

Background

In a 2020 survey conducted by Dynamic Benchmarking for the American Alliance of Museums, 64% of the 619 responding museums anticipated having to cut back on education, programming, and other public services due to budget shortfalls and/or staff reductions (Dynamic Benchmarking, 2020). However, according to Mervis (2021) in an article discussing funding availability for academic research, Federal funding has actually increased since the pandemic (p. 1298).

The USA Spending website offers insights into how Federal funds are dispersed through their Spending Explorer tool. For example, Federal grants provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences increased grant and contract funding specifically for museums in 2020 to \$43,556,166 and \$43,864,648 in 2021, compared to \$34,866,129 in 2019 and \$36,340,864 in 2018 (USA Spending, 2021).

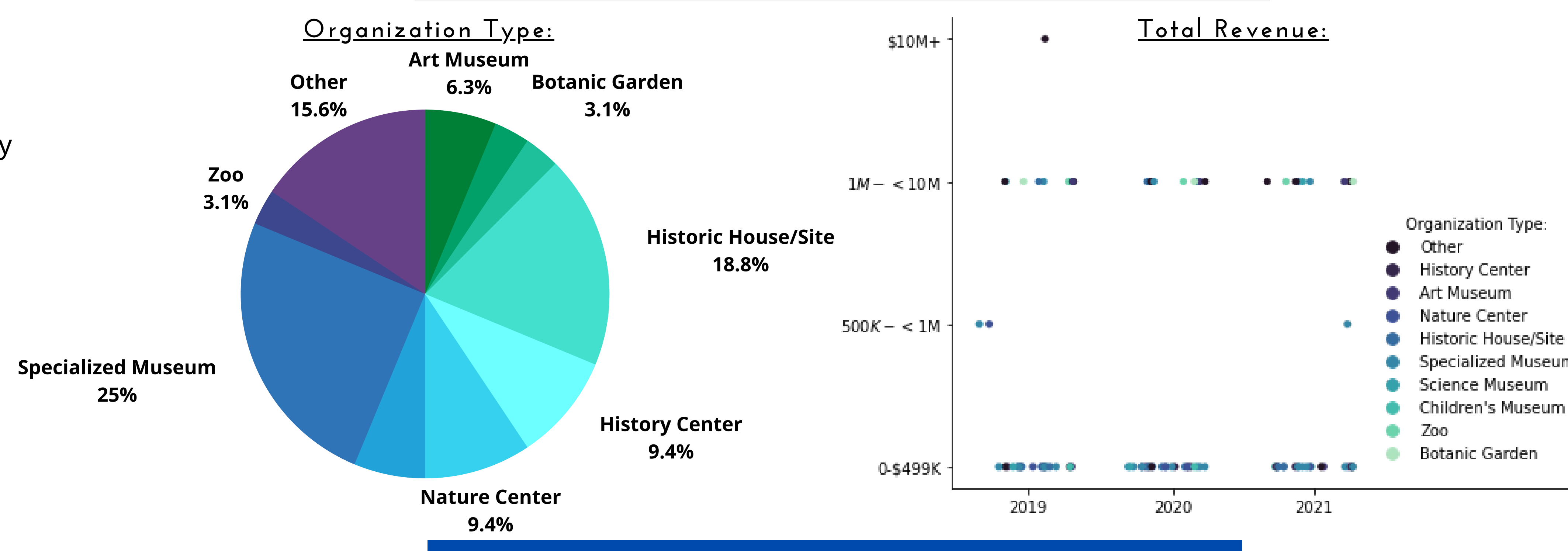
State governments have also continued to offer funds. Since the beginning of the lockdown (March 2020), the Florida Department of State has offered 8 grants of historical, art, and cultural significance (FDOS, 2021).

Similarly, community based grants have also remained available. Specifically looking at Brevard County, the Space Coast Tourism Development Office offered a Cultural Event Grant for 2021, and the Community Foundation for Brevard offered a Community Grant to Brevard nonprofits for 2021 (SCTDO, n.d.; CFB, n.d.).

