



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: Safety Net Survey

*2021*

**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.

The Legislature requires the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (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 process. More than 340 people from LEAs that applied for Safety Net received the survey in September 2021. The survey included 12 questions and was open for two weeks. OSPI received 74 responses.

# BACKGROUND

There are two types of Safety Net funding: High-Need Individual and Community Impact. High-Need funding is provided on behalf of an individual student. Community Impact funding is for a factor that impacts the LEA as a whole. OSPI provides a [bulletin](#), instructions, and application forms to school districts each school year. OSPI provided professional development at seven of the nine regional educational service districts (ESDs) prior to the initial 2020–21 submission date. The Safety Net Oversight Committee awards funding to applicants.

The Committee has awarded more than \$834 million since the program’s beginning in the 1996–97 school year. In 2020–21, the Committee awarded funding to 116 LEAs. These LEAs included school districts, an Educational Service Agency (ESA), and one charter school.

Two of the 118 LEAs that applied did not receive Safety Net funding. These two LEAs were not funded due to lack of demonstrated capacity on Worksheet A.

## Funding Awarded by the Committee

**3,152 High-Need Individual applications totaling \$86,121,681**

**15 Community Impact applications totaling \$4,999,030**

# UPDATE STATUS

Respondents rated nine of the 12 questions on a scale of 1–5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 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.

## Survey Changes

A question regarding the helpfulness of individual changes was removed this year as no substantial changes were made to the process.

## Survey Responses

While some average responses decreased in the 2020–21 survey results, all the questions had an average response above 4 out of 5.

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

- Lowering or removing the threshold,
- Adjusting the timelines so there are no deadlines in the summer months, and
- Streamlining the application process.

**Table 1: Average Response by Question**

Question	Average Response
Q1. The 2020–21 Safety Net Bulletin—which outlined the process changes, application criteria, and submission deadlines—was clear.	4.28
Q3. The training provided by OSPI for the 2020–21 safety net process was helpful.	4.04
Q4. The safety net website includes information that is helpful to my LEA in the safety net application process.	4.14
Q5. OSPI staff members are helpful to my LEA in the safety net application process.	4.53
Q7. The safety net committee carefully considers my LEA's requests for safety net funding.	4.52
Q8. Although I may not always agree with the results, I was informed why my safety net applications were or were not funded.	4.59
Q10. My LEA's IEPs have improved as a result of the safety net process.	4.12
Q11. Although I may not always agree with the results, I believe the safety net standards are uniformly applied to all LEAs.	4.18

**Source:** 2020–21 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. Table 2 below contains data for out-of-district placements by placement type for the past three years. The data show that the percentage of applications **funded** through Safety Net for out-of-district placements increased by nearly 6% in 2020–21. Examining the data, the number of funded applications in all types of placements increased while the total amount funded increased in all types of placements except school district placements.

**Table 2: Out-of-District Placements, 2018–21**

Type of Placement	Total Awarded for Out-of-District Placement*	Number of Applications Funded	Percent of Total Applications Funded
<b>2020–21</b>			
ESD program	\$12,427,620	189	6.0%
In-state NPA	\$35,717,058	468	14.8%
Out-of-state NPA	\$12,857,602	80	2.5%
School district	\$10,026,543	179	5.7%
	\$71,028,823	916	29.1%
<b>2019–20</b>			
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%
<b>2018–19</b>			
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%

**Source:** Safety Net Database.

**\*Note:** The total awarded for the out of district placement types is the cost before threshold deduction. The cost before threshold is used as opposed to the award amount because applications may contain other costs and include more than one out-of-district placement location.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Safety Net Bulletin and application forms are currently under development for the 2021–22 school year. OSPI has scheduled training opportunities at all nine ESDs as well as targeted trainings for specific areas such as completing Worksheet C and the 1:1 contracted provider worksheet, and a High School and Beyond Plan mini training. Staff have reached out to OSPI's Office of Native Education to request to join one of their regular meetings. Additionally, staff have met with one juvenile rehabilitation institution to discuss Community Impact and have plans to reach out directly to the remaining three institutions. Once the data are available, staff plan to run preliminary capacity checks in an effort to reach out to districts who may qualify for Safety Net but who typically do not apply.

