



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# UPDATE: Safety Net Survey

*2023*

**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 funding to provide special education services. Applicants must show need beyond state and federal funding already available to the LEA.

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 475 people from LEAs that applied for Safety Net received the survey in September 2023. The survey included 12 questions and was open for four weeks. OSPI received 110 responses.

# BACKGROUND

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

OSPI provided training to seven educational service districts (ESDs) prior to the initial 2022–23 submission date. OSPI hosted one general training as well as 70 scheduled one-on-one virtual meetings with over 40 LEAs prior to the submission deadline.

The Safety Net Oversight Committee awards funding to applicants. The Committee has awarded more than \$1 billion since the program’s beginning in 1996–97. In 2022–23, the Committee awarded funding to 135 LEAs. These LEAs included:

- School districts
- An Educational Service Agency (ESA)
- Four charter schools
- Two state schools

Four of the 139 LEAs that applied did not receive Safety Net funding. Two LEAs were not funded due to lack of demonstrated capacity on Worksheet A. Two LEAs were not funded due to cost corrections to the individual student applications.

## Funding Awarded by the Committee

**4,832 High-Need Individual applications totaling \$153,898,255**

**16 Community Impact applications totaling \$11,953,334**

# UPDATE STATUS

Respondents rated eight of the 12 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 four questions were open-ended. Survey responses were anonymous.

## Survey Changes

A question requesting information on what LEAs would find helpful in an online application platform was removed from 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:

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

**Table 1: Average Response by Question**

Question	Average Response
Q1. The 2022–23 Safety Net Bulletin—which outlined the process changes, application criteria, and submission deadlines—was clear.	4.30
Q3. The training provided by OSPI for the 2022–23 safety net process was helpful.	4.07
Q4. The safety net website includes information that is helpful to my LEA in the safety net application process.	4.00
Q5. OSPI staff members are helpful to my LEA in the safety net application process.	4.60
Q7. The safety net committee carefully considers my LEA's requests for safety net funding.	4.31
Q8. Although I may not always agree with the results, I was informed why my safety net applications were or were not funded.	4.41
Q10. My LEA's IEPs have improved as a result of the safety net process.	3.94
Q11. Although I may not always agree with the results, I believe the safety net standards are uniformly applied to all LEAs.	4.17

**Source:** 2022–23 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 further decreased by 2% in 2022–23.

Type of Placement	Total awarded for out of district placement	Number of Applications	Percent of Applications
<b>2022–23</b>			
ESD program	\$12,587,998	185	3.8%
In-state NPA	\$44,752,644	550	11.4%
Out-of-state NPA	\$22,073,843	117	2.4%
School district	\$12,639,839	202	4.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$92,054,324</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>21.8%</b>
<b>2021–22</b>			
ESD program	\$11,299,619	170	4.4%
In-state NPA	\$34,721,358	468	12.1%
Out-of-state NPA	\$17,063,349	103	2.7%
School district	\$10,858,915	181	4.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$73,943,241</b>	<b>922</b>	<b>23.9%</b>
<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%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$71,028,823</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>29.1%</b>

**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. The number of applications column may contain duplicate counts as a student may have attended more than one placement type during the school year.

## **CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS**

An application platform to provide a streamlined electronic submission process for applicants was developed. The platform is launching for the 2023–24 school year. This platform should alleviate many challenges applicants face when submitting applications.

The Safety Net Bulletin and submission instructions are currently under development for the 2023–24 school year. OSPI is expanding its training plan to incorporate both general overview training opportunities as well as more in-depth training on the new application platform. In addition to one-on-one meetings with LEAs, OSPI will be offering Safety Net specific office hours twice a week starting January 1, 2024.

