Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Safety Net Survey

2022

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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 Safety Net process. More than 500 people from LEAs that applied for Safety Net received the survey in September 2022. The survey included 13 questions and was open for two weeks. OSPI received 97 responses.

BACKGROUND

There are two types of Safety Net funding: High-Need Individual and Community Impact. High-Need funding is allocated on behalf of an individual student. Community Impact funding is for a general factor that impacts the LEA. OSPI provides a Safety Net bulletin, instructions, and application forms each school year.

OSPI provided training to all nine regional educational service districts (ESDs) prior to the initial 2021–22 submission date. OSPI hosted one general training and four topical mini trainings as well as one-on-one meetings with over 30 LEAs prior to the submission deadline.

The Safety Net Oversight Committee awards funding to applicants. The Committee has awarded more than $960 million since the program's beginning in 1996–97. In 2021–22, the Committee awarded funding to 127 LEAs.

Five of the 132 LEAs that applied did not receive Safety Net funding. These five LEAs were not funded due to lack of demonstrated capacity on Worksheet A.

The funding awarded by the Committee in 2021–22 included:

- 3,862 High-Need Individual applications totaling $115,617,132, and
- 10 Community Impact applications totaling $6,286,752.

UPDATE STATUS

Respondents rated 8 of the 13 questions on a scale of 1 to 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 four questions were open ended. Survey responses were anonymous.

Survey Changes

OSPI added question requesting information on what LEAs would find helpful in an online application platform to the survey.

Survey Responses

The average response decreased slightly on several questions. Seven of the eight questions had an average response above 4.0.

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

- Removing barriers for small and medium sized LEAs
- Streamlining the application process
- Removing the IEP compliance component of the application
- Providing more feedback when applications are not funded
- More consistency between reviewers

Figure 1: Average Response by Question

Question	Average Response
Q1. The 2021–22 Safety Net Bulletin—which outlined the process changes, application criteria, and submission deadlines—was clear.	4.35
Q3. The training provided by OSPI for the 2021–22 safety net process was helpful.	4.18
Q4. The safety net website includes information that is helpful to my LEA in the safety net application process.	4.11
Q5. OSPI staff members are helpful to my LEA in the safety net application process.	4.64
Q7. The safety net committee carefully considers my LEA's requests for safety net funding.	4.41
Q8. Although I may not always agree with the results, I was informed why my safety net applications were or were not funded.	4.45
Q10. My LEA's IEPs have improved as a result of the safety net process.	3.89
Q11. Although I may not always agree with the results, I believe the safety net standards are uniformly applied to all LEAs.	4.03

Source: 2021–22 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 decreased over 5% in 2021–22.

Figure 2: Out-of-District Placements by Placement Type, Three Years

Type of Placement	Total awarded for out of district placement	Number of Applications	Percent of Applications
2021–22			
ESD program	$11,299,619	170	5.4%
In-state non-public agency (NPA)	$34,721,358	468	14.8%
Out-of-state NPA	$17,063,349	103	3.3%
School district	$10,858,915	181	5.7%
TOTAL	$73,943,241	922	23.9%
2020–21			
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%
TOTAL	$71,028,823	916	29.1%
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%
TOTAL	$65,532,396	945	23.1%

Source: Safety Net Database.

*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 opposed to the award amount because applications may contain other costs and include more than one out-of-district placement location.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The Safety Net bulletin and application forms are currently under development for the 2022–23 school year. OSPI is scheduling training opportunities at all nine ESDs.

OSPI staff are working with a contractor to create an application platform. The goal of this platform is to provide a streamlined electronic submission process for applicants. The platform was initially scheduled to be available by the 2022–23 school year. However, delays with the contractor pushed planned launch to the 2023–24 school year. This platform should alleviate many challenges applicants face when submitting applications.