Work continues on an application platform. An application platform will provide a streamlined electronic submission process for applicants that addresses concerns regarding submission from this and previous year's survey respondents. The goal to have this application platform available by the 2021–22 school year was not met as there have been delays with the potential contractor. This platform should alleviate many challenges applicants face when submitting applications.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

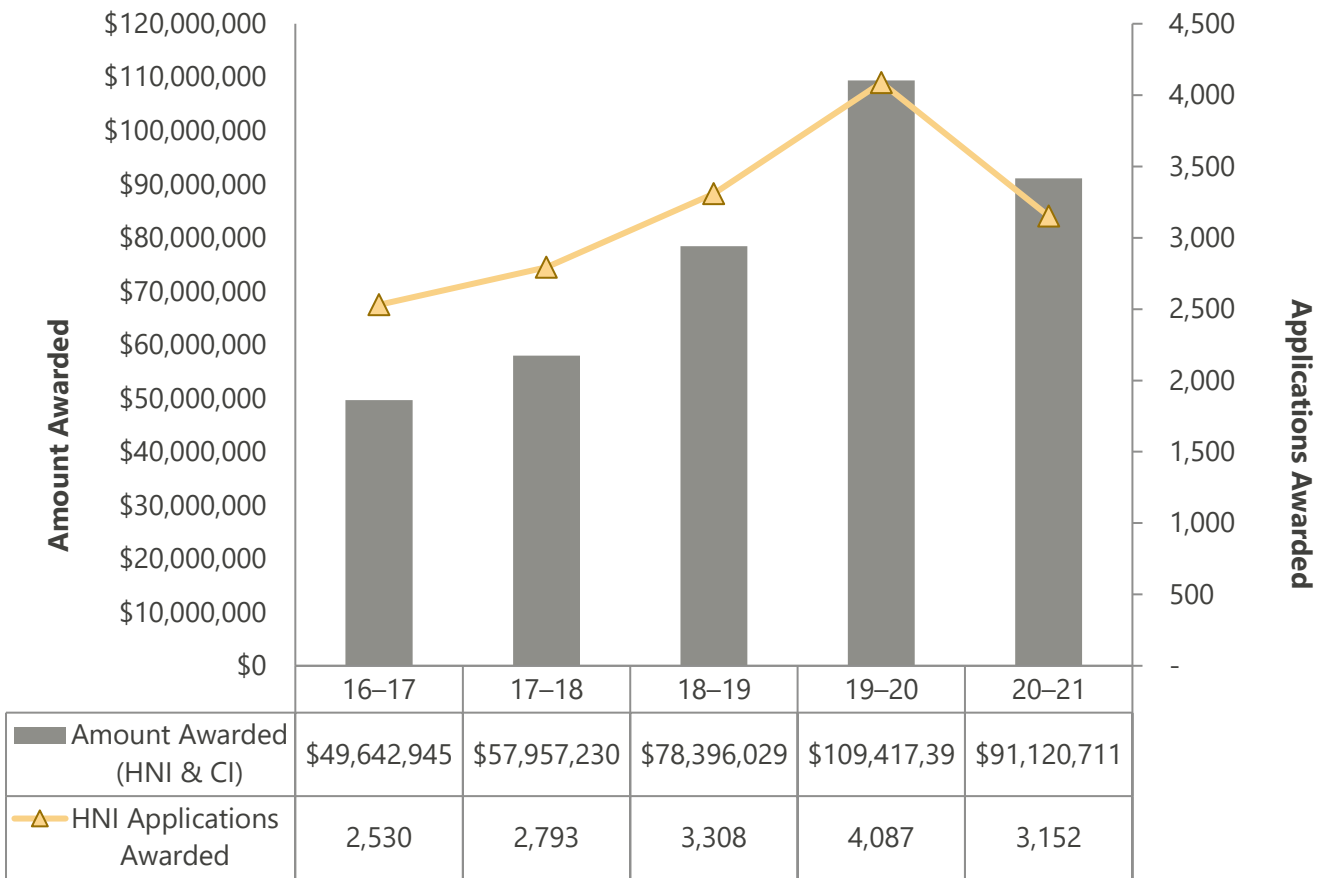
OSPI would like to acknowledge the effort and hard work that both applicants and committee members contribute to this process.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Safety Net Funding Amounts

In 2020–21, the State Safety Net Committee approved 116 LEAs for Safety Net funding. The committee awarded 3,152 High-Need Individual student applications and 15 Community Impact applications for a total of \$91,120,711 (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Safety Net Funding 2016–17 through 2020–21**

