



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



ANNUAL SURVEY  
**Grants Management**  
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

February 2021  
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# REI Systems, NGMA, and GWU Conduct an Annual Grants Survey

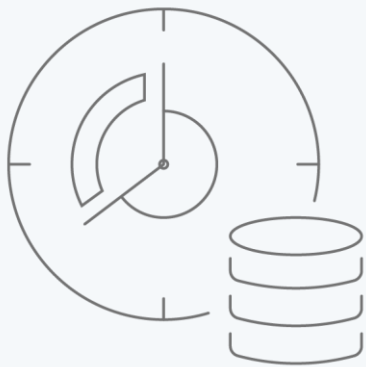
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- Identify issues and priorities
- Let you see how you fit
- Help advocate for what you need



# What are the biggest findings?

**More time spent on compliance than anything else**



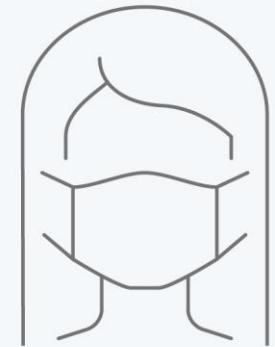
**Admin spend appeared to increase significantly in 2020 over 2019**



**Many can't measure performance, or don't know if it improved (more than 56%)**



**COVID had a huge impact on performance (61% said more than 10% impact)**



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- Introduction and methodology
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- Administrative spend on grants management
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# REI Systems, GWU, NGMA

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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](http://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.

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**REI Systems** provides grant management solutions, analysis and advice. We digitize government to produce healthier citizens, safer communities, and better lives. Visit [reisystems.com](http://reisystems.com)

# Introduction and Methodology

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**Purpose:** The purpose of the grants management survey and analysis is to inform the grants community of cross-cutting issues and trends so as to help improve grants management, and to support advocates for better grant management

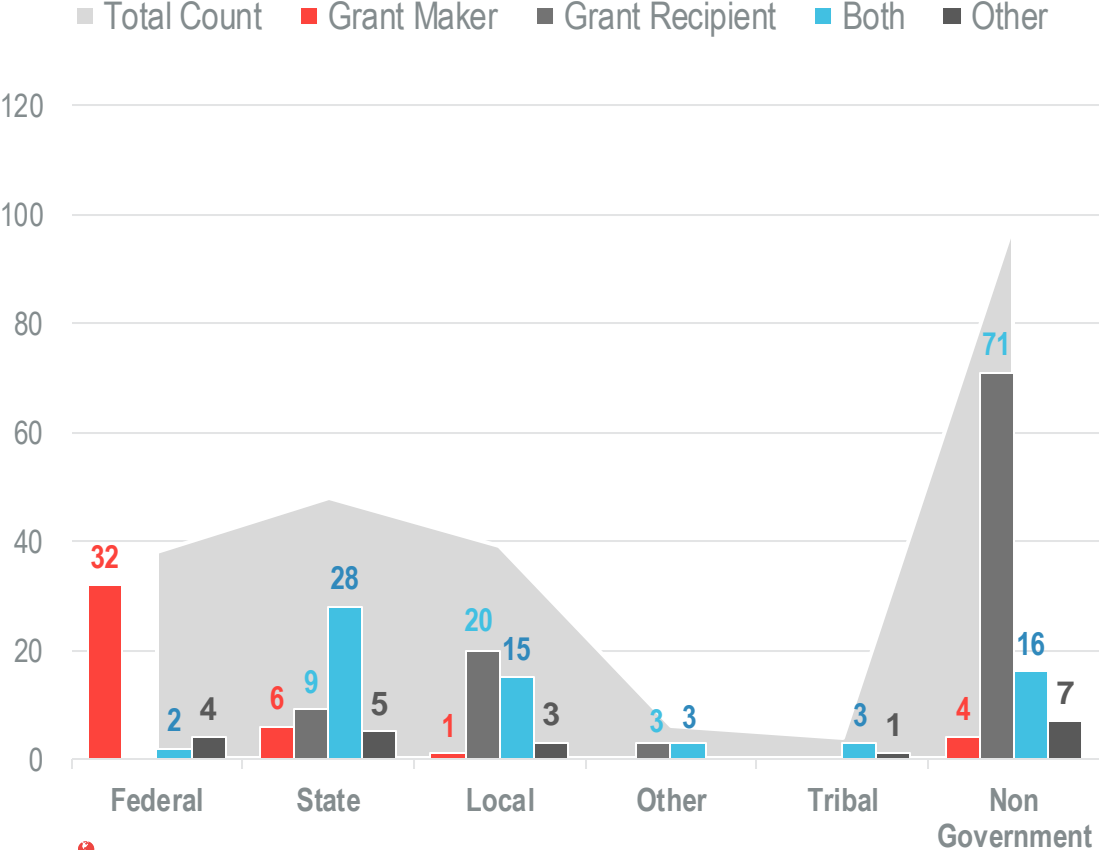
**Survey Design:** GWU, REI, and NGMA developed a survey of grant managers in 2016 to help identify key practices, major challenges, and related topics that could help inform the grants management community. Revisions were made to the survey for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, to maximize the opportunity to evaluate the trend of responses over time

## **Survey Administration:**

- During November 2020, we invited more than 5,000 professionals in grant management and related fields to take the survey online. Others (Grants.gov) also distributed the survey on our behalf
- Those invited to respond included NGMA members, attendees of Grants Management Breakfast Forum events, and other grants professionals that REI and GWU have been able to identify. Those receiving the survey were encouraged to forward it to colleagues
- Responses were anonymous, though respondents were offered the chance to receive these survey results if they chose to share their name and email address

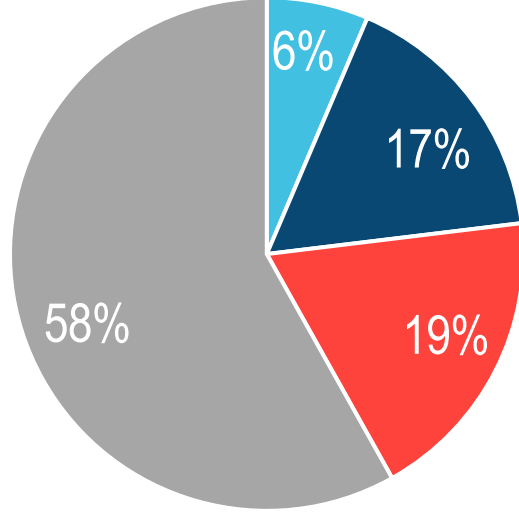
# Respondents Included a Mix of Federal, State / Local & Non-Profit Grant Managers

