COVID-19 Has Permanently Changed Grant Programs

ANNUAL GRANTS SURVEY RESULTS WEBINAR

REI SYSTEMS

NGMA
National Grants Management Association

Trachtenberg School
of Public Policy
& Public Administration
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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REI Systems, NGMA, and GWU Conduct an Annual Grants Survey

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National Grants Management Association

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

→ **Identify issues and priorities**

→ **Let you see how you fit**

→ **Help advocate for what you need**

The **National Grants Management Association** provides tools and resources for grants professionals to support and maintain high levels of grants management competency and to establish standards of excellence for grants managers. Visit ngma.org

The **Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration** is a focal point for public affairs education, research, and public service at the George Washington University. Visit tspppa.gwu.edu

REI Systems provides grant management solutions, analysis, and advice. We digitize government to produce healthier citizens, safer communities, and better lives. Visit REIsystems.com

Many trends continued, and the pandemic caused permanent changes

What are the BIGGEST FINDINGS?

- **Compliance monitoring continues to be the most time-consuming activity**

- **Performance dropped considerably for federal organizations**

- **The pandemic has permanently impacted grants operations**

- **Although most organizations do not require training, training continues to be a significant success factor**
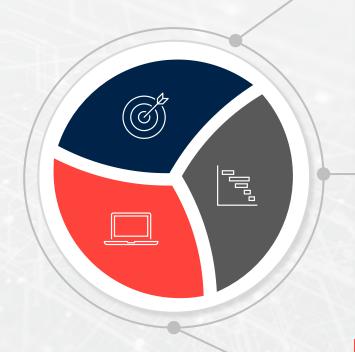
- **New technology adoptions in grants management has a way to go**

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AGENDA

- Introduction and Methodology
- About the Respondents
- Grants Lifecycle
- Systems and Data
- Training
- Legislation and Directives
- Success Factors and Challenges
- Key Takeaways

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Introduction and Methodology

Purpose

Inform the grants community of crosscutting issues and trends to **help improve** grants management and to **support advocates** for better grants management.

Survey Design

GWU, REI, and NGMA developed a survey of grants managers in 2016 to help identify key practices, major challenges, and related topics that could help inform the grants management community. Revisions were made to the survey every year to maximize the opportunity to evaluate the trend of responses over time.
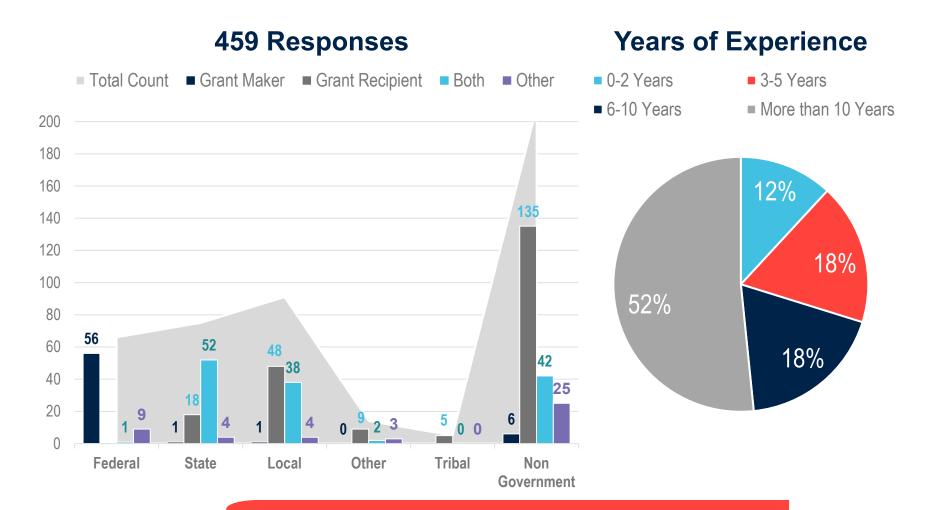
Survey Administration

More than 5,000 professionals in grants management and related fields were invited to take the survey online.

