



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Safety Net Survey

2020

Authorizing Legislation: RCW [28A.150.392](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safety Net funding is available to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate need for additional special education funding. Applicants must show need beyond state and federal funding already available to the LEA. For more background on the Safety Net program see the [2014–15 Safety Net Survey report](#).

The Legislature requires OSPI to annually survey LEAs about their satisfaction with the Safety Net process. The survey is used to consider feedback from LEAs to improve the Safety Net process. More than 360 people from LEAs that applied for Safety Net received the survey in September 2020. The survey included 13 questions and was open for two weeks. OSPI received 88 responses.

Respondents rated nine of the 13 questions on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five the highest. The average response to all questions was above 4.0. This is an improvement from the previous year where four of the questions had an average response below 4.0.

BACKGROUND

There are two types of Safety Net funding, High-Need Individual and Community Impact. High-Need Individual funding is funding on behalf of an individual student. Community Impact funding is for a factor that impacts the district as a whole.

OSPI provides a [bulletin](#), instructions, and application forms each school year. OSPI provided professional development at all nine ESDs prior to the initial 2019–20 submission date. The Safety Net Oversight Committee awards funding to applicants.

The Committee has awarded more than 748 million dollars since the program’s launch in 1996–97. In 2019–20 the Committee awarded funding to 125 LEAs. These LEAs included:

- school districts,
- an Educational Service Agency (ESA),
- the Washington State Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth (CDHY), and
- the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB).

The Committee awarded funding for:

- 4,087 High-Need Individual applications totaling \$104,833,293
- Twelve (12) Community Impact applications totaling \$4,584,104

Five of the 130 LEAs that applied did not receive Safety Net funding. These five LEAs were not funded due to either lack of demonstrated capacity on Worksheet A or IEP cost calculation issues.

UPDATE STATUS

Respondents rated nine of the 13 questions on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest and five the highest. Depending on the question, the lowest response was either 'not helpful' or 'disagree.' The highest response was either 'helpful' or 'agree.' 'Not applicable' was an available selection for eight of the questions. One question was a yes/no answer and three questions were open ended. Survey responses were anonymous. See **Appendix B: Safety Net Survey Results** for a full list of questions and the survey results.

Survey Changes

Question 12, regarding the helpfulness of changes, was updated to reflect changes to the application process from the previous year. The changes were:

- Proration of IEPs when IEP issues identified,
- Lower threshold,
- Ability to submit updated Extended School Year (ESY) paperwork if paperwork submitted with initial application was for previous school year,
- New worksheet C layout, and
- Only one version of worksheet C published

Survey Responses

All the questions had an average response above 4.0. This is an improvement from the previous year where four of the questions had an average response below 4.0.

In the written comments, respondents reported the process could be improved by:

- Publishing the bulletin and application forms early.
- Not using the secure file transfer protocol for application submission.
- Providing more training on various topics related to application submission.
- Providing more feedback when adjustments are made to applications.
- Providing procedures for how to include additional information when requested.
- Allowing non-direct costs associated with students to be included in application.
- Lowering the threshold.

Table 1: Average Response by Question

Question	Average Response
Q1. The 2019–20 Safety Net Bulletin—which outlined the process changes, application criteria, and submission deadlines—was clear.	4.36
Q3. The training provided by OSPI for the 2019–20 Safety Net process was helpful.	4.36
Q4. The Safety Net website includes information that is helpful to my LEA in the Safety Net application process.	4.32
Q5. OSPI staff members are helpful to my LEA in the Safety Net application process.	4.74
Q7. The Safety Net committee carefully considers my LEA's requests for Safety Net funding.	4.64
Q8. Although I may not always agree with the results, I was informed why my Safety Net applications were or were not funded.	4.54
Q10. My LEA's IEPs have improved as a result of the Safety Net process.	4.14
Q11. Although I may not always agree with the results, I believe the Safety Net standards are uniformly applied to all LEAs.	4.35
Q12. Please rate the helpfulness of the following changes:	
a. Proration of IEPs when IEP issues identified	4.61
b. Lower threshold	4.80
c. Ability to submit updated ESY paperwork if paperwork submitted with initial application was for previous school year	4.70
d. New worksheet C layout	4.41
e. Only one version of worksheet C published	4.68

Source: 2019–20 Safety Net Survey results

Follow-up from Workgroup Recommendations

[House Bill 2242, Sec. 408 \(2017\)](#) directed OSPI to review and make recommendations of possible adjustments to improve the Safety Net process. The study was performed by a Workgroup of 21 individuals who met multiple times during the 2017–18 school year. The [Special Education Safety Net Study Report](#) was submitted to the Legislature November 1, 2018.

The Workgroup recommended examining nonpublic agency (NPA) placement data as an area for further review. The table below contains data for out-of-district placements by placement type for the past three years. The data shows that the percentage of applications funded through Safety Net for out-of-district placements dropped by 2.1% last year. Examining the data, the number of funded applications in ESD programs and out

of state NPAs did not change, or changed very little, while the funded in-state NPA and school district placements decreased. The number of applications funded increased overall in 2019–20 because applications were prorated when IEP issues were identified instead of receiving no award. It is important to note that while the percentage of applications funded either decreased slightly or remained stable, the costs associated with these placements increased.

