



Utah Office for Victims of Crime Client Survey

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Executive Summary

The Utah Office for Victims of Crime (UOVC) serves crime victims in Utah by administering federal and state grants to nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other service providers. These funds allow agencies to provide victims with essential services such as crisis intervention, emergency shelter, and legal assistance. Prompted by recent reductions in federal funding, UOVC requested and implemented a survey to better understand client perspectives on its training and resources, the application process, and grant distribution.

The survey received 205 total responses from grant applicants and non-applicants across the state, with most respondents indicating they received funding from UOVC and represented a law enforcement agency or prosecutor's office. Approximately one-third of respondents indicated they did not know their agency's budget, but of those who did, 38% had a budget of over \$1 million, 17% had between \$100,000 and \$999,999, and 5% had under \$100,000.

Some key findings revealed that 82% of respondents found UOVC's training materials helpful. There were no major differences in satisfaction when analyzing the responses by agency region (rural, suburban, urban) or agency budget. Some free response answers regarding training and resources suggested more interactive, tailored formats such as step-by-step guides.

Additionally, 72% of respondents agreed the application process was clear and straightforward. The agencies most likely to indicate this were higher education institutions, forensic examiners, and non-profit organizations that provide legal services. However, the responses to some open-ended questions revealed concerns about the application's clarity and time commitment.

Finally, 59% agreed that the fund allocation process was fair. Agencies with budgets of less than \$100,000 were the most likely to agree it was fair, as 71% indicated they agreed or strongly agreed. When given an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback about funding, some respondents highlighted the need for more transparency and prioritization of marginalized and rural communities.

Despite UOVC's strong support system, evidenced by free response answers describing UOVC's responsive staff and fast communication, respondents requested simplified processes, diverse training, and greater flexibility in funding policies. UOVC can utilize this information to reflect on its grant processes and effectively support Utah's victim service providers, ensuring that resources reach those most in need.

Introduction

The Utah Office for Victims of Crime (UOVC) is a state agency tasked with supporting victims of violent crimes by providing financial compensation and resources. UOVC manages government funds to distribute grants to nonprofits, government entities, and other organizations providing victims' services. UOVC administers federal and state grants, including the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), designed to support community service providers and nonprofit organizations. These grants fund vital services like crisis intervention for victims, emergency shelter, counseling, and legal assistance. These are critical in helping victims restart their lives and access justice.

The organization also actively offers grantees resources, training, technical assistance, and monetary compensation to improve their capacity to provide high-quality services. Ensuring fair access to these resources for disadvantaged populations, including marginalized groups and rural communities, is at the heart of UOVC's mission.

Recently, UOVC has faced numerous challenges due to significant reductions in federal funding, which has prompted the need for more intentional and equitable fund allocation. This financial strain has made it crucial to assess how funds are allocated and whether they successfully reach grassroots and underprivileged organizations.

In collaboration with UOVC, this project addresses these challenges by developing a survey for current and potential grantees to complete. This survey aims to better understand their experiences and obstacles with UOVC's application process. Particularly, the survey provides feedback on the accessibility and clarity of the application process and the quality of training and materials available for respondents. This survey also aims to provide insights that will inform UOVC's future funding strategies, such as the perceived fairness of award distribution procedures. Nonprofit organizations, especially those serving vulnerable populations, often face barriers such as complex application processes and insufficient technical support, which limits their access to crucial funds (Nonprofit Quarterly, 2024).

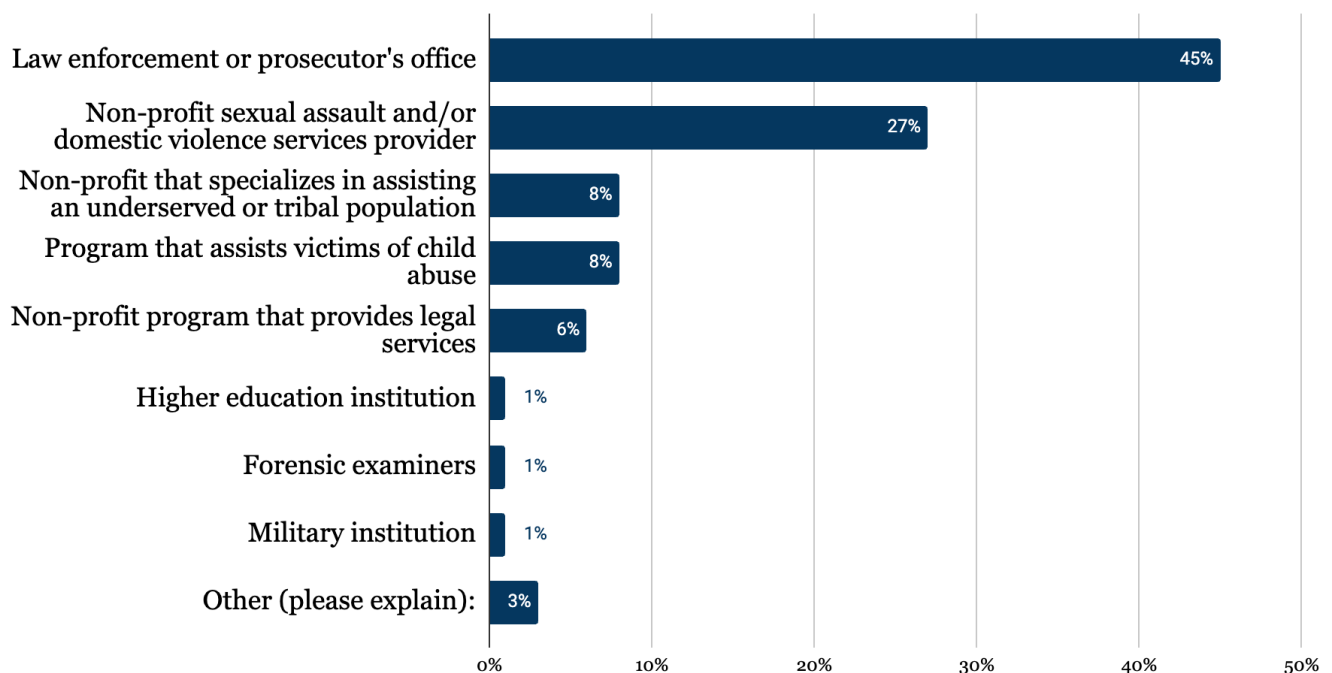
Insights learned from these survey results will aid UOVC in its mission to better advocate for underserved populations. This project aligns with broader trends in the nonprofit sector, where data collection is increasingly used to assess the real-world impact of funding and adjust strategies to better serve communities in need (Good Grants, 2024).

Sample Demographics

The survey received 205 total responses, though many were incomplete, reducing the sample to 144 respondents who answered questions regarding the agencies they represented. A large share (86%) indicated they currently receive funding from UOVC.