ACKNOWLEGMENTS

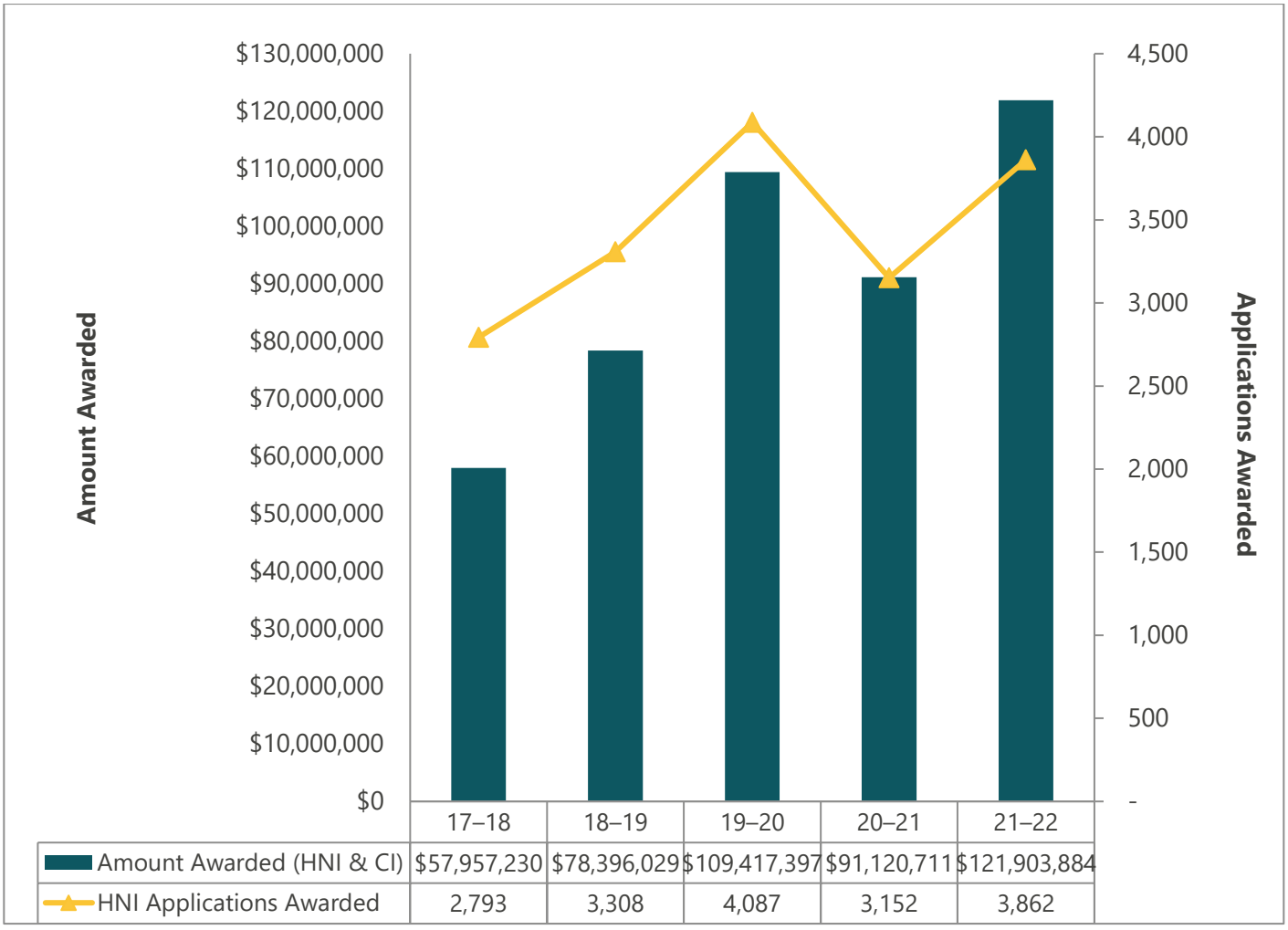
OSPI would like to acknowledge the effort and hard work that both applicants and committee members contribute to this process.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Safety Net Funding Amounts

In 2021–22, the State Safety Net Committee approved 127 LEAs for Safety Net funding. The committee awarded 3,862 High-Need Individual student applications, and 10 Community Impact applications for a total of $121,903,884 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Safety Net Funding 2017–18 through 2021–22

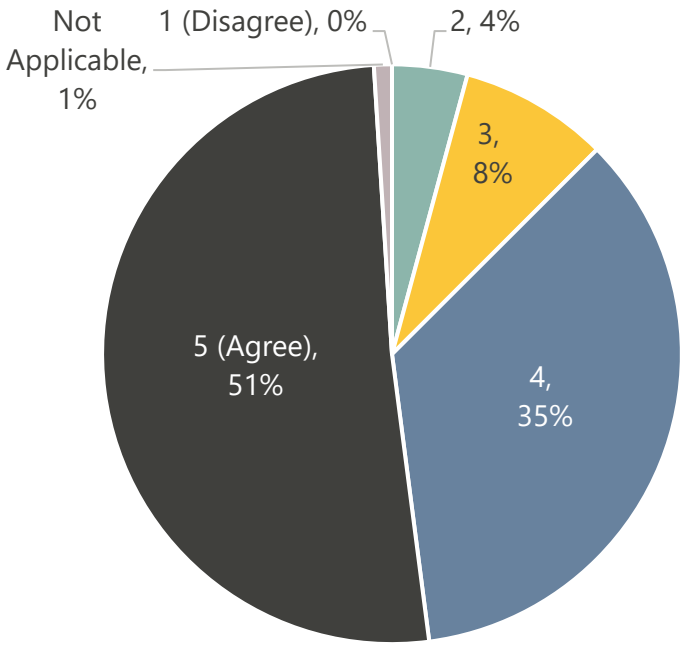


	17–18	18–19	19–20	20–21	21–22
Amount Awarded (HNI & CI)	$57,957,230	$78,396,029	$109,417,397	$91,120,711	$121,903,884
HNI Applications Awarded	2,793	3,308	4,087	3,152	3,862