233 Responses



Years of Experience

- 0-2 Years
- 3-5 Years
- 6-10 Years
- More than 10 Years





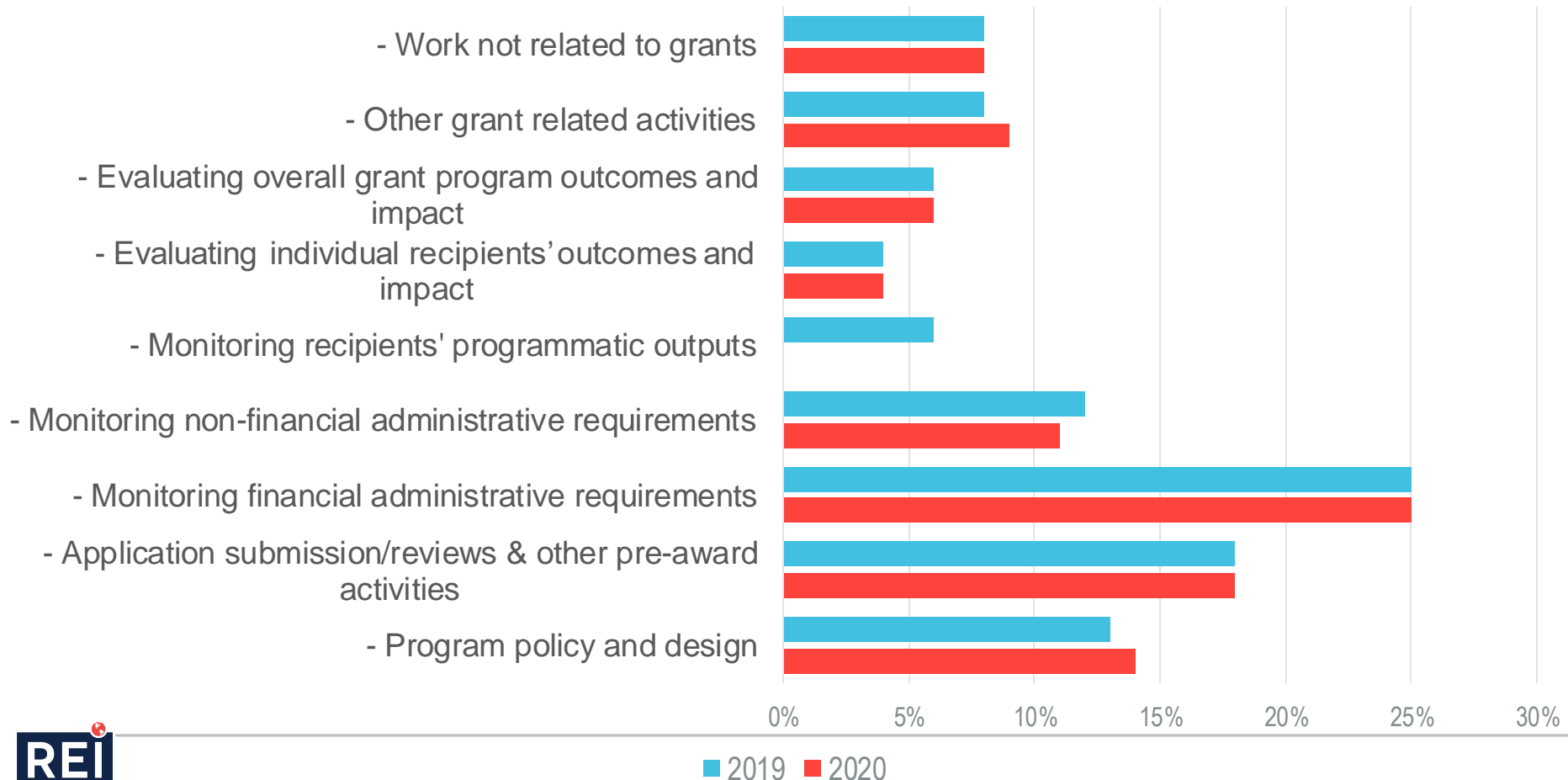
# How Grant Managers Spend Their Time



# Grant Managers' Work is Consistent; The Biggest Task is Still Compliance Monitoring

Compliance takes more time than any other activity

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

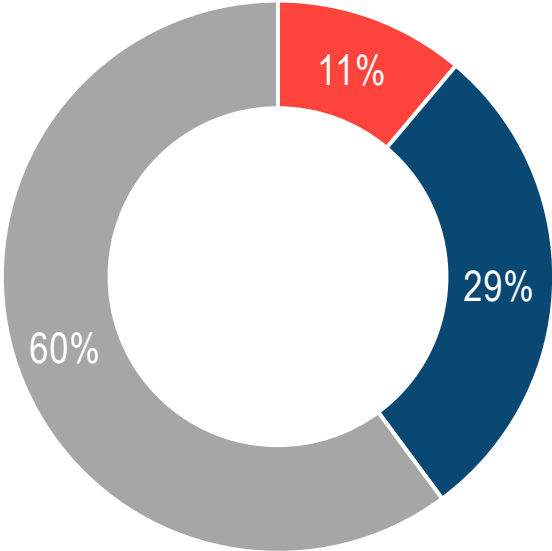


# Few Organizations Require That Their Staff Receive Grants Management Training

and certification requirements are even more rare

1.8. Does your organization require formal grant training of your staff?

Required Training



■ Yes, with Certification   ■ Yes, but no certification   ■ No training required



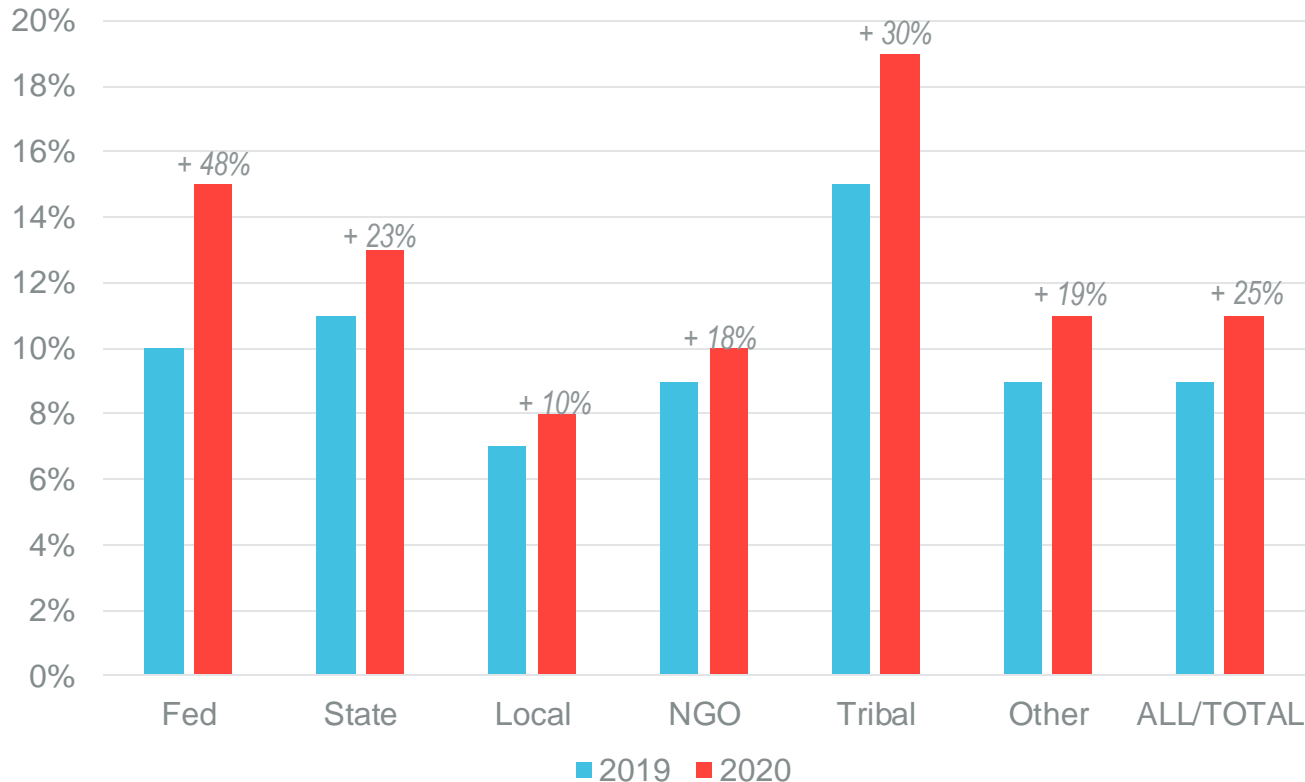
# **Administrative Spend on Grants Management**

# Admin Spend on Grants Management seems to have increased significantly

Even as grant volume increased due to COVID...