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SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents Included a Mix of Federal, State, Local, and Nonprofit Grants Managers

459 Responses

Legend: ■ Total Count ■ Grant Maker ■ Grant Recipient ■ Both ■ Other

Category	Grant Maker	Grant Recipient	Both	Other
Federal	56	1		9
State	1	18	52	4
Local	1	48	38	4
Other	0	9	2	3
Tribal		5	0	0
Non Government	6	135	42	25

Years of Experience

Legend: ■ 0-2 Years ■ 3-5 Years ■ 6-10 Years ■ More than 10 Years

- 12%
- 18%
- 18%
- 52%

With the best response rate in the survey's history, nongovernment responses increased the most compared to previous years.
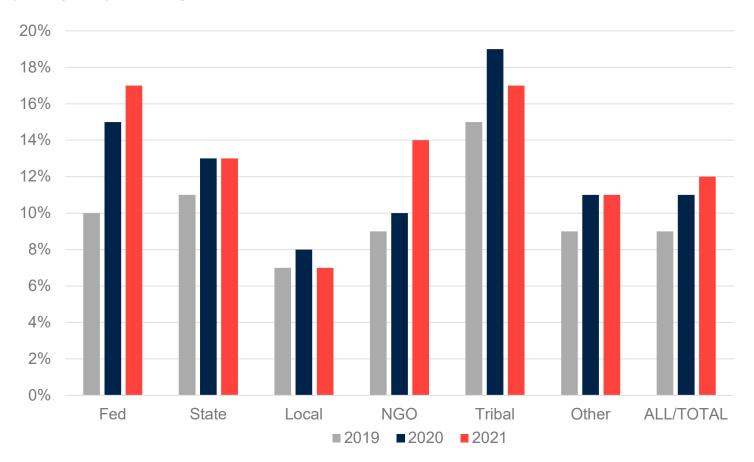
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Admin Spend on Grants Management Remains High

1.4. What percentage of the annual value of grants processed by your organization does [your organization's] administrative budget constitute?
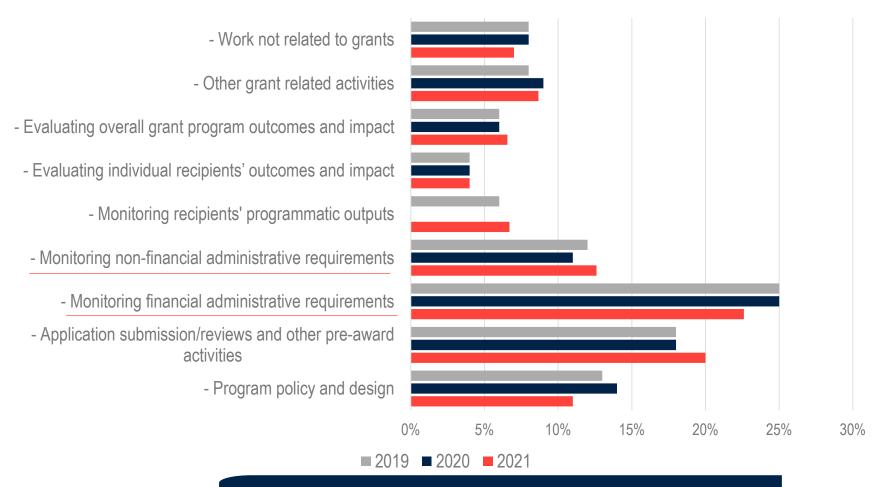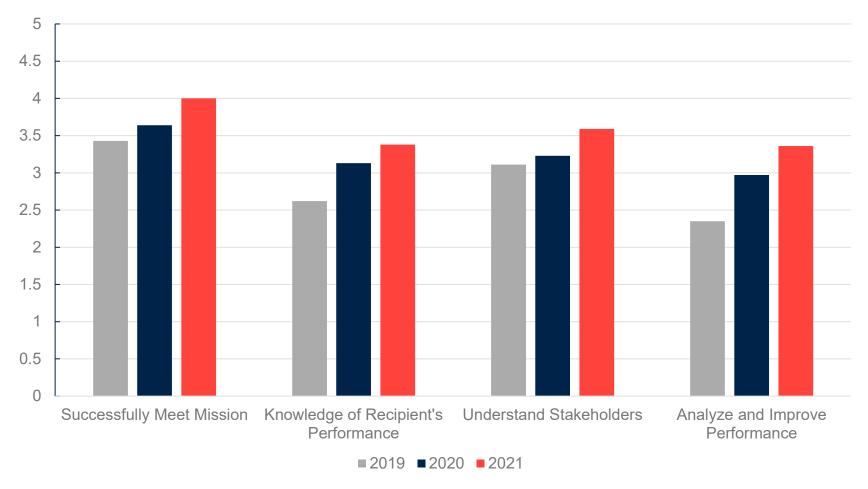
Admin spending as a percent of grant value