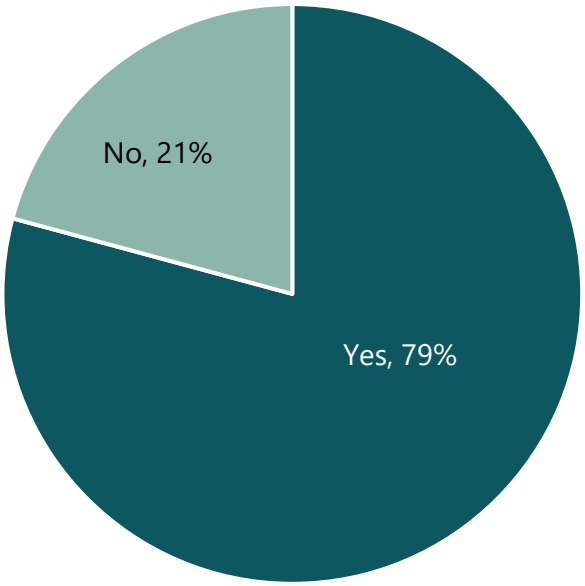
Source: Safety Net Database.

Appendix B: Safety Net Survey Results

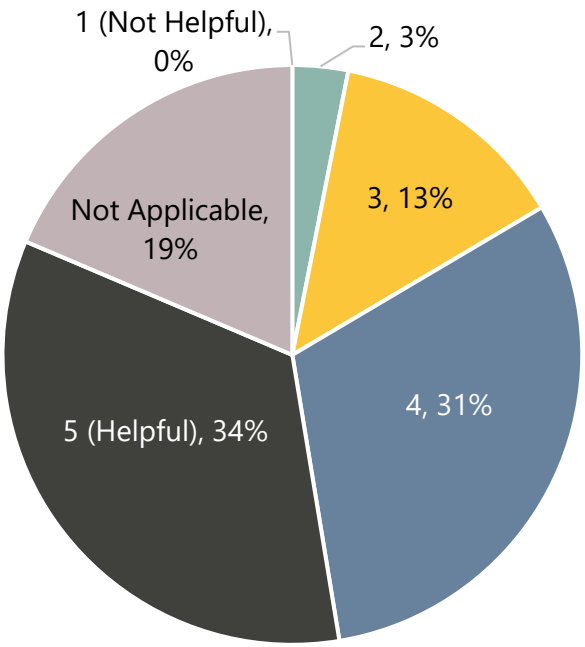
1. The 2021–22 Safety Net Bulletin—which outlined the process changes, application criteria, and submission deadlines—was clear.



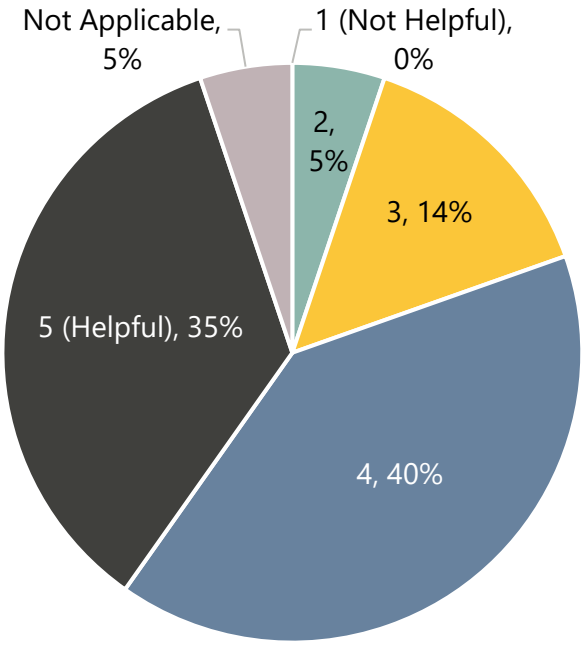
2. Did you utilize training provided by OSPI-such as in person trainings, Zoom meetings, webinars, or training videos-for the 2021–22 Safety Net process?