# **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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

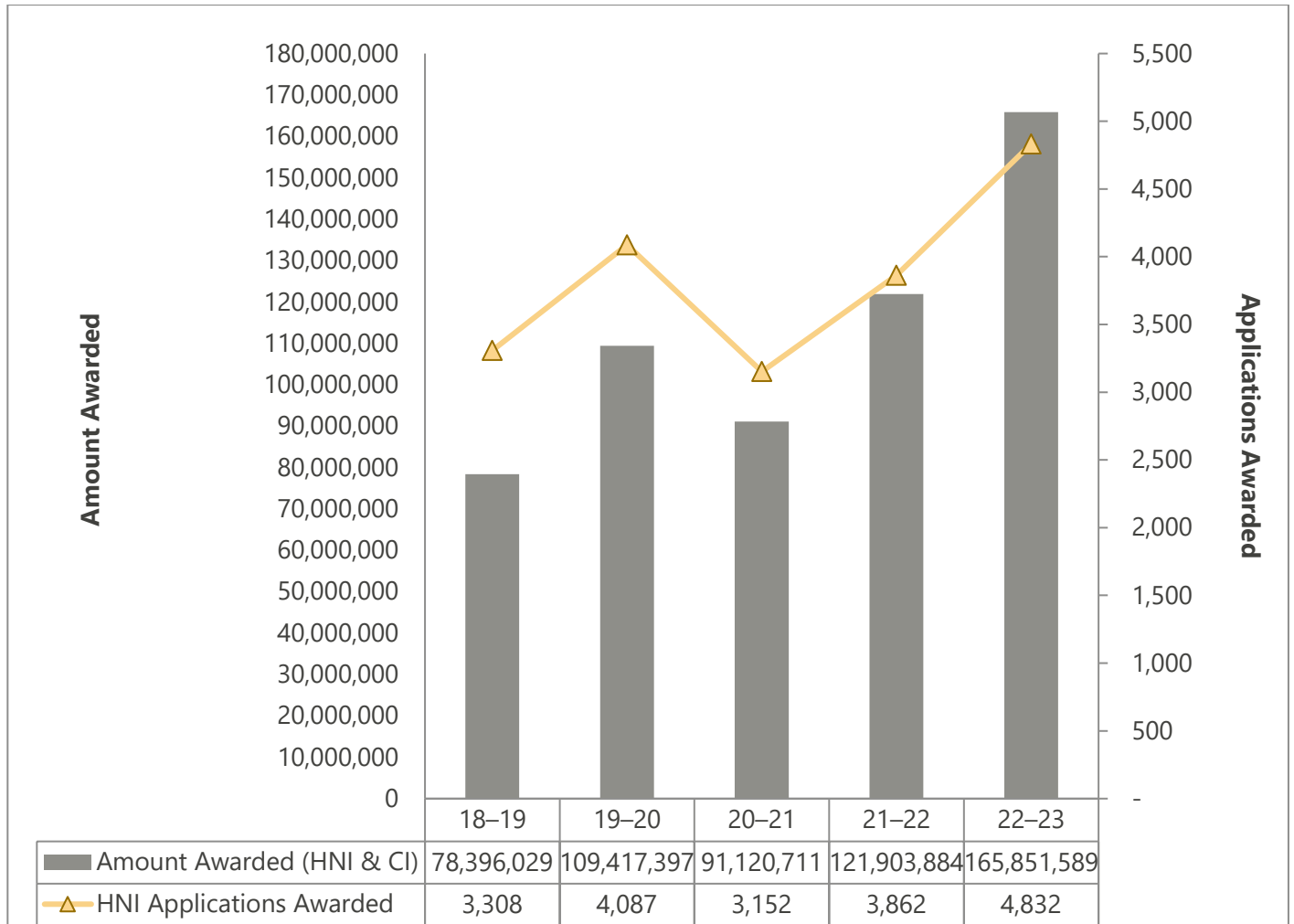


# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Safety Net Funding Amounts

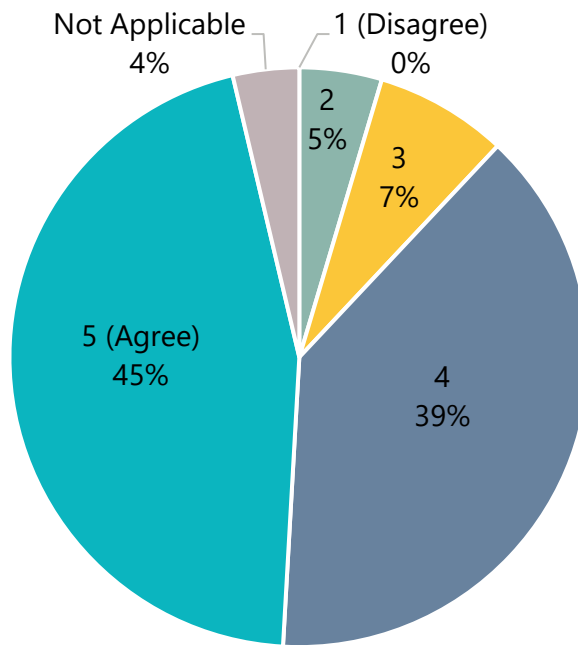
In 2022–23, the State Safety Net Committee approved 136 LEAs for Safety Net funding. The committee awarded 4,832 High-Need Individual student applications, and 10 Community Impact applications for a total of \$165,851,589 (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Safety Net Funding 2018–19 through 2022–23**