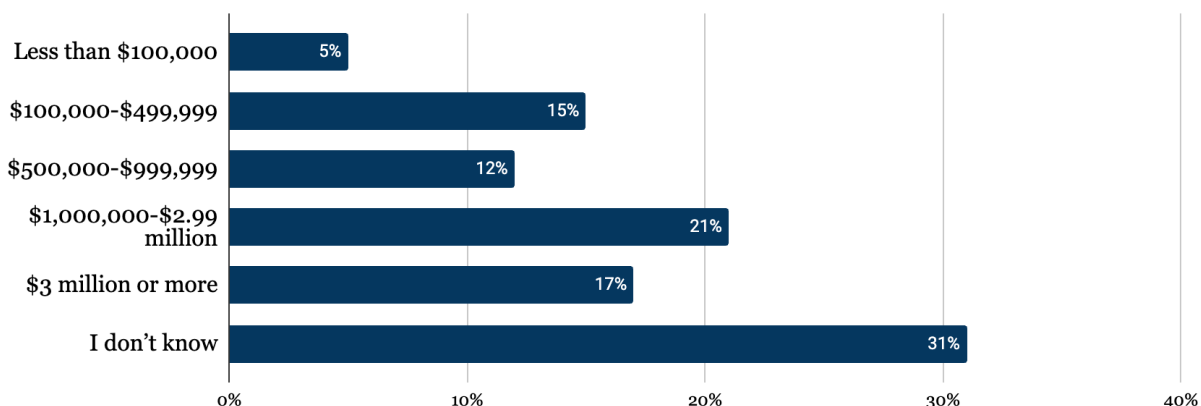
Almost half (45%) of respondents indicated they were a law enforcement agency or a prosecutor's office. The next most popular organization type was a non-profit sexual assault or domestic violence services provider. Five respondents answered "Other" and included free response answers such as "state agency," "federal law enforcement," "government agency," or that their organization fit more than one category.

Figure 1. Responding agency types.



Around 33% of the sample indicated they did not know their agency's budget. However, out of the 100 respondents who answered the question, 30 stated their budget was between \$1,000,000 and \$2.99 million, 24 said \$3 million or more, and 22 said \$100,000-\$499,999. There was also a fairly even distribution between agencies' locations, including urban, suburban, and rural areas. Only 2% of respondents indicated that their agency is on tribal land.

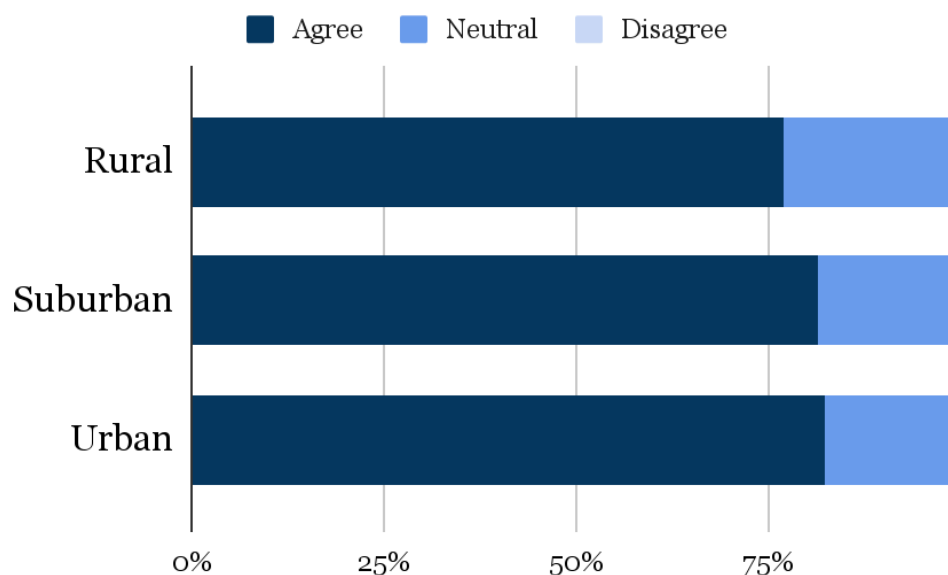
Figure 2. Responding agency budgets.



Results

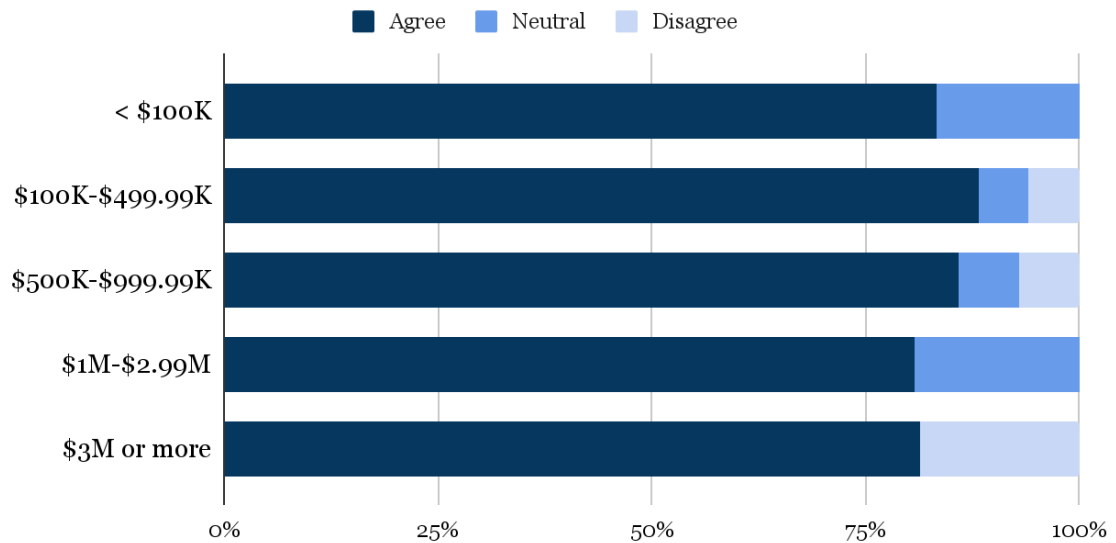
Among respondents, 82% agreed that UOVC's Request for Proposals (RFP) training and accompanying materials helped prepare well-written grant applications. 13% expressed neutral sentiments, and only 5% disagreed. Subgroup analysis revealed no notable differences in perceptions of training and resources across geographical locations, indicating consistent satisfaction regardless of region.

Figure 3. RFP training satisfaction by area.



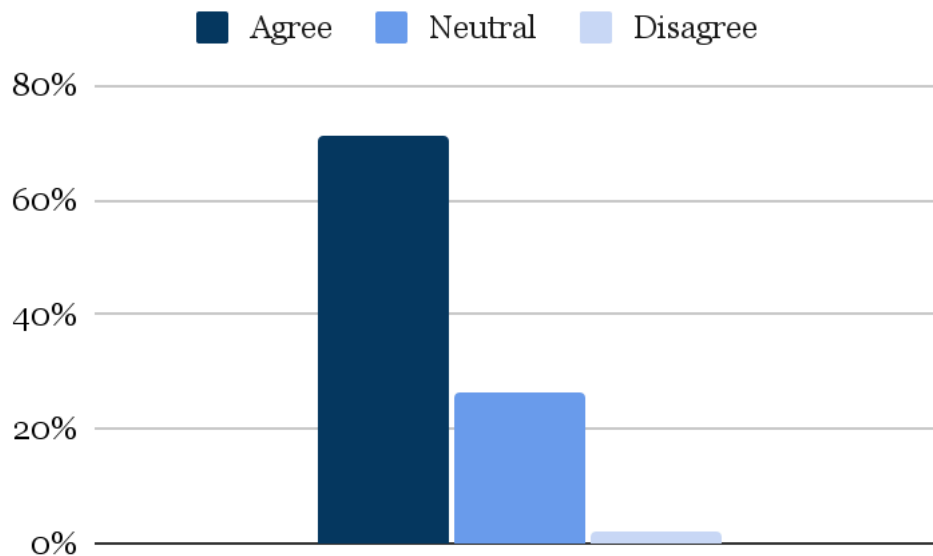
Similarly, no significant variations were observed based on budget sizes, suggesting uniform approval of UOVC's training efforts across organizations of different financial capacities.