## 1.7. 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



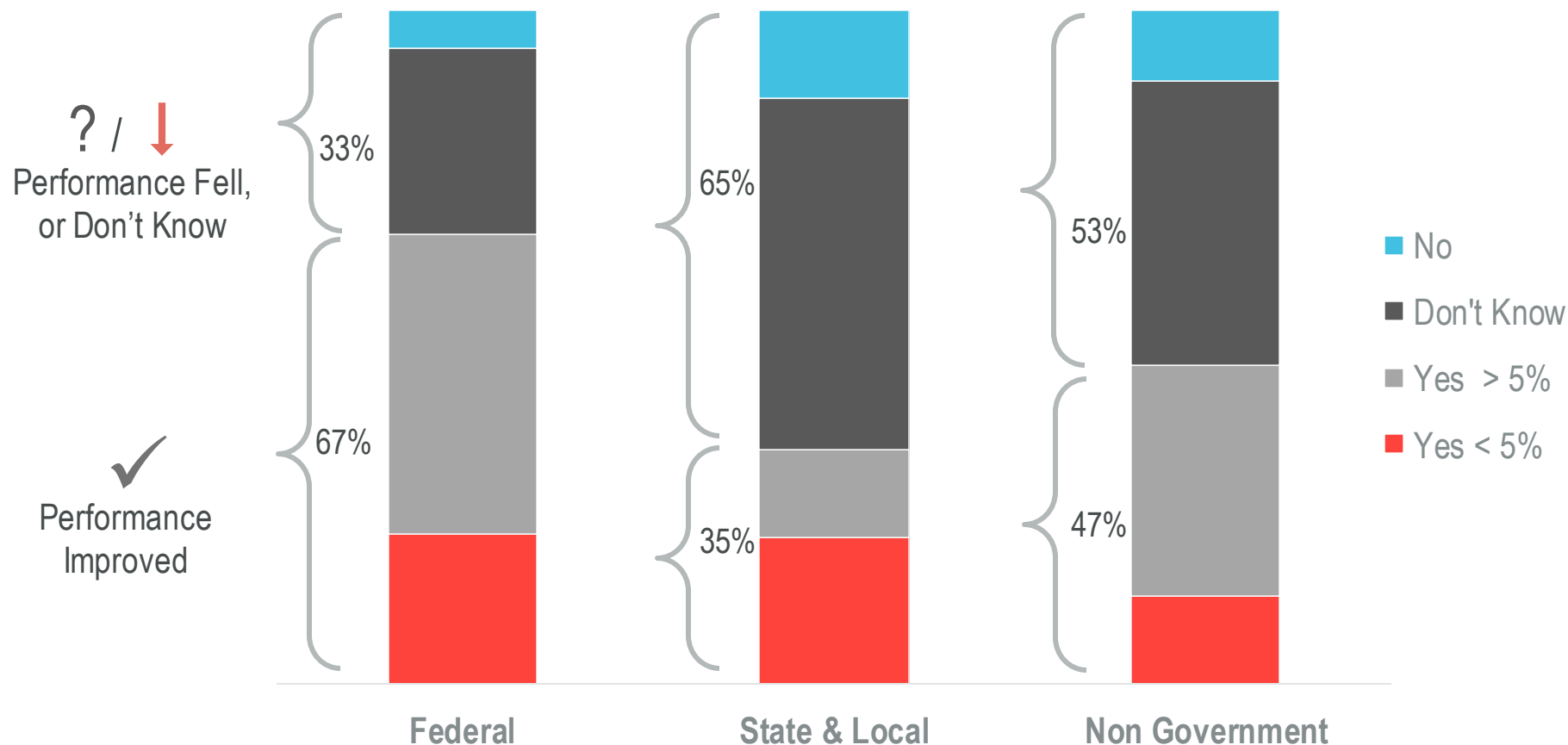


# Performance and grantee burden

# Outcome Improvements were lower in 2020

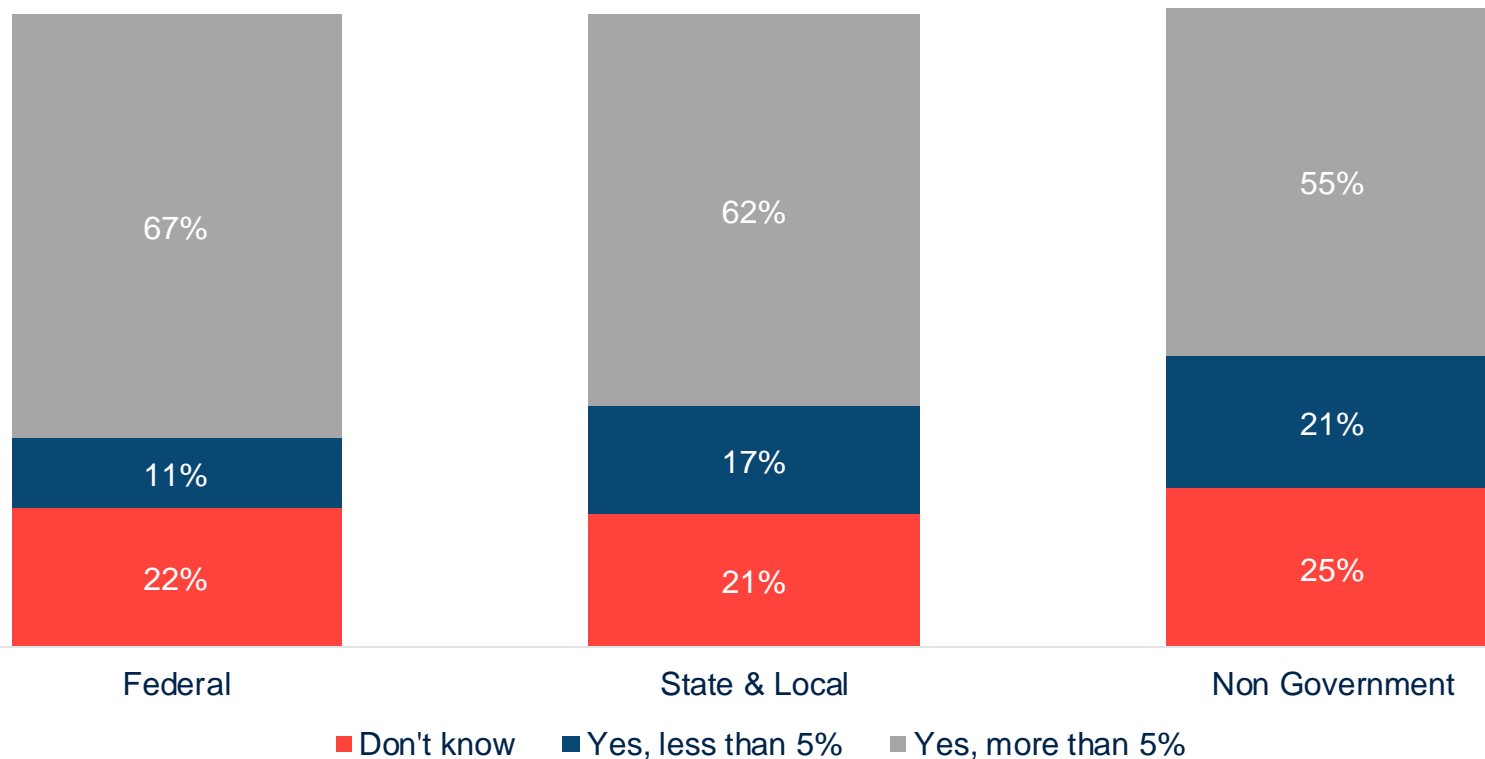
The Federal Government reported the most improvements