Identifying Observable Changes in Grant Seeking Habits of Florida Museums Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Closures

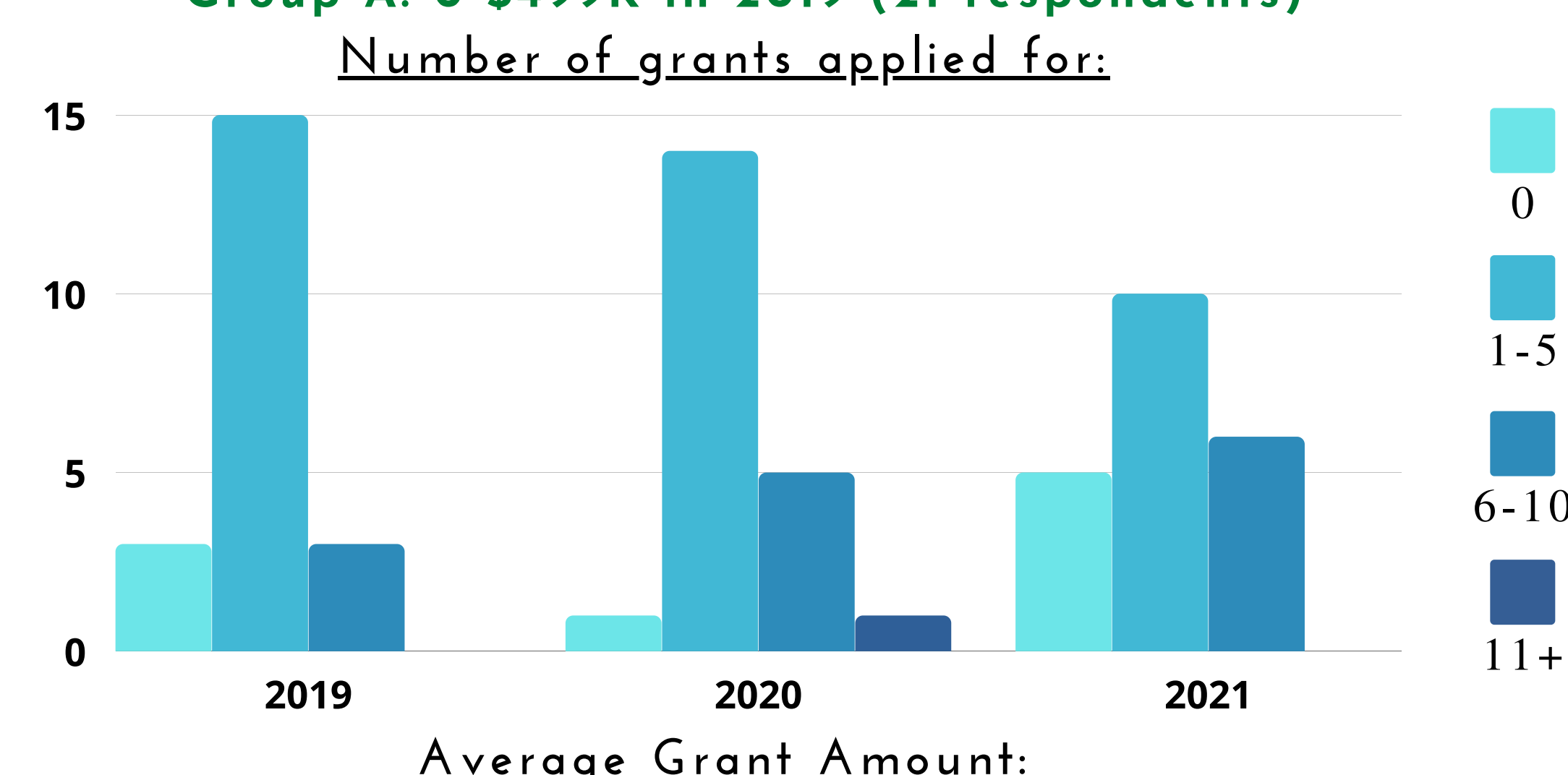
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Survey Results