Figure 4. RFP training satisfaction by budget size.



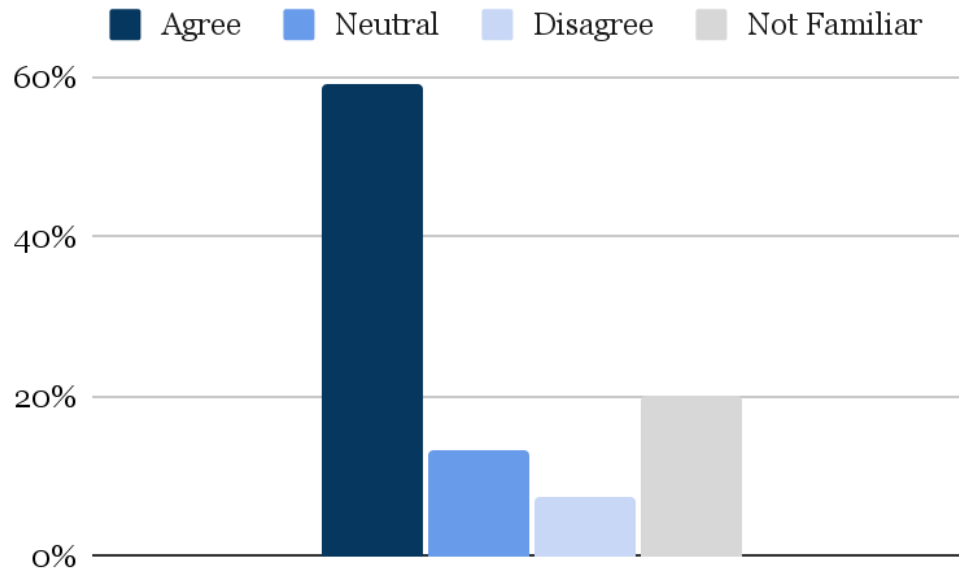
72% of respondents agreed that the UOVC application process was straightforward, highlighting a generally positive perception of its accessibility and user-friendliness.

Figure 5. “The grant application was clear to follow.”



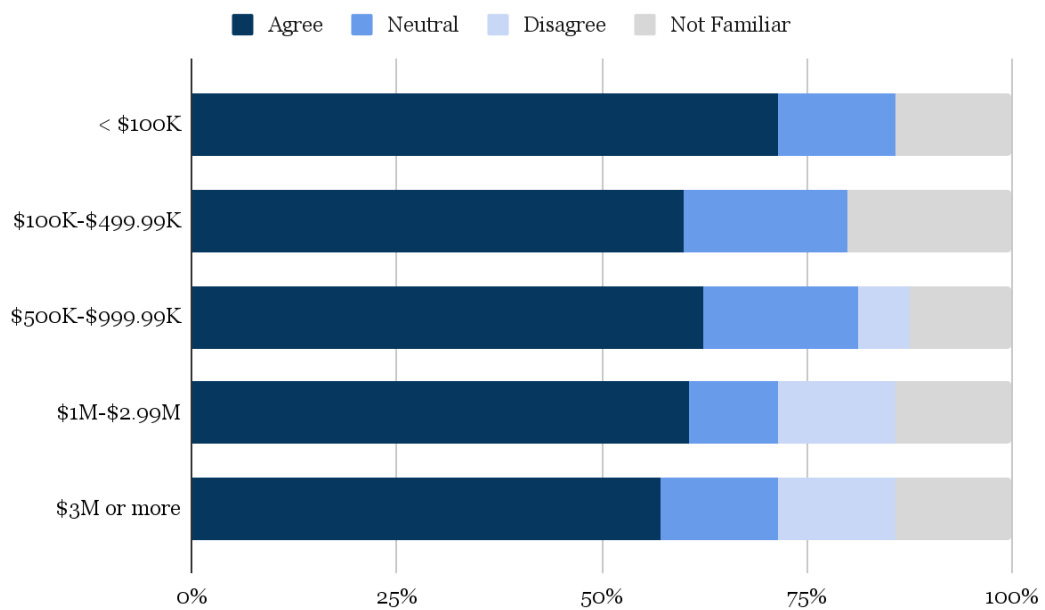
Regarding the fairness of UOVC’s screening and fund allocation processes, 59% of respondents felt the processes were equitable, while 8% disagreed. Notably, 20% reported unfamiliarity with the process, suggesting improved communication and outreach could enhance awareness.

Figure 6. Fairness in the distribution of grant funds.



Interestingly, agencies with the smallest budgets (less than \$100,000 annually) reported the highest satisfaction with the fairness of grant fund distribution, with 71% agreeing. This finding may indicate that these agencies perceive UOVC's allocation processes as particularly supportive of smaller or resource-constrained organizations.

Figure 7. Fairness in the distribution of grant funds by budget size.



Training and Resources: A Strong Foundation with Room to Grow

Grantees praised UOVC's efforts to provide accessible training through videos, FAQs, and email support, describing the process as *"transparent and accessible."* These resources form a helpful starting point, particularly for first-time applicants. Comments like *"frequently asked questions are made public, making the process as transparent as possible"* highlight UOVC's efforts to assist grantees.

However, many respondents expressed a need for more interactive and tailored support. Comments like *"I learn better hands-on rather than just watching a video"* suggest that videos alone are insufficient for some. Suggestions included separate training tracks for new and seasoned applicants and step-by-step written guides to simplify the application process.

Grantees also highlighted a gap in the clarity of instructions, particularly in understanding the procedure of grant reporting and funding eligibility. As one respondent put it, *"A step-by-step written guide would have been helpful."* The lack of tailored guidance leaves some organizations, particularly smaller or grassroots ones, feeling underserved in an already competitive environment.

