

**ABC
SPIRITS**



**MECKLENBURG COUNTY
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD**

Annual Review: Keva Walton, CEO

Year: 2023-2024

Board of Directors

Chair- Monifa D. Drayton, MPA

Beverley Thorpe

Dr. Wilhelmenia Rembert

Jay Neal

Marcus Kimbrough

Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners
Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center
600 E. 4th Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

**ABC
SPIRITS**

MECKLENBURG COUNTY
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD



November 1, 2024

Dear Chairman Dunlap,

On October 30th 2024, the board of directors of the Mecklenburg County Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Board convened to review the annual performance of the Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Keva Walton. Based on feedback from the board and his direct reports, the board agreed to a merit increase of 4.5% totaling a baseline compensation of \$260,225.90. This includes the transition to the middle of his salary range which occurred for all staff members as a part of the market study results in 2023.

In sum, Mr. Walton had an exceptional year specifically in the areas of innovation, strategic leadership, relationship building, customer improvement tactics and ensuring an equitable environment for all. As a result of his leadership, the Mecklenburg ABC Board concluded 2023 with a gross profit of \$67,997,183.00 allowing for a total distribution of \$20,372,576 to local governments. Contributions to our Community Health and Wellness Grant Program Partners include:

- Total Small Grant Program- \$117,797.00
- Total Annual Grant Program- \$526,703
- Renewal Grant Program- \$355,500

Total community investment: \$1,000,000

In closing, we as members of the board of directors continue to remain in full support of Mr. Walton and his leadership of this great organization.

Sincerely,

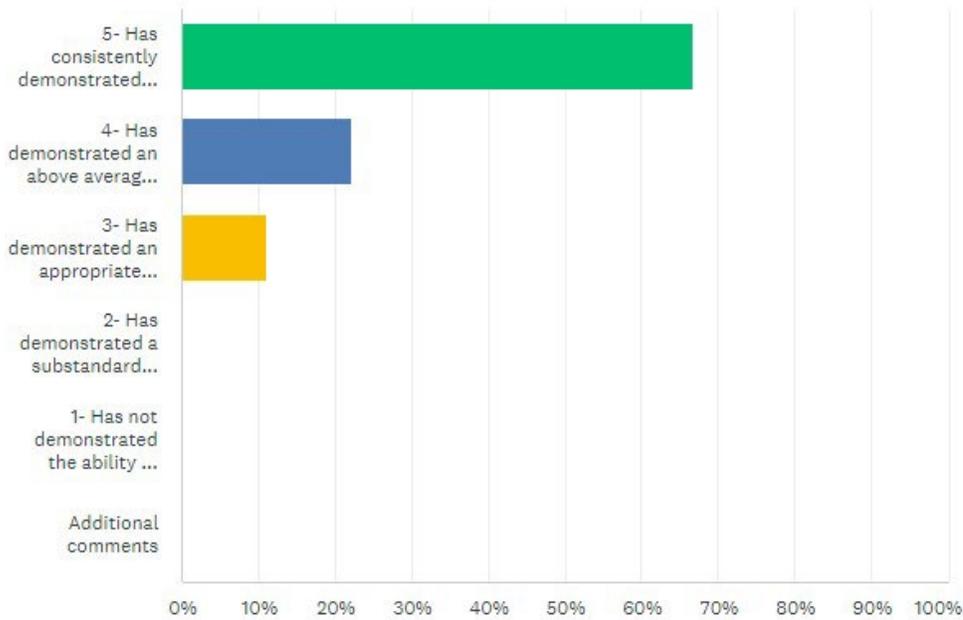
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Monifa D. Drayton".

