

Boston EMA Ryan White Planning Council



ASSESSMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE MECHANISM

2020 – 2021 Report

July 2021

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Assessment of Administrative Mechanism

I. Background

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) requires that all Ryan White Part A Planning Councils conduct an annual assessment of the administrative mechanism (AAM) to evaluate how efficiently and rapidly grantees disburse funding to the areas of greatest need within the eligible metropolitan area (EMA). The purpose of the survey is to evaluate the degree to which providers were satisfied with BPHC's administration of Ryan White Part A funding. The Boston EMA Ryan White Planning Council's role was to review the survey results and provide recommendations to BPHC in areas where improvements were necessary.

The Services, Priorities, and Evaluation Committee (SPEC) committee is charged with executing the AAM. The survey was sent out in March with a final collection and analysis conducted in April. The final results and recommendations were presented to Planning Council on May 13th, 2021 and voted on by the Council on June 10th, 2021.

II. Methodology

Planning Council Support (PCS) staff distributed the survey online through Survey Monkey. On March 10th, 2021, PCS staff emailed the survey link to all Part A-funded with final deadline of March 31st. The survey included 22 multiple choice and open-ended questions which procurement and disbursement of funds by BPHC in FY20, with an additional focus on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted agencies. The survey was submitted by 94% of all agencies (33 out of 34 agencies), with the feedback analyzed by SPEC with recommendations made for subsequent AAM surveys.

III. Summary of Findings

Several responses highlighted high staff turnover and difficulty with retention. Agencies asked for a quicker turnaround of reimbursement, a revamped process for budgets and the need for higher salaries. The bidders conference being online was well received, as well as the use of online tools for procurement and disbursement of funds. The pandemic was challenging for agencies, which included delays and complicated funding procedure

IV. Results

ASSESSMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE MECHANISM SURVEY TOOL

The AAM was conducted with a virtual survey tool. All graphs and survey responses were aggregated by the program.

Distributed to All Part A-Funded Agencies | March 10th, 2021

Final Collection and Analysis of Results | April 1st, 2021

Q1: Agency Name*

32 Agencies Responded

94% of all Part A funded agencies

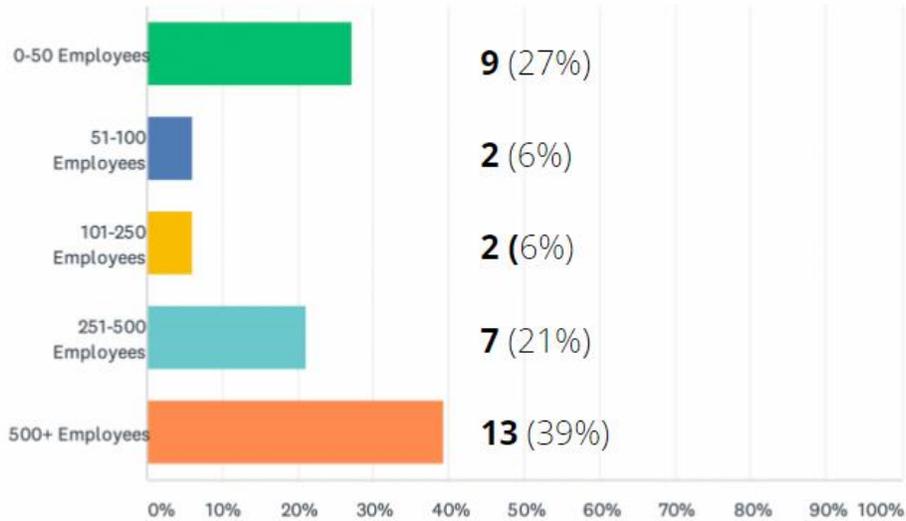
1 Anonymous

33 Total Submissions

*AGENCIES ARE KEPT ANONYMOUS AND ONLY COLLECTED BY PCS TO TRACK WHICH AGENCIES HAD YET TO RESPOND

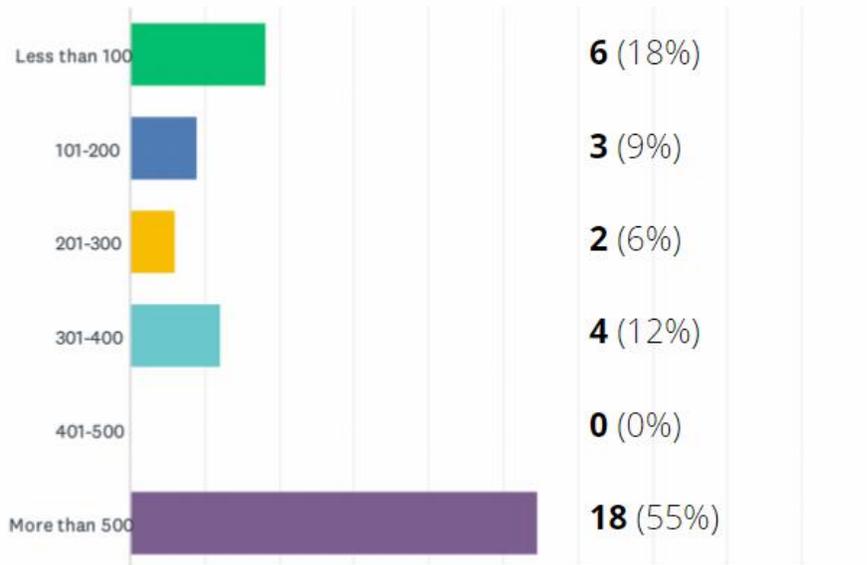
Q2 What is the size of your agency?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