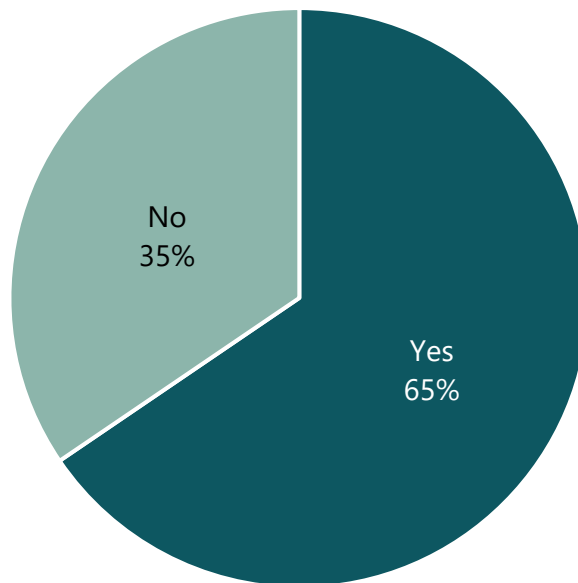


## Appendix B: Safety Net Survey Results

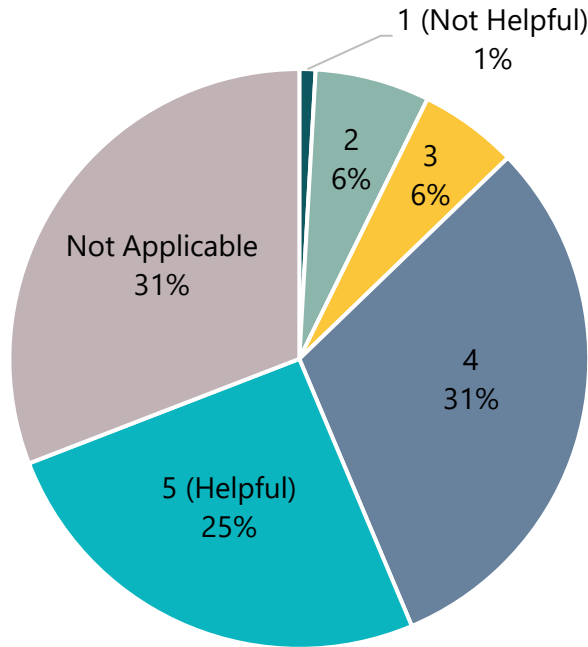
1. The 2022–23 Safety Net Bulletin—which outlined the process changes, application criteria, and submission deadlines—was clear.



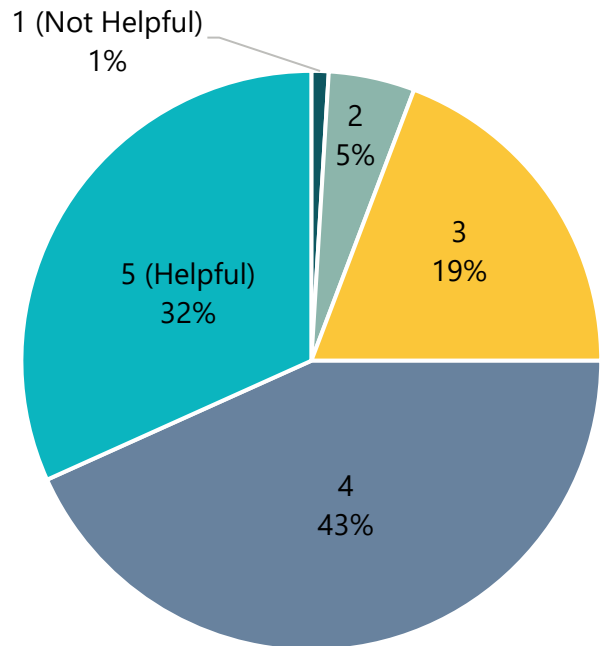
2. Did you utilize training provided by OSPI—such as in person trainings, Zoom meetings, webinars, or training videos—for the 2022–23 Safety Net process?