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



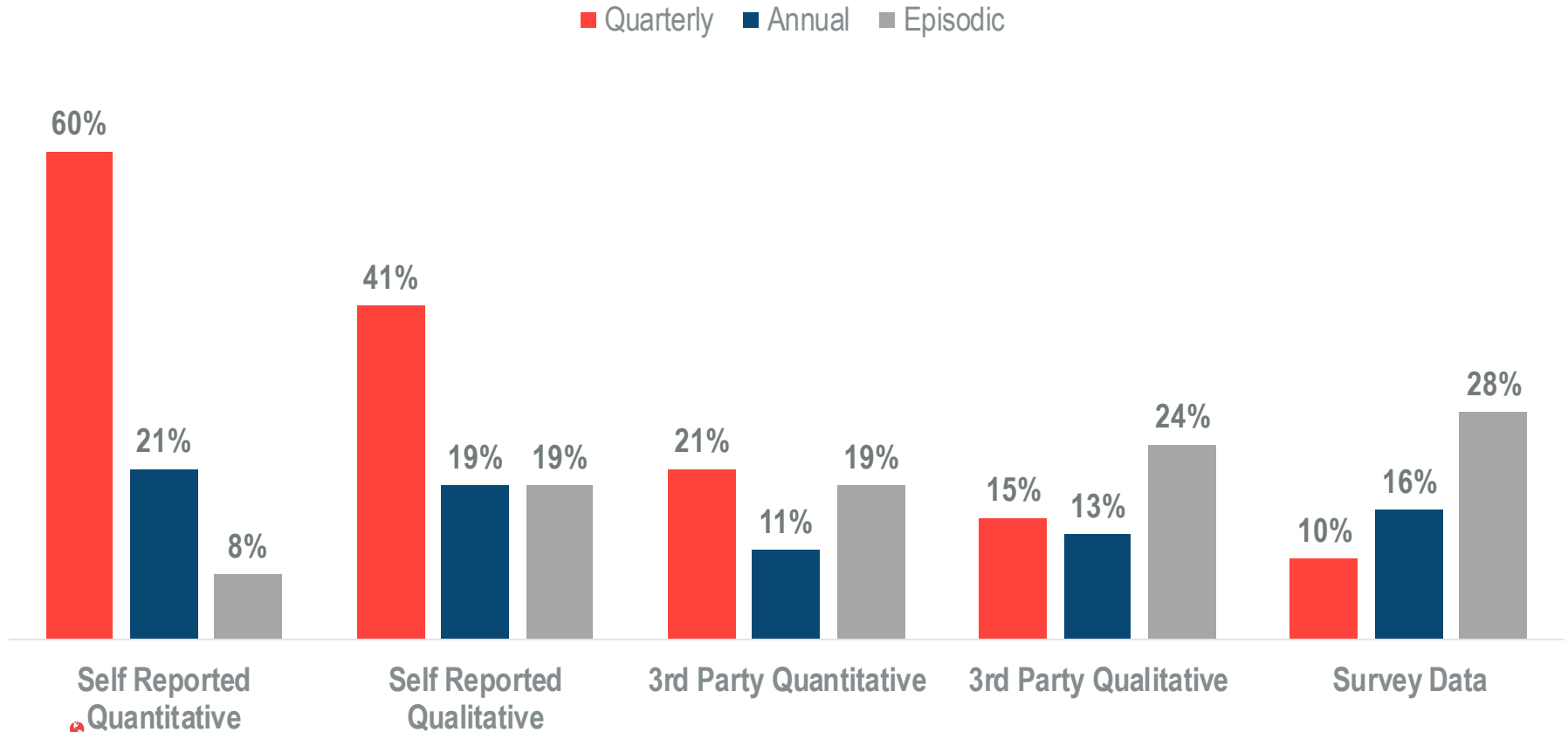
# Perhaps Because The Pandemic Significantly Affected Outcomes

6.4. Were your organization's / your recipients outcomes impacted by the pandemic declaration in March 2020?



# Grant Managers Use More Self Reported Than Third Party Gathered Data

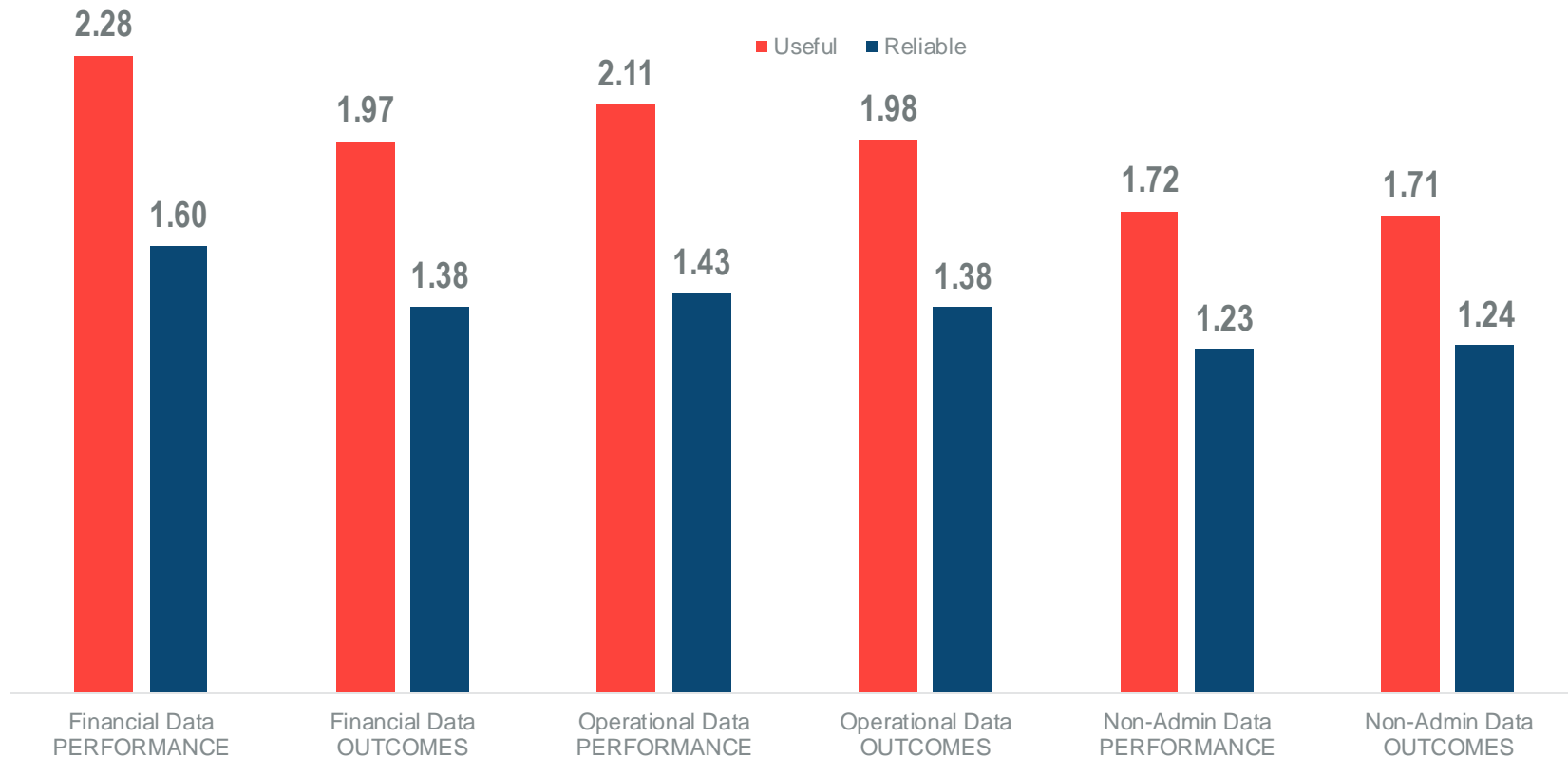
3.1. Please indicate the frequency with which you submit (or expect your grantees to submit) various types of data.