Legend: ■ 2019 ■ 2020 ■ 2021

Categories: Fed, State, Local, NGO, Tribal, Other, ALL/TOTAL

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GRANTS LIFECYCLE

Grants Managers' Work Is Consistent:
The Biggest Task Is Still Compliance Monitoring

2.1. How much time do you spend on the following grants management activities?

Categories (top to bottom):
- Work not related to grants
- Other grant related activities
- Evaluating overall grant program outcomes and impact
- Evaluating individual recipients' outcomes and impact
- Monitoring recipients' programmatic outputs
- Monitoring non-financial administrative requirements
- Monitoring financial administrative requirements
- Application submission/reviews and other pre-award activities
- Program policy and design

Legend: ■ 2019 ■ 2020 ■ 2021

Compliance monitoring still takes more time than any other activity – 35%.
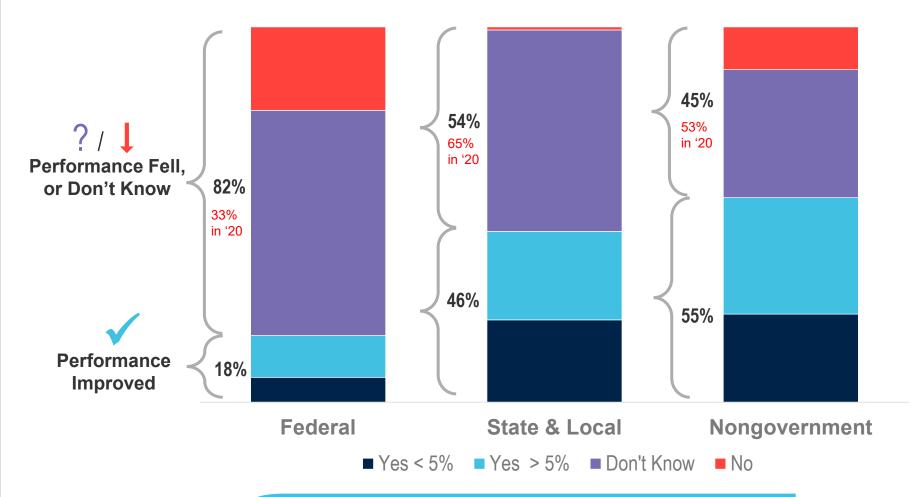
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Organizational Ability to Meet Mission Objectives Improved

2.2. What is your assessment of how well equipped your organization and its operational environment is?
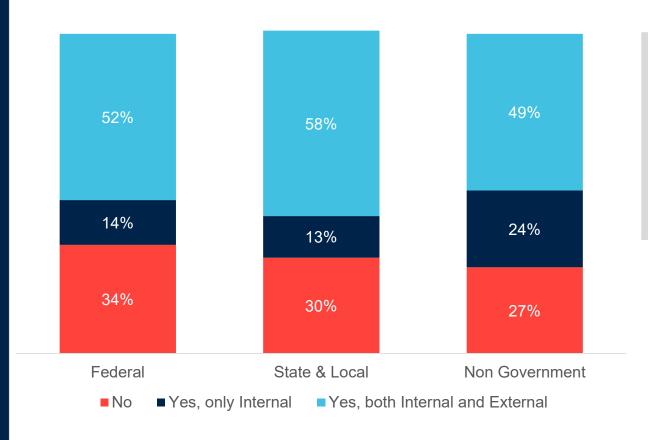

Legend: 2019, 2020, 2021

Many More Organizations Experienced Falling or Unknown Performance Than in Previous Years

2.4. Have your organization's/your recipients' outcomes improved over the past 12 months?

? / ↓

Performance Fell, or Don't Know

82%
33% in '20

54%
65% in '20

45%
53% in '20

✓

Performance Improved

18%

46%

55%

Federal **State & Local** **Nongovernment**

■ Yes < 5% ■ Yes > 5% ■ Don't Know ■ No

Overall, 55% of respondents had no performance improvements, or could not measure it.