Type of Placement	Total awarded for out of district placement	Number of Applications Funded	Percent of Total Applications Funded
2019–20			
ESD program	\$12,294,983	203	5.0%
In state NPA	\$33,145,221	485	11.9%
Out of state NPA	\$9,710,479	58	1.4%
School district	\$10,381,713	199	4.9%
	\$65,532,396	945	23.1%
2018–19			
ESD program	\$9,204,531	168	5.1%
In state NPA	\$27,968,408	429	13.0%
Out of state NPA	\$6,829,698	45	1.4%
School district	\$9,396,295	191	5.8%
	\$53,398,932	833	25.2%
2017–18			
ESD program	\$7,839,645	160	5.7%
In state NPA	\$21,199,544	374	13.4%
Out of state NPA	\$4,601,656	35	1.3%
School district	\$8,261,676	175	6.3%
	\$41,902,521	744	26.6%

*Please note that the total awarded for the out of district placement types is the cost before threshold deduction. The cost before threshold is used as an application may contain more than just the out-of-district placement.

Source: Safety Net Database

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

There were minimal effects due to COVID-19 on Safety Net applications for the 2019–20 school year. Although not always in the same manner, special education services continued during spring 2020 and expenses associated with those services were included in Safety Net applications.

The Safety Net Bulletin and application forms are currently under development for the 2020–21 school year. OSPI will continue to expand training opportunities available. Additionally, OSPI is continuing work on an application platform. The new platform will provide a streamlined electronic submission process for applicants that addresses concerns regarding submission from this year’s survey respondents. The goal is to have this application platform available by the 2021–22 school year. This platform should alleviate many challenges applicants face when submitting applications.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

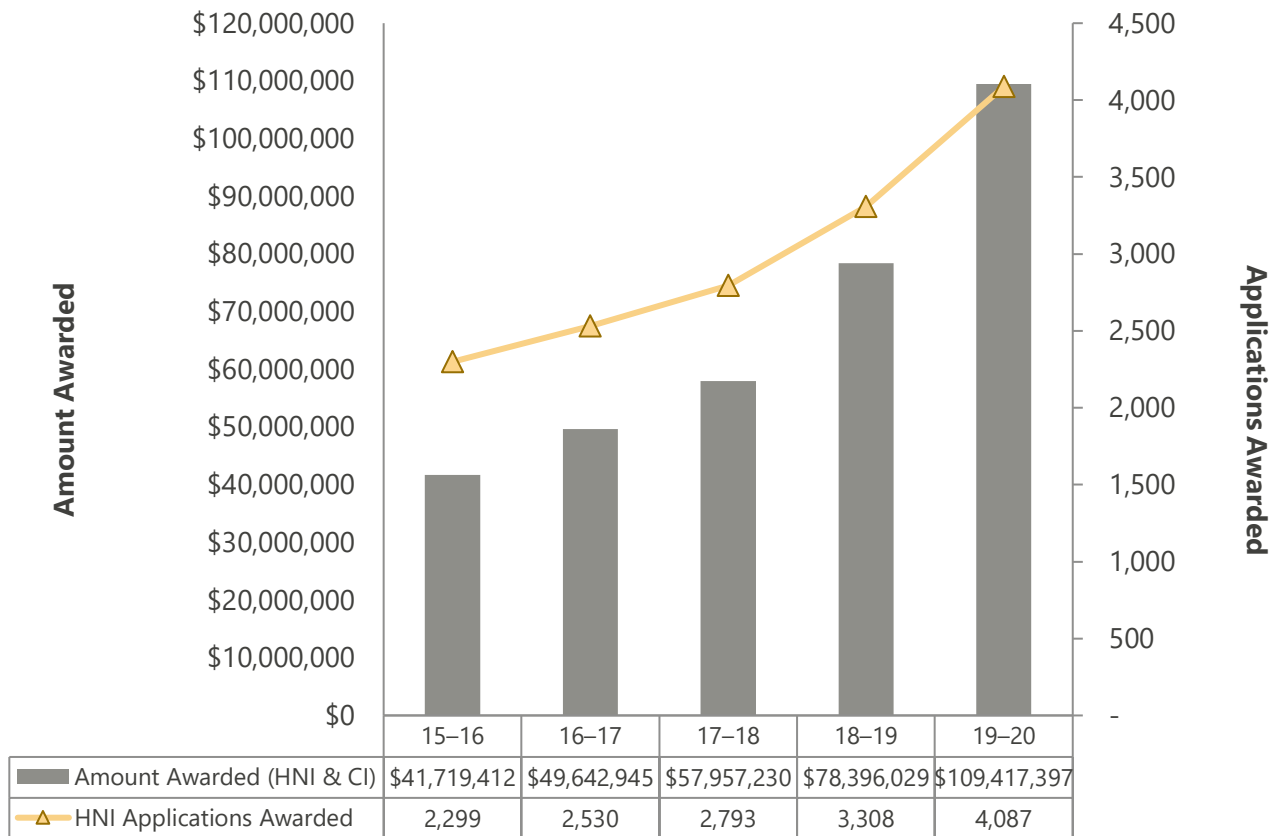
OSPI would like to acknowledge the effort and hard work that both applicants and committee members contribute to this process.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

In 2019–20, the State Safety Net Committee approved 125 LEAs for Safety Net funding. The committee awarded 4,087 High-Need Individual student applications, and 12 Community Impact applications for a total of \$109,417,397 (see Figure 1).