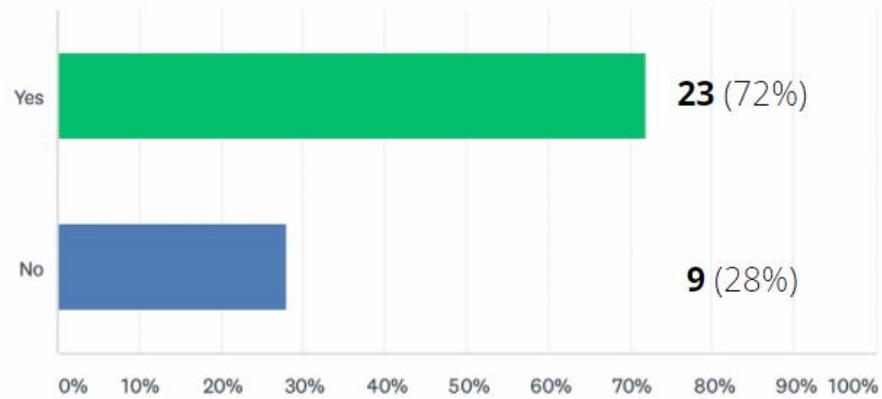
Q3 How many clients does your agency serve?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Q4 Did you respond to the AAM survey in the past two years? If not, why?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 1

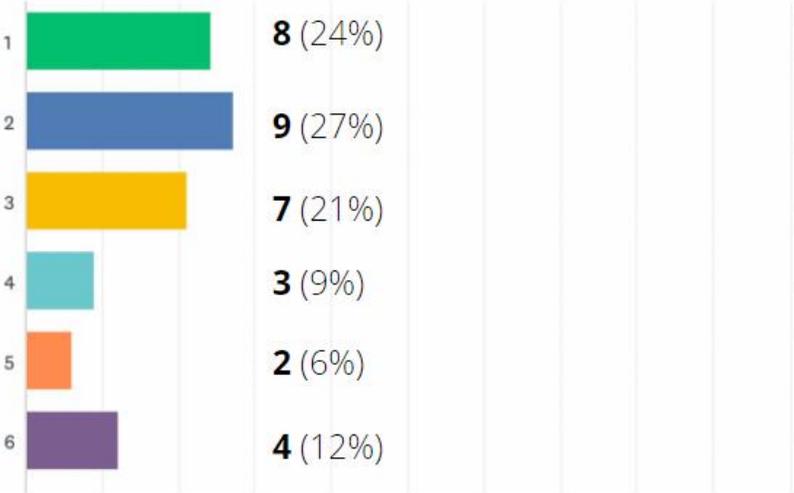


Comments

- *"First time I'm hearing about it"*
- *"Not sure - maybe someone else did prior to my arrival to this role in 2019"*
- *"Was not asked"*
- *"Not sure if [staff member] responded to this in the past"*
- *"This is the first invitation we've received to provide feedback"*
- *"We do not recall, but if it was requested, we completed it"*
- *"I am unsure I have only been at the agency for 14 months"*
- *"Not sure if we did it or not"*
- *"I started this job 10/19"*

Q5 How many Boston EMA Ryan White Part A service categories were you funded for in FY 2020?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Comments

"Medical case management, medical transportation, emergency financial assistance, psychosocial support"

"MCM and Med transportation and emergency financial assistance under CARES Act"

