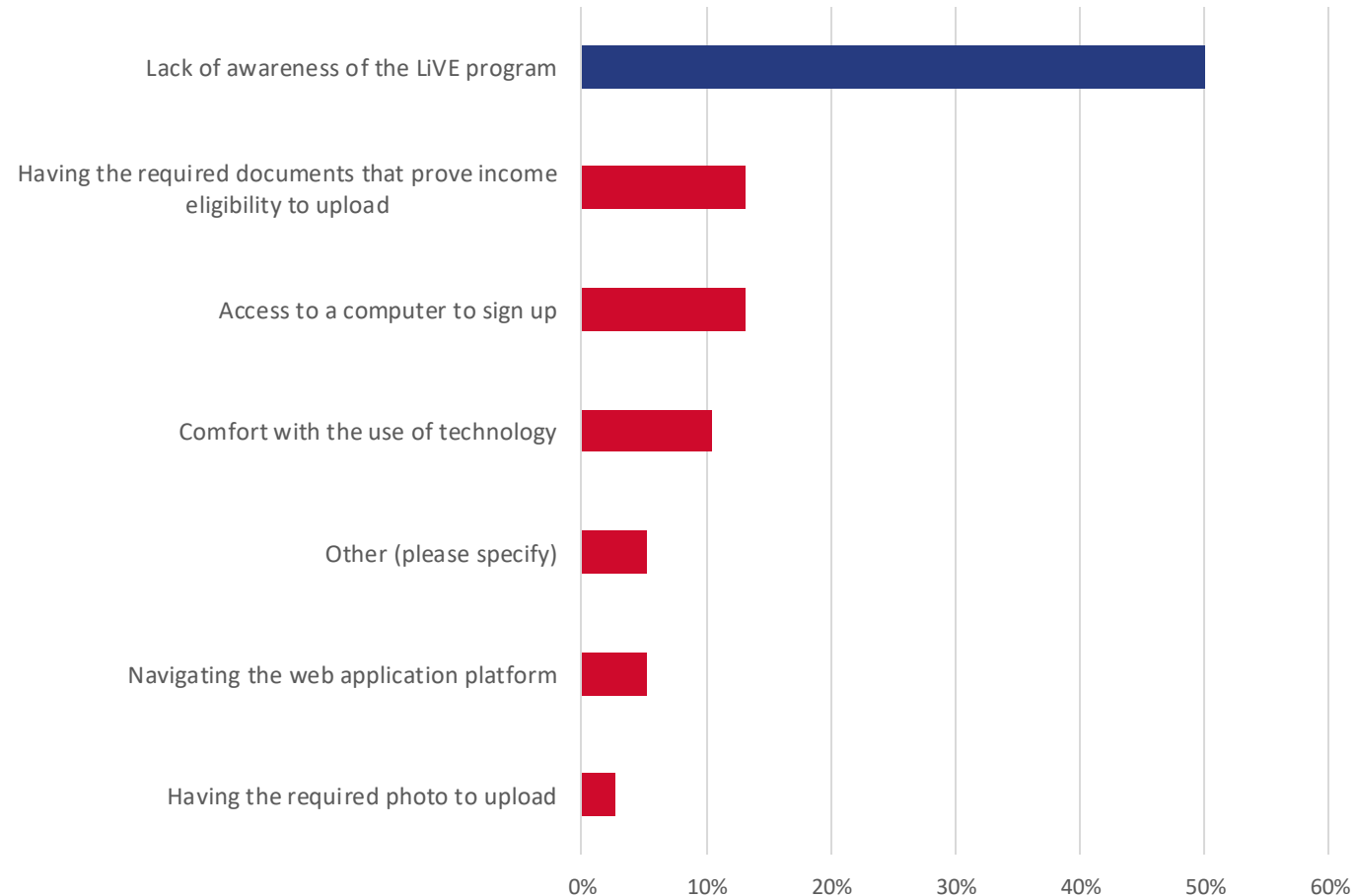
Discount Programs: Challenges in Signing Up

- When asked what challenges community members experienced in signing up for the income-based LiVE discount, more than 85% of respondents indicated that there was a **lack of awareness of the LiVE program**.
- More than 50% of respondents noted that access to and comfort with technology were also challenges. A majority also indicated that understanding what is required to sign up and having the required documents are barriers.
- One also indicated it was undignifying to need to consistently prove financially burdened status.