Monifa D. Drayton, MPA

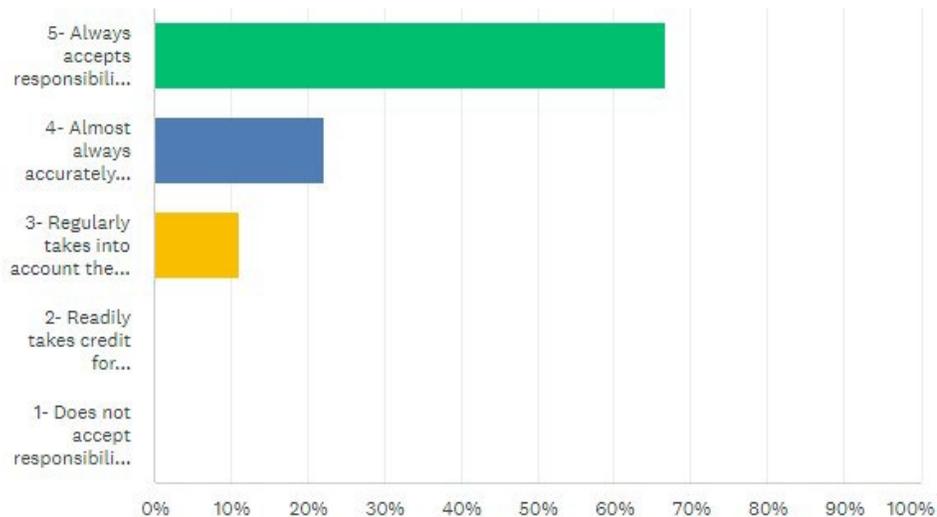
Chair

Organization Survey Results

1. Strategic Leadership involves the ability to set long-term goals and guide the organization to achieve them. This involves creating a vision for the future, making key decisions about the organization's direction and ensuring that the organization adapts to a changing environment.



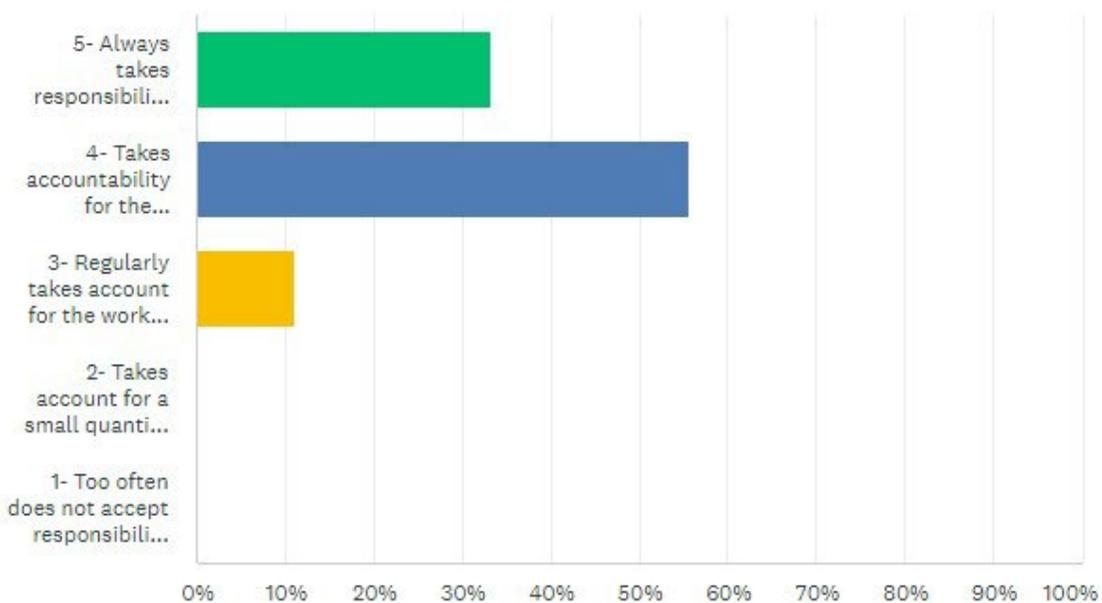
2. Program accountability is defined as taking full responsibility for the successes, challenges and failures of initiatives and actions within the organization.



Responses

- Keva always gives credit where credit is due and always creates the space for others to lead. He is not afraid to pause, when asked or needed. He seeks to understand any hiccups and provides constructive feedback.
- Keva never publicly blames anyone within the organization. I have heard him say at times that "this is on me" when technically it was on others. He always recognizes high performers within the organization.
- Keva has developed a senior team that collaborates very well and our experts in their field. Individual programmatic recognition has taken place throughout the year. He needs to continue to ensure that his team has clear expectations, communication and alignment, coaching and collaboration, and consequences and results.
- ABC University is an example of where Keva could see that the organization needed to have a structure in place to accommodate the training needs of team members. Keva reorganized the staff in such a way to make sure that everyone is in the right seat on the bus.

