

Background

Many health disparities WV communities face are compounded by perceived and real social isolation, disconnect from resources, and not feeling valued.

Introduction

The Greenbrier County Health Alliance (GCHA) aims to improve holistic health across Greenbrier County, West Virginia, with a special focus on those who live in remote communities disconnected from valuable services, resources, and support systems.

The everyday assets and activities that are available to us where we live, work, and play significantly influence our health. Availability of quality fresh foods, recreational opportunities, and education, skill-building, and support for community leaders and stakeholders to engage in making positive change happen can help determine how healthy WV communities are and will be.

GCHA is organizing and building upon existing local strategies and resources to facilitate coordinated grassroots action. GCHA Ambassadors are improving health in their communities by directing collaborative, community-driven projects to help empower residents to lead healthier lives and transform where they live. GCHA is pulling together capacity and developing infrastructure for sustainable, stakeholder-led engagement to connect and enhance systems that respectfully integrate and inspire the strengths and priorities of rural and marginalized populations.

What follows is a summary of outcomes and lessons learned from this county-wide, community engagement effort.

The **GCHA Engagement Survey** is a quality improvement (QI) initiative to assess processes, impact, and experience across fundamental principles of engagement and participatory methods, including trust, respect, agency, empowerment, and shared leadership.

Findings present a foundation for discussion and planning pertinent to building capacity and infrastructure for a central, active and evolving community-driven research hub that meaningfully integrates grassroots stakeholders into the forefront of research priorities across West Virginia.

Evaluation Method – Community Engagement Survey

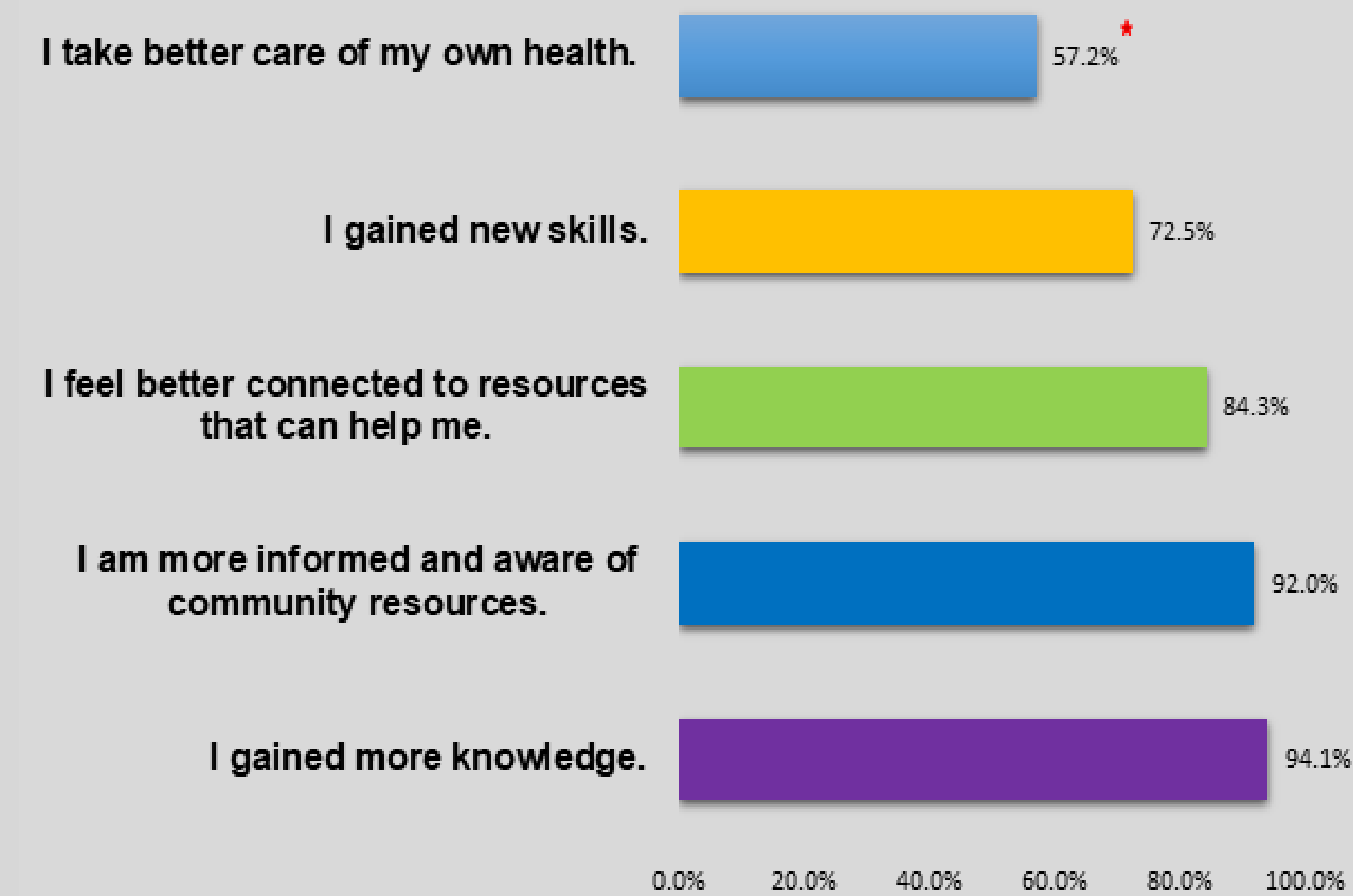
GCHA Engagement Survey launched in July 2018. 42.5% of GCHA stakeholders (51/120) completed the survey in full (37-77 closed and open-ended items).