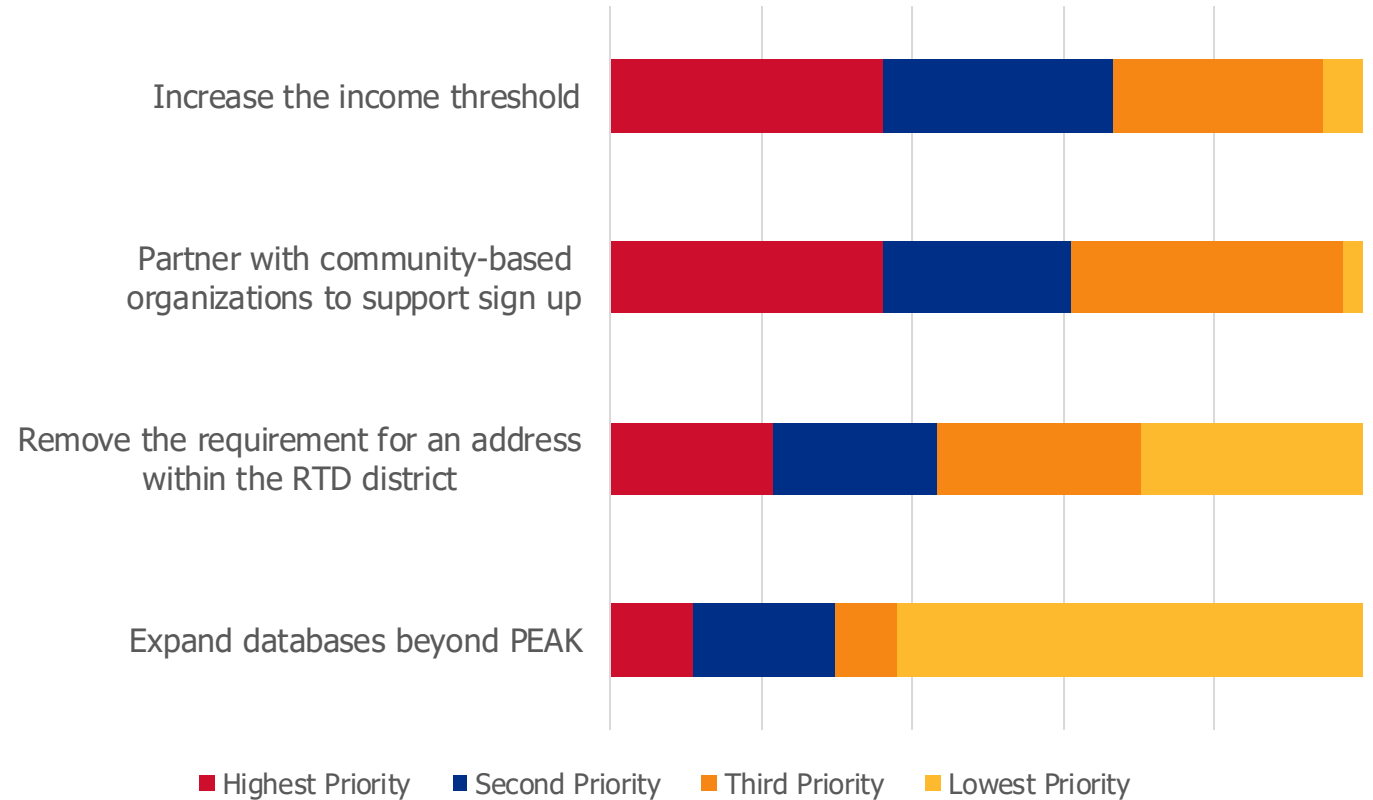
Discount Programs: Challenges in Signing Up

- 50% of staff member respondents indicated that **lack of awareness of the LiVE program** is the single *most common* challenge community members face when attempting to sign up, followed by:
 - Having required documents that prove income eligibility
 - Access to a computer
 - Comfort with the use of technology



Discount Programs: Improving Access

- Respondents were asked to prioritize possible changes to the LiVE program enrollment process.
- **Increasing the income** a household can make and still qualify for LiVE and **partnering with organizations** to help community members sign up for the program were the top-ranked changes.



Discount Programs: Increase to Income Threshold

- More than 80% of staff members indicated that **an increase in the income threshold from 185% to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines** would support the community they serve in qualifying for the LiVE program.
- Respondents indicated that the increase would:
 - Provide broader access to the LiVE program
 - Better reflect income qualification requirements for affordable housing
 - Ensure unhoused customers do not lose important benefits when they secure employment
 - Support the increasing financial demands of living in the Denver Metro area
- Notably, some staff indicated that 200% was too low, stating that this moderate increase in the federal poverty threshold may not be sufficient for such an expensive metro region.

Discount Programs: Community Sign Up

- RTD is considering partnering with organizations to support community members in signing up for the LiVE program. Respondents described what would help their organizations in supporting this process:
 - Direct communication/outreach about the program from RTD with the opportunity to ask questions to better understand the process
 - Remote or in-person training for organization staff to learn how to assist families with the sign-up process
 - Shareable information about the program (in multiple languages)
 - Funding to increase organizational capacity to promote the program and assist in the sign-up process
 - Easier ability for organization to attest to income-qualified status of community members (similar to the Neighborhood EcoPass portal)
 - Automatic application acceptance based on free/reduced lunch qualification
 - Ability to print discount cards at various locations within the community
 - Grace period where community members can use RTD while sign-up process is pending

Discount Programs: Proof of Income

- For organizations that use proof of income to qualify for services, the following systems were provided as being used for verification:
 - Free/reduced lunch eligibility
 - Bank statements
 - Employer verification
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
 - Tax records
 - Pay stubs
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Medicaid eligibility
- Respondents recommended using the following systems or databases to streamline eligibility verification:
 - Neighborhood EcoPass portal
 - Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
 - Yardi
 - RentCafe
 - Caseworker verification/attestation
 - System similar to Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) benefit distribution from the federal government
 - Benefits Data Trust
 - Code for America

Discount Programs: Increasing Discounts

- Respondents were asked to prioritize proposed discount increases.
- **Free fares for youth** and having a **70% discount on a monthly pass** for all discount program customers were the top ranked choices.