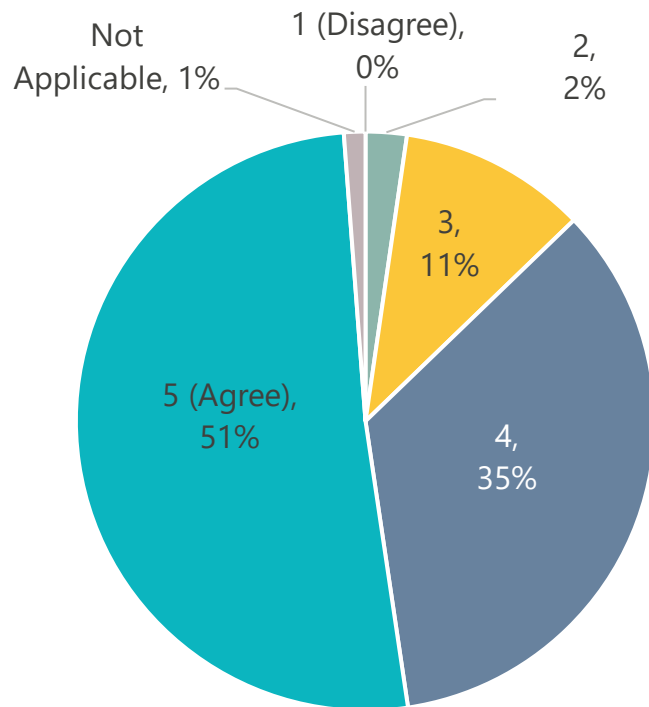
Figure 1: Safety Net Funding 2015–16 through 2019–20



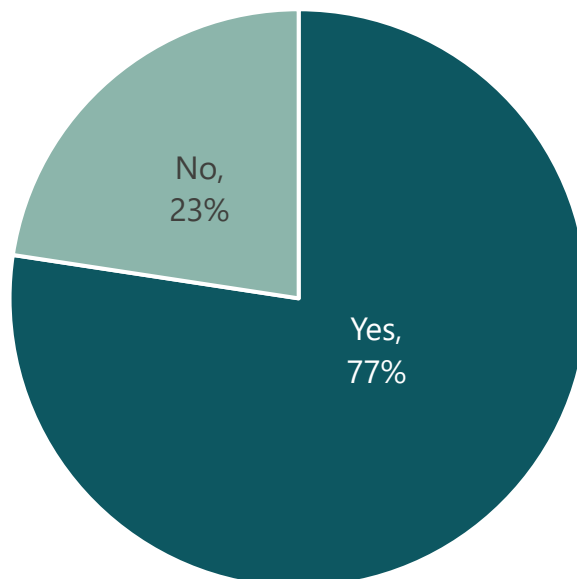
Source: Safety Net Database

Appendix B: Safety Net Survey Results

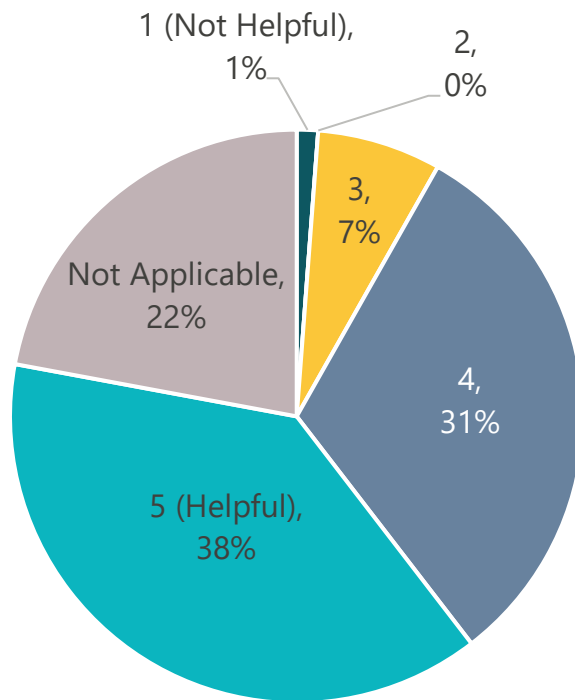
1. The 2019–20 Safety Net Bulletin—which outlined the process changes, application criteria, and submission deadlines—was clear.