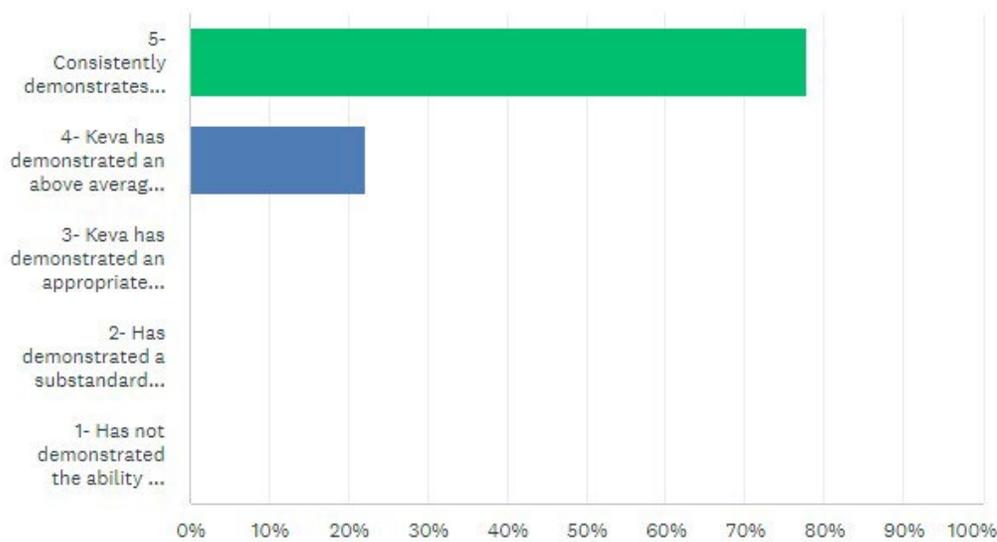
3. Personal Accountability in leadership is critical as it ensures that the team are following through with their commitments and working towards a common goal. It is the responsibility of the CEO to guide teammates and hold them accountable as needed.



Responses

- Seems to set high expectations for self and give direct reports reasonable latitude, support and oversight without micro-managing, while communicating a high expectation for their high performance. Readily listens and responds appropriately to critical feedback.
- I think this is an area where we as an organizational are getting stronger. Due to the newness of several roles, Keva is leading the way for change and we are all stepping in to how we hold ourselves and others accountable in a productive way.
- Keva always accepts accountability and expects the same of his direct reports. He does give a vision for what he wants to be accomplished and lets his direct reports devise a plan for ensuring it is accomplished. We have regularly scheduled one on one meetings with him to go over what his expectations are and for us to give him updates on what we have accomplished and what we are working towards accomplishing.
- I have seen growth in Keva's ability to hold team members accountable for their work product. While not excusing any of his behaviors he is human and has made admitted mistakes over the past year. I think he is learning from his mistakes and being intentional about showing up in a more controlled way.
- This is an area where Keva excels. He could very easily shy away from personal accountability, but Keva has always owned areas where improvement has been needed. He takes feedback as a gift.

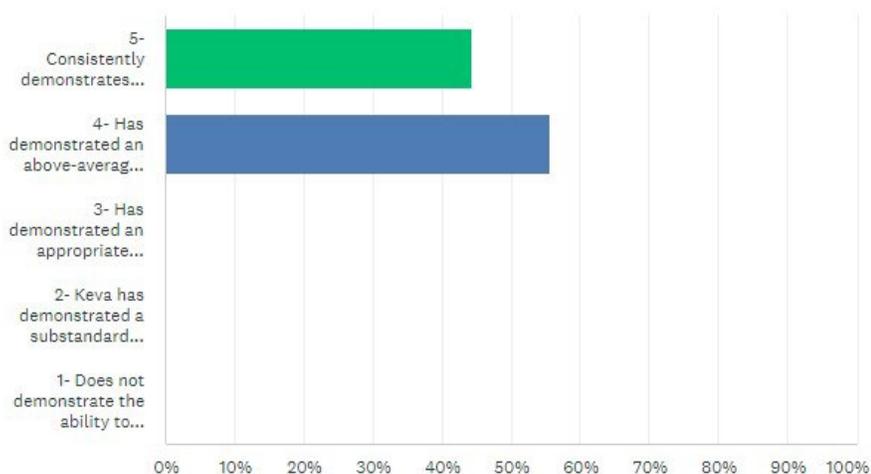
4. Innovation is Keva's ability to support and identify new opportunities, processes and techniques that will enhance the well-being of both teammates and the overall business functions.