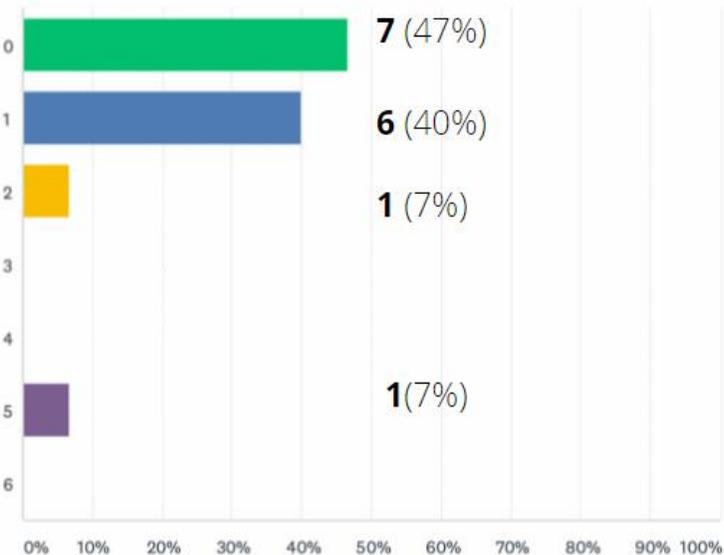
"Oral Health"

"EFA, COVID-19, Medical Case Management, Peer Support, Medical Transportation and Dental"

"Medical Case Management"

Q6 If you participated in the Nov 2019 MAI (Minority AIDS Initiative) procurement, how many MAI service categories did you apply for?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 18



Comments

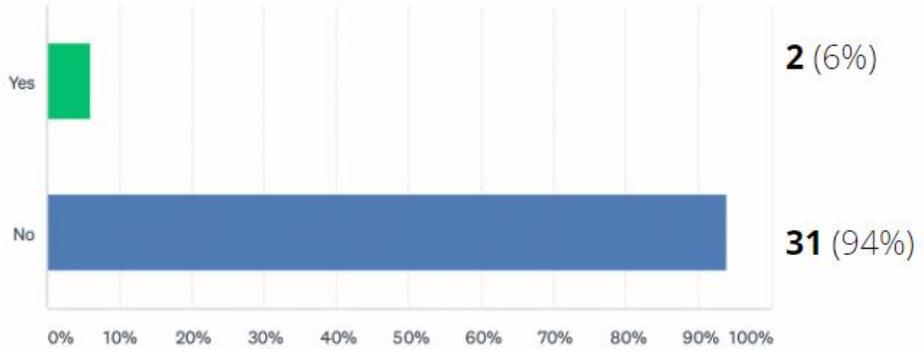
"I believe we also applied for Linguistic Services"

"EFA"

"Education and outreach"

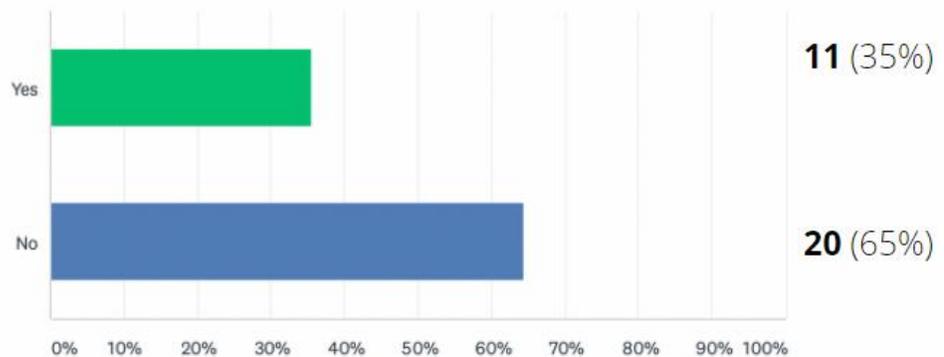
**Q7 Did you submit an RFP for any of the new service categories last year?
(e.g. Linguistic and/or Other Professional Services)**

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



**Q8 Are there gaps in funding at your agency, specifically with regard to
Ryan White Part A services? If so, please explain.**

Answered: 31 Skipped: 2



Comments

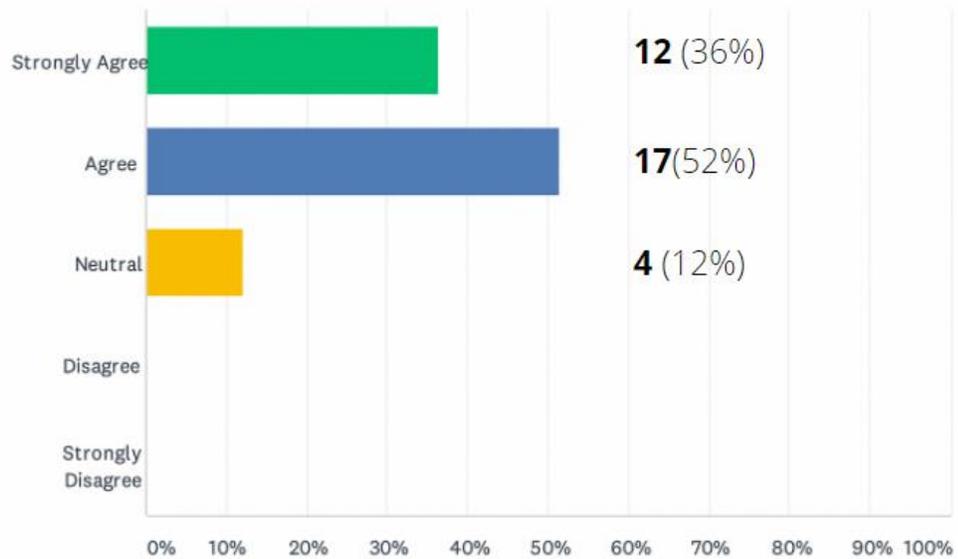
- *"We only received half of the legal services' funding requested (\$50,000 vs. \$100,000) which isn't enough to hire a new attorney to significantly increase capacity to meet the needs of an increased demand around housing and benefit legal cases."*
- *"Related to the overall operations of the services. Because of the way BPHC defines oversight and administration we are always facing gaps related to the funding for program leadership, data collection, program support and occupancy."*
- *"We would benefit from continued emergency financial assistance as well as low cost cell phones for our Ryan White eligible clients"*
- *"Keeping up with salary increases for staff that cannot be covered under the grant"*
- *"In personnel due to changes in salaries across our institution"*