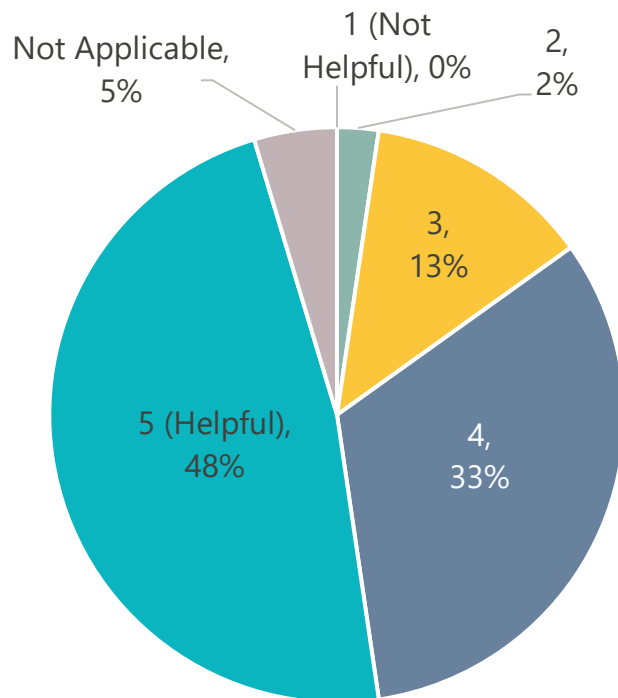
2. Did you utilize training provided by OSPI—such as in person trainings, Zoom meetings, webinars, or training videos—for the 2019–20 Safety Net process?



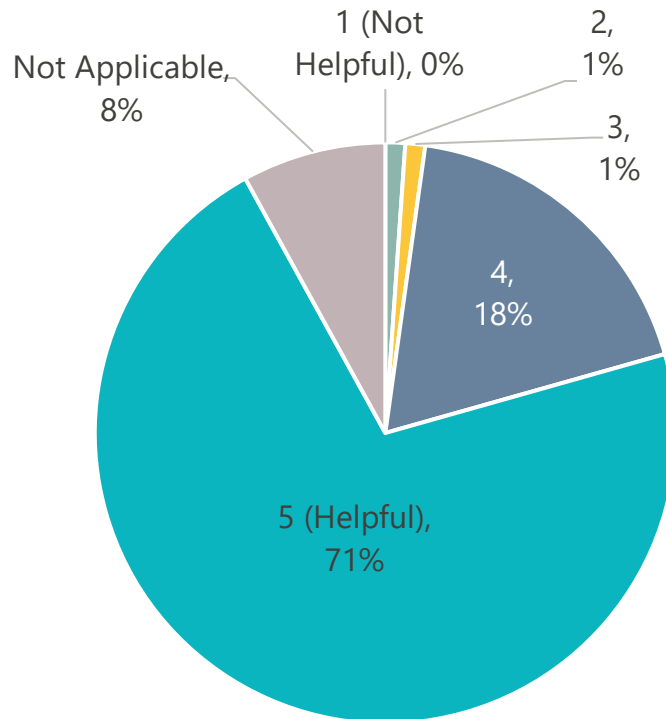
3. The training provided by OSPI for the 2019–20 Safety Net process was helpful.



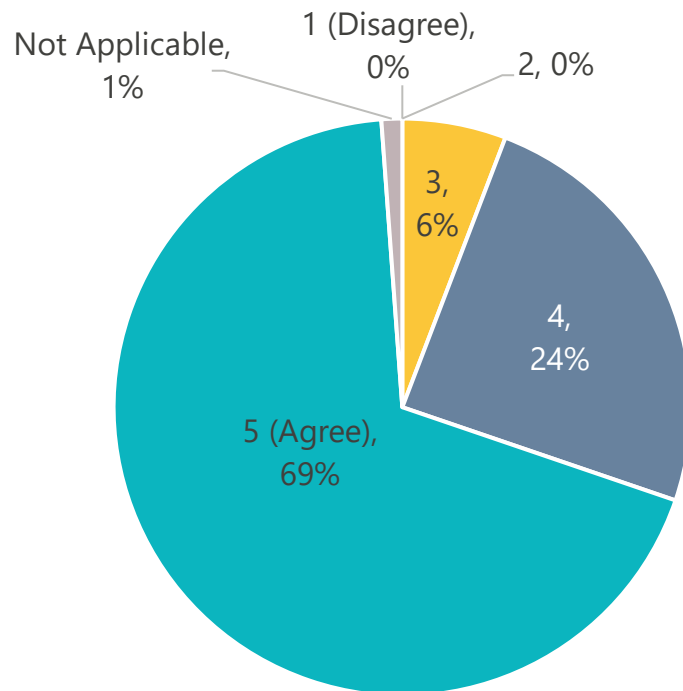
4. The Safety Net website includes information that is helpful to my LEA in the Safety Net application process.



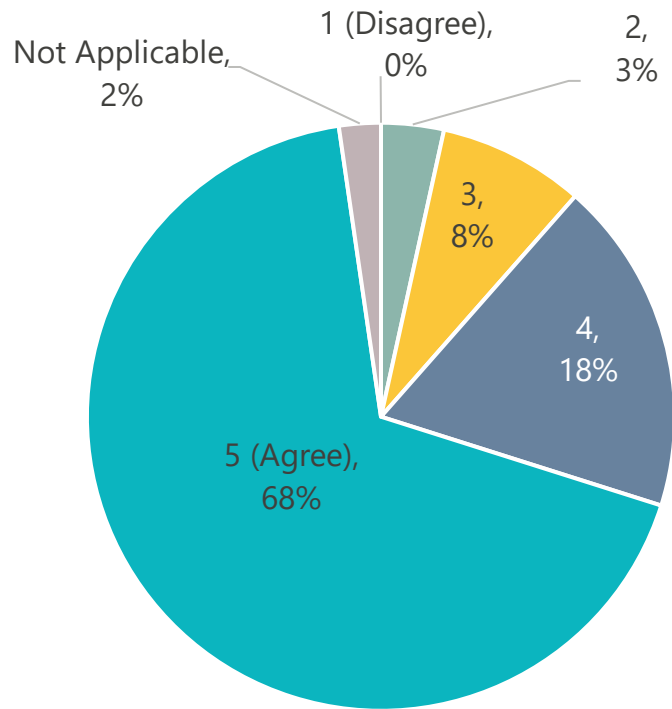
5. OSPI staff members are helpful to my LEA in the Safety Net application process.