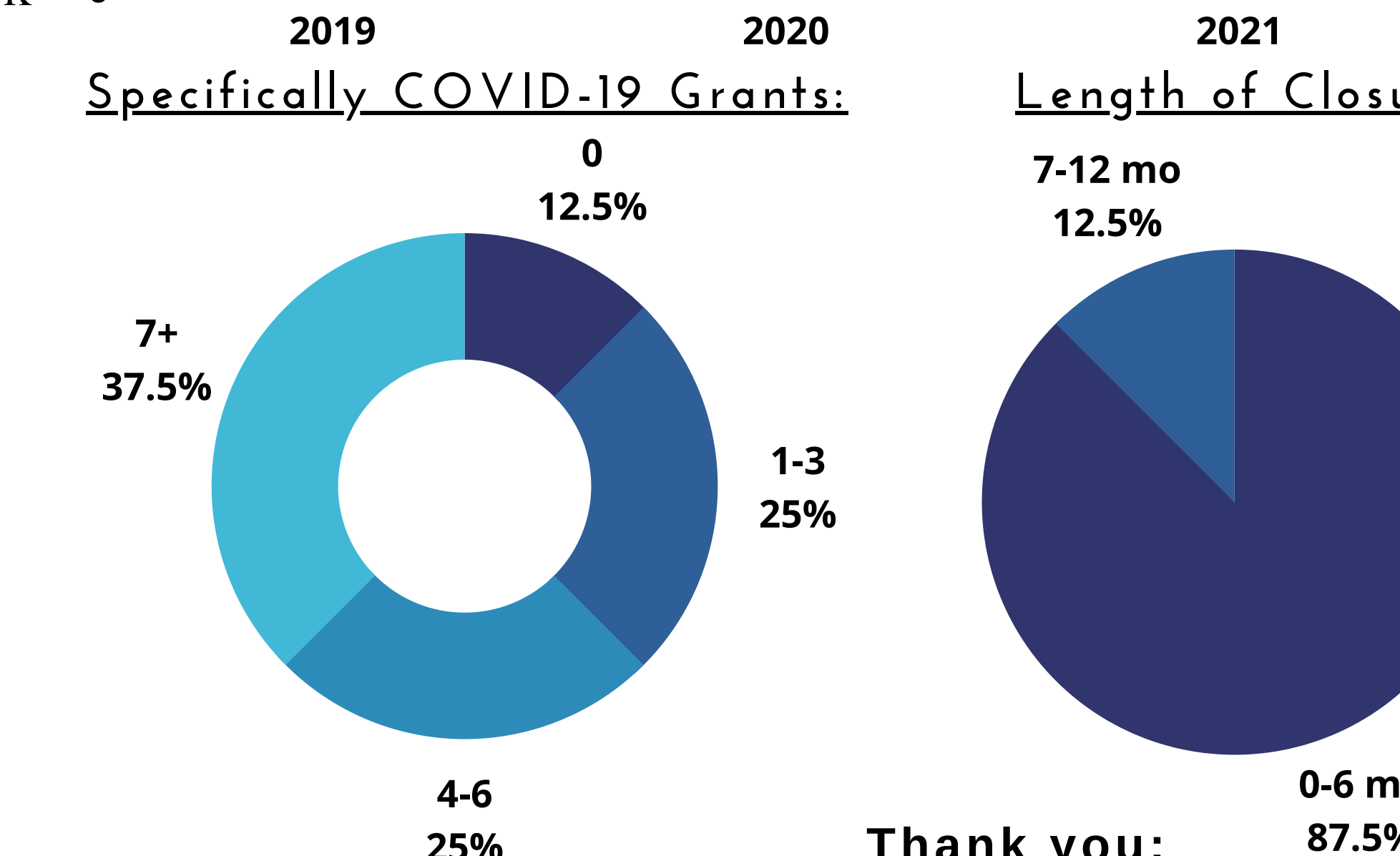