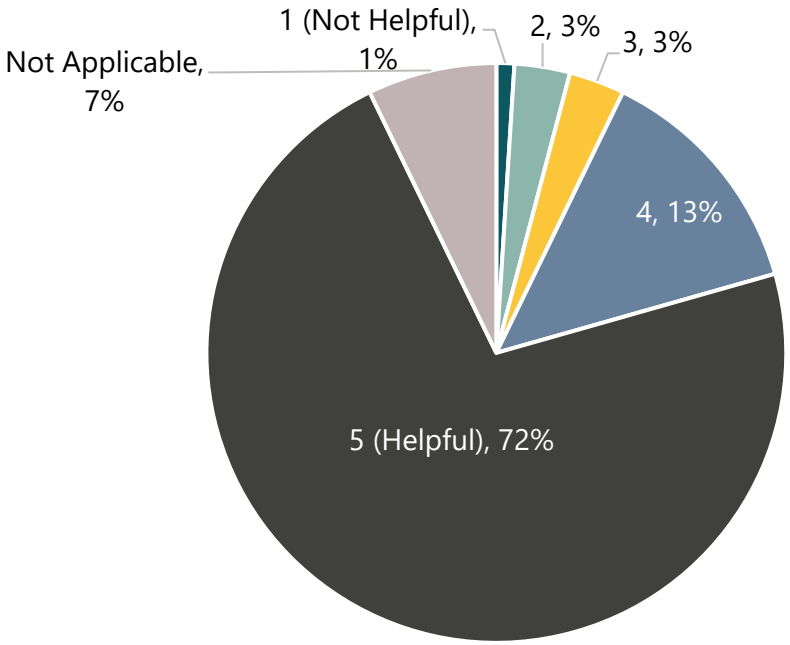
3. The training provided by OSPI for the 2021–22 safety net process was helpful.



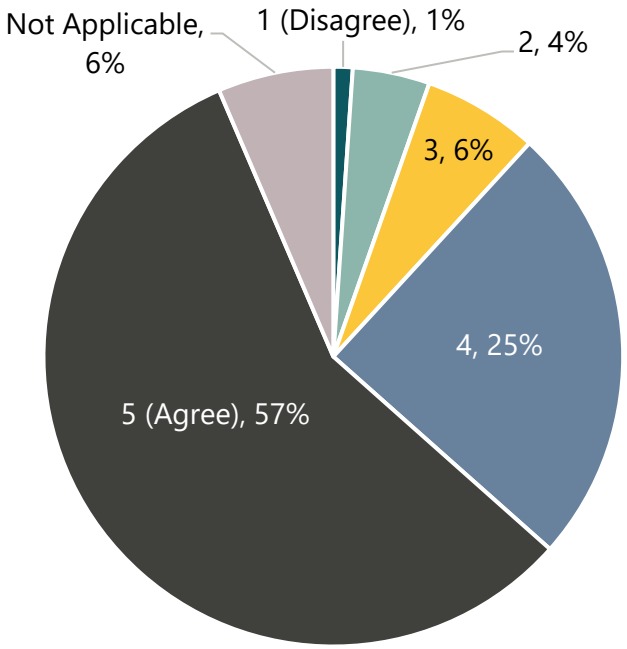
4. The safety net website includes information that is helpful to my LEA in the safety net application process.



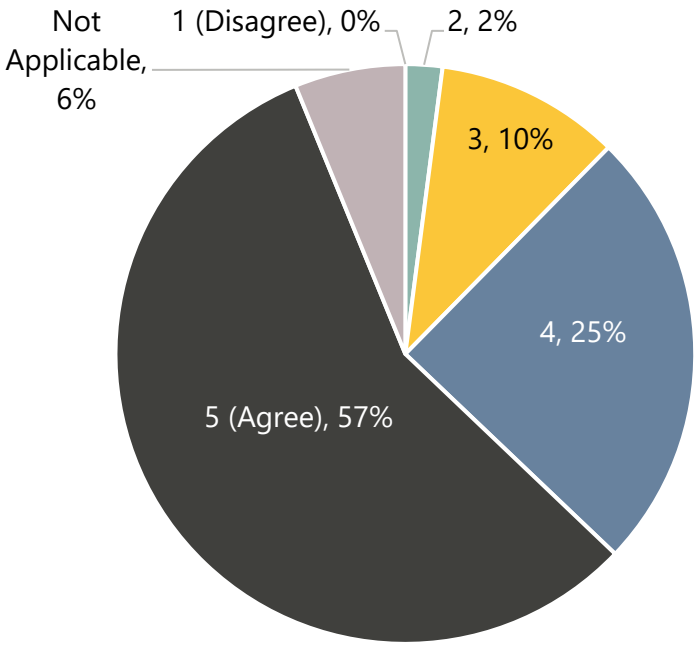
5. OSPI staff members are helpful to my LEA in the safety net application process.