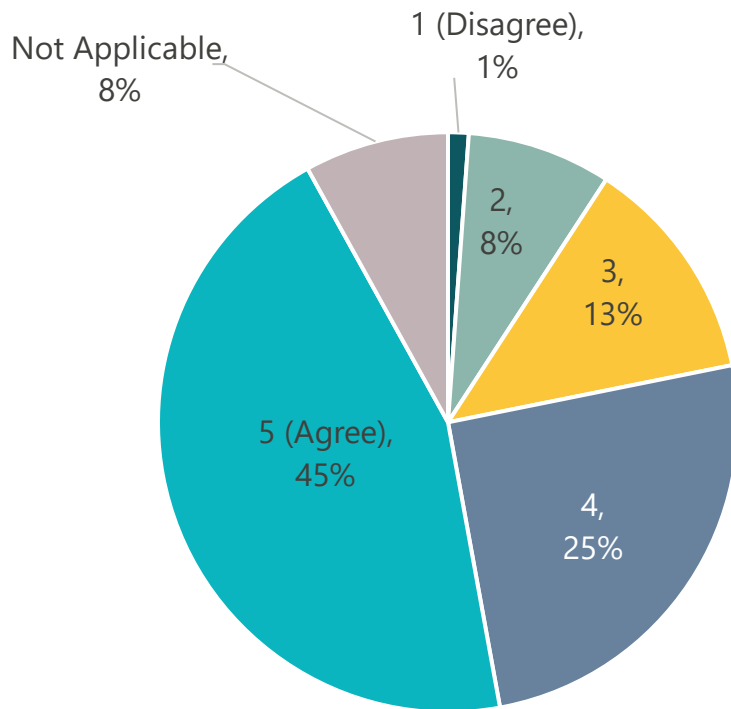
7. The Safety Net committee carefully considers my LEA's requests for Safety Net funding.



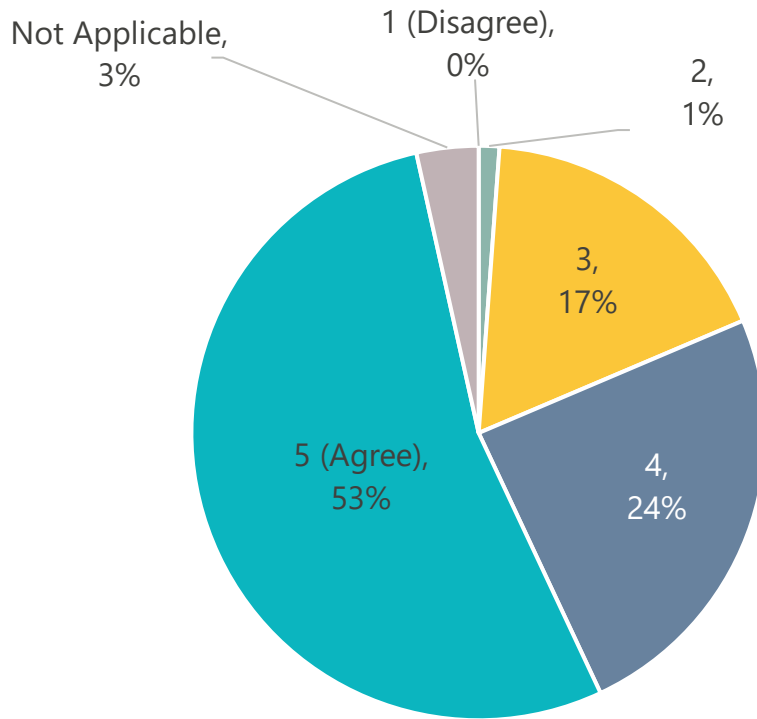
8. Although I may not always agree with the results, I was informed why my Safety Net applications were or were not funded.