# Financial Data Collected Continues to be Perceived as Most Timely, Useful & Reliable

3.2. Please tell us how timely, useful and reliable different types of data are for your program.



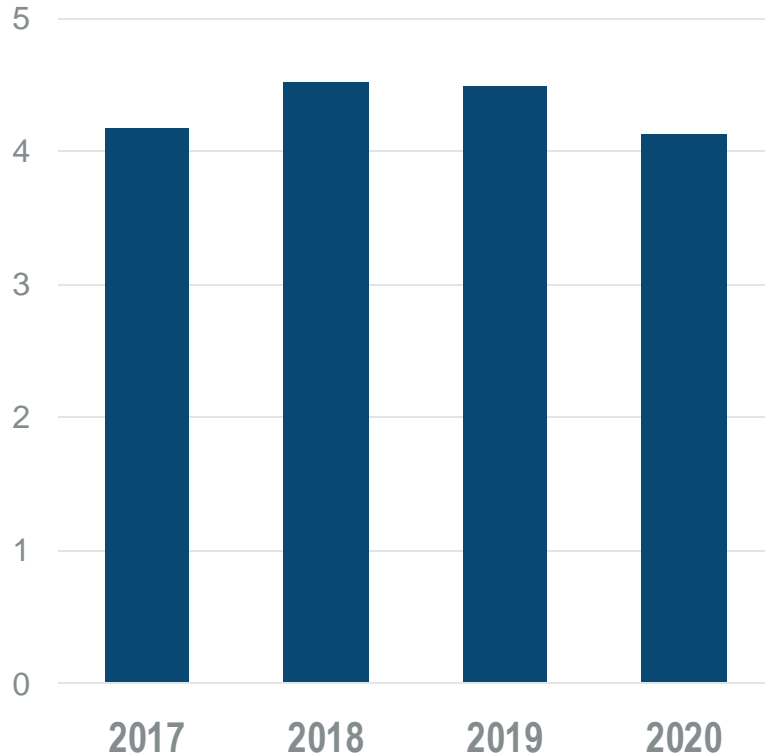


**Strongly Supported Issues – and  
Those That Are Not...**

# Of All Survey Topics, Respondents Feel Strongly About

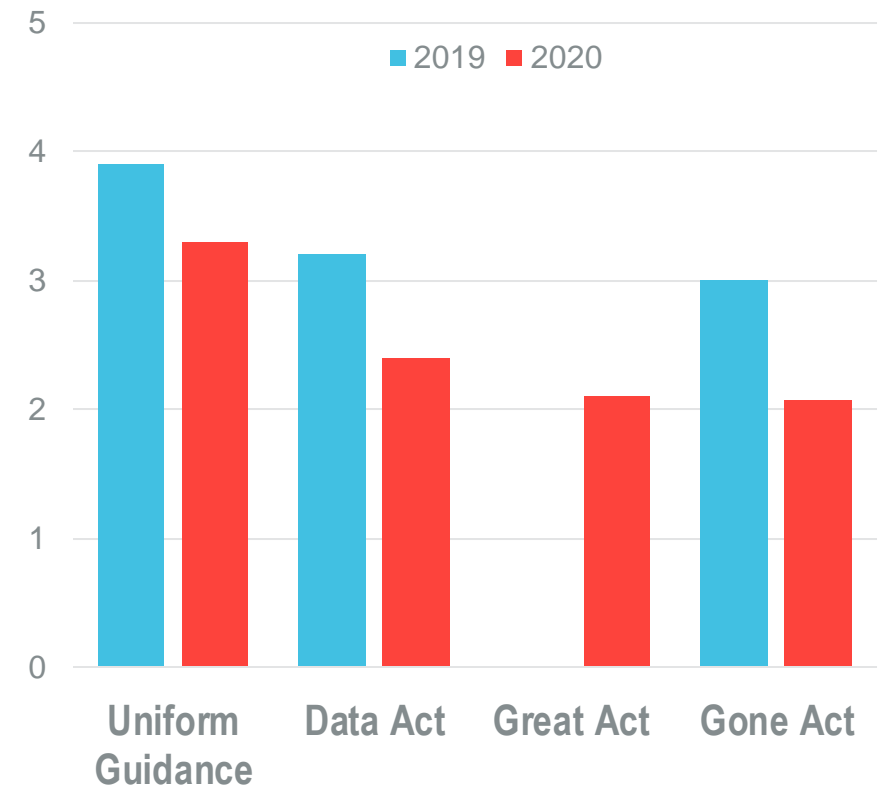
**5.4. Should state governments and federal agencies share data and automate interactions more than they do today?**