13

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The Pandemic Has Had a Permanent Impact on Operations

2.5 Has your organization changed its operations (beyond just remote work) as a result of the pandemic?
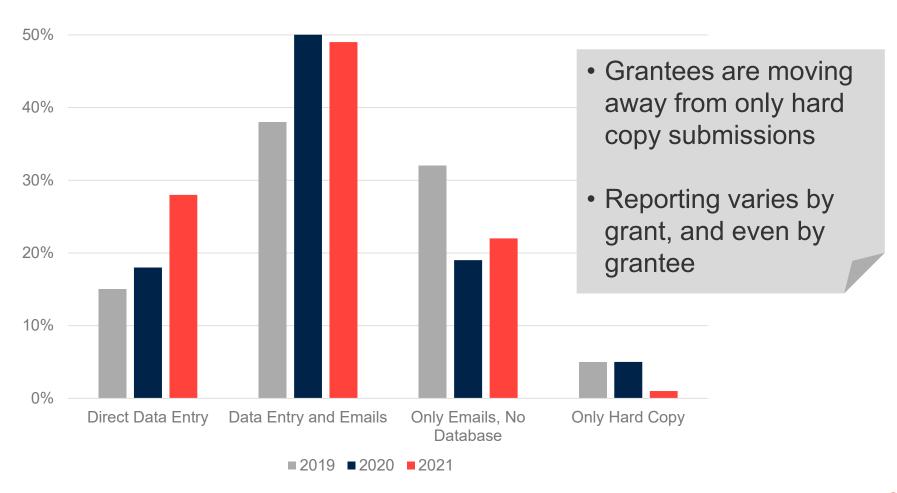
	Federal	State & Local	Non Government
Yes, both Internal and External	52%	58%	49%
Yes, only Internal	14%	13%	24%
No	34%	30%	27%

Legend: ■ No ■ Yes, only Internal ■ Yes, both Internal and External

Permanent Changes:

- Virtual meetings, reviews and site visits
- Technology that allows remote work
- Online Communication

Of those who said operations changed, 82% said the changes will persist beyond the pandemic

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SYSTEMS AND DATA

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Grant Reporting Automation Has Improved But Still Has Some Way to Go
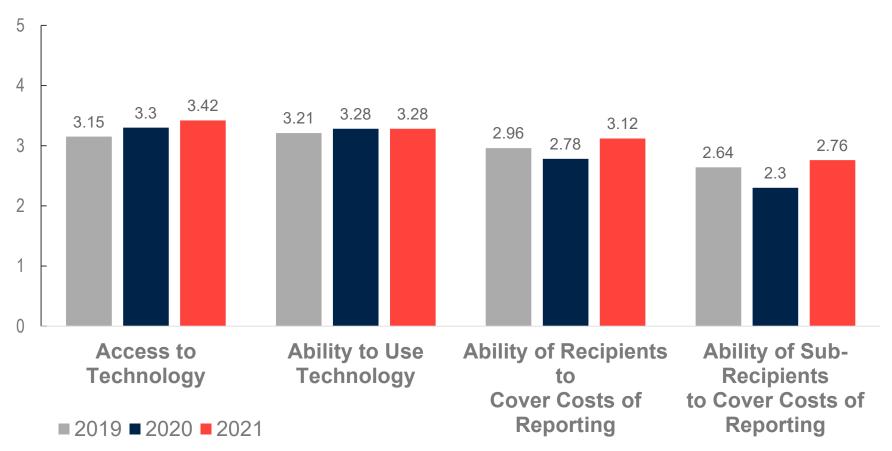
- Grantees are moving away from only hard copy submissions