Responses

- Keva consistently gets us to think outside of the box, is a strong proponent of BHAG's. He leads the way in identifying new opportunities and partnerships to support overall team goals. He's driven by the "what ifs" and what is needed in the future.
- Keva says that crisis's create opportunity. He is forward thinking and expects others to think outside the box. Nearly all of the things we are working on now such as "Boutique Stores," ABC To Go, getting away from Dalcom and potential for curbside service are his ideas. Although he will not say as much, but I believe ABCU was his idea as well.
- Keva often has cutting edge ideas and innovation (technology, real estate endeavors, etc) that are far ahead of other ABC Boards including the ABC Commission. He has definitely created an innovative culture at Meck ABC.
- In the time that I have worked for Keva he has always been an outside of the box thinker. Because our industry/business is so regulated alot of what he seeks to do gets bogged down in the "politics" of bureaucracy and red tape; however that has never stopped him from trying to push the envelope. He understands Darwinism 101 at it's core. If our system doesn't evolve, most assuredly we will become extinct.
- Keva is always bringing new and innovative ideas to the table. The partnership with UNC Charlotte to look at our gaps in store coverage, the partnership with the security firm to use "stick figure" technology to show patterns in behavior so team members can be safe from potential predators are just a few examples of the innovative ideas that Keva has

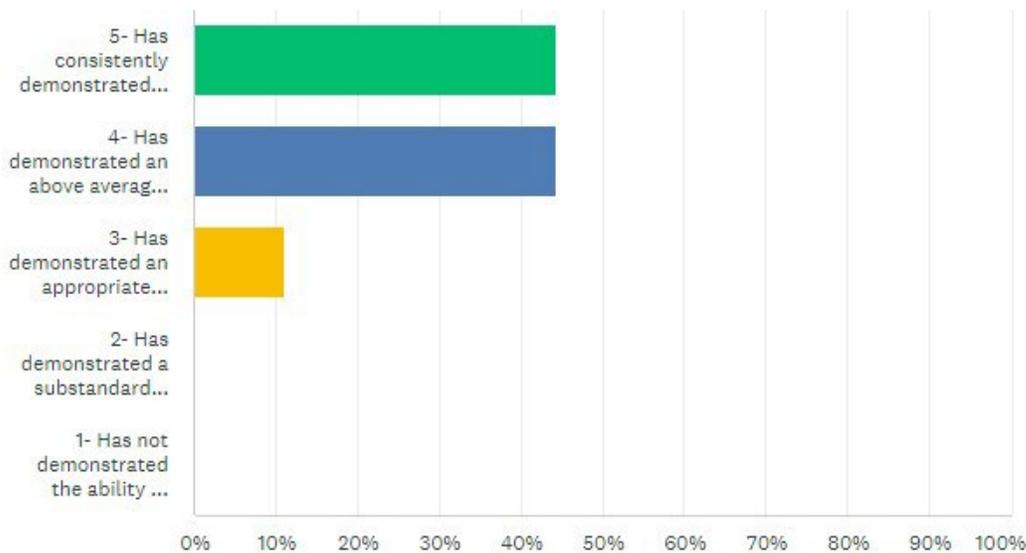
5. Relationship building includes building strong relationships both internally and externally to further enhance the well-being of the organization. This includes encouraging positive teammate collaboration and connectivity.



Responses

- Based on the staff survey, there may be a need and opportunity to further enhance internal team relationships, i.e., better understanding and execution of roles/responsibilities among managers and front line workers, etc.
- Keva has been consistent in building relationships with all levels of staff and having a true open-door policy. He encourages and counsels all who seek and creates a safe space for open communication.
- Keva has done an outstanding job of quietening the cry for privatization by building a positive relationship with our MBX customers by including them in focus groups and dedicating a position to work directly with them. He has also done his best to work with the NCABC commission. There are numerous other organizations he has built relationships with or strengthened them such as the library, City Council and the Board of County Commissioners.
- Give a toast is a great example under Keva's leadership where teammates are recognized for their contributions and efforts to make Meck ABC board and stores a fun and great place to work.