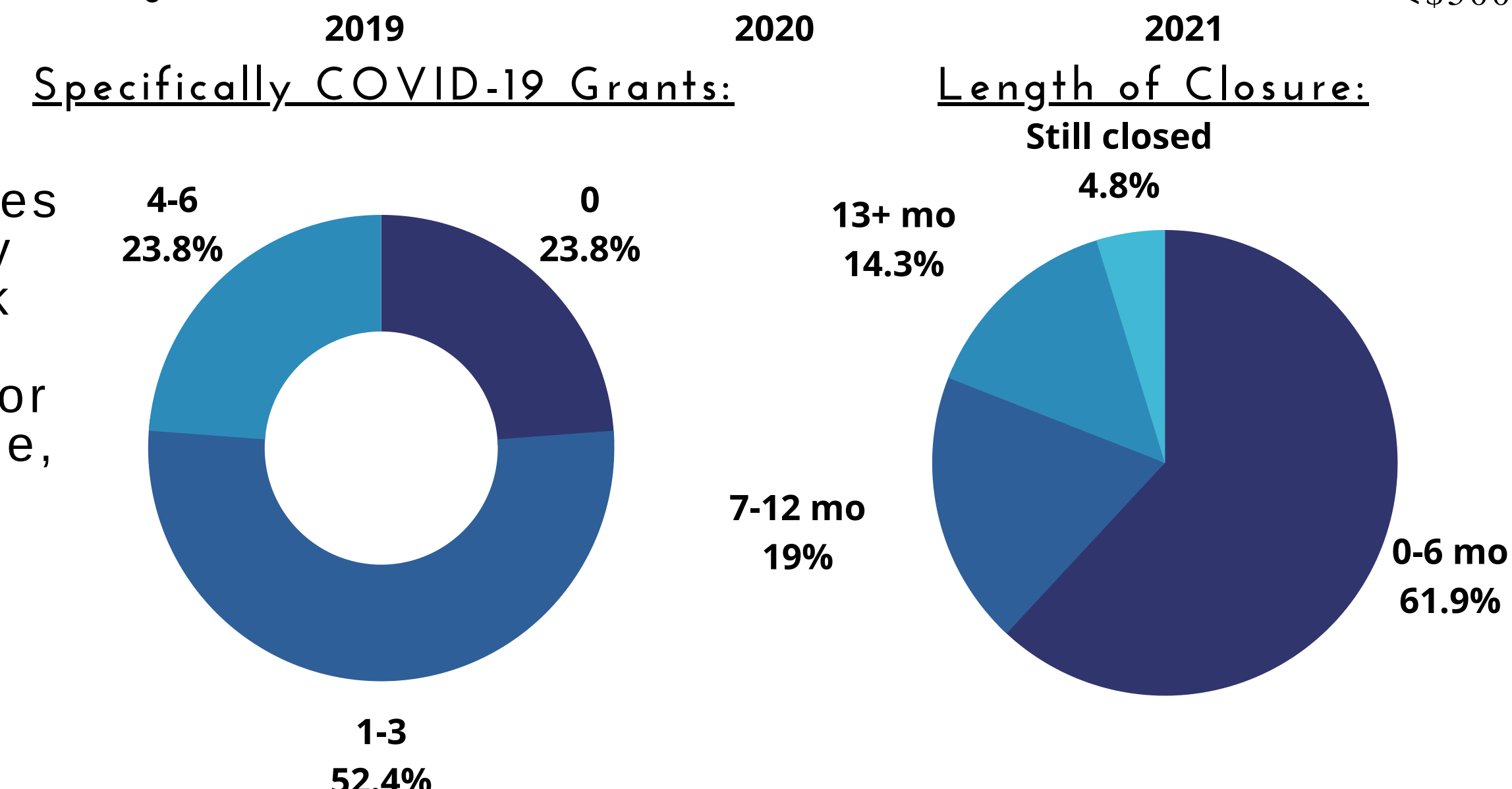
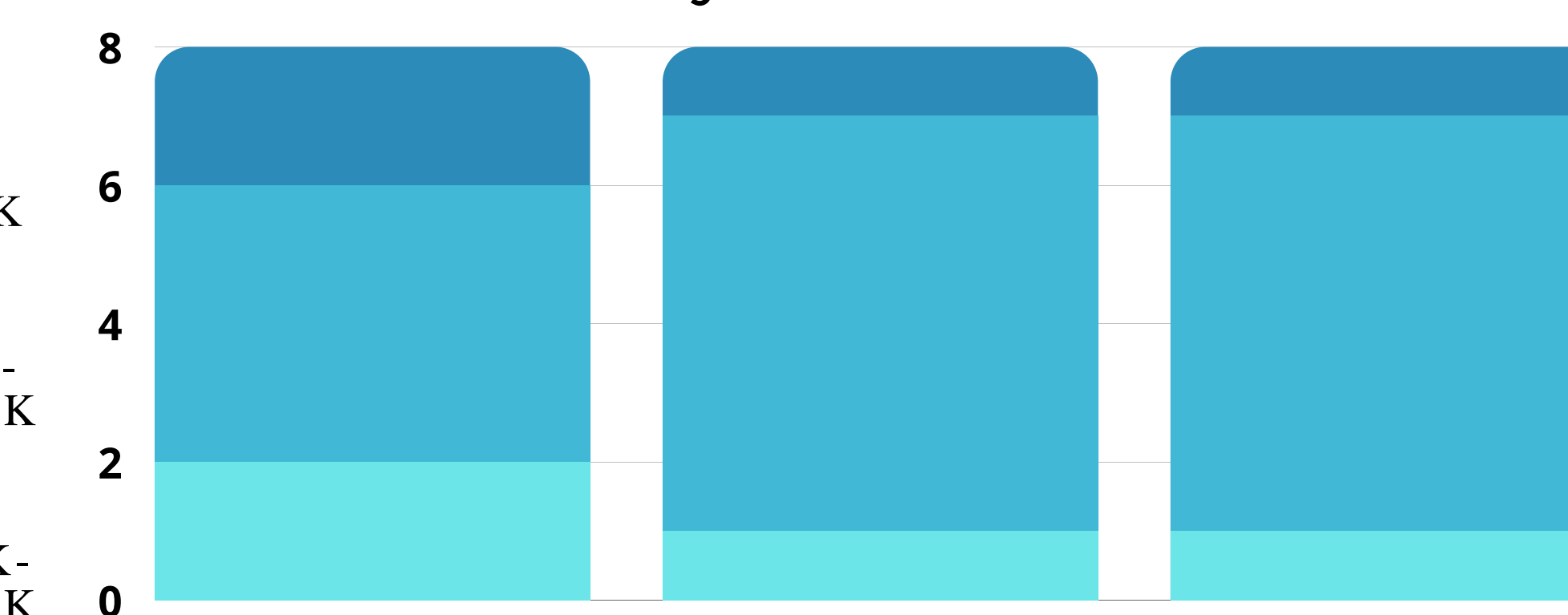