Comments

- *"Emergency funds"*
- *"Funding from our other provider sources may fluctuate during each period and present shortfalls in monies available for staff salaries and fringe costs."*
- *"The direct service side could use more technology funds to assist clients and the indirect side needs more funding to run the program"*
- *"Adequate funding to support our MAI Medical Case Management services"*
- *"In the past year, it has been a marked increase in the number of medical and behavioral visits (42 and 53% respectively); nursing visits have increased by 18%. Lastly, our total utilization so far for 2020 shows an increase of 35% (from 2,356 to 3,195). With so many challenges brought upon us by COVID-19 and the continuous unrest around the social determinants of health we find ourselves with a great deal of difficulty meeting all the increasing needs of our patients. Our biggest gaps are around data entry and social determinants of health issues (non-medical case management).*

Q9 BPHC conducts an open and competitive procurement process.

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0

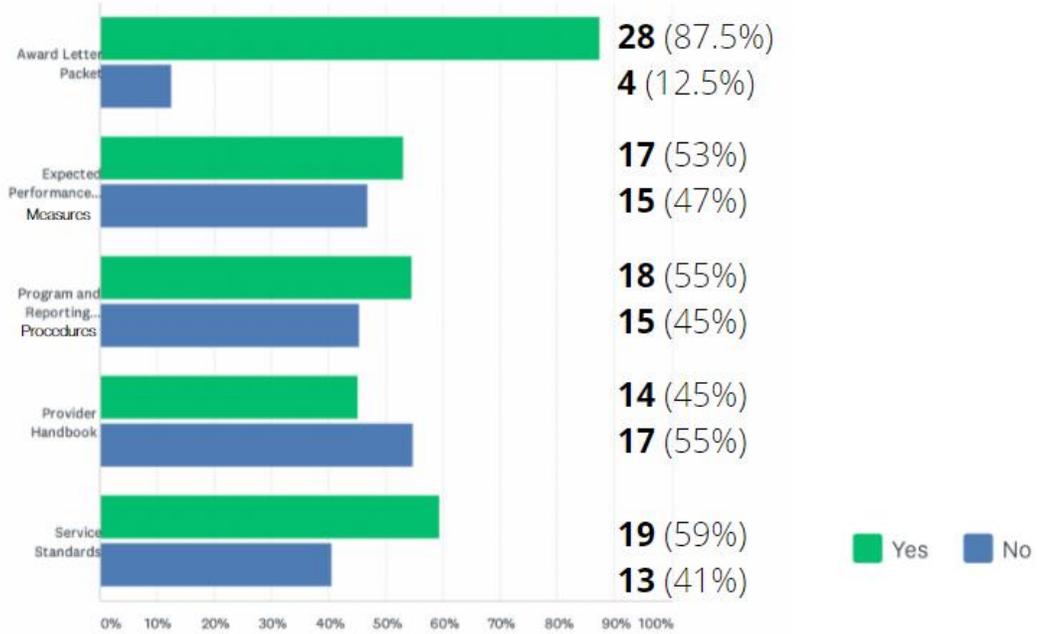


Comments

"I am not very familiar with the procurement yet"