Program Design

Feedback on organizational grant, discount and pass program design

Transit Assistance Grant Program

- In designing the transit assistance grant program, respondents encouraged RTD to:
 - Create a process that does not add further burden on community organizations
 - Limit/streamline reporting requirements for organizations
 - Provide information to communities via channels that they already use
 - Establish a simple application process that can be completed in-person in cities where RTD operates
 - Time grants with school calendar year cycles (starting in July) to support students/families of students
 - Release grants in Q1 to allow for capacity building and distribution
 - Offer grants between \$100k-150k for hiring staff, marketing, professional development and administration
 - Allow for grants to cover full year of passes
 - Provide discounts on RTD services for grantee organizations

Bulk Discount Program

- When asked whether a bulk discount program would be of interest to their organization, respondents were split with approximately half indicating interest and the other half expressing that they would not use a bulk discount program.
 - Those with interest indicated that bulk discounts:
 - ▶ May encourage greater use of public transportation
 - ▶ Would enable the organization to purchase more passes
 - ▶ Would support clients to meet organization staff or to attend appointments
 - ▶ Could be used by community navigators to promote RTD services
 - Those who did not express interest indicated that the:
 - ▶ Minimum cost threshold (\$2,000) is too high
 - ▶ Organization already participates in the EcoPass program
 - ▶ Current RTD service in area is not sufficient to justify the cost
 - ▶ Discount would be useful only for clients but not staff
 - ▶ Organization's funding prevents purchase of this type of item

Bulk Discount Program: Implementation

- To successfully implement a bulk discount at their community-based organizations, respondents indicated a need for:
 - Limited and streamlined reporting requirements
 - Clear guidance on program implementation
 - Additional public transit services within the organization's service area (to justify usage of the program)
 - In-person training and orientation with community members
 - Simple purchasing processes
 - No expiration dates on passes
- Some respondents had feedback on the eligibility verification process suggesting:
 - ▶ A crossover with the P-EBT or free/reduced lunch database
 - ▶ Low barriers to verify eligibility
 - ▶ The ability to use the organization's income eligibility verification for their own grants to apply to RTD discounts
 - ▶ Trust in the organization – that if the organization is verified, they are serving the demographic eligible for the program

Affordable Housing: Who Responded

- Of those respondents who work in the field of affordable housing:
 - 11% manage/develop housing developments with **100% affordable units**
 - 33% are part of a housing authority managing **a portfolio of affordable units in different locations, with different levels of affordability criteria**
 - 56% have **other roles**, including casework, engagement, and/or assistance for unhoused individuals or housing sites
- Respondents also provided data on the number of units they manage and % AMI for each of those units:
 - 30% AMI – 633 total units managed
 - 50% AMI – 628 total units managed
 - 60% AMI – 995 total units managed
 - 80% AMI – 213 total units managed

Affordable Housing: LiVE Eligibility Certification

- Of the respondents who work in the field of affordable housing, 75% expressed an interest in **becoming authorized to certify tenants as LiVE eligible.**

- Potential *benefits* of becoming authorized included:

- ▶ Providing useful discounts for tenants
- ▶ Supporting tenants with mobility needs
- ▶ Reducing the administrative burden on RTD and community-based organizations
- ▶ Ensuring digital equity

- Potential *barriers* to becoming authorized included:

- ▶ Administrative burden – difficulty in managing the qualification/paperwork process for the affordable housing entity
- ▶ Difficulty with the sign-up process

Affordable Housing: Neighborhood EcoPass

- Of the respondents who work in the field of affordable housing, 78% expressed an interest in **participating in an Affordable Housing Neighborhood EcoPass Program.**

- Potential benefits of participating in this program include:
 - ▶ Providing an annual pass to those residents who do not live in Neighborhood EcoPass boundaries
 - ▶ Reducing barriers to transportation and making transportation easier for all residents
 - ▶ Offering transit-oriented housing
 - ▶ Helping tenants with access to employment or to broader neighborhoods

- Potential barriers to participating in this program include:
 - ▶ Administration of the program with limited bandwidth outside of housing operations
 - ▶ Contract minimums, recognizing it would be difficult to assess initial participation
 - ▶ Paying for passes and determining if/how to pass on transportation costs to residents vs. cost-sharing
 - ▶ Some tenants already accessing EcoPass through employers

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