"I appreciate how helpful the staff is in setting people up for success throughout the writing process. I appreciate that frequently asked questions are made public for everybody, and the process is as transparent as possible. It does feel like UOVC makes an effort to partner with the grant writers/recipients"

"I wish more help was provided with grants rather than just online videos. Every time I have a question I do not have time to go through a whole video plus I learn much better hands on rather than just watching a video"

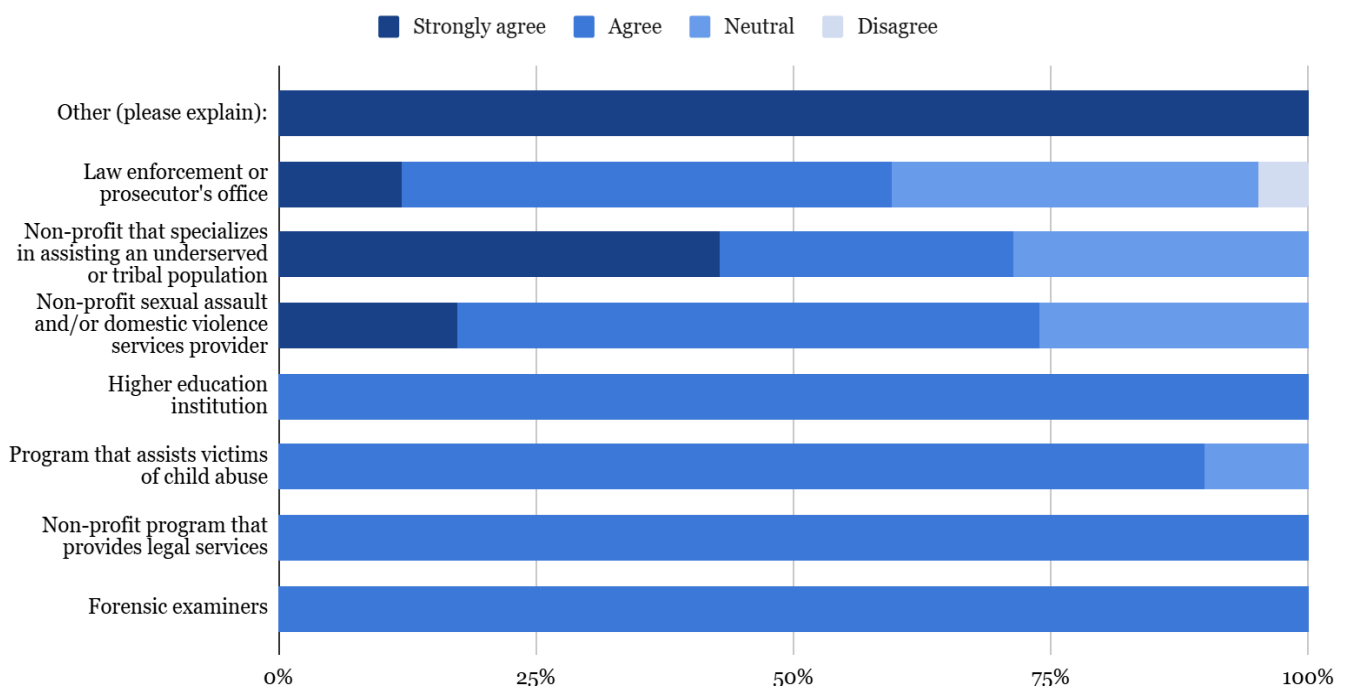
Simplifying the Process: Clearer Paths to Funding

Grantee feedback on UOVC's application process reflected both strengths and areas for improvement. The federal grant application process was commended for its clarity and structure, with one respondent sharing, *"It's streamlined and not as involved as other federal grants."* This simplicity was a welcome feature in an otherwise complex funding landscape.

However, the state application process faced criticism for being restrictive. One grantee noted, *“Only selected programs were invited to apply, leaving others excluded from opportunities.”* A recurring issue was the sizeable administrative burden. Respondents pointed out the excessive reporting requirements, with one commenting, *“The UOVC grant program has the highest administrative burden of all of our grants.”* Dual reporting systems further complicated the process, drawing time and energy away from direct victim services. Additionally, tight timelines and limited communication around funding decisions left some organizations struggling to plan effectively.

Beyond fairness, respondents called for greater clarity and consistency in evaluation criteria. One suggested, *“Establish and communicate a clear and consistent set of evaluation metrics aligned with the goals stated in the RFP.”* This would ensure that decisions are based on objective measures rather than subjective viewpoints.

Figure 8. Understood grant application process by agency type.



Equitable Grant Distribution: Strengths and Room for Improvement

UOVC’s grant distribution process was praised for its fairness and commitment to supporting victim services. Many respondents appreciated the role of subject matter experts (SMEs) in reviewing applications, with one stating, *“I think the UOVC distribution process is fair, and I appreciate the subject matter experts' contribution to*

the process.” The thoroughness of the screening process and the transparency in award decisions also stood out in the responses.

However, the feedback also highlighted concerns about inclusivity and clarity in fund allocation. Several grantees spoke about issues with selective practices, particularly in state funding. *“State funding was never published, and UOVC invited programs they selected to apply rather than having an open application process,”* one respondent shared.

Another common theme was the need to prioritize underserved and marginalized communities. One respondent suggested focusing on programs that build capacity, serve rural areas, and serve marginalized communities. Suggestions for improvement included prioritizing programs in rural or marginalized communities and balancing support between new and established initiatives. One respondent emphasized, *“Programs shouldn’t be penalized for future funding if they are unable to spend all of their funding,”* advocating for flexibility in addressing organizational challenges.

Others voiced concern over perceived imbalances, such as allocating funds to new programs at the expense of established ones. *“Strong programs need to be funded, and VOCA should not fund brand new programs just barely applying,”* one respondent argued, voicing concerns about maintaining service quality and sustainability.

“I feel like strong programs need to be funded and VOCA should not fund brand new programs just barely applying ... If new programs get funded then the strong programs ... are now providing less services.”

Capacity-Building and Flexibility: Meeting Programs Where They Are

Respondents insisted on supporting organizations at various stages of growth and operation. Several highlighted the need for more flexible funding policies to adapt to diverse needs. Regarding the ‘minimum of 25% grant funding for every position’ rule, a respondent shared, *“This particular rule should be flexible based on program structure, allowing us to allocate personnel time more effectively for client needs.”* Flexibility in funding adjustments and timelines was critical for helping organizations sustain their services, especially during unforeseen challenges.

Many respondents emphasized that funding rules often hinder their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. As mentioned previously, one respondent shared that *“programs shouldn’t be penalized for future funding if they are unable to spend all of*

their funding,” pointing out that current policies sometimes discourage careful financial management. Others suggested allowing more freedom to adjust budgets, especially as staffing and community evolve with time.

Capacity-building emerged as a key priority, particularly for organizations in rural or underserved areas. Respondents stressed the importance of focusing on smaller organizations with limited resources, with one noting, *“Supporting organizations in scaling up allows them to sustain and expand their services over time.”* Such an approach would enable these groups to increase their impact while meeting the unique needs of their communities.

“Supporting organizations in scaling up allows them to sustain and expand their services over time, meeting them where they are, and leveraging their unique ability to meet victims needs.”

Trust and Relationship-Building: Strengthening Partnerships

Grantees frequently praised UOVC staff for their dedication and support, with one respondent stating, *“I think they try really hard to be helpful and available.”* This reflects the positive relationships many organizations experience during the grant process. Additionally, the responsiveness of grant analysts stood out, as another respondent shared, *“Your grant managers/analysts were great to answer questions and be supportive in our very first application.”*

Grantees also acknowledged UOVC’s efforts to include diverse perspectives through committees and SME contributions. While some suggested further improvements in consistency and communication, the overarching sentiment was that UOVC’s collaborative approach helps build trust and ensures that applicants feel supported.

Limitations

The survey has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting results. First, its external validity is limited. Realistically, the client could not randomly distribute the survey to all its partners, so a nonprobability sample was used. However, the results still produced valid inferences for this specific sample.

Another limitation is potential complications with the distribution of the survey. The survey was sent to a distribution list with around 2,600 participants. However, it remains unknown if these recipients may have sent the survey to additional agencies.