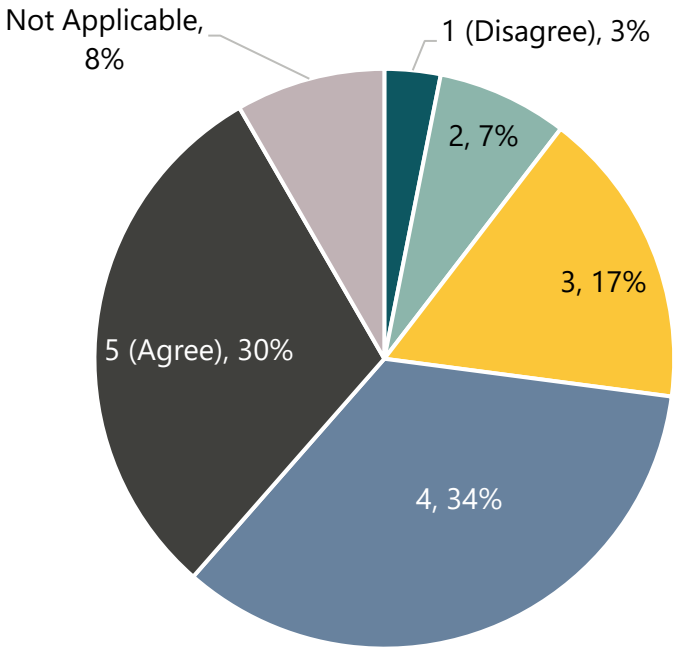
7. The safety net committee carefully considers my LEA's requests for safety net funding.



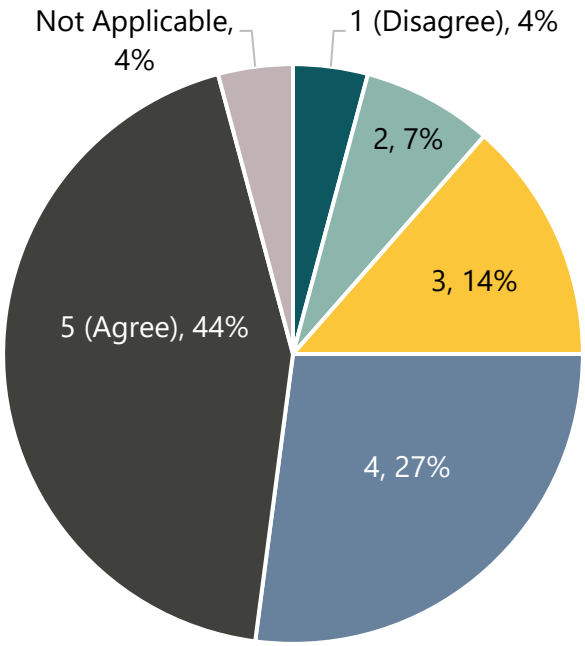
8. Although I may not always agree with the results, I was informed why my safety net applications were or were not funded.



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

Figure 4: Survey Question 6

Please provide an example for question 5.
We were told that we had not claimed the state portion of safety net until 5 months after it was too late to claim the funds.
Answers are often curt and do not provide details or examples.
They usually respond to email inquiries within 24 hours.
Emailed questions were answered promptly.
Amber O'Donnell is awesome to work with! She returns phone calls/emails in timely manner and is always helpful!
Amber is quick to respond, very helpful and very clear.
Staff respond rapidly, answer questions and help!
All questions have received very timely answers.
Always answers questions in a timely manner. Also, follow up by phone is appreciated as well.
I scheduled multiple one on one trainings with the Safety Net staff who helped me through the entire process
Sarah and Amber are always super quick to my questions during submission season! And any follow up for things I miss/mistype is always brought in a kind way when asking for correction/verification.
I am new to this position so I have not taken the trainings nor have I had too many conversations with my LEA/OSPI rep at the moment.
It was frustrating that phone calls were never answered and all communication was via email. Safety Net is complex that it's easier to communicate by talking through some of the issues.
greatest example is when uploading OSPI staff let me know what pieces came through and which didn't. I felt they were watching out for me and our district.
OSPI staff was available to respond to questions from my staff.
Quick and direct response to email inquiries- every single time!
We used the ESD 113 and the Lewis County Special Education Coop and they were great.
Answering questions, assistance with ftp upload.
It is so nice to have a place to reach out for questions. The Safety Net team was so helpful and responsive to our questions.
All emails were answered promptly regarding questions I had, and phone calls were returned in a timely manner with answers that were understandable and helpful.
Most of the support is post turning in the application and their patience with me getting the missing documents to them. It would be great to get samples of what mistakes districts made in the IEPs that got no funding.
I was able to email or schedule a virtual meeting with staff and they helped me through the process. I couldn't have completed some of my more complicated students' submissions without them.
Due to individual situations, our district reached out to Safety Net staff for clarification and support for how to correctly document the requests and expenditures.