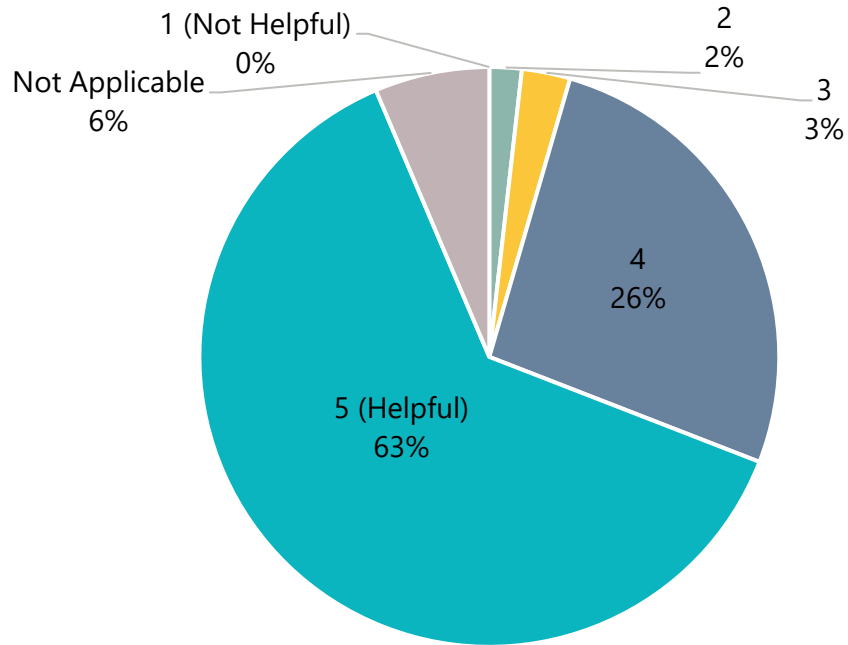
3. The training provided by OSPI for the 2022–23 Safety Net process was helpful.



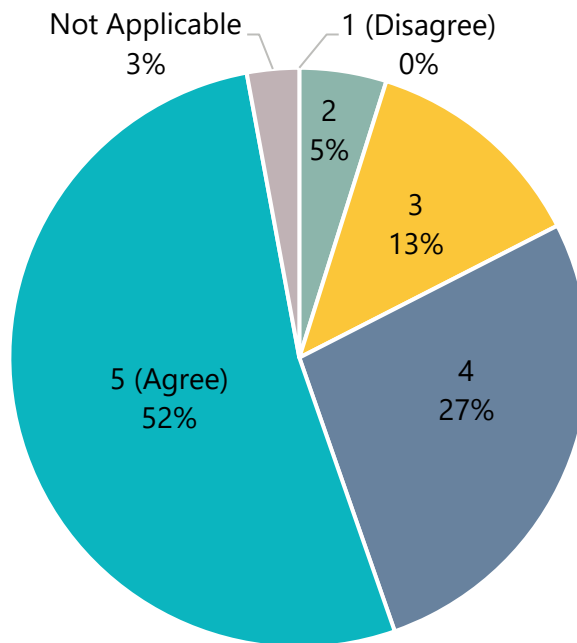
4. The Safety Net website includes information that is helpful to my LEA in the Safety Net application process.



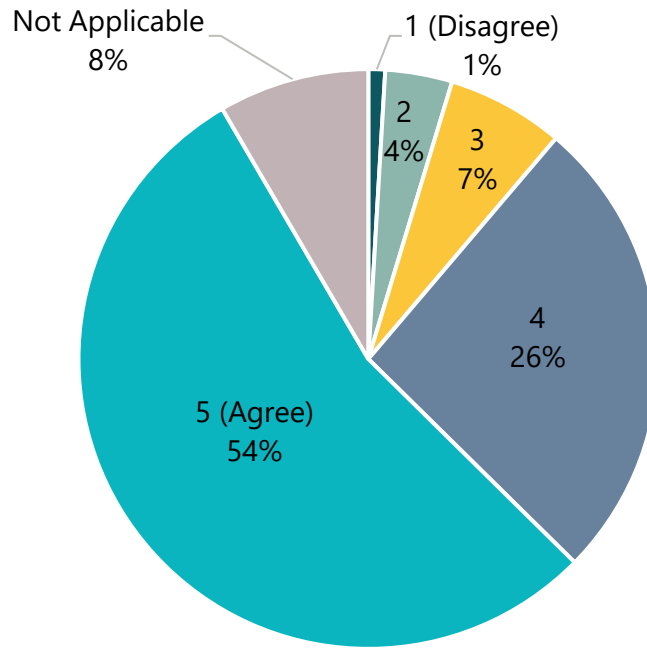
5. OSPI staff members are helpful to my LEA in the Safety Net application process.