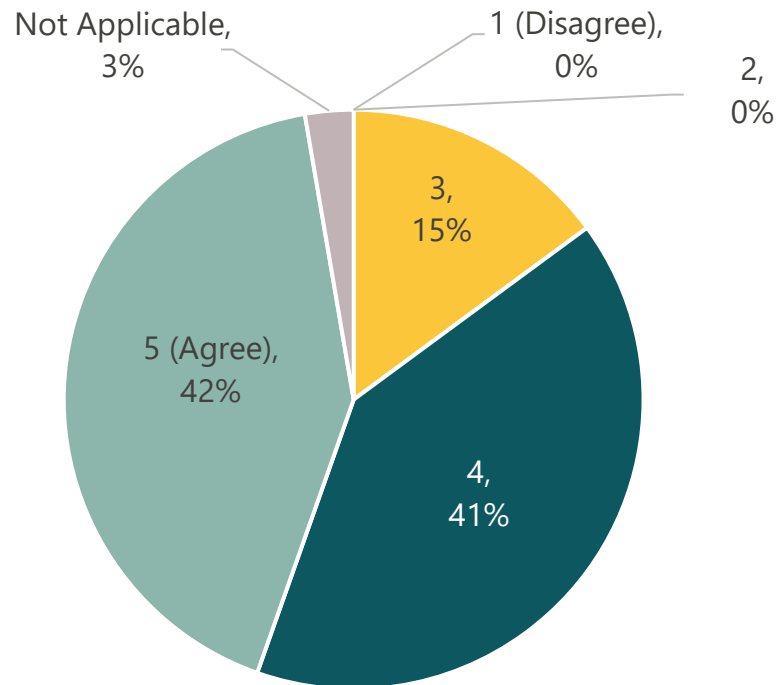


**Source:** Safety Net Database.

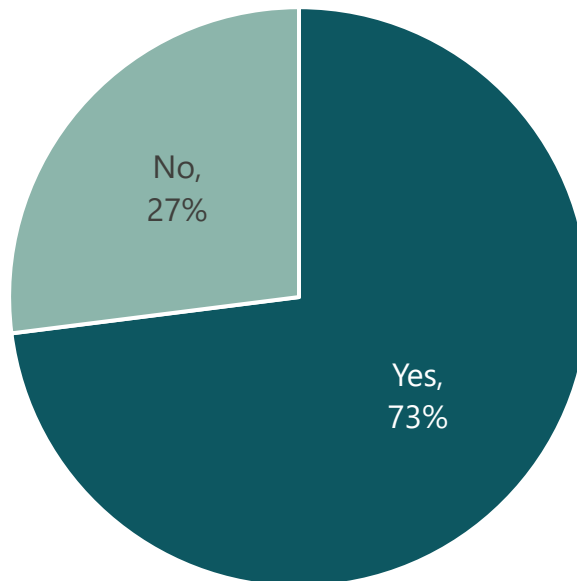


## Appendix B: Safety Net Survey Results

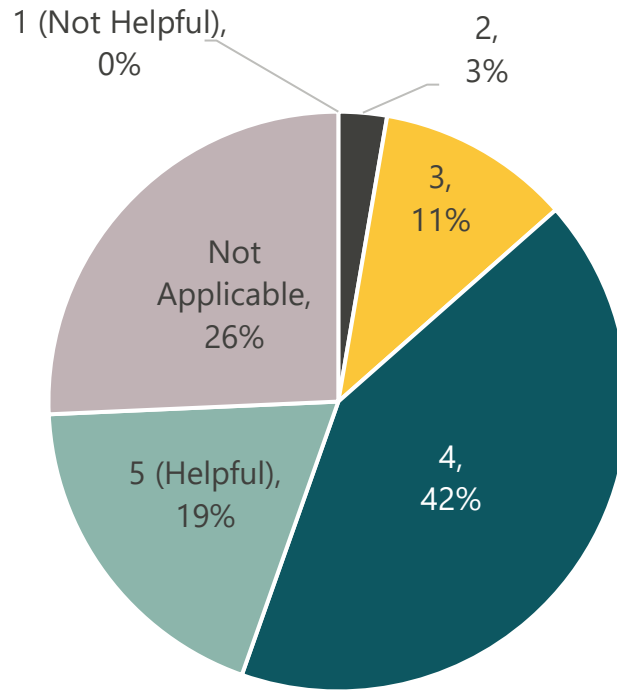
1. The 2020–21 Safety Net Bulletin—which outlined the process changes, application criteria, and submission deadlines—was clear.