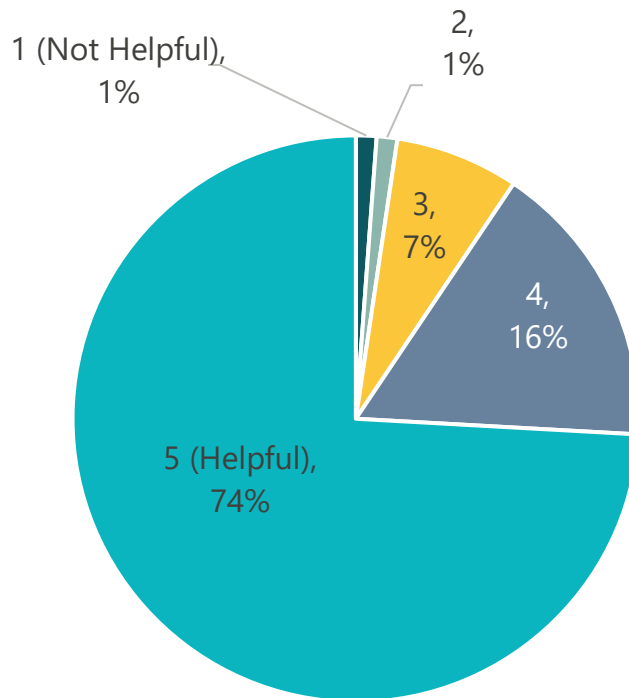
10. My LEA's IEPs have improved as a result of the Safety Net process.



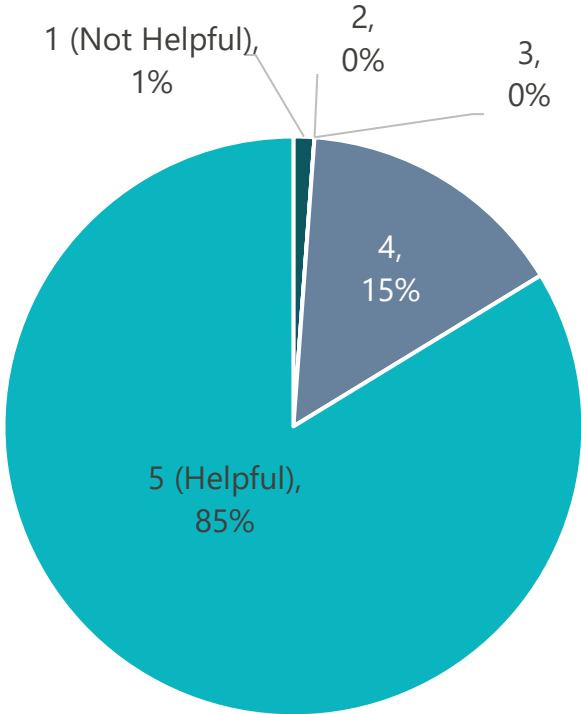
11. Although I may not always agree with the results, I believe the Safety Net standards are uniformly applied to all LEAs.



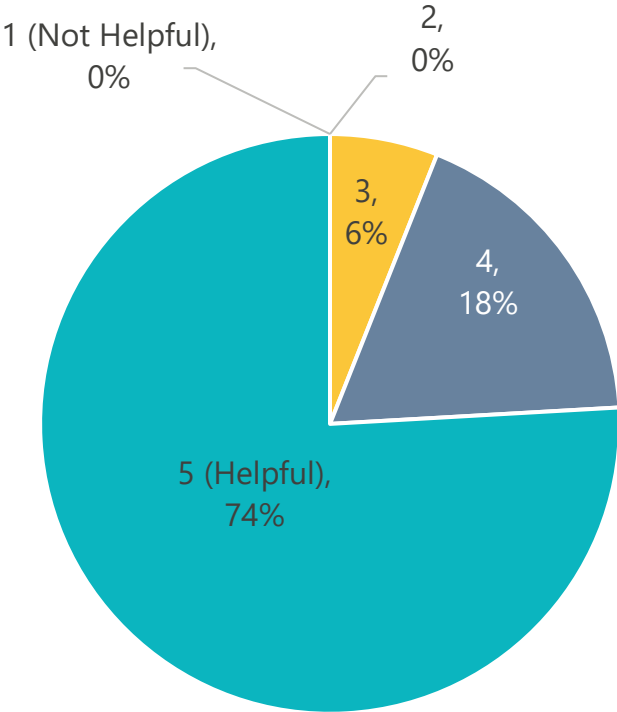
12. Rate the helpfulness of the following change:
a. Proration of IEPs when IEP issues identified