6. Ensuring diversity in all areas of the spectrum helps foster an environment of inclusion, collaboration and improves team performance. In reviewing the entire year, please provide your feedback regarding Keva's leadership in the area of being diversity oriented.

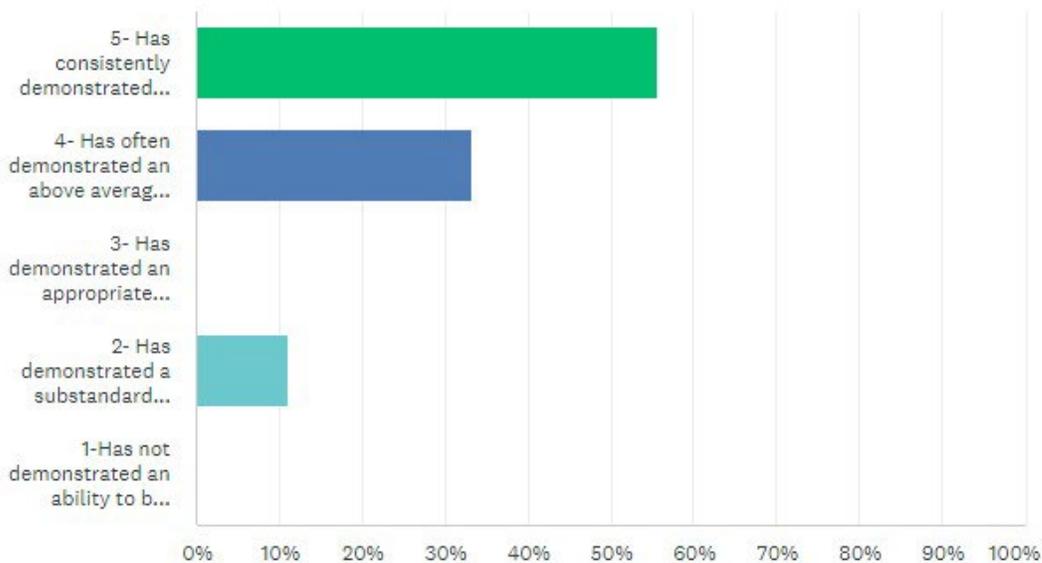


Responses

- Keva has consistently demonstrated a high level of ability to attract, secure, and support a highly diverse workforce from administration, management, and frontline teammates to contracts with vendors and grantees, as well.
- Keva leads from a place on inclusion. He always seeks ideas and participation from ALL. He provides leadership opportunities to all levels of staff, often guiding the senior team to ensure we highlight individuals in visible roles as often as possible.

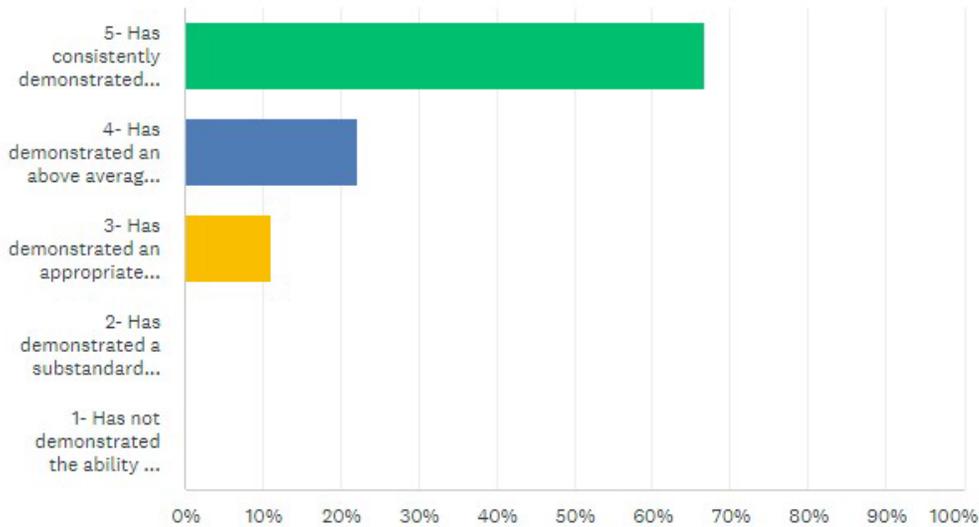
- A quick look at the readout from Fluent will demonstrate that under his leadership, a sense of inclusion is listed as a recurring theme throughout the organization. I do not know of anyone here who feels they are being discriminated against or treated unfairly because of who they are.
- I have seen this specifically in vendor services/contracts. Keva is committed to diversity in vendor management and the RFQ process