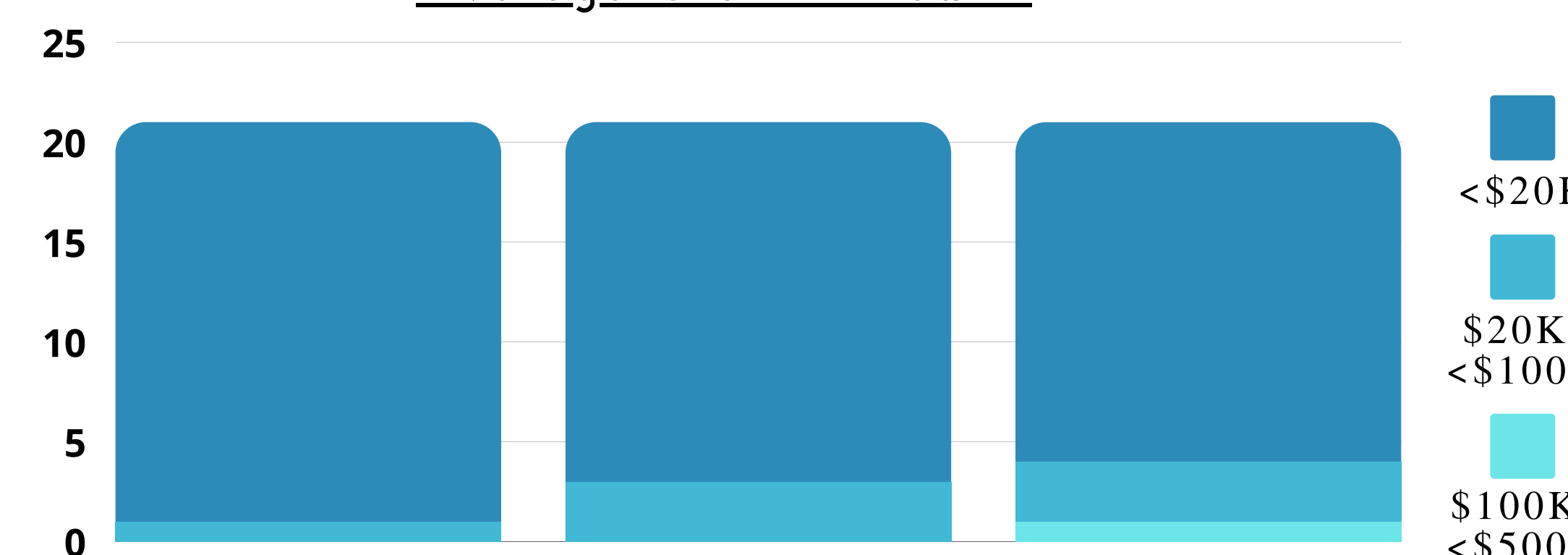