This leads to the assumption that the total number of recipients is 2,600. Thus, we report a response rate of 7.9% (205 responses out of 2600).

Additionally, the survey was short and mainly consisted of open-ended questions, which limited quantitative analysis. The open-ended questions had the lowest item responses, and some identified themes did not align with the quantitative results (e.g., 82% agreed that the RFP training and materials were helpful, while many comments stated they didn't receive enough training or help).

Finally, there is a risk of coverage bias present. Some agencies may have received the survey but chose not to respond due to their lack of knowledge about UOVC's grant process. This could have skewed some of the results regarding agencies' understanding of the training, application process, and grant distribution. Over one-third of participants indicated they did not know their agency's budget, which may have impacted their answers regarding funding distribution.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the respondents' feedback from the open-ended questions. They intend to reflect the suggestions of organizations involved with UOVC's grant processes and highlight areas for improvement from their perspectives.

Provide more written information before grant cycles.

Many respondents cited their appreciation of clear communication from UOVC. However, many also cited that they would prefer to see more written information about various topics through the website (as opposed to videos or emails). Some suggested they would also find visual tools on the application process helpful. In addition, one wrote that a *“step by step written guide with instruction and where to find the information and what information to submit and track would have been helpful.”*

Some of the most common topics that respondents requested more upfront information on included allowable costs, differences between the state and federal funding application process, transparency on exact funding availability and future funding cuts, and evaluation metrics.

Expand the training resources available.

A few respondents explained that they lacked experience in grant writing and would prefer to receive more training in this area. One stated, *“Our facility does not have a grant writer so the process is extremely time consuming and confusing.”* Another said that *“the training helps me understand the system, not how to write a good application.”* While creating training on grant writing may be outside of UOVC’s scope, UOVC could consider sharing pre-existing resources.

Additionally, one respondent suggested separating training for new applicants and returning applicants, and others felt that there was redundancy that could be lessened. Meanwhile, new applicants and non-respondents felt they needed more information on the application steps.

Provide additional one-on-one assistance with the application process or advertise the availability of this assistance.

Many comments expressed satisfaction with the grant analysts’ hands-on assistance and availability at UOVC; however, many comments asked for additional help concurrently. One stated they would have preferred *“further hands on training, and dedicated assistance to grantors.”* Therefore, some agencies believed that UOVC should increase the one-on-one assistance the grant analysts provide or better market it, as some agencies may not have been aware of it.

Shorten or simplify the application process where possible.

One participant stated the final recommendation: *“I would suggest simplifying the process if possible.”* Many respondents commented on how *“complicated”* and *“time-consuming”* the application process is and that this complexity often deters them from applying for funds. One stated that *“it was not reasonable to continue to apply for the amount of time required for funding.”* Some said they previously found other application processes simpler through the state and other agencies. Additionally, one respondent recommended *“more flexibility, as there was in the past, to request grant changes between funding categories and up until the last month of program years.”*

Appendix A: Literature Review

The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is federal legislation passed by Congress in 1984 that addresses the need for federal funding of victim service programs by establishing the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) (Newmark, 2004). The funds are distributed as grants to victim service agencies throughout the country. The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) is a federal agency within the Department of Justice that oversees the distribution of these funds.

Two funding methods are implemented by OVC: formula and discretionary (Sacco, 2015). Formula grants are established through existing legislation, and discretionary grants are determined through a selective application process. Victim Compensation and Victim Assistance formula grants are the two formula grant programs distributed by the OVC (Office for Victims of Crime, n.d.). Victim Compensation grants are intended for state agencies that assist victims of crime (Office for Victims of Crime, n.d.). Victim Assistance formula grants are distributed by states to local governmental and nongovernmental agencies that support crime victims (Sacco, 2015). UOVC is responsible for this in Utah.

While funding provided to victim compensation programs has helped many victims, some issues must be addressed. There are strict reporting guidelines for victims to be eligible for funding. Many victims are ineligible if they do not report the crime to law enforcement within the allotted time (dependent on local rules) (Evans, 2014). In 2023, the National Crime Victimization Survey found that 45% of violent crime victims were reported to law enforcement (Tapps & Coen, 2024). Victims who chose not to report these incidents to the police often did so out of fear, lack of confidence in the police, and thinking the crime was not serious enough to report (Tapps & Coen, 2024). This means that over half of all victims of violent crime in the US are not eligible for funds.

The funds available to crime victims are consistently underutilized. Only about 10% of violent crime victims access available services (Warnken & Lauritsen, 2019). The likelihood of victims to not seek out resources is extremely high. Victims with physical injuries tend to be more likely to pursue resources (Warnken & Lauritsen, 2019). This highlights the gap in services for crime victims who do not suffer physical injuries.

An additional shortcoming of the grant programs is the limited funding available for administrative purposes. Five percent of VOCA grants are specifically for administrative costs (Evans, 2014). The limited funding can increase the administrative burden for agencies and make it difficult to adequately staff their teams, leading to potential service gaps (Evans, 2014).

Appendix B: Survey Methodology

Survey Design

The UOVC survey was developed by the University of Utah students in the Master of Public Policy (MPP) program during a survey methods course in the fall of 2024. Meetings with UOVC leadership aided the development of the survey's aims, leading to the development of the survey items. Additionally, the survey was presented in the Survey Research Methods course to ensure the questions were not written in a way that encouraged bias, were easily understood by potential respondents, and produced quality data.

The survey was created in Qualtrics and administered by the MPP student team. The final version contained ten questions. Eight were multiple-choice or multiple-selection questions, five had opportunities for written explanations when selecting a specific answer, and two were open-format questions. The questions and distribution of responses for multiple choice questions can be found in Appendix C.

Survey Implementation

The target population of this survey was organizations that aid victims of crime that have applied for grants with UOVC in the past, plan to in the future, or are interested in the application process. The survey was emailed to 2,600 people on UOVC's email list on November 6, 2024. UOVC also posted a link to the survey on the UOVC website. There remains a question of whether there were multiple respondents per agency or just one per agency. The survey was available for 19 days, closing November 25, 2024. There were 205 respondents, just under an 8% response rate.

Analysis

The analysis conducted on survey results consisted of highlighting the distribution of responses among demographics and identifying common themes in the free response questions. The only results that were omitted from the analysis were written results answered as "Not Applicable". Demographics included agency type, total budget, and office location. The analysis aimed to find trends among specific agency demographics in relation to their responses to questions about satisfaction levels with grant application processes, the equity of funding distribution, and resources offered by UOVC. The trends among respondents help contextualize what barriers the agencies encounter when applying for grant funding. Trends also help inform future funding strategies for UOVC by identifying potential gaps in knowledge and providing a different perspective on funding equity.