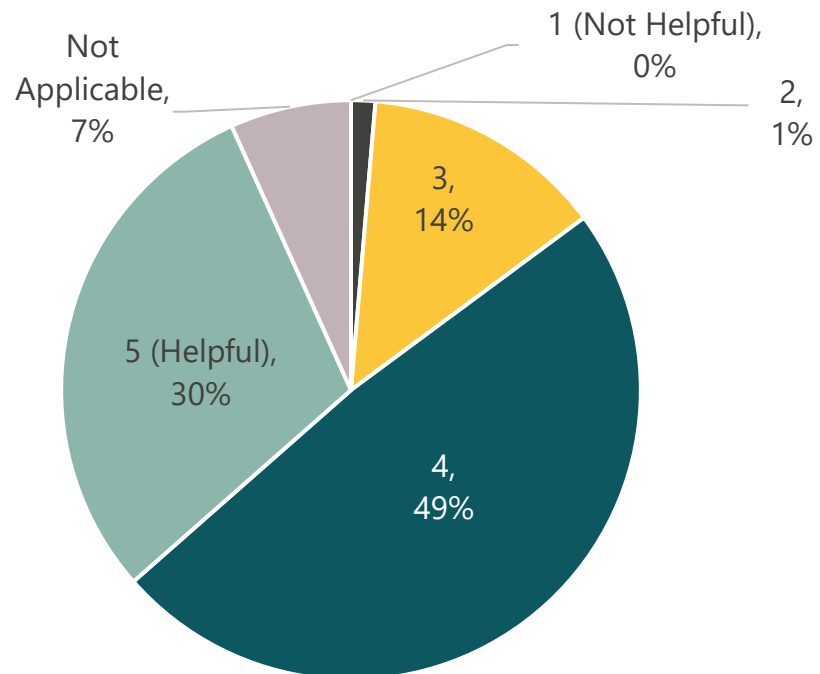
2. Did you utilize training provided by OSPI—such as in person trainings, Zoom meetings, webinars, or training videos—for the 2020–21 Safety Net process?



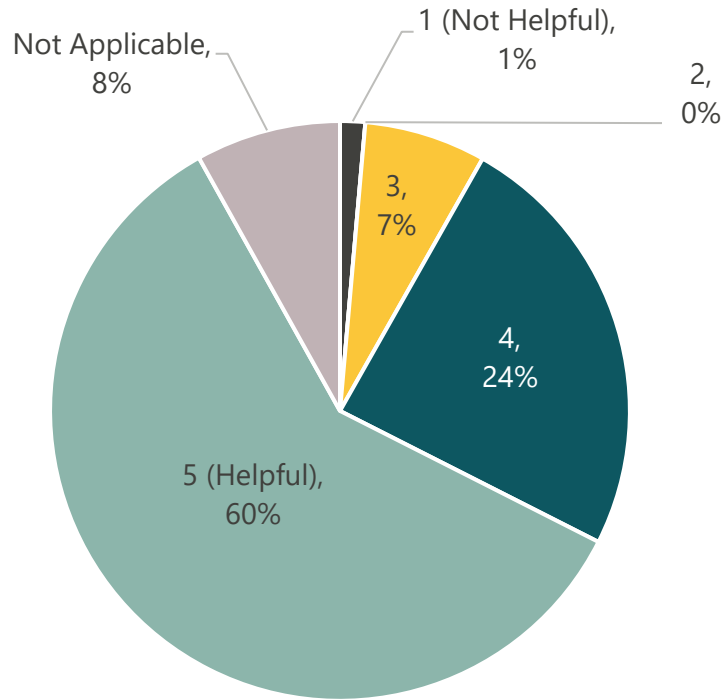
3. The training provided by OSPI for the 2020–21 Safety Net process was helpful.