Please provide an example for question 5.
I had lots of questions and recd. a lot of support from multiple staff members
Safety net staff always respond to questions in a timely manner. They are always careful to get accurate information. The team is extremely supportive! They are always willing to schedule a meeting if more support is needed and to supply guidance. They are amazing!
OSPI staff are responsive to emails and phone calls.
Quick to reply to emails and phone calls
Always respond quickly. As deadline approaches make themselves uber available.
I reached out for support and my questions were always answered!
I emailed the Safety Net staff multiple times throughout the process and my requests were always answered quickly and with easy to understand information. I never felt like I couldn't reach out to them for help.
Requests for support over the years via phone and email have always been positive.
Whenever I asked a question to OSPI they were very quick on getting back to me and walking me through any questions I had. I felt very comfortable asking any questions that came up and that I could reach out to them whenever I needed help/support.
I know they are there to help problem solve. They respond quickly to inquiries.
Rapid response to our questions
Respond quickly to questions
Every time I email with a question, the OSPI staff are quick to respond and thorough in explanations.
They answered transportation questions with ease.
Quick to respond to questions.
Appreciate the quick response to questions
OSPI staff was very helpful when I reached out with questions and concerns.
They answer my many questions and Zoomed with me multiple times last year.
We were able to have one on one discussions and assistance in guiding us through different parts of the application
Sarah was extremely helpful with guiding me through the process. She provided helpful feedback and tips for submitting the best application we could.
All questions answered in a timely manner
The safety net team has been very helpful and responds to email in a timely manner.
answer our questions
Sarah, Jess, and Amber have all been incredibly responsive and helpful whenever I reach out to them via phone or email.
Amber O'Donnell goes above and beyond to provide guidance in a timely, helpful way. She is very much appreciated!
They answered all my questions
I had many unique situations especially due to covid. Staff members at OSPI always answer my questions in a timely manner, they will even glance at wording in IEPs for me to help to know if it would be adequate to quantify expenses.

Please provide an example for question 5.
Sarah and Amber are accessible, professional, patient, and willing to answer all questions!!
We had a specific question about a student and Appendix C - we contact OSPI and got the information we needed.
OSPI staff were very responsive and helpful when seeking clarification on any components.
I needed more explanation and assistance than what I was able to discern from the website and the too fast paced training. The training was great, but too fast paced for those who have no prior experience and knowledge with Safety Net. I was able to access staff who helped me 1:1 with clarification points and technical assistance.
Response time is often slow and you get different answers from different people
I reached out multiple times to Sarah Kahne and she was fantastic in answering questions and walking me through the process. She is a true asset.
If something needs to be clarified, they are available to do so. They also work with the district if the district was not clear enough on paperwork.
OSPI staff members are responsive and helpful with our questions and follow up questions.
Timely responses to emails. Be able to access support in real time was a challenge.
They were able to answer questions in a timely manner.
We contacted them a number of times with questions, which were all answered promptly
Additional guidance and support on the transportation component would be helpful.
We were unsure whether the award was correct and the staff were prompt, thorough, and professional in their responses.
Any questions we had they took time to answer them and schedule time to have a zoom meeting to help us with specific students.
OSPI team is always happy to provide guidance
Sarah and the team answer questions quickly.
Questions send via email are always answered in a timely manner.
All of our direct questions were answered clearly and in a timely manner.
Prompt in their replies to questions with thorough answers.
N/A
Staff is always quick to respond to queries and provide assistance.
Quickly to respond to email and willing to meet 1:1 via zoom. Great help.
The staff were always available and extremely patient and helpful every step of the way. It was obvious that they want you to get the application details correct and will walk you through each step to make it happen.

Figure 5: Survey Question 9

Please list helpful tools or supports that were available or provided to your LEA.
details on why requested funding did not equal awarded funding
examples, combined workbooks
N/A
Feedback is good when awards are given. Guidelines are clear as we get into the process.
Nothing is clear until you call and ask for clarification.
Website, trainings, staff
The website, recorded trainings, bulletin, and live support staff.
The examples that are provided are always very helpful.
Supporting documents, letters, bulletins, and spreadsheets are helpful.
Examples on website
Phone support
Sarah, Amber, and Jess are the best supports around!
n/a
Recorded webinars that I could go back and watch were very helpful.
The instructions and the application itself was very intuitive
Data with all applications and their status
I fill out Worksheet A. It is straightforward and easy to understand.
online tools
NA
The new Worksheet C is very helpful.
The spreadsheets for entering costs were very helpful
Sort of. More clarity about why transportation was not funded or not funded at full amt. It is additional work and if we can't claim a certain amt, it would be good to know ahead of time
Detailed explanations for adjustments were shared with the LEA
The whole Safety Net process with OSPI is well done and clear.
The information about Transition Plans and HSB Plans is vague. The two are both required yet are conflicting in some areas and redundant in others. Making the two seamless and useful needs to be a VERY HIGH priority for the state. Particularly because it is because it is making post-school outcome planning for our students unnecessarily complicated. AND because it is impacting Safety Net funding that we desperately need even to come close to providing appropriate services for students.
OSPI Staff members! Trainings
Sarah and Amber
Answering our questions.
There were components of our application that weren't approvable in their current format; however, we received great feedback on how they can be allowable in future years.
explanation of how funding was given
In the trainings there were helpful tips. OSPI staff are very responsive and willing to help.

Please list helpful tools or supports that were available or provided to your LEA.
Linked bulletin, trainings, and forms on the website were helpful. I did not find information regarding making the claim (timeline, when available etc.)
Training materials available to review while completing application
Online trainings, update emails, accessibility to Safety Net staff for questions.