**STATES AND FEDS SHOULD SHARE DATA AND AUTOMATE INTERACTIONS MORE**



**5.2. Please rate the impact of the executive and legislative directives on your day-to-day lives**

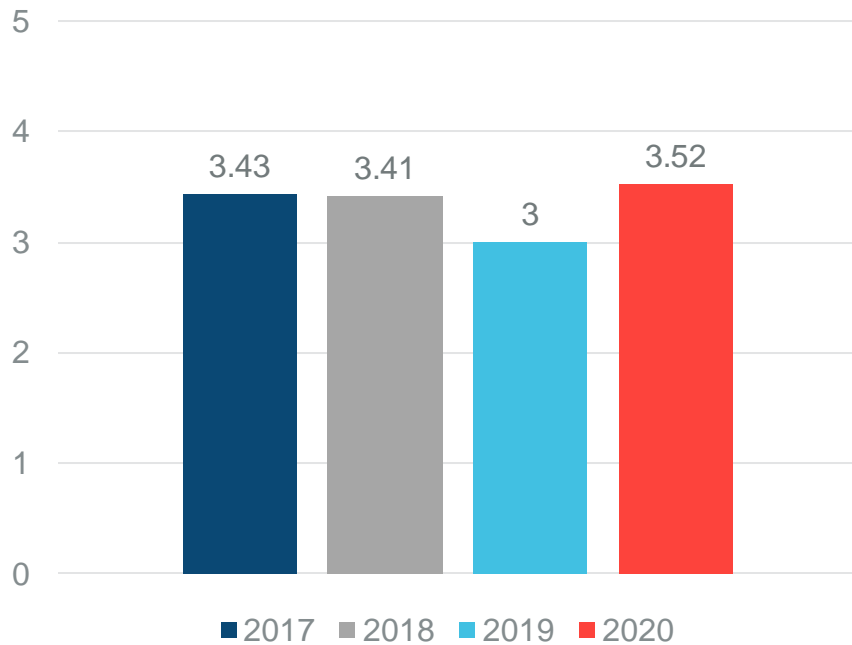
**IMPACT ON DAY-TO-DAY LIVES**



# Use of Risk Strategies and Interest in Analytics remain High

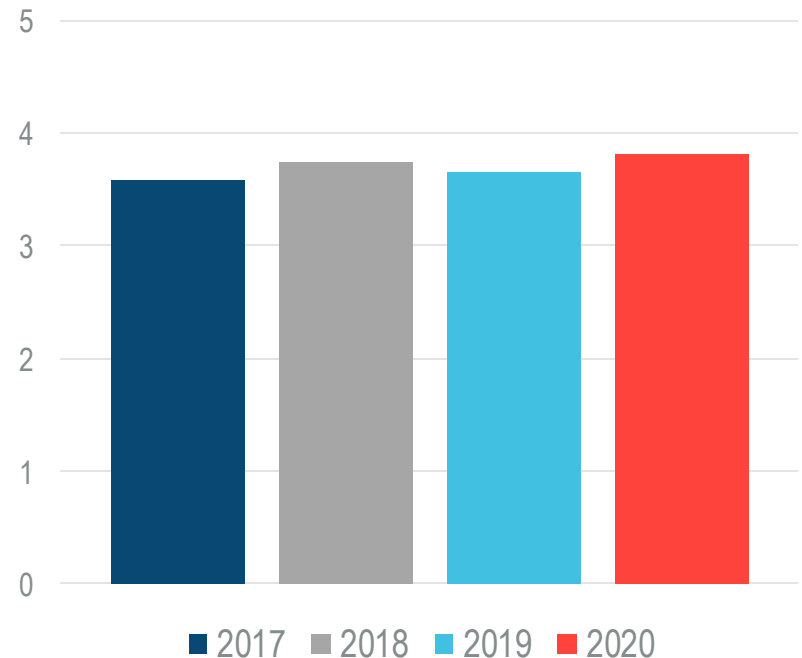
4.2 To what extent is your grant program or organization using a risk-based strategy (i.e. focused attention on aspects that involve greater risk) to monitor current recipients?

USE OF A RISK-BASED STRATEGY TO MONITOR RECIPIENTS



4.1 To what extent are your executive leaders and managers interested in evaluation and data analytics?

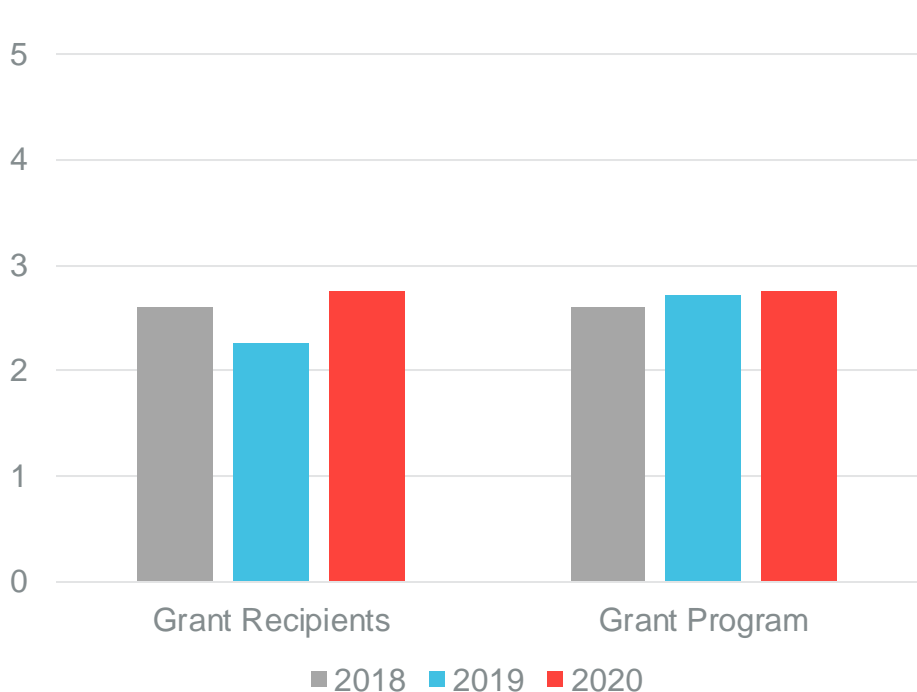
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP INTEREST IN ANALYTICS



# Respondents Also Seek Improvement

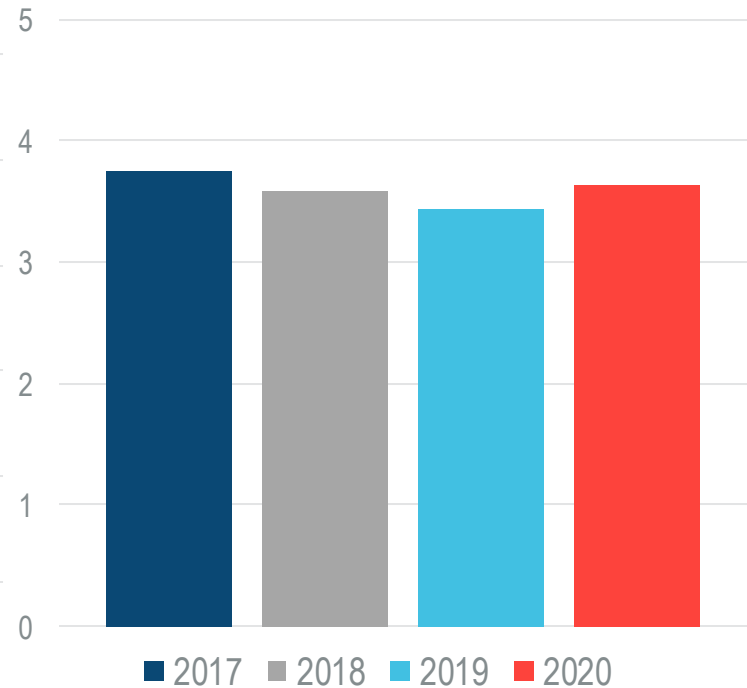
*5.2 How effective are your data systems in helping you to analyze and improve the performance of you or your recipient or your grant program?*