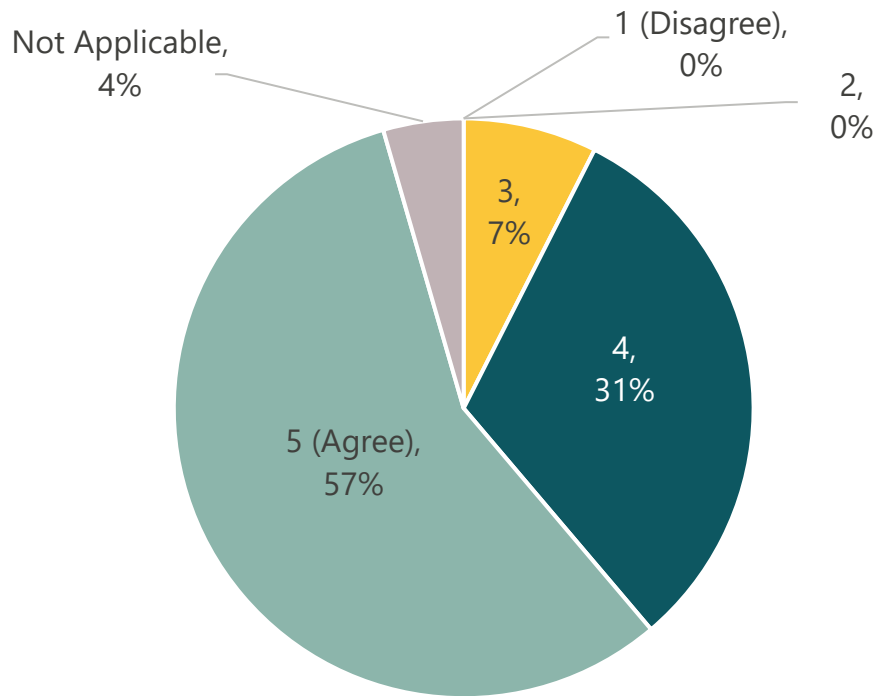
4. The Safety Net website includes information that is helpful to my LEA in the Safety Net application process.



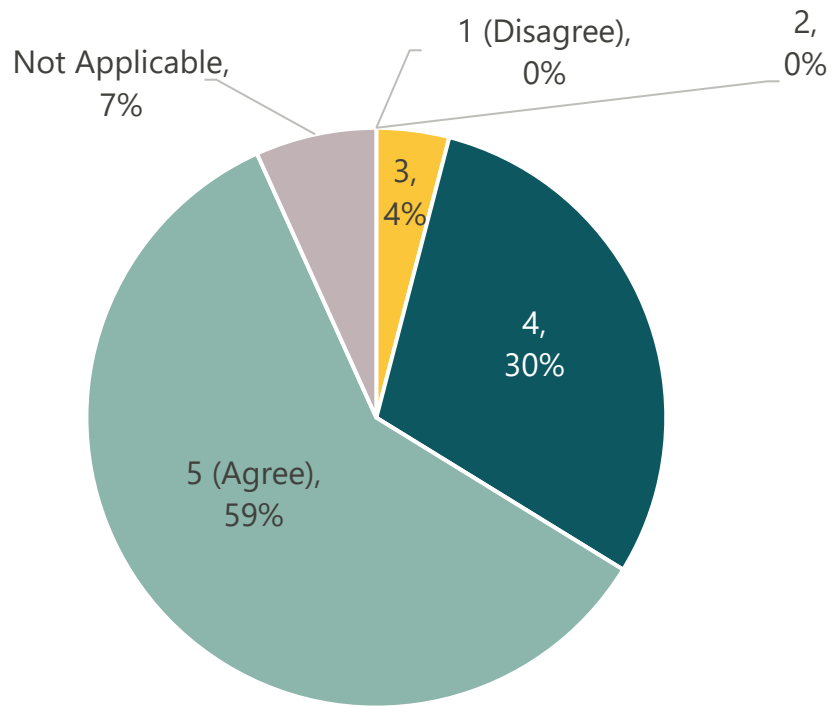
5. OSPI staff members are helpful to my LEA in the Safety Net application process.