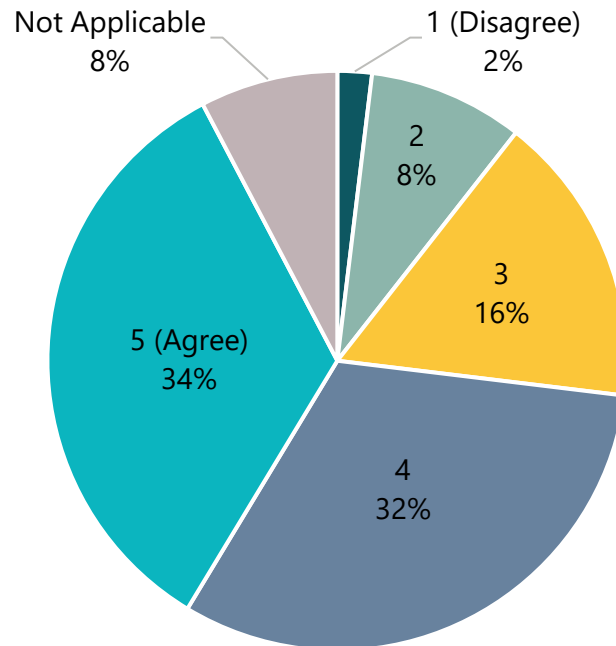
7. The Safety Net committee carefully considers my LEA's requests for Safety Net funding.



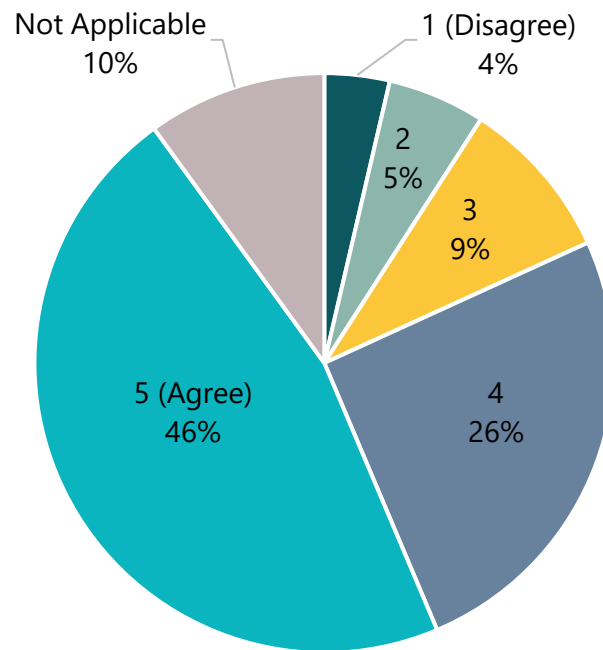
8. Although I may not always agree with the results, I was informed why my Safety Net applications were or were not funded.



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

Please provide an example for question 5.
Sarah is super special or thebomb.com
Good communication regarding general information about the process and well as deadline reminders.
Questions were responded to very quickly.
General comment - all phone calls and emails to Safety Net staff are returned in a timely manner. All questions are addressed. They are extremely supportive of us over the years. We are so appreciative.
Very responsive and communicative
I set up a zoom with staff to ask questions.
I will be more actively involved this year as I have taken on a new role, but any time that our district has had a question we have been able to get help to get it answered.
Very responsive. Support districts and help problem-solve in order to get the maximum award amount as possible.
Appreciate how promptly the safety net team responds to questions; Their response provided the process - not just a quick answer.
I always get responses very quickly, and they always answer my questions. I felt very supported by this team!
Staff was very helpful with our appeal.
Responds to emails quickly. Gives concise, detailed explanations and always willing to assist
I email lots of questions throughout the process and the OSPI staff is quick to respond with the exact details needed for us to move forward.
In the past, when I've had to call with specific questions, they usually get back to me within 24 hours.
We met with staff to discuss how we could write our Community Impact grant so we would have a chance of having it accepted. Staff were unable to give us specific information on what the committee is looking for.
The information was very vague. It's way too hard to fill out Safety Net for the first time over zoom. This needs to be a monthly session at the ESDs.
Whenever I had a question, I called or emailed the Safety Net team and they were ALWAYS responsive and helpful.
I didn't contact OSPI staff for questions or support this application cycle.
I haven't personally worked with OSPI staff for safety net, but I know my SPED director did and she was impressed with the assistance she received.
Although staff tended not to be available via phone, which would have been helpful for certain issues, email responses were timely and very helpful.
Since I moved to a new district starting July 1, OSPI was able to help provide me with context of corrections etc.
Prompt replies to emails
Very responsive to emails and questions

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

This was my first Safety Net process and I was more than green to everything. I has so many questions and the team was awesome at getting back to me on all my questions. I think I would have liked to have more one on one time just to get exposure to the process. But doing the process was the biggest help.

Questions are answered in a timely manner. The OSPI - Special Education Data/Fiscal Office Hours have provided LEAs with tremendous support; I as well as others in my LEA appreciate all the support Sandy, Amber, and the rest of the team provide to us. They are always respectful and there is no question that is not answered. You all are appreciated.