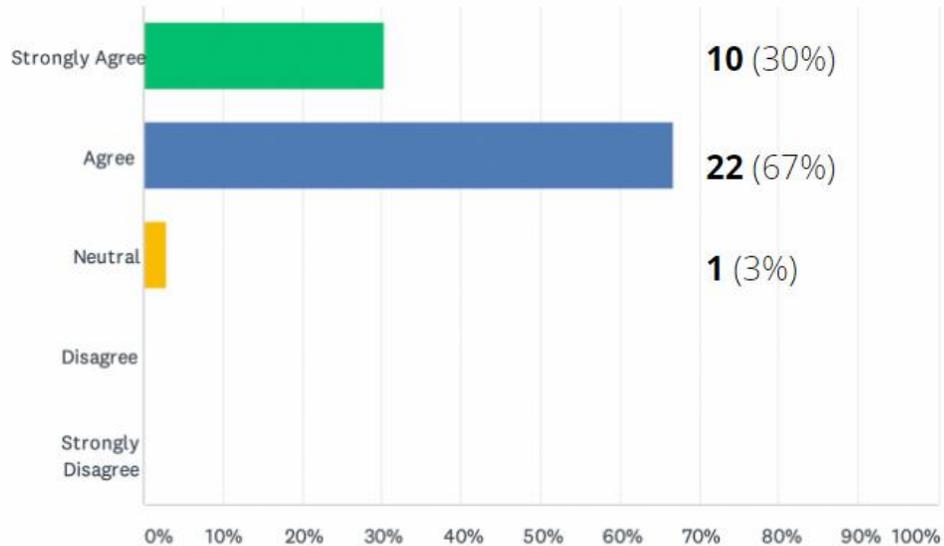
Q10 At the start of FY21, have you received each of the following documents?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Q11 BPHC provides a clear scope of service for each contract.

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Q12 What suggestions would you offer to improve the disbursement of funds process?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 12

- *"Clearer instructions regarding MAI funds"*
- *"Slow contracting process precludes being able to invoice in timely manner. Consider quarterly invoicing."*
- *"Budget revisions should be processed faster"*
- *"We don't have any issues with fund disbursement; the system is working"*
- *"Discuss as a collective how funds are disbursed. Having additional conversations with partnerships in the Boston EMA."*
- *"Utilize some funding to allow for cost of living increases in staff salaries, otherwise reductions in hours/service may become necessary"*
- *"Issues the funds as a full award instead of a partial award"*
- *"Reimburse more quickly (within 30 days) and/or do a better job of quickly notifying us if there is an error on our submission"*

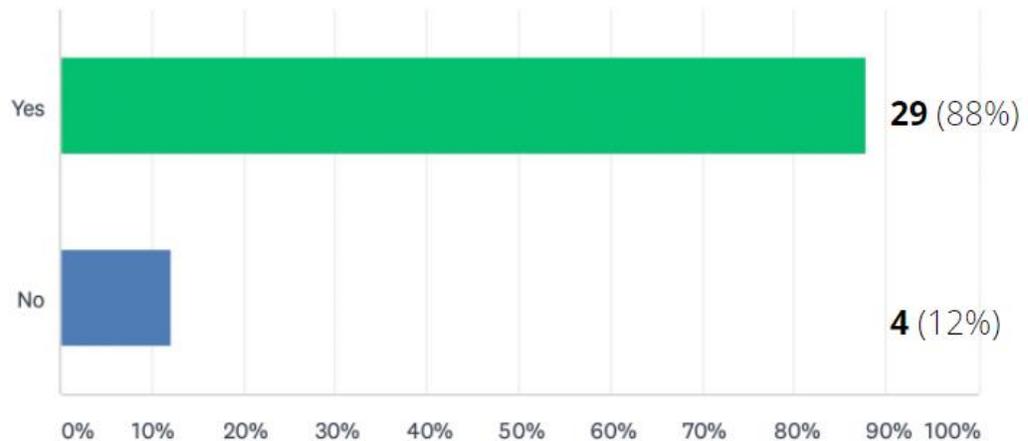
Q12 What suggestions would you offer to improve the disbursement of funds process?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 12

- *"Quicker turnaround between being notified of the award and having a contract signed and PO# available. Quicker turnaround once budget amendment requests are submitted."*
- *"Currently ok with status quo"*
- *"Allow us to create our own budget vs. getting one already developed and needing to revise it"*
- *"Because this is a 5-year award, it would be benefi[cial] to have some inter-year flexibility in service provision"*
- *"A shorter turnaround time for the payment of invoices"*
- *"Would suggest to start contracting a bit earlier so everything can be in place by 3/1"*
- *"Payment details provided directly to accountant recording the disbursement"*

Q13 Do you feel properly trained to do a budget revision?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Comments

"FYI, budget revisions are done by finance department, with input from Program Manager & Director"

"Our finance team handles this process"