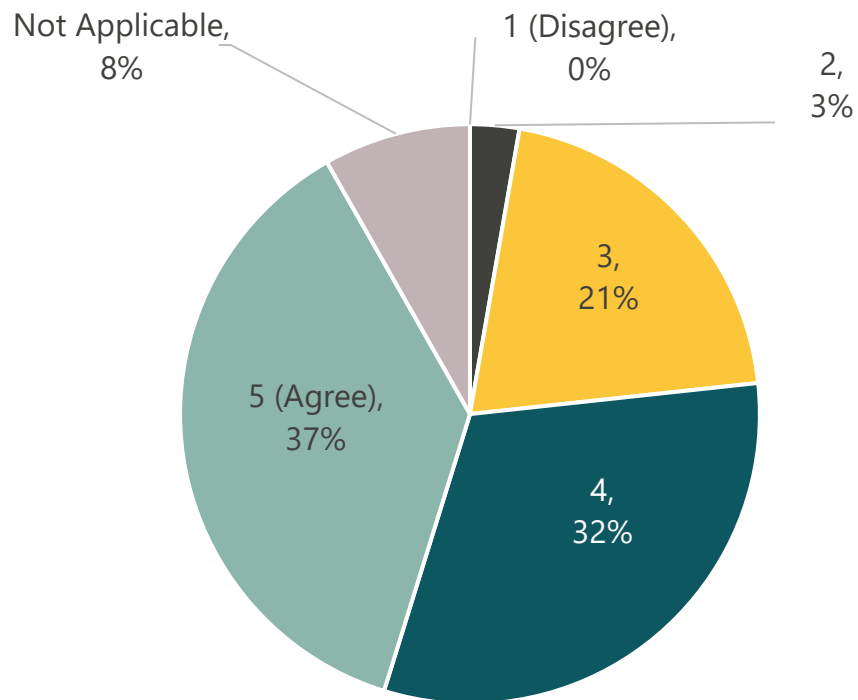
7. The Safety Net committee carefully considers my LEA's requests for Safety Net funding.



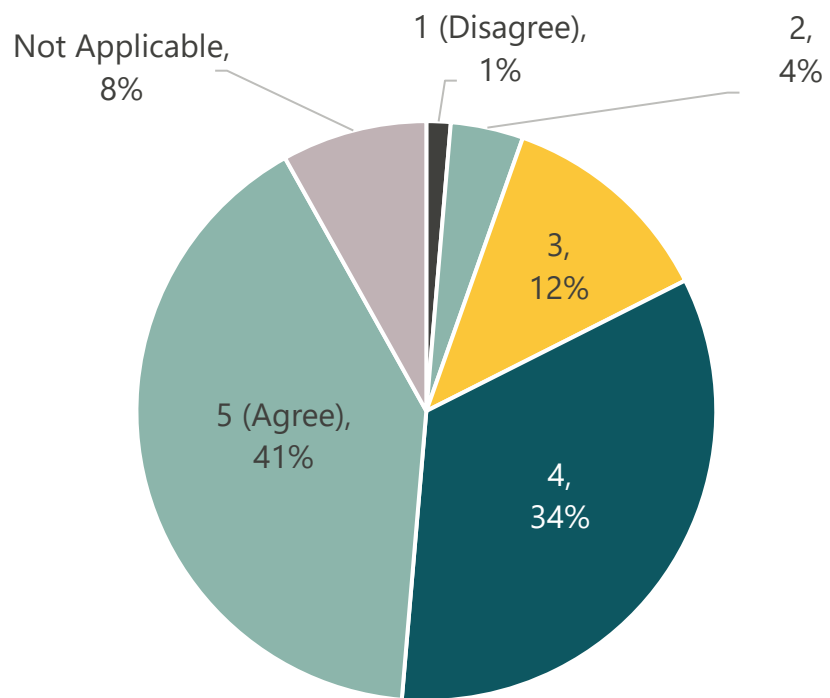
8. Although I may not always agree with the results, I was informed why my Safety Net applications were or were not funded.



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.