7. Having a leader who demonstrates strong ethics will foster a culture that boosts productivity, teammate engagement and encourages collaboration. Overall it is the moral principles that govern Keva's behavior and decision making.



- Keva is an emotional leader. How he feels sometimes over shadows the facts and is therefore reflected in the decisions that others make which are sometimes in conflict with Meck ABC policy.
- Keva's ethics is never questioned. He is a man of high moral and ethical character.
- From the beginning Keva has fostered a high ethical culture. He has created a family environment where everyone feels comfortable to express their thoughts and ideas.

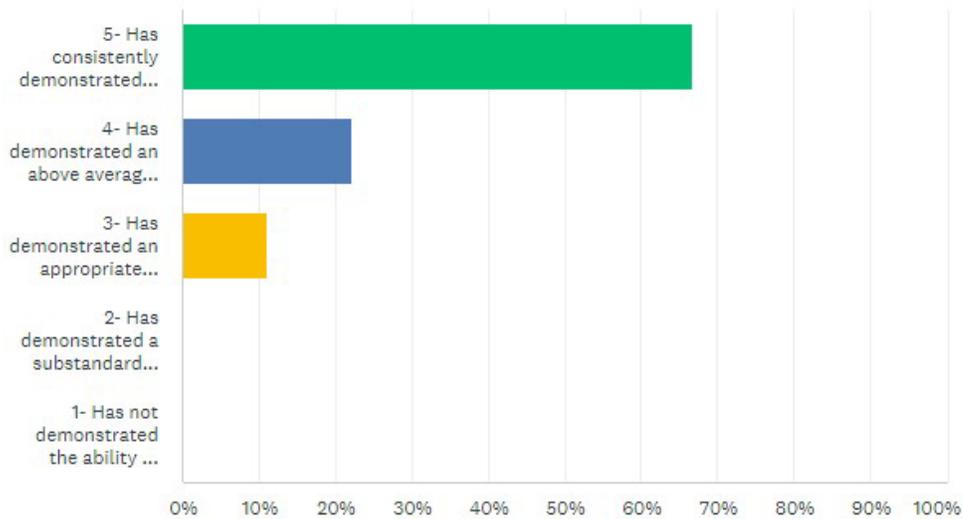
8. The overarching goals of Mecklenburg ABC include culture, customer improvement, community engagement, financial stability and the over health of the business. Therefore a key to strong leadership is to be goal focused and oriented.



Responses

- The nature and scope of what is brought to the Board of Directors on a consistent basis demonstrate Keva's ability to keep his eyes on the big picture as well as stated organizational goals and objectives.
- Keva finds creative approaches to keep us all focused on our main objectives and goals (i.e. puzzle pieces), fostering an environment where we can all thrive and grow.
- Keva always sets his expectations and part of what he always says is to "follow up and follow through." He always wants to be debriefed on how the objective was accomplished.
- Three of Keva's eight goals and objectives were not executed in FY24 for various reasons. Going forward he needs think about setting ambitious goals and/or think about goals that focus on the process and not the results. Major program areas like Law Enforcement, Community Investment/Alcohol Education, and Community Service may need more than one goal each year to ensure their growth and productivity.
- With the implementation of the incentive plan, I feel a much-needed focus on goal attainment has been established. Store level P&L's are now in place where each store manager can now see how their ordering habits are impacting the bottom line.