**SATISFACTION WITH DATA SYSTEMS IS NOT HIGH...**



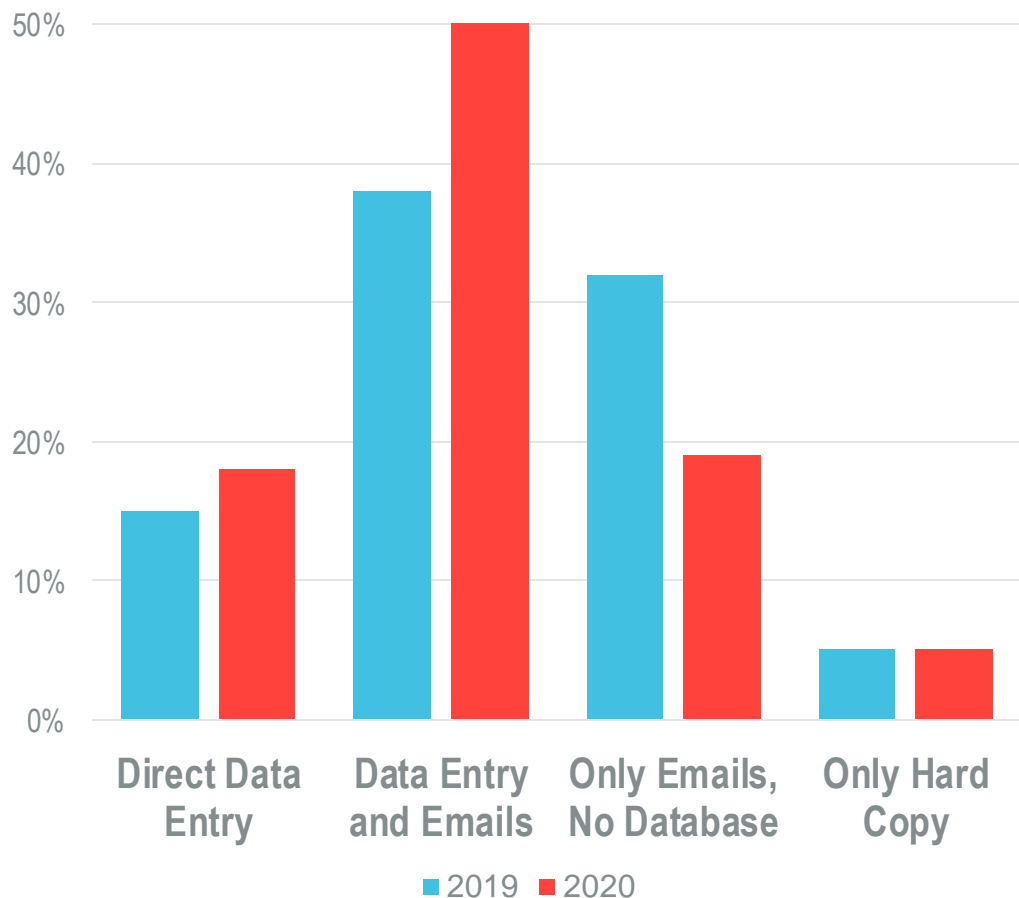
*5.2. How well equipped do you feel your organization is to successfully meet your grant program's mission?*

**CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY TO MEET GRANT PROGRAM MISSION INCREASED SINCE 2019**



# Grant Reporting Automation Improves But Still Has Some Way to Go

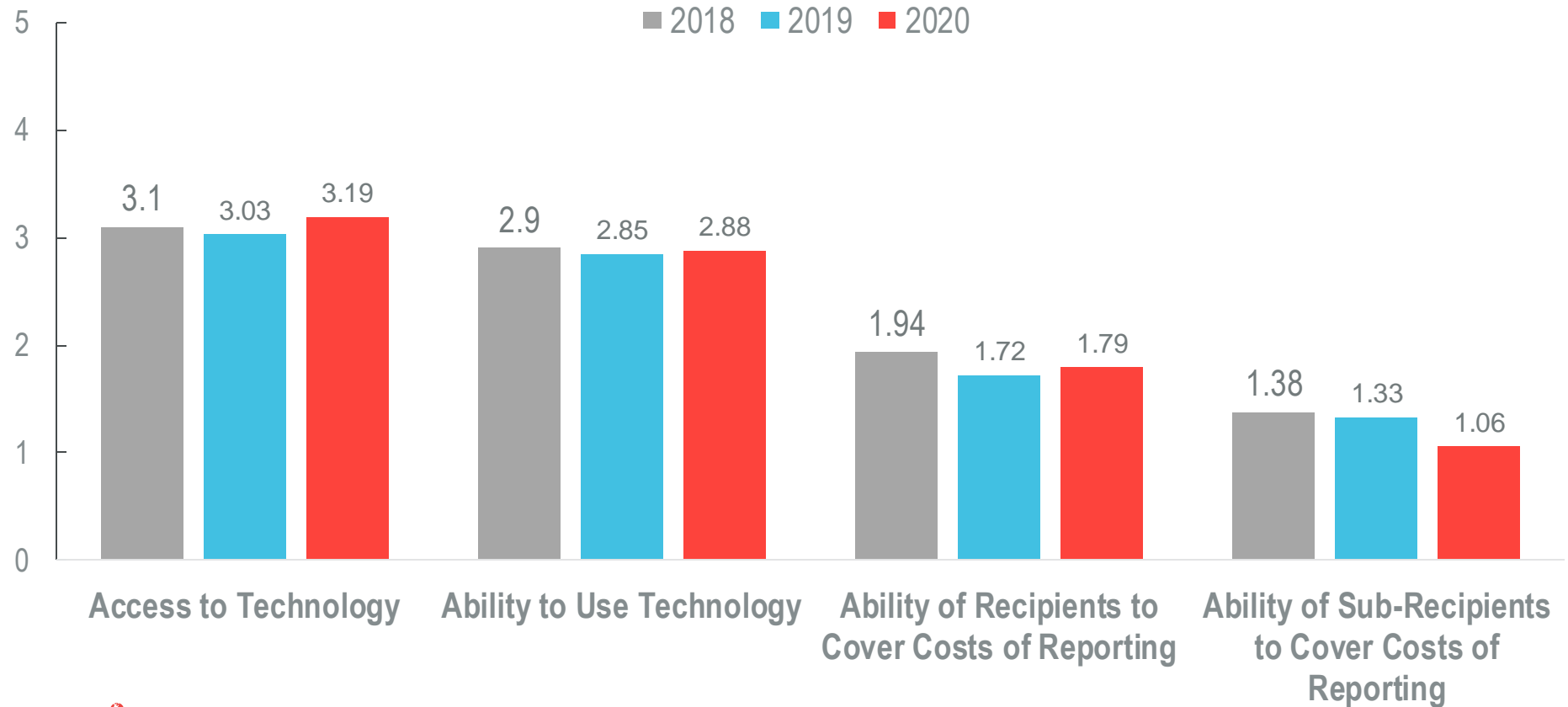
## 2.2 How would you describe the method used by your grantees to submit reporting



- Grant reporting isn't sophisticated or efficient
- Reporting varies by grant, and even by grantee

# Satisfaction With Technology and Costs to Cover It Continues to be Low

*2.1 Rate your satisfaction with the technology, your program or organization's use of it and the technical assistance provided to your staff, recipients, and sub-recipients to use it.*