## Appendix C: Safety Net Survey Comments

**Table 3: Survey Question 6**

<b>Please provide an example for question 5.</b>
When I call with a question or an email I get prompt responses.
Ann Almlie Jones guides our team. Sarah Kahne is always available to answer questions and support the team.
They are very responsive when questions arise.
Phone calls were answered or returned quickly.
They always respond to emailed [questions] in a timely manner.
They were very patient when we would get something wrong and it took more than once for me to understand what they were asking for to get it right. VERY HELPFUL!
The level of staff support from OSPI has steadily improved over the last 4 years. OSPI is proactive in seeking information that districts may have overlooked and has been extremely timely and helpful when responding to questions.
Phone calls and emails were answered promptly and with respect.
Prompt return of phone calls.
Since this was the first time our district submitted for Safety Net funding, it was very helpful to be able to contact OSPI for any clarifying questions. The support was very helpful and appreciated!
Took way too long to get a response back to emails, which delayed our submittal, which caused us to get denied for one of the items. More timely communication is a must when we are in the middle of the process.
We always have questions and they are very prompt in helping us.
Amber, Sarah, and Jess were always available to answer my questions. They were able to share some documents that helped me understand better how to read a service matrix. I never felt like I couldn't contact them for help. I'm sure they got tired of hearing from me!
Review of Safety Net process provided to Olympic ESD SpEd Directors.
Answer clarifying questions.
Everyone we talk with is patient, humble, and willing to listen to concerns, and helps come up with solutions.
Office manager has been able to call for questions without hesitation.
Patience and helpfulness when our documentation was lost in transition between retirements.
Questions that were unique to a situation and that had to be problem solved.
Responsiveness to emails. I believe there should be more opportunity for schools to have support in determining how better to document needs within the district so as not to miss out on funding opportunities.
We have not received any information on resources that are provided through OSPI.
Amber's replies were timely, calming, and accurate. We really appreciate her work and guidance on Safety Net!
Quick Response.
I received assistance with gaining access to the system in a very timely manner.

<b>Please provide an example for question 5.</b>
Questions are readily answered.
All Safety Net questions were responded too in a prompt and clear manner.
Staff were responsive and provided helpful information about a situation that we had not encountered before.
Helpful with technical issues and questions.
Staff are always very quick to respond and able to answer all questions.
All OSPI safety net team members were very fast to respond and give guidance for unique circumstances even during the height of the safety net submission rush.
Very helpful on day-to-day logistical questions.
Answer questions in a timely manner.
When I have called for help with the upload, I have always received prompt assistance.
Quick to respond. Thorough explanations.
Whenever I called OSPI, they were always willing to set up a zoom meeting to answer any of my questions.
Had to revise my application and Sarah helped me through it.
Questions were quickly and thoroughly answered.
OSPI staff contacted me about files that were not readable so they could be resubmitted.
Responsive to questions, especially for those of us who are new, and are asking questions that may be simple to others.
The answers provided regarding staffing changes and how to reflect that within the application was unclear.
Helped me navigate the system as a first time filer.
Email responses are prompt, clear and helpful.
Easy to reach in a timely manner.
I e-mailed many times with questions about or Safety Net application. Each time my question was answered promptly.
Staff was so responsive and supportive. I greatly appreciate their availability and turn around with answers. Also so willing to help. They are great!
Called for clarification on a question and struggled with the phone system. Once we received a call back the question was answered.
When we email OSPI staff with questions, they are quick to answer and are always very helpful.
Staff are quick to respond to questions via email and to clarify what may need to go in a particular box on the form.
Staff were responsive and very helpful with scheduling times to support.
Email responses are timely.
I reached out multiple times to the team and they were always super helpful and responsive.
We appreciate the support we received from the Safety Net Committee members especially Amber, Sarah, and Jess!!! They're prompts and responsive to our inquiries.
Amber O'Donnell is our go-to person and we love her and truly appreciate her patience with us!
Quickly responded to inquiries regarding specific WSC [Worksheet C] questions or clarifications.

**Please provide an example for question 5.**

Response to questions was timely.

**Table 4: Survey Question 9**

<b>Please list helpful tools or supports that were available or provided to your LEA.</b>
The revision of worksheet C- much easier to use - and OSPI staff was always available to support and guide.
The information for the process, including the final amount, was detailed. I'm originally from Massachusetts, where the average reimbursement rate for Safety Net funding is 30% - 40%, but we received 85% this year and really appreciate it.
The online training materials on the OSPI website -- especially the FAQ which help me run through my specific questions.
Training on new rules and the updates to the worksheets.
Consistency Index Review process for some staff.
Just being able to quickly get to OSPI staff is very helpful.
Lewis County SpEd Co op has been extremely helpful to our district.
N/A
Bulletin Webinar.
Listing why adjustments were made is helpful.
The safety net web page in general has been really helpful for our team as a resource and starting point for initial questions we have.
Updated website with forms, directions are a great improvement.
The community impact descriptions are always helpful.
Worksheet C:)
Support from OSPI.
FTP [File Transfer Protocol] site was easy to navigate.
Guidance for submitting and completing student applications.
Checklists, timelines.
Quick email responses.
The staff!
Online trainings.
I appreciate the descriptions to why or how my applications were adjusted.
Sent several letters to the district to inform us of the results.
I am new to this process, so not sure about tools available. I believe there are probably lots of tools available on the website and will searching this more since I am more involved now.
We were given the PDF document why there was a prorated funding for some of our applications and the IEP review as well were very helpful!
It was very easy to look at our results in the email provided as to where we need to improve our reports for a better outcome.
Training Materials; Direct Support for Questions/Clarification
OSPI webinar, monthly meetings