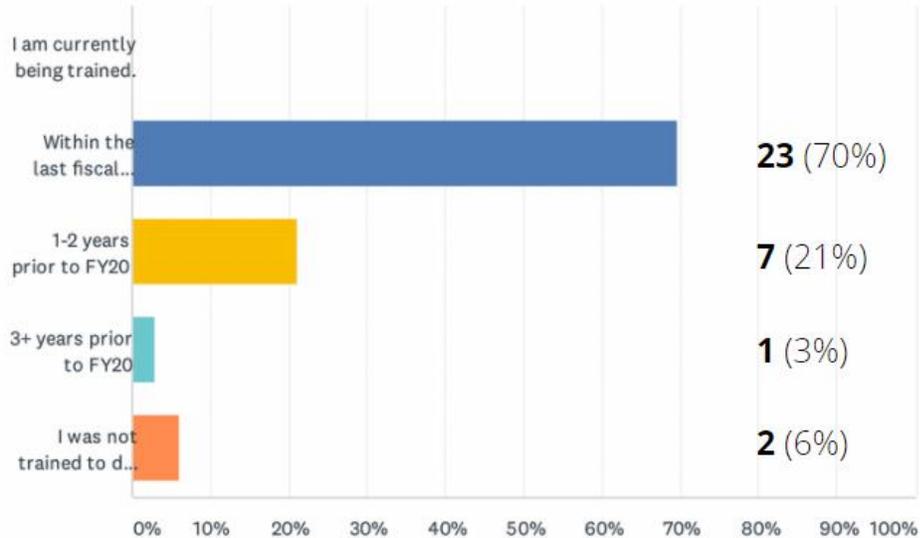
"Process seems to change every year"

"Process is very confusing, and I do not do it very often so I need a re-training each time I do it!"

"But only because I have been doing them for many years"

Q14 When were you last trained to do a budget revision?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Q15 What circumstances at your program might require you to submit a budget revision?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0

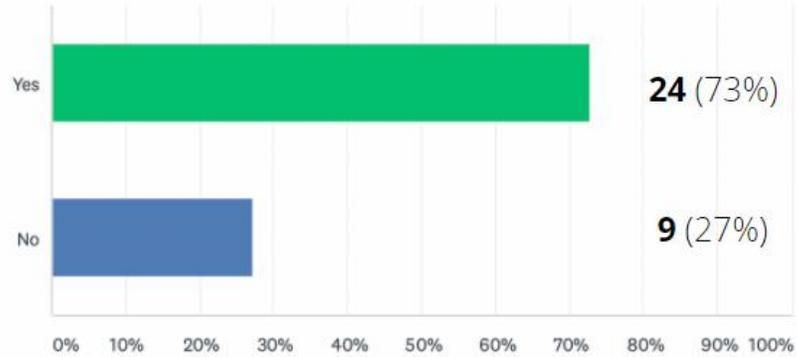
#	RESPONSES
1	We don't anticipate that being necessary.
2	When new staff is added; when changes in salary require an increase or reduction in staff's FTE's; when a line item requires additional funds or new line items are required to support clients and staff; etc...
3	Staff changes/vacancies.
4	Budget information should be updated at time of proposal submission and collected from BMC annually prior to distributing contract package
5	New staff member
6	Every time something other than staff changes, it seems like we need to do a budget revision.
7	Changes in staffing
8	Change in staffing, change in allocation of funding across nonpersonnel items based on shifts in client utilization of services or unforeseen interruptions/changes in standard operations (i.e. pandemic)
9	underspending of a line item that is more than 10% If someone leave the position or if we have any openings.
10	underspending, staff turnover, pandemics affecting performance goals and indicators

11	Change of funds and as a training program funds may have to shift based on the scope of service or training format.
12	new hires, moving funding to cover unspent funding in staff lines when staff leaves.
13	changes in staffing, fringe benefit costs
14	Staff vacancies
15	staff changes, pay rates, movement from one line to another to spend down budget
16	Changes in base salary, changes based on changing needs of the program
17	Underspending of a particular line such as office supply, need to move funds to Dental Treatment fund.
18	Name was incorrect on budget; allocating funds to better serve clients
19	Salary changes
20	Revisions required due to staffing vacancies
21	staff turnover
22	Staff vacancies.
23	Staffing Changes or underspending/overspending on specific line items
24	lower than expected usage of transportation funds esp during public health emergency. or if there is a vacancy in staffing
25	Changes in staff personnel or changes in existing staff salaries and fringe costs. Other direct cost may also require adjustments. Lately, the turnaround time between submission and final approval of budget revisions seems to be taking longer than had been usual.

26	Update salary, FTE and actual expenses.
27	In case of any staff turnover
28	Staff changes
29	Staff turn over, underspent funds
30	Staff turnover.
31	Changes in salaries, staffing, need to move money from one line to the other.
32	Changes in FTE, Changes in the scope of services due to COVID
33	Many reasons. At the beginning of a contract year, we based our budget on simply that a budget of estimated costs. Many changes can happen throughout the contract year requiring a budget revision to spend our budget appropriately.