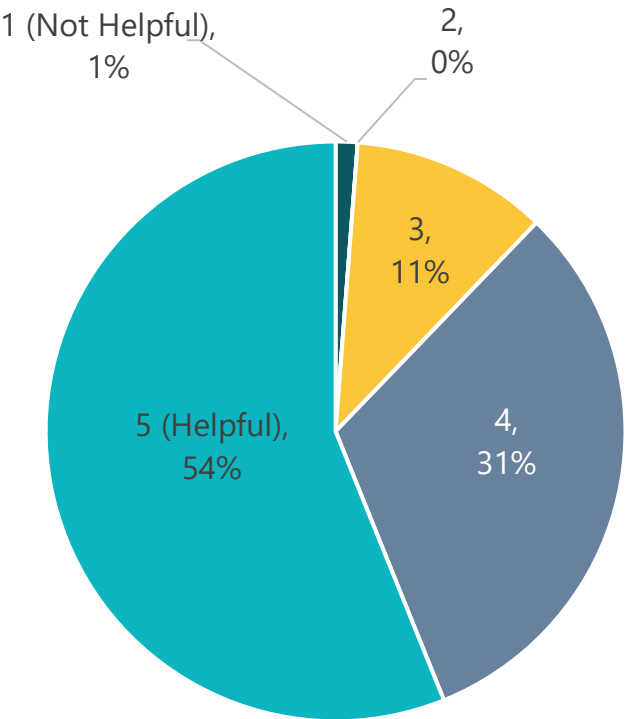
b. Lower threshold



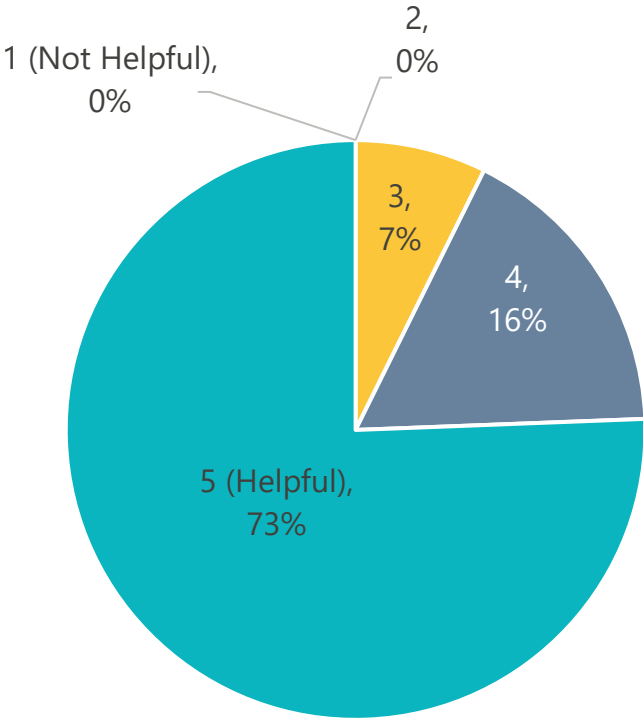
c. Ability to submit updated ESY paperwork if paperwork submitted with initial application was for previous school year



d. New worksheet C layout



e. Only one version of worksheet C published



Appendix C: Safety Net Survey Comments

Table 3: Survey Question 6

Please provide an example for question 5.
Alyssa and Jennifer are always ready with a quality answer!
I have emailed Amber and she is always very helpful.
Response to phone calls- extremely slow.
Anytime I've called for assistance OSPI Sped has been very helpful and I enjoy working with them.
I reached out to Amber & Sarah multiple times and they were both very helpful and willing to answer my newbie (only my 2nd Safety Net rodeo) questions. Because of their help I was better able to understand concurrent services and went from nearly all of our 2019 submissions being adjusted due to my lack of knowledge and understanding to none of our 2020 submissions adjusted due to that.
I always have questions and Amber is very prompt and helpful in her responses.
OSPI staff are very responsive and quick to troubleshoot and answer questions.
Always responsive to emails and returning phone calls. Might be helpful to know which OSPI person is supporting which districts.
When I have had specific questions, I have gotten prompt and useful responses.
I found OSPI SN staff to be patient and knowledgeable about the SN process and supportive in completion of our application.
The sped director and admin assist both left in the same year. This was our second year of trying to completed the sped forms. We had so many questions but they were always answered very politely.
Office staff are able to communicate with OSPI whenever questions about process arise.
I had a couple of questions about calculating time and staff responded to me clearly and quickly.
Amber was very responsive in terms of having excellent, accurate answers as well as her timeliness of responses.
Understanding the process.
Answering emails/questions in a timely manner.
Had to call for clarification a few times and received the help needed quickly.
Contact was made with individuals who were helpful.
Anytime I had a question, I was able to send it via email and/or call and always received a prompt and helpful response. Thank you so much!
OSPI staff researches questions and provides feedback.
Amber was very responsive and helpful when we reached out with questions about specific aspects of SN.
Promptly answered questions and provided timely information.
Close collaboration and support during the submittal process was helpful!

Please provide an example for question 5.
I called a couple of times to ask clarifying questions and received timely feedback. I was also contacted by team member for further information which was nice. Once submitted, we received multiple email communications with where our application was in the process. It was phenomenal service!
Amber attended a regional meeting in person. It was so helpful to have her available to answer questions.
Amber O'Donnell is very receptive and responsive to questions!
When I called they were helpful.
Both Amber O'Donnell and Sarah Kane provided me guidance especially when completing the Worksheet C. They answered my inquiries regarding HSBP.

Table 4: Survey Question 9

Please list helpful tools or supports that were available or provided to your LEA.
Worksheet C.
Communication and meetings via zoom.
Rubric.
Annual visit to Puget Sound SpEd Directors by Amber.
Having Amber & Sarah available to answer my questions—especially in a way I could understand.
Award summary sheet comments are helpful tools.
We looked at reports that were previously sent in. We were able to replica those.
Direct access to being able to ask questions was very helpful.
Written responses as to why funding was not granted.
Review of process during ESD meeting, updated documents on Safety Net site, having people available to answer questions
Thank you for coming to our local ESD to train us.
Trainings and access to directions to refer to.
The Service Matrix examples were extremely helpful.
Web and people answering the phone when the research would be cumbersome.
I don't know. On the report there are codes, but I don't know how to decipher what they mean (for the results).
Email and/or calling support staff website Q&A's.
Website and the digitally accessible Safety Net application.
I loved the new worksheet C, the contracted staff calculator, and all of the webinars, and ESD Safety Net Training. I spoke with Amber O'Donnell, Cindy Hargrave, and Sarah Kahne and found them to be particularly helpful whenever I had a question.
Written explanation is great and the ability to ask follow-up questions.
OSPI staff calling when they have questions about our application.
Responded to emailed questions. Phone conversations. In-person visit.
Bulletin, OSPI Safety Net website, meetings.
The listed reasons for not funding were generic, rather than specific to the specific issues for each file.
Technical assistance.