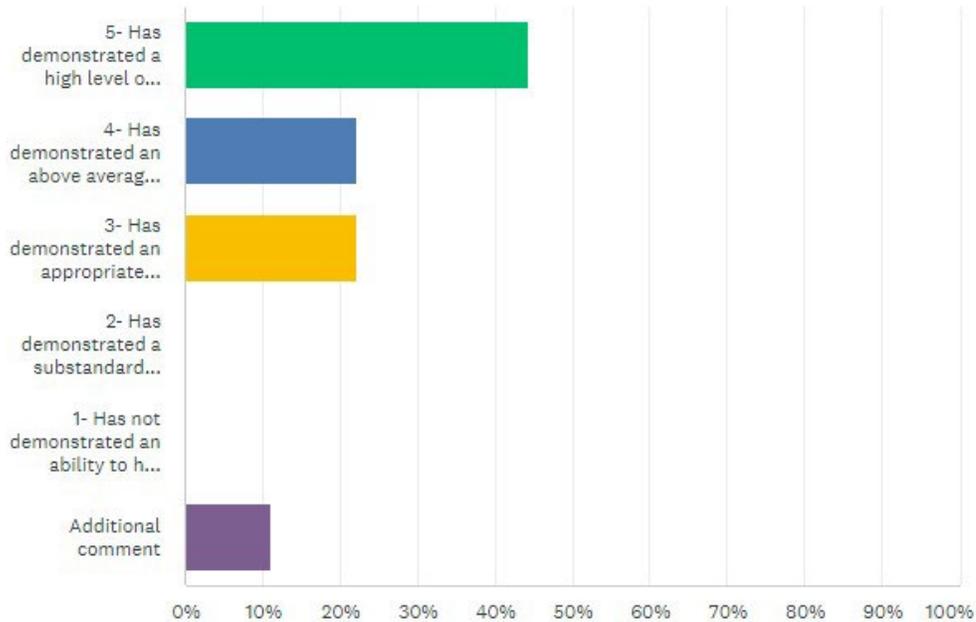
9. Initiative is the ability and willingness to take action immediately and efficiently for the safety and wellness of the organization.



Responses

- Keva has shown a keen ability to respond promptly and appropriately to matters concerning the safety and wellness of the organization. He seeks first to ascertain relevant and necessary data to make sound decisions and take decisive action.
- Keva always makes the time and takes the initiative to settle sensitive issues and those issues requiring immediate attention.
- Keva is impatient in a good way. If he sees an issue, he gets the right people in the room and settles on a plan to address the issue. As an example, he jumped right on the issue of employees improperly storing and selling allocated bourbons.
- Time and time again, Keva has taken action on the warehouse situation in Raleigh. He always wants to make sure we are in a position of strength and not weakness from an inventory perspective. Whether it means we need to order direct to have direct shipments or take advantage of steep discounts on key brands.

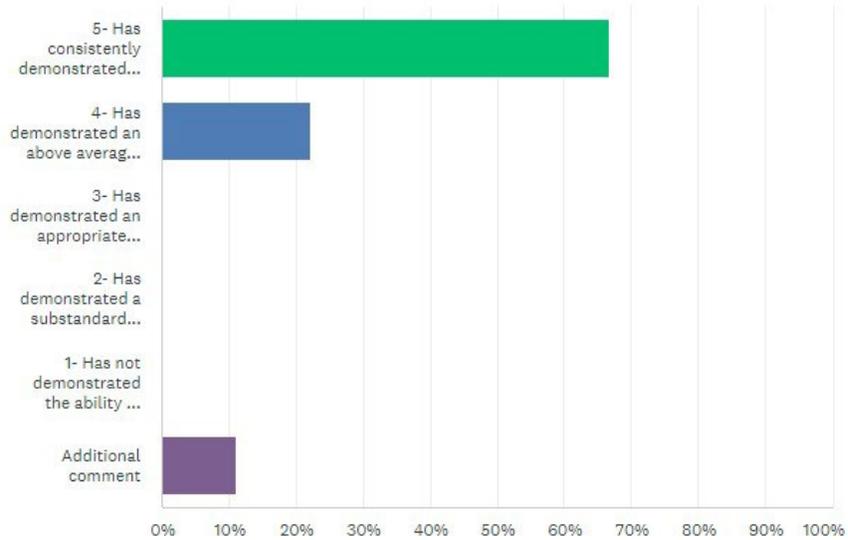
10. Human Resources and Organizational Development: Fostering a culture of belonging through activities, action and leadership will foster an environment of collective cooperation and teambuilding. This includes encouraging positive peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration.