**Table 5: Survey Question 12**

Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
To develop a process that is less complex - as this one is very time consuming.
I think the current process is fair. The recent changes have made it a much less stressful process. I still wonder how to make the monies available earlier so districts don't have to wait until the end of the fiscal cycle.
It's my understanding that charter schools are unable to include transportation as part of the total expenses for safety net funding, which can be significant. Is my understanding incorrect or (if I'm right) are there any steps that can be taken to change this?
Small rural school districts are severely impacted by students who require so much extra time and effort. Ensuring that there is some factor considered for small schools would be more helpful. This is especially so for transporting students, when it costs us \$40,000 for a year to transport a student to a facility 1.5 hours away and we are only allowed to ask for \$7,000 it feels like the formulas are out of balance.
Special Ed for Dummies manual! I'm an admin assistant with no background in special ed (previously a school admin asst) and am tasked with completing the Worksheet Cs. Things like concurrent services were difficult for me to understand my first year (and it showed in our adjustments). Not just for Safety Net, but in general I'd love to see some sort of basic information about special ed, paperwork, etc. in a format that someone without SpEd background could understand.
Overall, I'm still seeing that we are rewarded with simplicity when we send a student to an out of district program, but if the student stays in district, and needs added supports (self-contained program, 1:1 para, etc.), we have to do extensive documentation. We continue to do the right thing and keep them in their LRE, of course. A way to remedy this could be, for example, to just take an average of what a para costs in the district, instead of assigning it to an actual person and how many days that person works with the student. Thank you!
Small districts generally do not have administrators available in July. Reports and updates for Safety Net should not be due during the month of July.
I am not sure that the reading of each district and their award is a good use of time. What would be more helpful is having more people available to explain the why and help us improve. Thanks for asking.
It just seems like other states do not link this process to monitoring and it is far less cumbersome. Any way to uncouple or make more like other states?
District reviews to be conducted along with training to look at sampling documentation for improving IEPs.
We have submitted IEPs with the same information. Most are approved, but occasionally someone will find something no one else has and we receive a 442 correction.
I couldn't really answer number 7 regarding the committee's careful considerations of our application. Not even sure I could answer what that would look like. It all comes down to trusting the committee and due to all of the other considerations I believe they 'must'.
I believe greater scrutiny is given to larger districts who are requesting higher amounts of funds.
Clear information regarding transportation calculator.

<b>Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.</b>
We did not submit any individual safety net students this past school year. It would be great to get specific training on what needs to be in IEPs and how funding is done for those as I saw that several districts bring in a lot of money for their students and we do not bring it very much.
This year was a lot more streamlined. I appreciate the changes made.
N/A
An opportunity to talk to similar districts to mine from across the state to share ideas and talk through struggles.
Examples of compliant vs non-compliant applications/IEPs. Examples of how to record specific items. IEP examples with coordinating Worksheet C would be very helpful.
I like getting the awards piece before the meeting so I can really listen to the feedback while awards are being read.
I cannot think of anything.
The trainings are often just being read off the slides, so I don't feel like I am being trained on the actual forms, what to look for, how to problem solve common issues. Examples of district solutions is helpful also.
It is very cumbersome. Sure would be nice if it could get simplified.
I would love to have continuous safety net trainings via Zoom and/or recorded asynchronous trainings provided. Our district truly appreciates the time provided to collaborate with the team prior to the submission to address our district's concerns and inquiries.
Transportation Calculator Availability
Changing the threshold during a Pandemic was inappropriate. The process is an exceptional burden for small districts that do not have the manpower to spend on each IEP/cost. This in itself creates inequity.

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