Figure 6: Survey Question 12

OSPI is working with a contractor to create an application platform for Safety Net. **The goals of this application platform are to:** • **streamline the application and submission process** • **include all application documents, worksheets, and training materials in a single platform** • **embed prompts and supports into the application to support successful submission** **What features would be helpful to you in an application platform?**
Notifying LEA's that they need to spend their state safety net in a more timely manner.
checks and balances
the ability to view prior year application(s) the ability to "save" progress then return at a different time to continue the application
Ease of use, multiple staff within district able to add and upload needed documents, use friendly/intuitive
No word documents. Have all the documents included like the individual summary, verification sheet, etc.
a user friendly platform that is similar to iGrants setup would be helpful. All updates regarding safety net applications being included on the platforms and sent out with email updates would also be helpful
I am not sure yet until I actually submit an application this year
An indicator for each part submitted successfully for each application.
data sharing agreements with Embrace or IEP online to ease bringing data from those platforms to the application process.
ability to upload provider invoices as one document instead of multiple
Some sort of preliminary certification by a human that all submission items are complete.
Everything on one worksheet rather than jumping from page to page. The links are helpful
training materials for special education teachers who write the IEPs for Safety Net and not just the people applying for Safety Net
Examples of completed forms.
Help section Live chat Examples of less common situations Easy "back"/ prior screen button Streamlined menu
An automatic checklist that looks for all required components
Examples. Anything that would provide definitions and examples.
Please provide some examples of scenarios that would/would not be approved for Safety Net.

OSPI is working with a contractor to create an application platform for Safety Net. **The goals of this application platform are to:** • **streamline the application and submission process** • **include all application documents, worksheets, and training materials in a single platform** • **embed prompts and supports into the application to support successful submission** **What features would be helpful to you in an application platform?**
A simple web upload of documents would be valuable, rather than the FTP system.
Love this idea. Not sure I have specific suggestions at this time.
As always the simpler the better.
A streamlined way to enter student information Removal of the "secure upload process"
I don't know. I'd need to see what it might look like in order to see what makes sense.
Quick Reference Documents: 1) how to navigate the new program; 2) preferred nomenclature when completing forms/sections
Any thing to streamline the process. The STFP site is difficult. Thank you for considering a change.
Align the application with other funding applications such as Title I .
Please don't ask for more information than what is needed. Please don't alter Worksheet A.
An upload checklist for all components to ensure complete packets are submitted.
better explanation of why things did not apply or were rejected from safety net.
Allow for import/export functions, Ability to tab through data entry fields,
Being able to submit electronically directly from our IEP system. A single platform would be very helpful, especially if there were embedded prompts.
all of the above
Ability to upload minutes directly from IEPOnline.
Moving to the three types of "files" electronically has been helpful. Clear guidance and how for the upload would be great.
Help Desk tickets
contractor calculations can be tricky on the current forms
Compatibility with multiple IEP platforms for ease of upload
Having everything in one place would be convenient.
Clear directions. Examples of what is to be included including any documentation/attachments Video on demand training In person training via Zoom or other platform to allow for questions and immediate feedback.
The scoring rubric the Safety net team uses for all areas to include transportation, NPA, etc.
The entire process is very confusing to anyone who is submitting an application for the first time, and at times feels redundant. I am excited to see a single platform.
Love the idea of a streamlined platform.
Making sure it has an option to allow for editing before submitting for final submission.
Explicit instructions. Real time support.

OSPI is working with a contractor to create an application platform for Safety Net. **The goals of this application platform are to:** • **streamline the application and submission process** • **include all application documents, worksheets, and training materials in a single platform** • **embed prompts and supports into the application to support successful submission** **What features would be helpful to you in an application platform?**
Easy uploads. Clear structure of what needs to be uploaded and why. Ability for more than one person to work on a spreadsheet or document within the system. Clear directions with detailed links attached.
References to the parameters and limitations of safety net funding
Instructions for how to complete each section and links to resources.
Easier submission transfer process
Providing easier access to the existing broken system is not helpful. We need to rethink the ENTIRE process and consider how we can streamline applications for students that are submitted year after year. Compliance needs to be uncoupled from Safety Net as we now have the WISM process.
Consistent contractor requirements.
Less bureaucracy. Provisions for small (less than 500 students) districts.
All of the above.
With an application I would want to ensure that all materials for a student are "together" and that there is a way to ensure that all elements are included for each student.
As IEP team decisions are based upon individual need it would be important to be able to explain individualized decisions.
The submission platform is cumbersome and difficult to navigate.