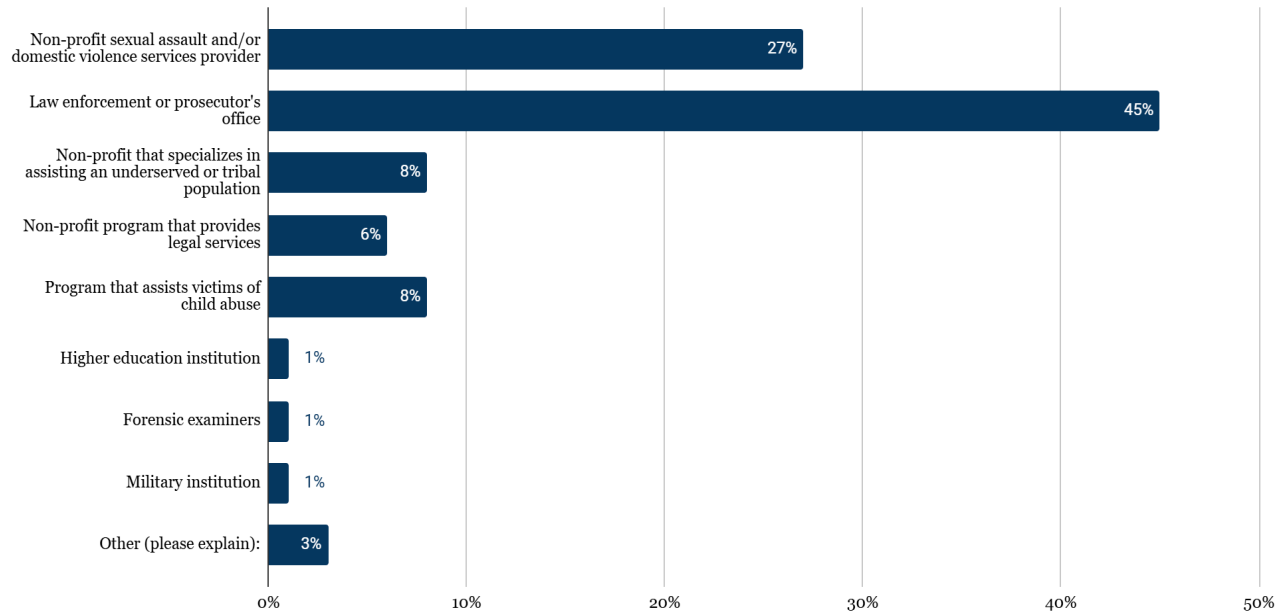
Identifying themes in the free-response questions involved reading through all answers and determining the topics mentioned most. The themes identified were training and resources, the application process, grant funds distribution, capacity-building and flexibility, and trust and relationship-building. Respondents highlighted the positive aspects of these themes and offered their feedback and suggestions. Taking these into consideration will aid UOVC in future grant application cycles.

Appendix C: Survey Questions and Responses

Question 1

Choose one category that best describes the type of agency you work for:

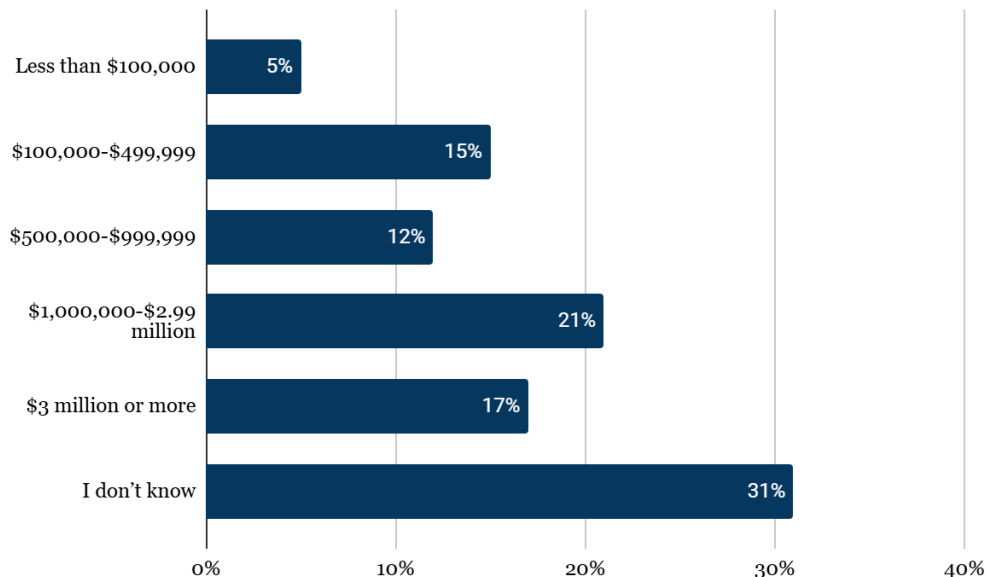
N =144



Question 2:

What is your agency's overall budget?

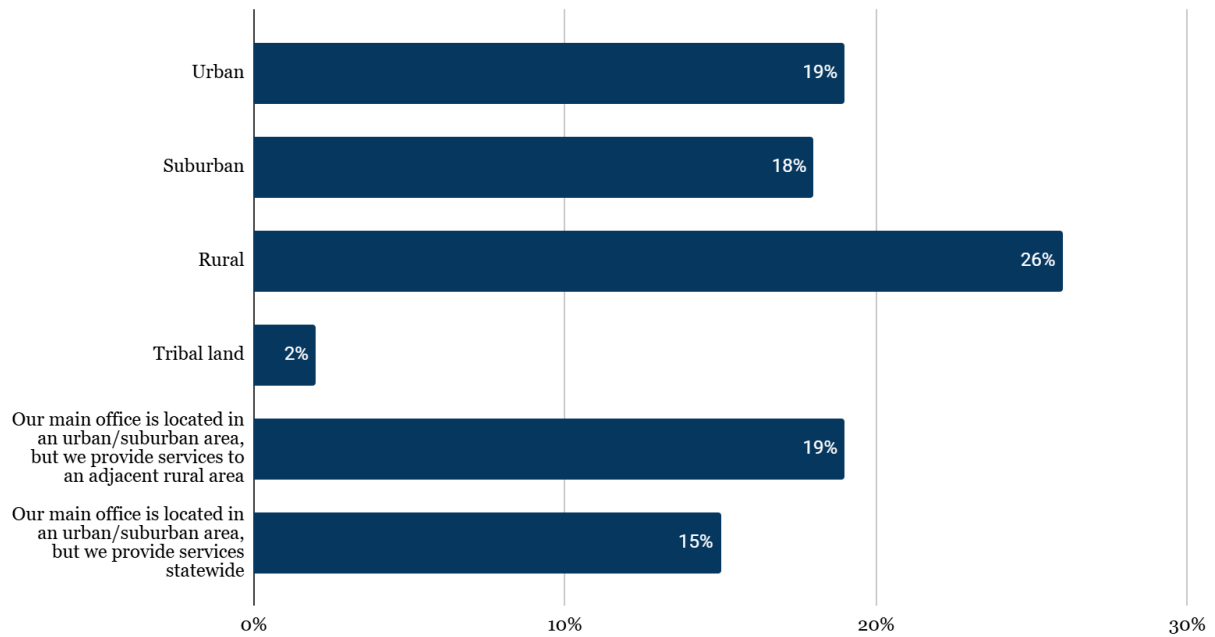
N =144



Question 3:

What type of area is your agency located in? (select one)