Please list helpful tools or supports that were available or provided to your LEA.
Website and OSPI staff.
Most staff are off during the month of July when the Award comes out leaving very little time to appeal the decision when they return in August.
All the spreadsheets are helpful and self explanatory. The info on the OSPI website was easy to find.
Website and staff.
Worksheet A and C templates with clear step by step instructions.
Questions were readily answered.
I was informed, but I did not understand the why. If it is at all possible to get an example of what a fully funded Safety Net application/IEP etc. looks like that would be helpful.
The forms that OSPI provides are helpful.
The face-to-face training provided at Anacortes and the training videos on how to complete the worksheets have been very helpful to us.
As noted above it is really about efficient helpful staff. You have them!!

Table 5: Survey Question 10

Q13. Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
As a smaller district the time taken up with this process is massive. Other districts with more resources, I believe have an easier time in reviewing these to make them perfect. It results in so much energy being piled into the exceptional Safety Net ones, for compliance that we rarely have time to review the others. Dialing down the expectation a bit more, and focusing on the spirit vs. the exact wording. I think this is getting better, but just needs to continue. There's an incredible amount of pressure on this process.
Less paperwork per IEP would be helpful.
A checklist that aligns with the committees scoring rubric would be helpful. An Asynchronous video of the training and an asynchronous video of key mistakes from the past (avoid these).
Continue to:—lower the threshold—reduce paperwork—find a metric besides minutes per week to measure funding, perhaps something that we can run a report to find easily. The spreadsheets and work we do to calculate minutes is a bit ridiculous.
Special Ed for Dummies would be great! I am just now starting my 3rd school year as an admin asst in Special Ed and it would be helpful to have an easy to understand document explaining things like concurrent services, supplemental services ,etc. The teachers, psychs, administrators, etc. have had these things drilled into them while getting their degrees. My degree is in sociology.
There have historically been some issues with inter-rater reliability such that it has seemed that an award is sometimes influenced by which reviewer you get. Anything the committee can do to address this issue is helpful.
Publish Safety Net application as soon as possible for LEA preparation purposes.
Liked the merge of the different forms including transportation. Not a fan of the Secure Portal.
The mechanics of how staff hours, particularly paraprofessionals' hours, are calculated from IEPs is unclear. I carefully attribute only the actual hours that are being worked, yet they are often adjusted.

Q13. Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.

Follow up on any identified deficiencies so that the LEA can improve. Our feedback was general rather than very specific.

10–12 would best be answered by the Sped Team. I am the business manager helping with the financial portion of the report.

When references to the possibility of including further information after Safety Net is processed, procedures for adding that additional information would be very helpful. Excess costs related to litigation, attorney fees, IEEs, etc. should be allowable student costs for a district to attempt to recoup through Safety Net.

Continue with updates.

My experience is that OSPI SPED is reasonable, supportive, and accessible.

Consider the cost to a smaller school district is proportionally more impactful than to a larger district with a larger capacity. Consider regionalization factors of funding. Most Eastern Washington District do not receive regionalization.

I was brand new to the process this year and I'm sure I will still feel brand new next year. Having access to guidance is reassuring.

I know it would require legislation, but a District's fund balance should be included in the calculation for SN funding. If a District carries a very large fund balance, they should not demonstrate "need". This would allow more funds to be available to lower income Districts.

This was the first time our district had done Safety Net in quite a few years. I thought the process was easy to follow once I understood it and look forward to seeing the process work better for our district 20–21 now that the expectation is clear.

It would be helpful for us to be able to submit an IEP and have someone evaluate it to give us feedback early in the school year in order for us to clearly articulate the requirements to our staff.

I greatly appreciate the changes that have been made as indicated above in #12. Thank you for hearing us and responding so magnificently!

Website could provide more details on process, worksheet C. Website could provide more information on compliant IEPs, IEP documentation, etc.

Continued striving to get all information out quickly (threshold, worksheet C/A, transportation calculator).

It would be helpful if meeting invite and documents were sent to all LEA members who registered to attend instead of only one person in the district.

Access to worksheet C and transportation form in Sept. would be great!

Great job— smooth process.

I think the whole process has been greatly improved. Thank you!

The fiscal folks need more training and instruction on the components of Worksheet A. For example, supplemental contracts and benefit % used.

The "coreftp" system is an EXTREMELY non-user friendly system in which to submit data. Is there a possibility of a more modern platform?

Please give us an example of a 'perfect' IEP for the more complex needs of a student, along with worksheet C.

I believe having guidelines and examples of completed Worksheet C for the districts on 100% remote model and blended model will be helpful in completing the application.

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