Figure 7: Survey Question 13

Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
it would be helpful if a "best practices" or "forms" area was available, for example on how to best prepare the fiscal reporting required after an award is granted.
n/a
Secure portal seems out of date.
Nothing as of now until I have some experience with submitting these.
I would prefer to not have a platform and to be funded fully for the services we're providing students in their IEPs without having to submit every tiny piece of documentation. I would like to include the salary of myself and my employees for all the time we spent on Safety Net this for reimbursement as well. And, that time should be taken into consideration as it's not time being utilized for student learning and just to be fully funded for special education services.
It continues to be frustrating that there is a gap between SWD funding and district expenditures to qualify for Safety Net.
having forms available well in advance of due dates is helpful- the transportation calculator comes to mind

Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
The complexity of the process is especially difficult for medium and smaller districts who may lack staff with sufficient experience and expertise to manage submissions. Additionally, submissions may be infrequent for these districts, which provides additional barriers to keeping up on requirements.
None
Not sure
For districts like mine that have small schools, and have minimal time to devote to Safety Net applications because of the multiple hats and services we provide (but the money from Safety Net may mean continuing a program or support or not) is there a way to be able to do something different? It is like going through an audit exercise each time and unlike larger districts who have dedicated staff for this work, it is very difficult to do the work needed to get the reimbursements warranted.
More support for unique situations. Better explanations of why funding wasn't provided (2 sentences doesn't explain much).
The rubric used for evaluating submissions would be helpful to have ahead of time
More guidance on aligning High School and Beyond Plans with the Transition Plan.
It has always bothered me that the concept of "capacity" and being eligible for reimbursement in the first place, seems to only work out for larger districts. Is there a way to do more to help smaller districts? I also don't like seeing such a large proportion of money going to wealthier eastside districts. I wonder if more attention should be paid to equitable distribution of these funds.
Thank you!
This is a suggestion or wonderment I've had for years and have included here. We as LEAs are penalized if we keep students in the less restrictive environment of the school district placement vs. an out of district placement. It's very simple to get reimbursed for out of district, whereas we have to identify a bunch of stuff for keeping students in place... all the information about the teachers and paras, documenting every day, and having it looked through if there were brief leave replacements. Couldn't we as a district essentially just set an average cost for that program, just like a contractor does in providing a rate for us? I hate to say it, but I do think some directors may be choosing the out of district as an easier alternative to get funding reimbursed. Thanks.
I am unsure of changes at this time.
I do believe that the application platform rather than excel worksheets and word documents will improve the process
Consistency among reviewers. I often hear comments about how decisions are based on who reviews. This should not be the determining factor.
NA
The Measurable Goal Quick Check provided on the OSPI site does not actually align with the criteria reviewers use to consider a goal measurable. The quick check says criterion can be a "descriptive statement - a description of the expected characteristics or quality of the final product or behavior in clear, objective language." However, when a descriptive statement is used as criterion, reviewers claim that there is not a common until of measure and do not accept the goal.

Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
We should not have to rely on a safety net process, rather the Legislature needs to recognize the cost and fully fund districts. Rural districts are challenged when it comes to hiring specialists and end up having to contract out which is extremely expensive
Continued opportunities to dialog questions. This was very good last year and hope it could continue
NA
The information about Transition Plans and HSB Plans is vague. The two are both required yet are conflicting in some areas and redundant in others. Making the two seamless and useful needs to be a VERY HIGH priority for the state. Particularly because it is because it is making post-school outcome planning for our students unnecessarily complicated. AND because it is impacting Safety Net funding that we desperately need even to come close to providing appropriate services for students.
new platform will be great, I agree with that focus
If this process could be proactive instead of reactive. If the LEA has a student with significant needs, then we should submit to OSPI or our local OESD for "approval" and support through the process. This will be a great opportunity for learning and for optimal funding.
Changes communicated earlier and more frequently. Anything that reduces the workload for us in the application process.
I have been very happy with the change that have been made to the safety net process since Glenna started - can't think of anything else.
The safety net process is bias and inequitable. It is does not recognize size of district or impact. Decisions are made without clear communication to all directors. ESDs have little impact or provide actual guidance that translates to funding. Raising the funding level yearly again impacts smaller districts over larger districts.
Clearer information regarding HSBP for transition students who are very low functioning.
Release worksheet earlier, such as October, so we can begin the process sooner.
Safety net is challenging to fill out if multiple contracted people work with students (such as two ASL interpreters with one student). There is a lot of time filling out the logistics side of the IEP.
It still takes a TREMENDOUS amount of time to complete the application process. I sometimes wonder what the true cost of the process is, when you calculate the days and days of time lost for this. It is likely in the millions.
There was a lot of good information available however I did not find information regarding making the claim (timeline, when available etc.)
Release applications in October
I have already submitted my ideas
Simplify, simplify, simplify.
N/A
It would be helpful to be given more specific information and specific feedback regarding why fiscal adjustments are made. For instance, identifying specifically why SDI minutes provided by the Behavior Tech in the General Education setting were adjusted. When the directive by OSPI is to provide a more inclusive environment and the LRE is determined to be General Education, why

Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
would SDI in the general education setting provided by a special education staff member (e.g., behavior tech) be adjusted.
n/a

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