Q16 Do you use the checklist provided by BPHC to maintain quality control of the budget revision process?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Q17 How long did it take BPHC to provide you with your PO number after returning the contract?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 1

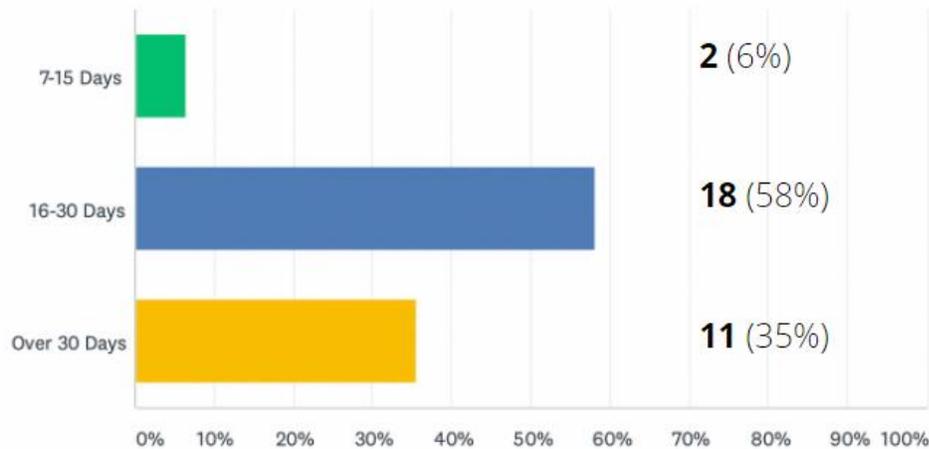
#	RESPONSES
1	Within 30 days.
2	Varies from time to time.. however, it is manageable.
3	unsure
4	Unsure
5	At least several months
6	I don't remember how long it took in FY20. In FY21, it was very quick.
7	not sure
8	Unsure
9	6-8 weeks, I believe
10	N/A

11	40 days
12	generally months
13	Over 30 days
14	too long!!
15	months
16	Very quick turn around time, unsure if this is related to us being an "in-house" program.
17	within 30 days of start of FY
18	It took quite some time
19	Unsure
20	30 days
21	A month or more.
22	30+ days
23	more than a month - 7 weeks
24	As a sub-recipient of the award, our agency has yet to receive a PO number for FY21.
25	Probably 1 month or so.

26	approximately one month
27	unsure
28	Not sure
29	It seemed to take longer than normal given the pandemic.
30	Within a couple of weeks
31	60 days
32	Don't recall but usually quick.

Q18 What is the average turnaround time once a complete invoice is submitted for BPHC to reimburse your agency?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 2

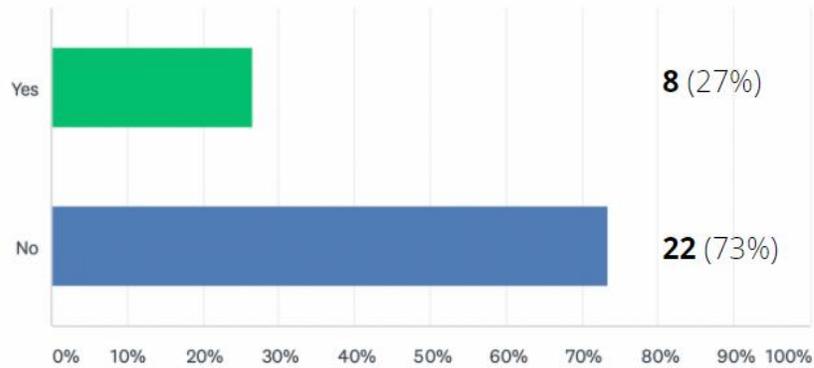


Comments

- *"Varies on the budget and on [agency]'s submission of the invoices"*
- *"We had a 82 day turnaround"*
- *"It is pretty consistently 30 days. Sometimes a few days earlier and sometimes a few days later."*
- *"Today on March 30 we still haven't been reimbursed for November"*
- *"Invoices are usually processed in 60 days"*
- *"Being a sub-recipient of the award may contribute slightly to a delay in receipt of invoice payments. Taking that into consideration, there are still times when payments take longer than expected."*
- *"It is typically 6 weeks or more"*
- *"30 to 45 days usually"*

Q19 Have you had an invoice returned to you for corrections that ultimately resulted in delayed reimbursement?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 3



Comments

"Finance did not provide details"

"Sporadically"

"Small error[s] send invoices back and add to delays"