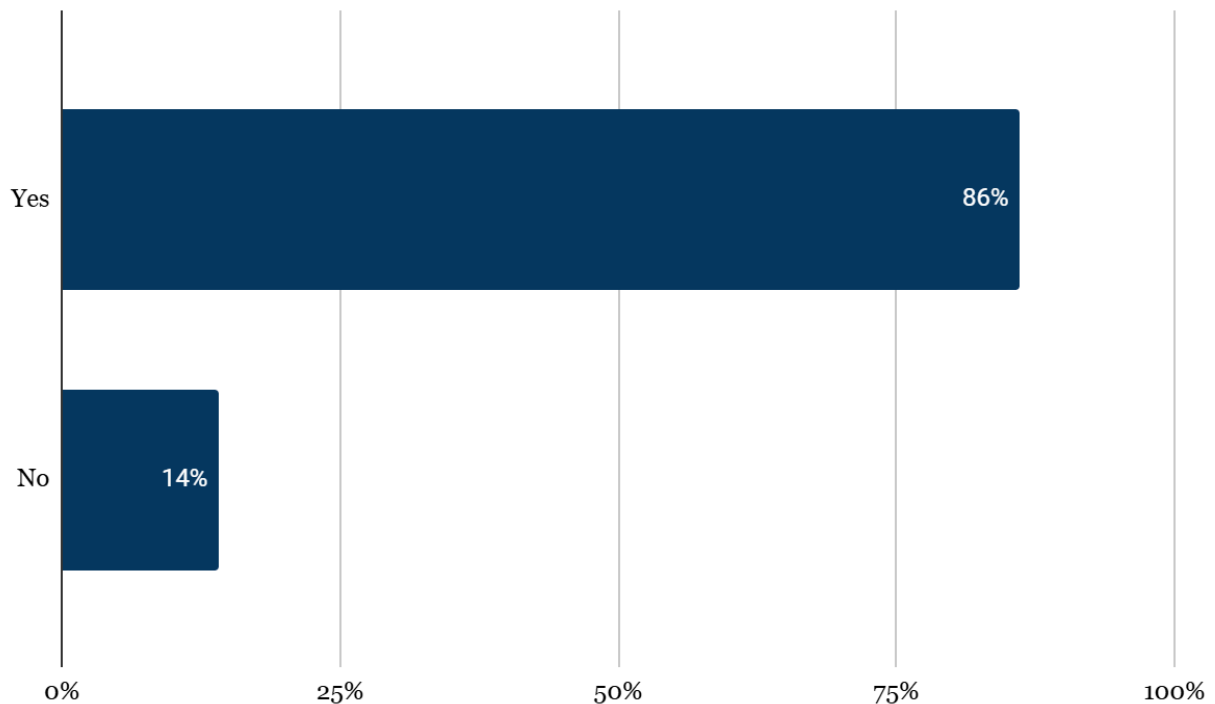
N = 144



Question 4:

Does your agency currently receive funding from the Utah Office for Victims of Crime (UOVC)?

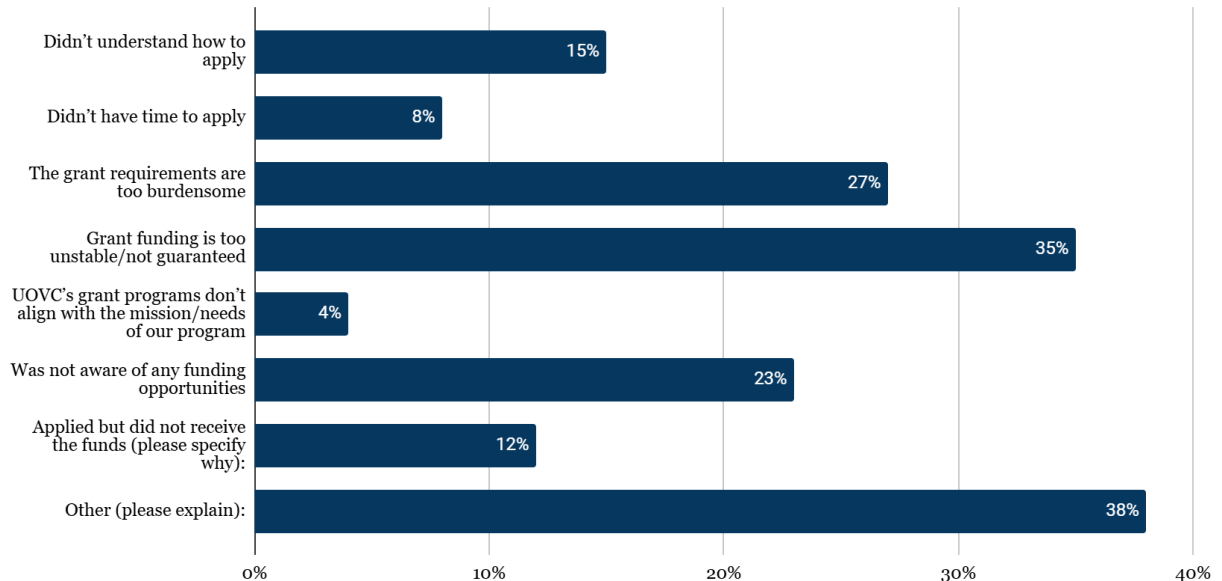
N = 143



Question 5:

If your agency does not currently receive funding, what factors prevent you from accessing current funding opportunities? (select all that apply)

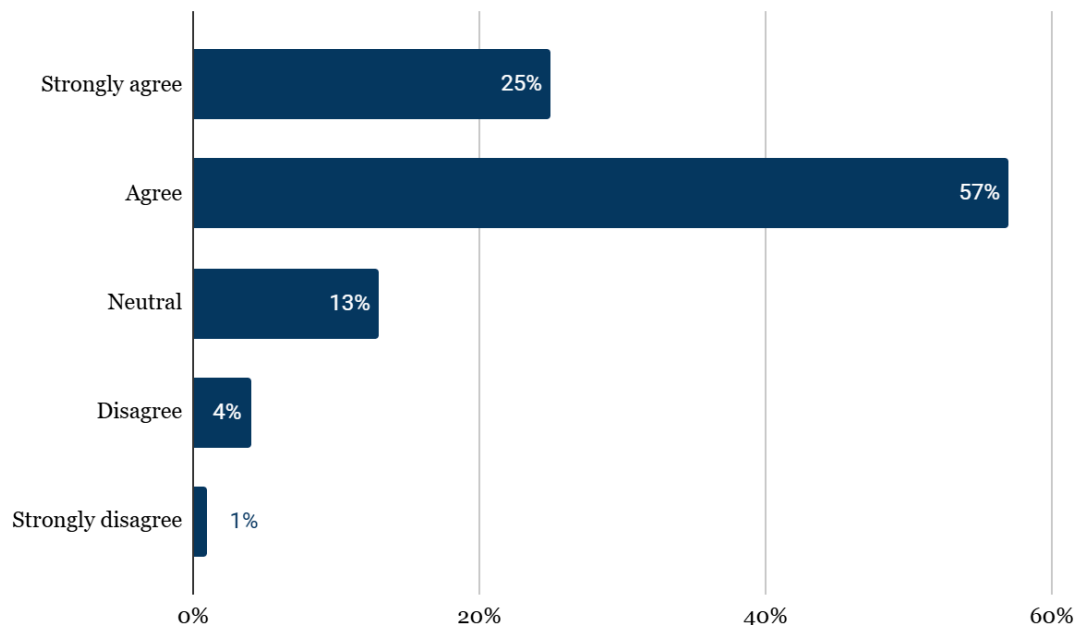
N = 42



Question 6:

The RFP training and accompanying materials always helped me understand UOVC's grant programs and submit a well-written application.