- Reporting varies by grant, and even by grantee

Legend: 2019 2020 2021

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Satisfaction with Technology and Ability of Recipients to Cover Costs Is Showing Some Improvement
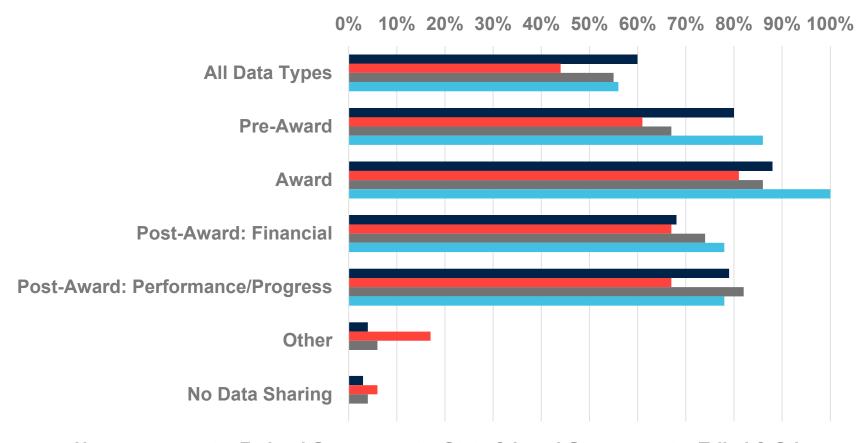
3.1 If you have a Grants Management System (GMS), please rate your satisfaction with the technology, your program, or your organization's use of it and the costs for your staff, recipients, and sub-recipients to use it.

Bar chart data:

Category	2019	2020	2021
Access to Technology	3.15	3.3	3.42
Ability to Use Technology	3.21	3.28	3.28
Ability of Recipients to Cover Costs of Reporting	2.96	2.78	3.12
Ability of Sub-Recipients to Cover Costs of Reporting	2.64	2.3	2.76

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There Is Strong Agreement on the Importance of Automated Data Sharing

3.5 What kind of data should local, state, and tribal governments and federal agencies share in an automated manner?
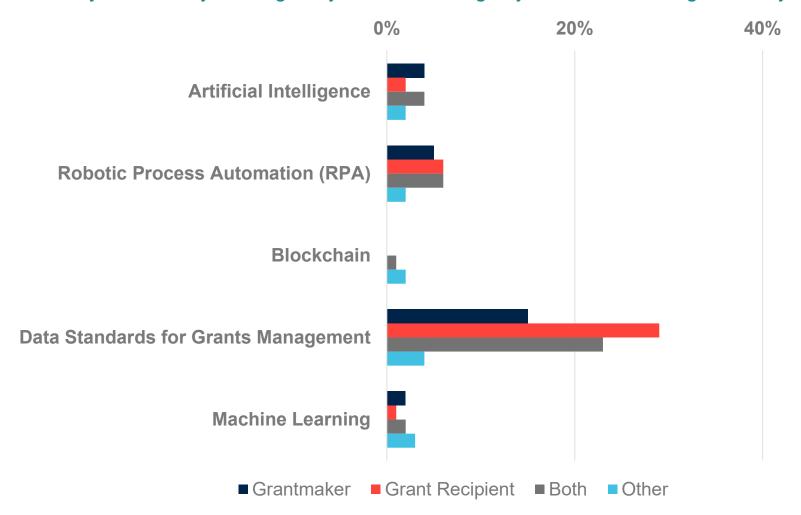

Nongovernment   **Federal Government**   **State & Local Government**   **Tribal & Other**

Grantmakers and Recipients Are Not Leveraging the Latest Advances in Technology

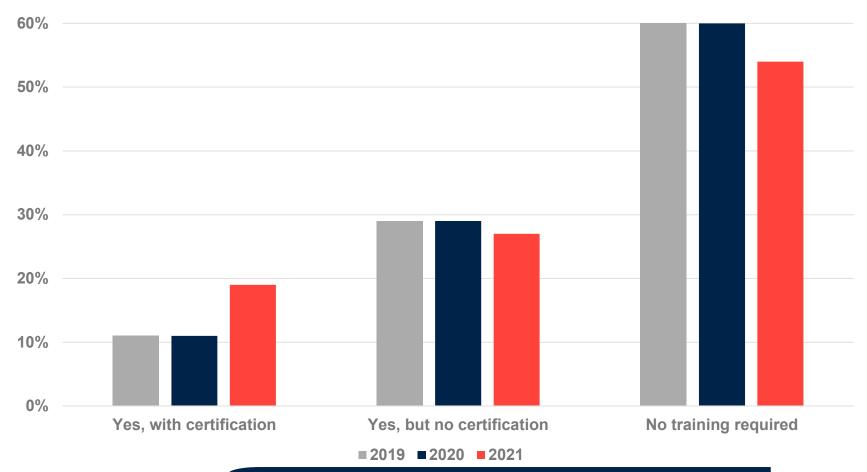## 3.6 Do you currently leverage any of the following in your Grants Management Systems?