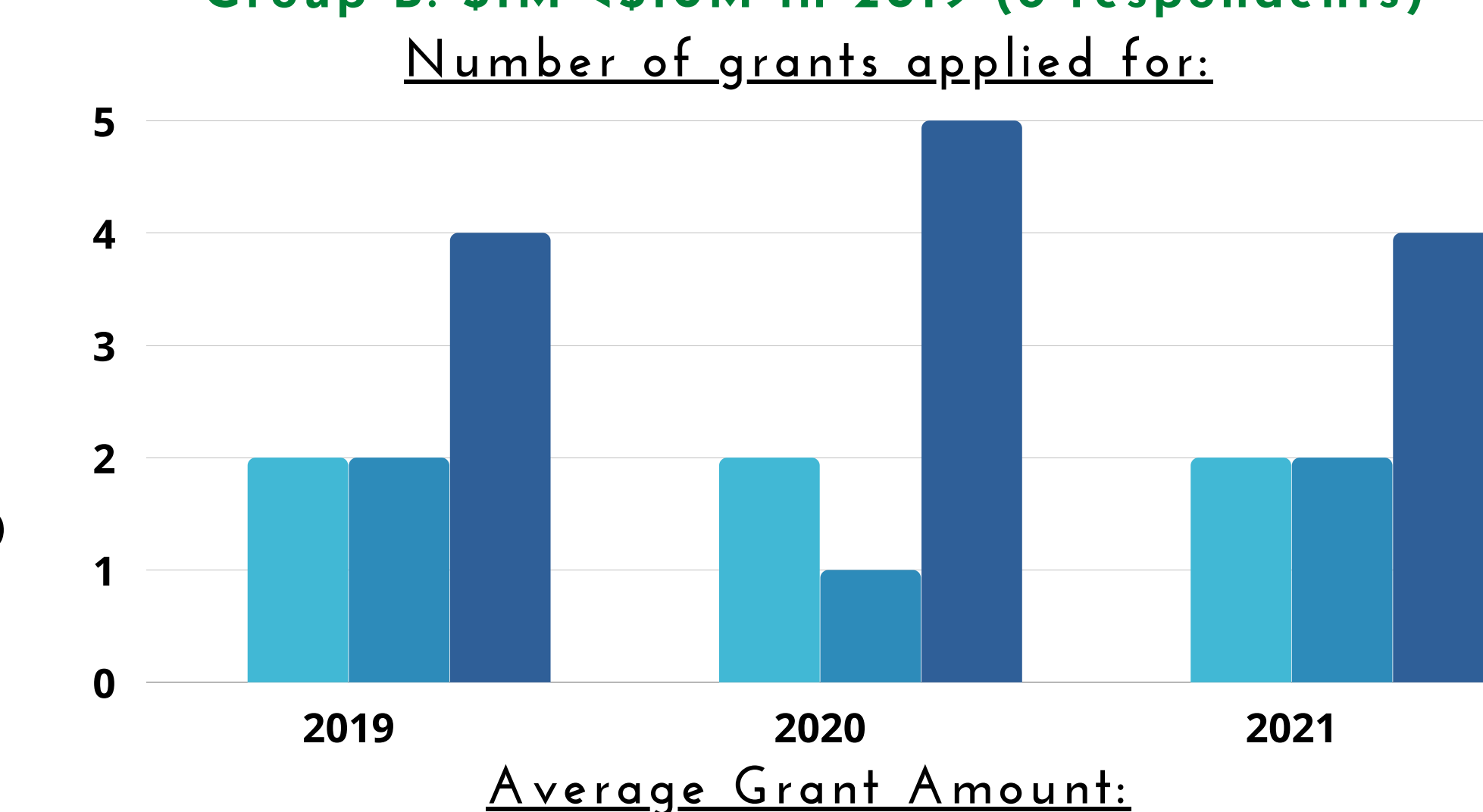