N = 93



Question 6a:

If you strongly disagree/disagree, what could have improved the training experience?

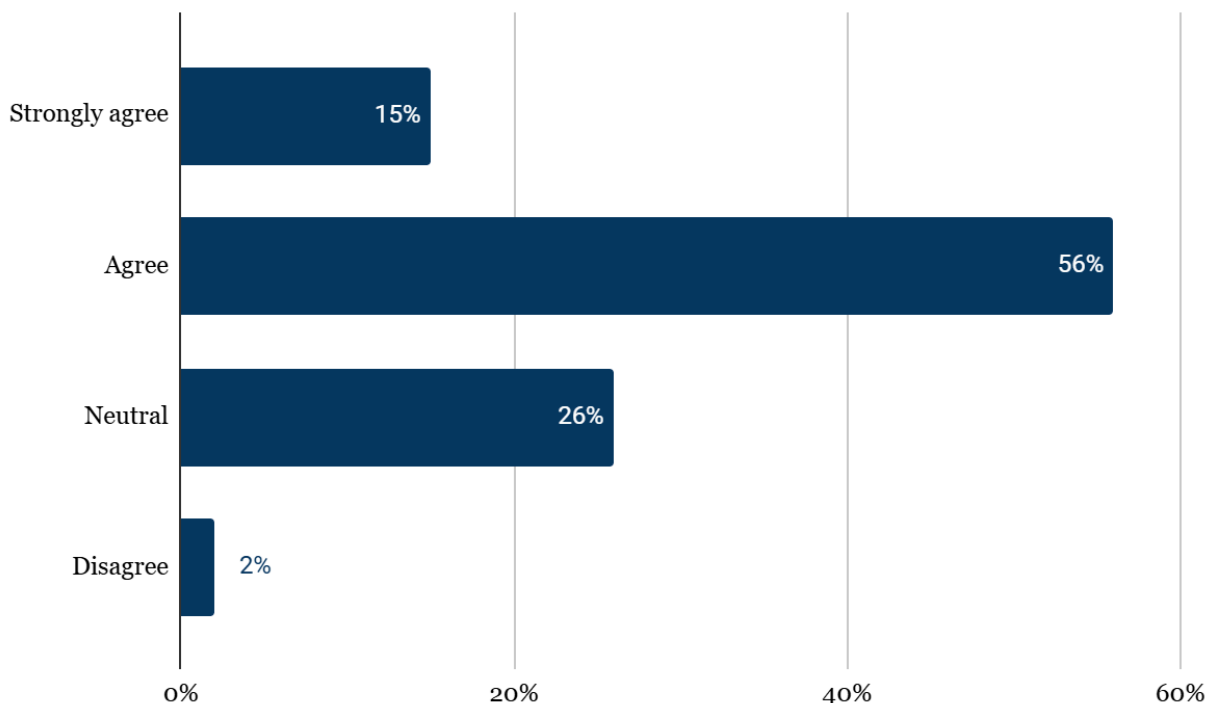
N = 8

Having a one on one assistance with the grant process.
less redundancy but understand it for new applicants. We had submitted grant application int he past and were familiar with the questions, maybe just new forms, online changes, requirements, etc
There should be a couple different trainings. Like one for new applicants or those with a few years of funding, one for how to improve your grant, and a training for the "I've had this grant forever." Also if agencies are struggling with writing a grant, submitting reports and funding requests then they should be invited to a separate training.
I would appreciate a clearer understand of exactly what is and isn't allowable under each funding opportunity. Trying to determine it by reading the CFR's is like looking for a needle in a haystack.
I did not anything about this
We knew there was going to be a decrease in funding, but it was surprising how much our request was cut. I think it would have been nice to have clearer guidance on the percentage of decrease.
Further hands on training, and dedicated assistance to grantors.
The training helps me understand the system, not how to write a good application.

Question 7

The grant application was clear to follow.

N = 91



Question 7a

If you disagree, what could have made the application easier?

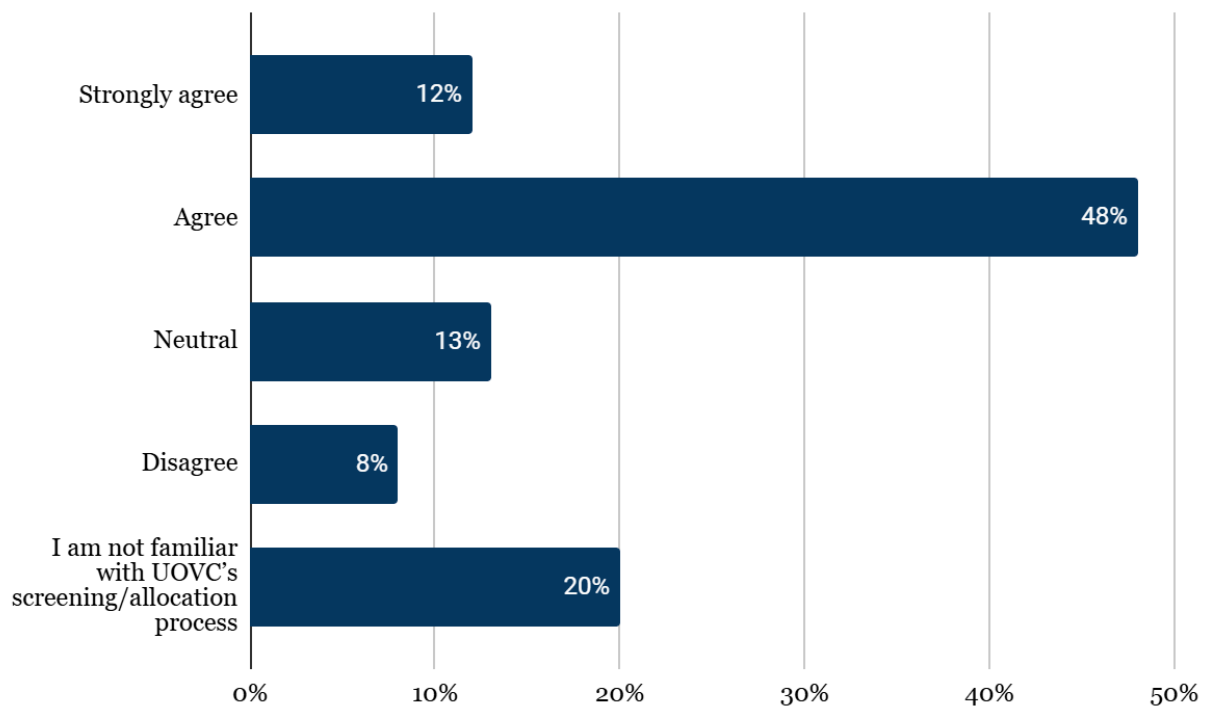
N = 3

Time consuming and managing a case load, no staff or support from our department to help us while maintaining a caseload.
Most of the instructions have been very clear, there is just a lot to work through, so it feels disorienting in that regard. Also, visual tools would be helpful to capture the entirety of the application process and all of the steps.
I did not know anything about this

Question 8

UOVC's screening and allocation process provides for fairness in the distribution of grant funds.

N = 120



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