Categories (top to bottom):
- Artificial Intelligence
- Robotic Process Automation (RPA)
- Blockchain
- Data Standards for Grants Management
- Machine Learning

Legend: ■ Grantmaker ■ Grant Recipient ■ Both ■ Other

X-axis: 0% — 20% — 40%

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TRAINING

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Few Organizations Require That Their Staff Receive Grants Management Training

And Certification Requirements Are Even More Rare

4.1 Does your organization require formal grant training of your staff?

Legend: 2019, 2020, 2021

Categories: Yes, with certification | Yes, but no certification | No training required

Certification requirements are trending upward but are still below 20%.
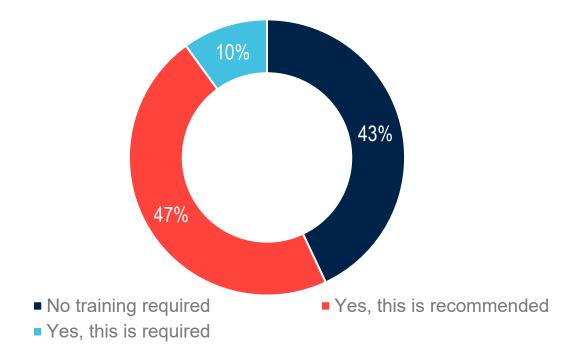
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About Half of Organizations Offer Grant Training to Grant Recipients

And Requiring Training Is Rare

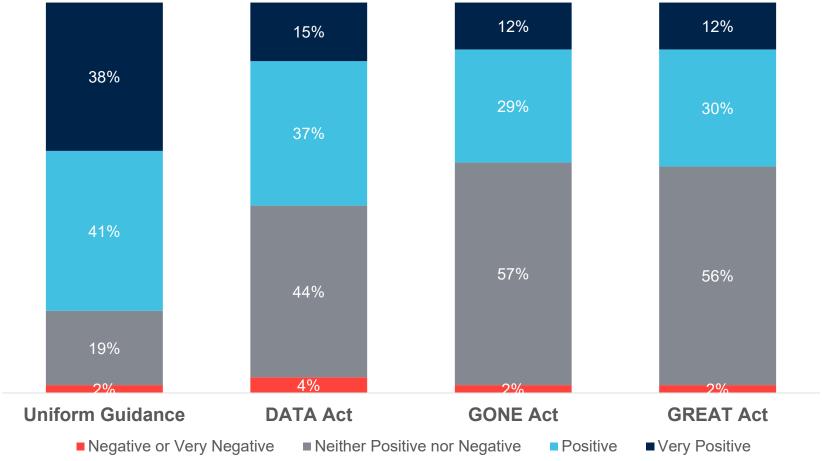4.2 Does your organization provide grant training to grant recipients or sub-recipients?

Grant Training for Grant Recipients

- 10%
- 43%
- 47%

■ No training required ■ Yes, this is recommended
■ Yes, this is required

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LEGISLATION AND DIRECTIVES

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Federal Legislation and Executive Directives Have Had a Moderate Impact on Grants Management

5.1 Please rate the impact of each of the following federal legislative and/or executive branch directives on your **day-to-day grants management.**

	Uniform Guidance	DATA Act	GONE Act	GREAT Act
Very Positive	38%	15%	12%	12%
Positive	41%	37%	29%	30%
Neither Positive nor Negative	19%	44%	57%	56%
Negative or Very Negative	2%	4%	2%	2%

Legend: ■ Negative or Very Negative ■ Neither Positive nor Negative ■ Positive ■ Very Positive

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Federal Legislation and Executive Directives Have Had a Small Impact on Recipient Innovation

5.2 Please rate the impact of each of the following federal legislative and/or executive branch directives on **recipient innovation.**

	Uniform Guidance	DATA Act	GONE Act	GREAT Act
Very Positive	20%	10%	8%	7%
Positive	33%	25%	21%	20%
Neither Positive nor Negative	43%	62%	67%	70%
Negative or Very Negative	4%	3%	4%	3%

■ Negative or Very Negative ■ Neither Positive nor Negative ■ Positive ■ Very Positive

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SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

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Successes

6.1. What are the most significant factors in the success(es) your organization has had in grants management in recent years?