Questions were emailed and responses were timely and helpful. Especially regarding students withdrawing after the paperwork was submitted, and contracted expenses.

Always willing to take our calls, no matter how small our questions might be. Friendly and helpful.

Phone calls are answered in a timely manner when clarification is needed.

Had sent an Email question for clarification on Worksheet A and was provided a quick, helpful response.

I emailed the safety net team several time during the process and they always responded promptly with clear answers.

Very quick to respond, help and support whenever needed.

New staff were in place at our district that were not familiar with the safety net application process and the OSPI staff were very helpful in answering questions to get our application submitted in a timely manner.

They have met with me multiple times to explain various things

na

Sarah Kahne was an incredibly supportive resource and was always willing to zoom with me to assist me when I had questions about the process as a brand new director last year.

They were available to for phone calls and questions.

The team responds quickly when we send an email seeking assistance or clarification.

Every email or phone call I made was answered/returned in a timely manner.

Responsive to email questions.

They answered my emails with questions in a timely manner

Answered questions when contacted.

Staff responded quickly and patiently to all my questions and needs.

Responded to my emails and phone calls

Sarah Kahne provided a 1:1 zoom to answer very specific questions for how to document services so that they could be quantified for a student. When we needed to make last minute changes due to an NPA closing prior to ESY, Sarah, again, was very helpful in how to document the last minute changes for staffing and transportation.

OSPI staff members follow up quickly and ask for specific information needed.

Amber is very clear in her communications on what is needed and what is required.

Very quick response time.

Never found that there isn't a person to respond. When there was a mistake made on OSPI's part, the follow-up resulted in a corrected amount in a reasonable timeline.

Helpful, yes. - need more leniency for errors made through this very complex process - Reduce the Threshold to \$20K



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

When I would have a questions they would respond right away and provide opportunities for zoom conferences as well.

timely responses when questions asked.

Amber responds to questions in a timely manner and the team took time to meet with my administrative assistant or myself about any questions.

Sarah and Amber are always incredibly responsive, which I greatly appreciate!

Was able to schedule a zoom call to ask questions.

I asked clarifying questions on how the process worked as it was our first time applying. The response was very timely, thorough, and gave us a clear deadline and the deliverables expected.

Staff assisted over the phone during the process.

They get back to us in timely fashion and help answer specific questions.

They are helpful; however, it takes a long time to receive a reply back. This can cause issues with submitting on time with proper information.

Staff are helpful and quick to respond to inquiries.

OSPI staff provide quick responses to emails and phone calls.

They will help us work through specific scenarios with unique situations

Helpful when we had questions in all aspects (completing the worksheets, funding rationale etc).

Quick response by email, tech help when needed- very responsive team.

My special education director applied for safety net and collaborated with OSPI. From what she reported, OSPI was helpful in the process.

Responses to questions were provided within the day or by the next day.

Very responsive to emails and phone calls

ESD 113 completes our Safety Net paperwork

We completed a request for reconsideration and the OSPI team was prompt and helpful

Answers were timely, but there is a distrust that questions will lead to additional scrutiny or financial penalty.

We asked student specific questions, and received quick responses.

I needed clarification on forms and was provided quick feedback and support.

Returned emails promptly. Due to not be able to speak with someone on the phone we were unable to clearly communicate / clarify our issues and questions.

I was able to get answers to questions

When I have questions they always get back to me in a timely manner.

When calling in to ask a question the staff were very helpful.

This was my first year completing the Safety Net worksheets and I received so much help from Sarah Kahne.

**Table 4: Survey Question 9**

Please list helpful tools or supports that were available or provided to your LEA.
1:1 training and assistance
The Excel templates that are provided on the Safety Net website are very helpful.
People are always willing to answer all of our questions.
The retiring director has a lot of experience with safety net. This year I believe that we will utilize a lot more tools and be able to answer this more clearly.
Zoom meeting Immediate feedback Problem-solving Flexibility
Training videos; communication with safety net team.
ESD 113 SPED Co-op Support
Ability to email the team directly. They are invaluable.
Safety net bulletin, training meetings
The preliminary findings are helpful to understand where we may need to appeal and provide additional information in hopes of having less deductions.
We mostly depend on sporadic help from other districts related to unique situations. OSPI staff are helpful giving technical guidance.
More in-person trainings that have someone from the Safety Net team working alongside of the district.
I needed a special worksheet C because I had additional staff. They provided me one within 24 hours of my request.
Tools were very helpful ahead of submission. Some sort of detailed feedback as to adjustments would be very helpful so we do not replicate errors or can more accurately represent student needs.
How to improve the application next time.
Not much. I had to go back and try and figure out where the errors were and why, so I am better prepared this year. I have many of the same errors but no one reached out to tell me how to fix it. I figured it out after looking at all the errors. The videos were ok. But not real clear for a green person.
Trainings, email responses and website
Reasons related to high-cost student application adjustments.
I would like more information about how capacity is demonstrated. There seems to be a disconnect between special ed and the business office, and I don't know enough about budgeting to know how it all works. Form A is a mystery to me.
Descriptions and examples
When I asked for more clarification, I was informed of the specific noncompliance in my one file that had issues.
The Safety Net team took time to call me and ask for additional items that were missing.
Phone calls, recorded help videos and email responses.
List with reasons
The Safety Net bulletin and Slide decks from the online training were helpful. Access to staff for specific questions were even more helpful.
Bulletins, examples, webinars
Need more leniency for errors made through this very complex process - Reduce the Threshold to \$20K