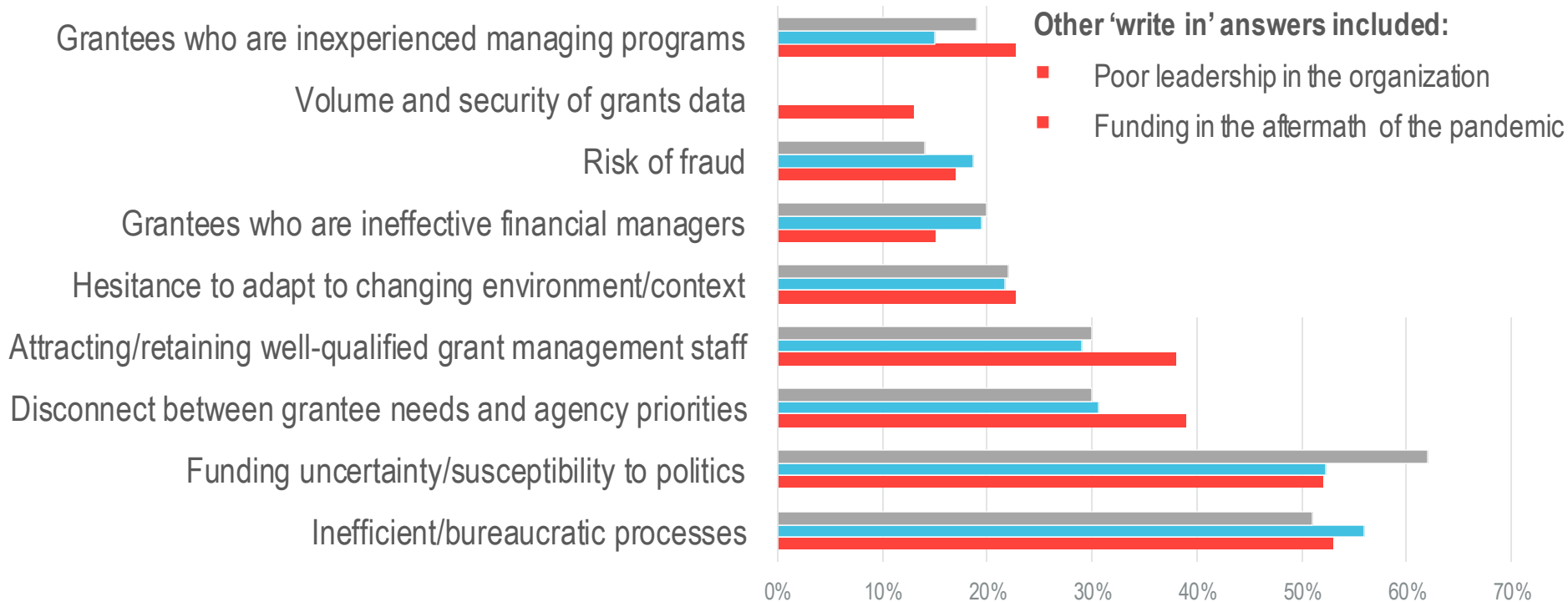
# **Significant Challenges and Success Factors**



# Challenges: Funds Uncertainty Recedes a Bit, Concerns Over Bureaucracy Increase

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

■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

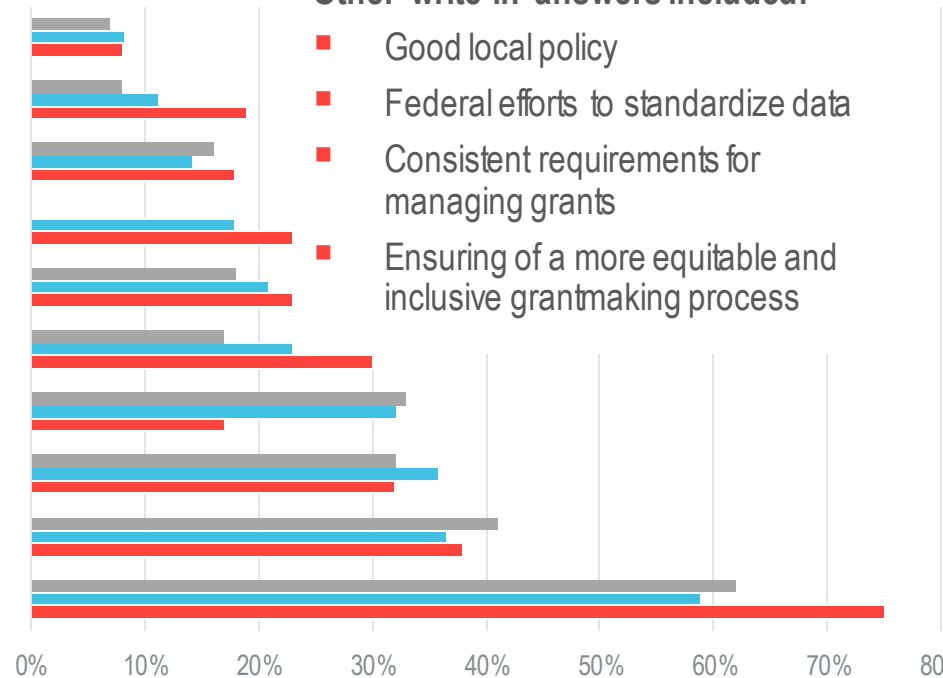


# Qualified Staff, Tech. Assistance, and Org Structure are Perceived Keys to Success

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

■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

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



Other 'write in' answers included:

- Good local policy
- Federal efforts to standardize data
- Consistent requirements for managing grants
- Ensuring of a more equitable and inclusive grantmaking process



# Key Takeaways

# Improving systems, more training and streamlining processes continue to be priorities

## 6.7. What are your Top 5 priorities over the next 3 years?



# Takeaways from Our Analysis

- Admin Spend appeared to increase significantly in 2020
- Grants managers continue to spend more time monitoring compliance than any other activity; this has continued to increase over the years.
- 56% of respondents said that Performance Outcomes did not improve or they didn't know if they did
- 78% said that the Pandemic affected Outcomes
- The GREAT Act starts to make its impact felt
- Grants managers aren't happy with their technology, particularly accessibility and cost.
- Systems, Training, Efficient processes remain priorities

# Suggestions from Survey Respondents- Priorities for Effort to Improve

## *6.6 What do you think should be the highest priorities / best ways to improve grant mgmt?*

### Processes

- Simplification in grant making; Diversity and inclusion taken into consideration in grant making.
- Standardizing reporting
- Quarterly meetings are important between the grantor and recipient as well
- Make the indirect cost rate proposal process less onerous
- Uniform application and performance standards across federal agencies.
- Having clear and realistic expectations and expectations in grant language.
- Consistent and streamlined grants processes across the grants lifecycle
- Bring in more diverse stakeholders and intentional engagement from the communities the grants are intended to help.

### Personnel

- Knowledgeable staff
- More and affordable training
- Adequate Staffing
- Attracting highly qualified, enthusiastic career-track employees
- Mandatory certification

# Suggestions from Survey Respondents- Priorities for Effort to Improve

## *6.6 What do you think should be the highest priorities / best ways to improve grant mgmt? (cont'd)*

### Systems

- One common federal grant platform for applying, managing and data reporting
- Ensure federal agencies that have failing, long outdated IT systems have the resources to update/replace those systems.
- Automating grants management systems to tie outcomes and financial side together. We can't measure efforts against outcomes, but a good grant management system would help us as a non-profit to do so.
- Periodic "facelifts" to older, stodgier (federal) grant management portals
- Reduction of reporting burden by consolidation of electronic systems;

### Data

- Data analytics tailored to the type of grant program - objectives.
- Standardization of data
- Improved data management via grants management system;
- Education on performance inputs and outputs

# Thank you!

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