Survey Participants



Building Skills, Confidence and Capacity

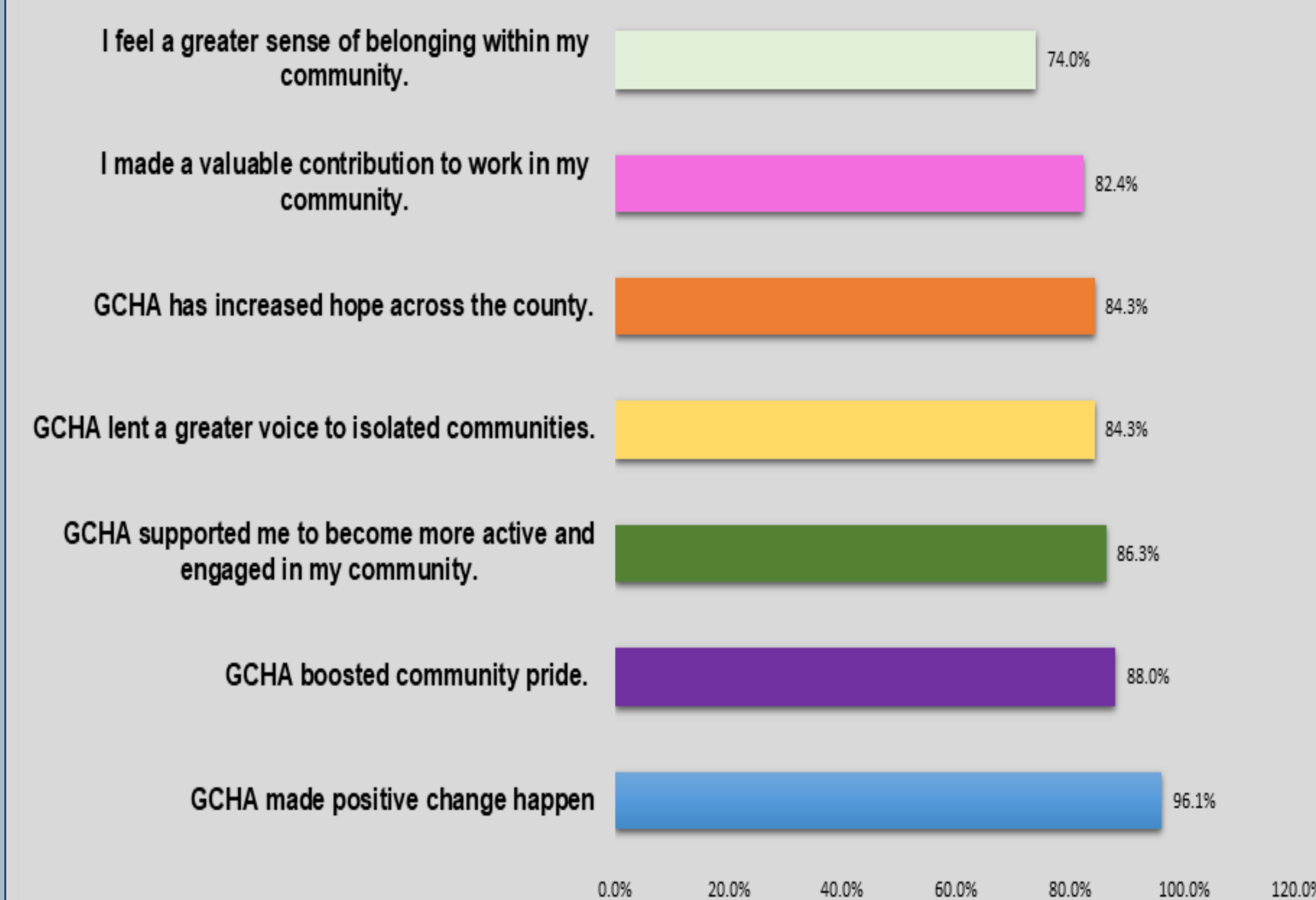
Participation in GCHA contributed to: (% Agree or Strongly Agree)



* Lowest scored item by 15 points, indicating a priority area for improvement.