Qualified staff remains the key to success, and the impact of clear communication and clear laws increased.

■ 2019　■ 2020　■ 2021

Write-in answers included:

• Collaboration with other agencies and recipients

• More flexibility with use of funds due to pandemic

Chart categories (top to bottom):
- Anecdotes of people who have been helped by grants
- Data linking grants to improved mission results
- Strong process for selecting recipients and avoiding risk
- Efficient methods for overseeing recipient performance
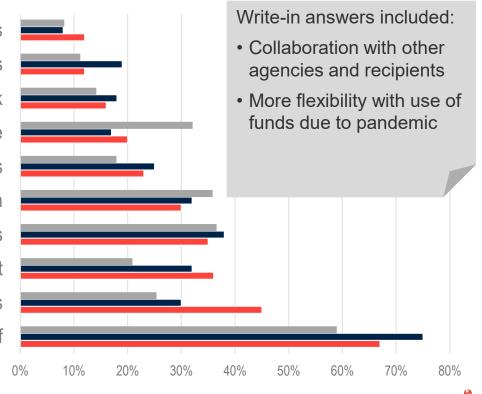- Passionate and skilled recipients
- Org structure to support agency-wide coordination
- Effective training/technical assistance for recipients
- Clear law/authorization to make the grant
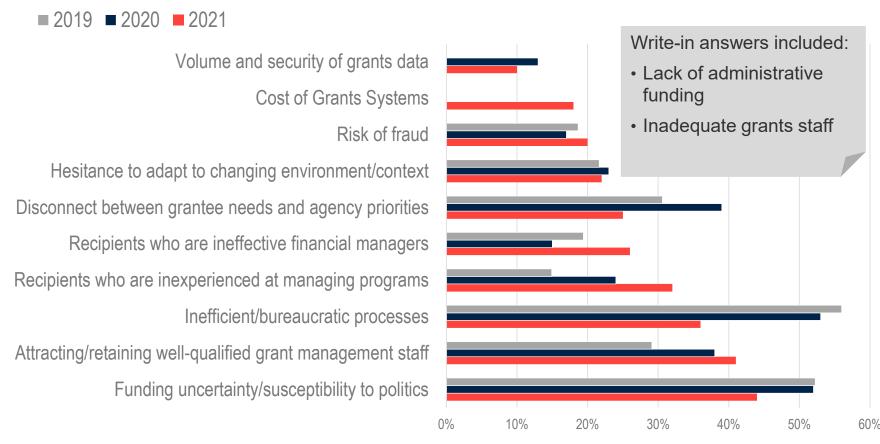- Clear communication about the mission of grants
- Well-qualified grant management staff

X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

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Challenges

6.2. What do you think are the **most significant challenges** facing grants management?

Funds uncertainty receded a bit, while concerns over inexperienced recipients increased.

■ 2019 ■ 2020 ■ 2021

Write-in answers included:

- Lack of administrative funding
- Inadequate grants staff

Suggestions from Survey Respondents – Priorities for Effort to Improve

6.4. What should be the **highest priorities/best ways** to improve grant management?

PEOPLE
→ Better training

→ Certifications for both Grantmakers and Recipients

→ Experienced staff

→ Leadership expectations

PROCESS
→ Communication

→ Clear expectations from Grantmakers

→ Standardizing processes

→ "Right-sizing" reporting requirements

TECHNOLOGY
→ Modernized systems

→ Standardized data

→ Automation in data reporting

→ Streamlined systems, fewer portals

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6.5. What are your **top 5 priorities** over the next 3 years?

Increasing staff, more training, and streamlining processes continue to be priorities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Takeaways from Our Analysis

1 Grants managers continue to spend more time monitoring compliance than any other activity

2 54% of respondents said that performance outcomes did not improve, or they didn't know if they did

3 82% said that changes that were made for the pandemic are permanent

4 As Grantmakers improve reporting automation, satisfaction with technology is slowly increasing

5 The Uniform Guidance has made a big impact on daily grants management activities

6 Systems, training, and efficient processes remain priorities

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Thank you!