Responses:

- Keva will roll up his sleeves and participate in all activities no matter how small. He finds creative ways and partnerships to ensure we engage effectively and collaboratively as a senior team while also leading by example.

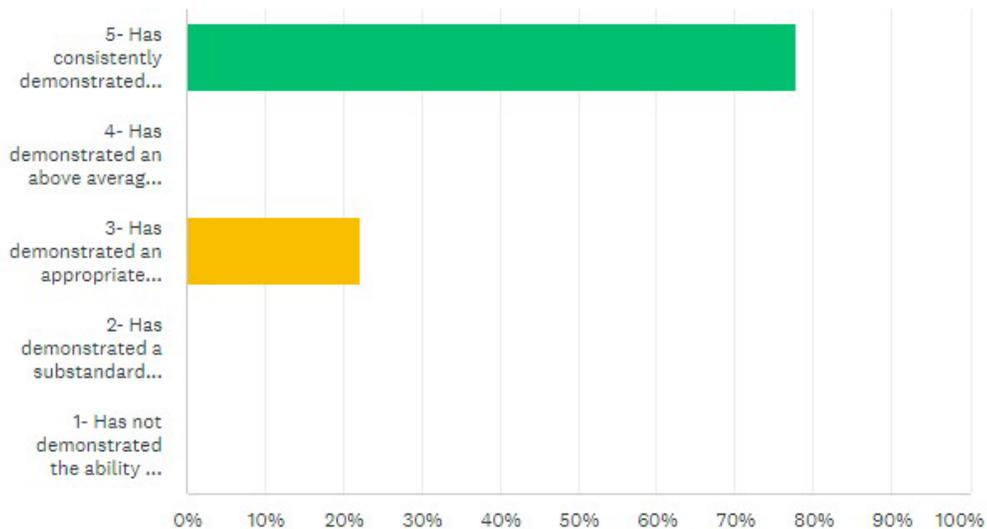
11. Being a community connector helps to advance the overall mission and message of the organization. Within the scope and role of the CEO, community engagement exceeds purely philanthropic activities but also includes networking that is profitable and beneficial to the core business needs. This includes activities such as engaging with elected officials, community leaders and leaders within the business industry.



Responses:

- Keva's vast level of experience and reputation in the community has opened many doors for Mecklenburg County ABC Board. He has emphasized the importance of having a presence in the community, particularly engaging with our customers and key decision makers in our community.

12. Financial stewardship is being responsible for managing the financial resources wisely, protecting the long-term assets of the organization and executing these duties with integrity, ethical conduct, and prudent financial decision-making.



Responses:

- Keva has done an outstanding job of being a great steward of money. He is concerned that his net profit is budgeted at 12.2% this year and it has been much higher in years past. I tell him that it is because he has had to right size the ship due to such things as outdated and inadequate IT and getting salaries where they need to be. He monitors expenses very closely and is always looking for ways to be more efficient.
- Keva has managed the financial resources wisely and executed these duties with integrity, ethical conduct, and prudent financial decision-making.
- There's so much to say here: I know the FY 2025 budget gave Keva pause. I know this because he told me so verbatim. He is burdened with as the CEO the intersection of positive employee engagement and ensuring there is a business to run that can meet all of its obligations, tax wise, community wise and local government wise. He made an intentional choice to continue to invest in the people of MeckABC while hedging his bets that with proper training, empowerment, systems and processes they would help increase revenue. He tries to control what he can control and then trust that the outcome will be favorable; however he is not afraid to pivot when needed as evidenced by his re-organization.
- Keva has exhibited fiscal responsibility in how he looks at the future growth of the organization. Monies are being set aside for the expansion of the headquarters and other operational needs. Keva is always looking to data to support the direction in which we need to head as an organization.

13. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to provide? (optional)

- Keva deserves all the credit for getting us where we are today. He does a lot of talking about his team but make no mistake that it mostly comes from him. He is forward thinking, and nobody here works harder than he does. I rated him as high as I can because if he doesn't deserve a high rating, none of the rest of us do either. Great man to work for.
- Keva has inspired Meck ABC to become a successful social and community enterprise. He should continue to be a visionary thinker, continue to have a strategic mindset, and continue to encourage team building and collaboration.
- Overall, I would say that Keva has had an exceptional year, and I look forward to many more years with him at the helm.