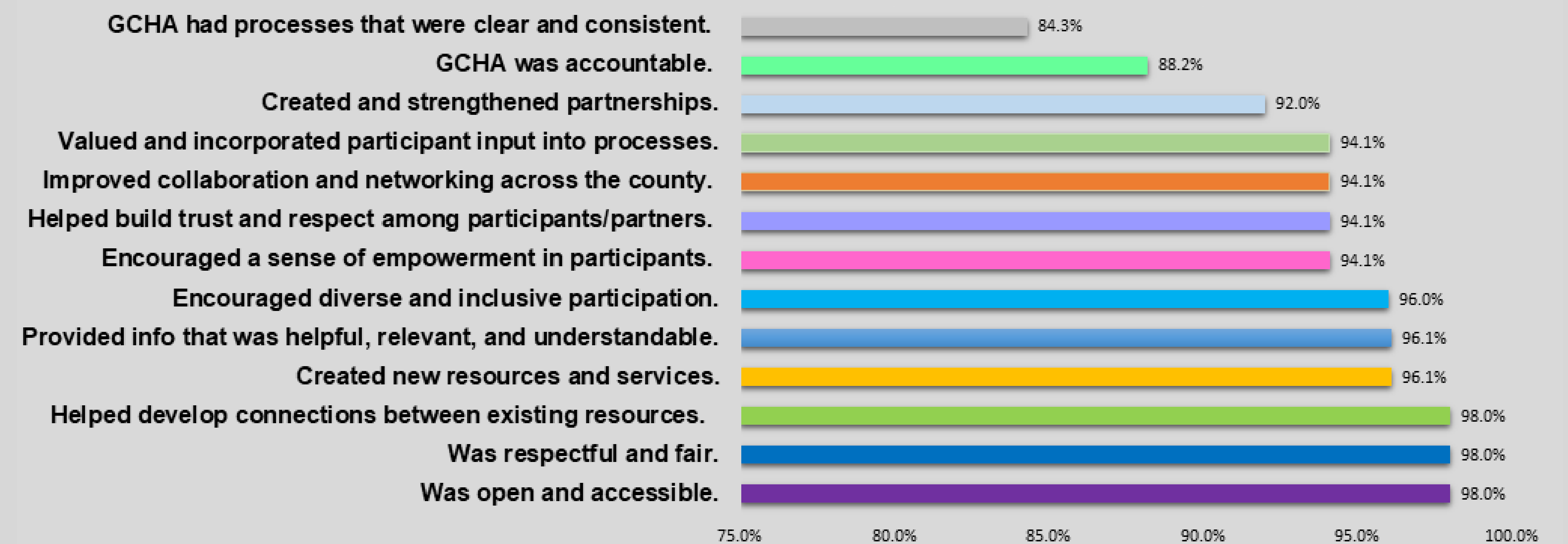
Empowering Community Engagement

(% Agree or Strongly Agree)



Building Sustainable Partnerships

(% Agree or Strongly Agree)



Results

"I feel that a whole group of people stand with me."

- Helping communities identify and empower leadership from within garners voice, agency, and efficacy to areas isolated by geography, special interest, and condition.
- Partners engaged in decision and agenda-setting throughout project planning phases are more committed and confident in their ability to create health change and exercise leadership responsibility.
- Ongoing education, resources, and support increase community capacity and facilitate effective partnerships.
- Annual mini-grant cycles of \$1000 generate community momentum, shared learning and capacity for improving health outcomes from within rural communities.
- Grassroots leaders are eager to contribute in meaningful ways when offered networking opportunities to learn together and celebrate.
- Leaders benefit from engagement experience by gaining confidence and comfort to share ideas, develop skills, discuss complex health problem, and exercise a key role in finding creative solutions.
- Community partners and service providers confront serious challenges in project data collection (measures, tools, timing, resources), interpretation and reflection on what works, and utilizing information for further planning.
- GCHA Engagement Survey sets a strong baseline to measure and build engagement and quality improvement efforts moving forward.

Discussion

Long-term research objectives are to:

- Facilitate action-oriented, community and patient-centered discussions, planning, and proposals targeting health priorities, research, and solutions.
- Educate and train community members, patients, medical students, researchers, and stakeholders on community-centered research processes.
- Develop research infrastructure, tools, and capacity to support stakeholder-driven research.
- Cultivate a model community research network in Greenbrier Valley to adapt and disseminate throughout WV and Appalachia.

References

CDC Community Health Improvement Navigator – Making the case for collaborative CHI - Because working together has a greater impact on health and economic vitality than working alone, CHI brings together health care, public health, and other stakeholders to consider high-priority actions to improve community health.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps – The Take Action Cycle believes that when people work together with a shared vision and commitment to improve health, it can yield better results than working alone.

ReThinkHealth.org – ReThinkHealth, A Rippel Initiative - ReThink Health believes that by thinking differently and working together, we can remake our troubled health system into one that is centered on the well-being and productivity of our people

Acknowledgments

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