If we further break down the results by revenue bracket in 2019 (excluding \$500K-<\$1M [only 2 respondents] and \$10M+ [only 1 respondent]) in order to see the changes over time, then we get:

Group A: 0-\$499K in 2019 (21 respondents)



Group B: \$1M-<\$10M in 2019 (8 respondents)



Thank you:
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Summary/Conclusion

Of the 413 museums contacted, 22 emails were returned as undeliverable, 10 replied stating they do not apply for grants, and 2 replied as out of the office until after the survey; leaving a possible 379 respondents. In total, there were 32 responses (8.4%).

Of the 10 survey questions, one question concerning types of grants applied for (Federal, State, etc.) will be omitted for the following reasons: 1. Received a response stating they did not have all of the information and therefore guessed. 2. There were several instances of a selection of '0' grants applied for during a specific year only to be followed by a selection of a type of grant for that same period.

In order to see a change over time, the museums have been broken into 2 categories based on revenue bracket in FY2019. Given that there are only 2 respondents in the \$500K-<\$1M and 1 in the \$10M+ categories, those will be omitted. Additionally, compared to 0-\$499K (group A), the \$1M-<\$10M (group B) respondents stayed closed for a shorter period of time, so that may affect the time allotted to seek grants.

For group A (21 respondents), there is an observable increase in the number of grants applied for during the height of the pandemic in 2020 compared to 2019. However, in 2021 there are more instances of '0' grants applied for than both 2020 and 2019 combined. There was also a slight increase in the average grant amount from 2019 to 2021. When asked the number of grants that were specifically COVID-19 related, 52.4% said between 1-3.

For group B (8 respondents), the number of grants applied for from 2019 to 2021 stayed mostly consistent. The only observable change was that 1 more museum applied for 11+ grants in 2020. There were no instances of '0' grants applied for. Similarly, the average grant amount stayed mostly consistent over the course of the 3 years. When asked for the number of grants that were specifically COVID-19 related, 25% were 1-3, 25% were 4-6, and 37.5% were 7+.

It appears that size of the museum does affect whether or not more or less grants were pursued. Group A sought observably more grants in 2020 and observably less grants in 2021. Group B, however, did not have significant variation. This is significant because larger museums remained steady in number of applications and amounts, therefore, smaller museums could benefit from learning how larger museums find and apply for grants.

Future Research

Two museums replied that [paraphrasing] there are not that many grants out there right now; however, it can be observed that museums in group B were applying for 11+ grants consistently. Future research may benefit smaller museums by learning the procedures for searching and applying for grants performed by larger museums and then developing a 'How-To' standards of practice.

For the last three questions of the survey, 19 of the 32 total respondents claimed never having a grant manager, 10 as never using a grant search database (16 as always using one), and 10 as never having attended (14 as yes) any grant preparational or informational webinars. Based on those answers, it may be beneficial to conduct further research to determine where and how museums are taking advantage of ways to search for and secure funds. This, again, can help to develop a 'How-To' search for grants and utilize all of the resources out there at their disposal (whether hiring a dedicated grant manager or attending informational meetings).

Further research is needed to determine if there was a specific area (STEM, Art, History, Education, etc.) where funding did decline during the pandemic. Current research did not produce any statistics that supported an overall decrease.

Since it was observed that group B stayed closed for a shorter period of time during the pandemic than group A, further research may be needed to determine an appropriate time allotment for grant seeking purposes.

Research Questions

1. Given the increased/continued availability of grant funding, did Florida museums seek more or less grant opportunities during/after the COVID-19 pandemic closures in comparison to prior years?
2. If there is a change, does the size of the museum affect the increase/decrease in funding opportunities sought?

Methods

- Developed research questions
- Performed literature review to identify past research of funding availability during pandemic closures, as well as how to interpret a nonprofit Form 990
- Rather than search each museum's past two 990s, the method of survey was chosen as the most efficient way to gather past and most current grant application and award data
- Developed survey questions (quantitative) for museums about specific numbers and amounts applied for in order to find answers to research questions
- Beginning with Google, identified 67 Florida counties and then searched for museums within each county
- Searched each museum's website and/or Facebook page to confirm their nonprofit status
- Searched staff directories for grant, development, or financial officer's email addresses; if none available, used general email or contact form
- Sent a request for the person in charge of grant applications to please fill out the student research survey and provided a link
- Used Google Forms to host the survey

References

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