Please list helpful tools or supports that were available or provided to your LEA.
Clarification on what was needed or help with how to respond to different situations.
Session at our ESD by OSPI, in person.
I would appreciate more information on the IEP review form instead of just the number and letter.
Bulletin Worksheet C instructions
A portal for submitting the safety net application would be better than the current drop of information into the server.
Would like more support for Community Impact Grant.
Worksheet C calculations are very helpful.
Information on the website about process and staff able to answer questions.
Training
Questions were answered quickly, and examples of documents were provided when asked ex. HSBP.
Follow up emails and documents clearly indicate the WHY safety net was not funded or not fully funded.
Documents were submitted but overlooked committee, thus requiring a request for reconsideration.
My district 2 IEPs were thrown out, but we did not get specific reasons as to why one of them was thrown out.
Phone contact, clear emails describing submissions.
The only tool we find useful is the Safety Net Bulletin.
ESD 113 Special Ed Co-Op
It would be helpful if I had more specific reasons why it didn't get as much as we thought and what we did wrong so we could fix it in the future.
Local ESD support Phone support from OSPI
The trainings were very helpful. And there was always someone available to help when we called.

**Table 5: Survey Question 12**

Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
A PLATFORM
This is a big-picture recommendation that is a radical departure from current practice, but I feel that all the safety net process should separate funding from compliance. Fund district requests at 100 %, but use the safety net process to identify districts that require a desk review or on-site visit. Year 1 is a desk review with ESD oversight of needed changes to IEPs. Year 2, if similar errors on IEPs are not remedied, result in an on-site visit by OSPI or the ESD, with professional development required in order to seek remedies to IEP issues caught through the safety net process. In this way, districts receive funds for high-need students AND OSPI is able to address IEP issues that need to be fixed. If Safety Net funds run out in a given year of requests, then all districts receive a prorated amount of their requests.
I'd love a more thorough training on safety net!
Any tools to streamline calculations on behalf of the district would always be welcome, including calculating when a student works with multiple para educators throughout their day.
I would like to see some type of technical memo after the award is granted that lists the areas that district could improve and areas that impacted the funding and why areas were reduced. If this is already being done, the superintendent should be included.
thank you.
Consider the content of the IEP when reviewing out of state IEPs, not all quantify the 1:1 support in a matrix.
None at this time.
The online portal being updated. I believe this is in process. Retaining the staff that is there now, because they will just get even better, and they are already GREAT!
Updated training (step by step) on website. It would be helpful to have examples of financial reports needed, or acceptable forms of submitting open POs. I'm still using templates from over 8 years ago, hoping they are good to go!
This is probably an unrealistic dream, however it would be beneficial if our staff pay rates could auto populate from the S275 report that is provided to OSPI when we enter the full staff name onto Worksheet C.
I believe districts that have more funding and therefore are able to hire staff specifically to focus on writing and reviewing evaluations/IEPs and developing SafetyNet applications (High Needs and Community Impact) have a higher chance of receiving awards closer to what they are requesting. The process is cumbersome and staff intensive.
I think the only challenge I have is when I receive a student from another district and the sending district has a poorly composed IEP that isn't safety net approvable. I try and hold an amendment IEP as soon as possible, however it takes sometimes up to a month to learn about the student to gather data to compose a good IEP but we can't request for those bad IEPs. I wish we could use our amendment to cover that month, however I understand the process.
A simpler upload and file management system.
Please offer worksheet c as a google doc, if at all possible, as more districts are using Google Suite.
School District had student with placement in NPA and safety net committee did not fund July and August expenditures, statement was new fiscal year for NPA. Safety Net if for SD, not NPA. Now SD is not getting reimbursement for costs for over one year. This is huge impact on SD.

Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
Detailed feedback regarding errors or adjustments so we do not replicate.
If the team here see's the same errors occurring on multiple worksheet C's it would be helpful to have a 10 minutes review of that process so the error does not continue. Sometimes when asking a question the team gives the general response and no examples and talks very fast. Which makes it hard for a new person in this role. The team was always responsive, and always willing to help.
Easier streamlined application process rather than uploading so many documents.
More training on community impact applications.
While I appreciate that new students who enroll after the annual count date that drives caseload minutes are recalculated to reflect the workload for the teacher when the new student arrives, I believe that if another high-need student leaves the caseload shortly after the annual count date, maybe we can create the possibility that the caseload minutes are adjusted after a particular student exits the caseload to reflect this as well. It seems that the adjustment for the new student added to the teacher's caseload minutes after the count date was determined in order to lower the cost for a new student, the converse is disregarded.
it would be helpful to have more turn-around time from when the award is announced and the updated expense data is due. I understand this is probably not possible, but there are many things going on at this time of year.
More information about form A and what to do if its not accurate.
There has to be an easier way to quantify the services other than the Worksheet C
The earlier information is out the better. It felt like things like the transportation calculator were pretty delayed last year. Early and often is helpful. Thank you!
Small districts often only have one director with a lot of hats. Safety Net takes a lot of time to gather the information and upload. Is there a different way for smaller districts to do this work or a different method for obtaining funds? When I am doing Safety Net, the district does not have a director... it takes me away from everything else.
Please continue to consider lowering the threshold further.
Release resources as soon as possible. Provide more detailed explanations for denials of payment/ reductions: the current 1-2 sentences is not very helpful for improving the process.
We have some students who receive 1:1 para services for half of the day. We organize those students' schedules so that we only have to hire one full-time person to provide services for both students individually. This amount of para time doesn't meet threshold for individuals.
I have found that when we have a student placed at a non-public agency, there is substantially less work to gain funding. This seems to "reward" a district for not keeping a student local and providing the in-district supports. Continuing to simplify the process for district staffing would help reconcile this. For example, if I have a paraeducator assigned to a student in-district, I have to provide daily information of who the person was to work with the student, but if I send them out of district, it's essentially just a line item, and not a consideration of who actually worked with the student.
Need more leniency for errors made through this very complex process - Reduce the Threshold to \$20K
NA
Better examples of guidance related to transition plans

Please list additional ways in which you think the safety net process can be improved.
Please reconsider calculation for contracted teachers. Assuming that all contracted teachers work with their entire caseload for the minutes assigned to a student assumes that a school has a fully self-contained program. This is not always the case.
Special Education is significantly underfunded. The safety net process is very time-consuming and the threshold goes up every year. Please advocate for better funding for special education.
The type of data that is needed wasn't always very clear - specifically when are we to use year to date info and when are we to use annual data? I came on to the project late - so more trainings or videos about it would be helpful.
Lower threshold, earlier award dates. August is too late, always mixed in with year end and summer months cause issues as well.
Better explanation of the deductions on some of the worksheets submitted.
Greater information for Community Impact grant for smaller communities.
It is so very labor intensive. Is there any way it can be less so?
Information out sooner. Maybe more scenarios to consider.
n/a
Special Education should be fully funded and the need for safety net dissolved.
Opportunity to review safety net IEPs with an individual to help make sure IEPs are correct to avoid errors. IEP training.
More organized system for submission.
More clarity Less punishment for non-essential mistakes Focusing on reimbursement for actual costs instead of punishing for minor compliance issues Extremely time consuming
*Sometimes it feels like there is a hidden agenda around items that have not been a priority in past years but have now become the tipping point upon which we will lose or gain essential funding for doing what is right for our students. *The cost of safety net monitoring (at the district AND state level) would be better utilized for direct services to support high-cost students. Special Education departments in every district must constantly weigh what are essential services for students against what is necessary to balance the district budget. It makes special education, in general, the enemy of basic education. This is fundamentally flawed in a system that it supposed to ignore cost of services to prioritize student needs.
Improved IEP checklist to include specific items that OPSI looks for/requires. Able to speak to an actual person at OSPI on the phone. Be able to speak to an actual person to understand / debrief why certain students were not funded, and how we can improve. Consider providing a training that does not have OSPI staff reading directly from the power point. Provide a simulated training, where staff could access worksheet C and follow along with OSPI to fill it out. Provide a help desk that could answer questions directly related to student's IEPs - such as 'is this goal measurable/acceptable' to OSPI.
It would be great in trainings if they had an example of specific IEP's that they then went through the worksheet so we can see how they are entering and what they are using to get the correct minutes, etc...
It would be helpful to have more detail when the amount is reduced. If more detail could be provided sooner it would help with the correction and resubmission.

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