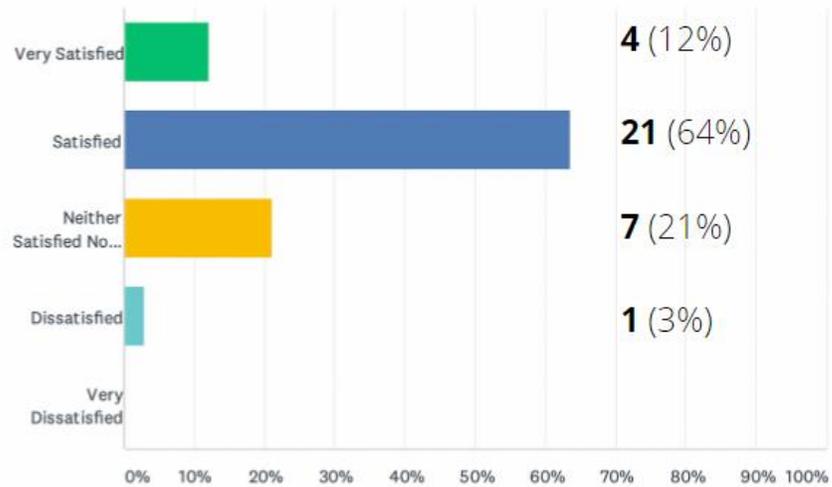
"Error on our part. It was resolved quickly."

"For invoice number format that had not previously been communicated"

"Understandable"

Q20 Overall, how satisfied are you with the fairness of the procurement process and the rapid disbursement of Ryan White Part A funds to your agency?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



Comments

"Consider splitting into 2 questions"

"Satisfied with procurement. Dissatisfied with the disbursement."

"Payments could always be faster. But all in all I think it is satisfactory."

"Monica is very responsive"

Q21 Is there anything we should be aware of that might be helpful to understand your ability to implement the Part A award at your agency?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 10

#	RESPONSES
1	Not at this time.
2	COVID has significantly impact hiring as many people are unable to work or afraid to work at the agency at this time. Salaries have been a challenge as the awards do not provide a 3% increase for staffs on Ryan White Funds. BPHC should look into 3% salary increase to help increase contracts during the five-year contract as other funders.
3	Responses to budget revision requests take a long time and have impaired our ability to bill at times.
4	none at this time
5	More flexibility in changes to budget line items that don't require a budget revision. For instance, only requiring a budget revision when the line item change is greater than 10% of the entire contract, rather than the line item (as is currently done).
6	no
7	Processing time for budget amendments was extremely long >3 months this year making it extremely difficult to responsibly manage spending to ensure all lines were spent down appropriately.
8	no
9	Budget revision reviews and approvals take excessively long and are frequently incorrect when approved. This strongly hinders our ability to work effectively with our fiscal department, to spend funds in a timely fashion and to implement changes. One is given the impression that there is poor communication between coordinators and/or poor training of BPHC staff.

10	no
11	Not at this time.
12	Not at this time
13	No
14	n/a
15	On question 3 of this survey - we serve > 200 clients LWHA. The agency serves > 35,000 patients per year.
16	The 21% cap on spending for the first quarter may be easier to implement under a units of service award such as housing, transportation, mental health, etc. However, when the 21% cap is applied to Case Management salary and fringe, it is problematic and can lead to a substantial shortfall in billable FTS's and fringe for the period. Other funding sources need to be billed at a higher level which can lead to a concern on their part.
17	N/A
18	No
19	No

20	Nothing at this time.
21	The revamped budget approval process is still a bit burdensome and approvals are not done on a timely basis. Our Project Officer has been very supportive.
22	No
23	Quicker turnaround time for budget revisions would be appreciated.

Q21 Is there anything we should be aware of that might be helpful to understand your ability to implement the Part A award at your agency?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 10

#	RESPONSES
1	Not at this time.
2	COVID has significantly impact hiring as many people are unable to work or afraid to work at the agency at this time. Salaries have been a challenge as the awards do not provide a 3% increase for staffs on Ryan White Funds. BPHC should look into 3% salary increase to help increase contracts during the five-year contract as other funders.
3	Responses to budget revision requests take a long time and have impaired our ability to bill at times.
4	none at this time
5	More flexibility in changes to budget line items that don't require a budget revision. For instance, only requiring a budget revision when the line item change is greater than 10% of the entire contract, rather than the line item (as is currently done).
6	no
7	Processing time for budget amendments was extremely long >3 months this year making it extremely difficult to responsibly manage spending to ensure all lines were spent down appropriately.
8	no
9	Budget revision reviews and approvals take excessively long and are frequently incorrect when approved. This strongly hinders our ability to work effectively with our fiscal department, to spend funds in a timely fashion and to implement changes. One is given the impression that there is poor communication between coordinators and/or poor training of BPHC staff.

8	We have relied upon electronic signatures, so there hasn't been much disruption on that front.
9	It has not
10	the pandemic has been challenging all around. In terms of fiscal and contracting procedures, our leadership team has many competing priorities relative to the pandemic, including testing and vaccination management, so often we have to re-send requests for signatures on key documents.
11	There is a short turnaround time. Especially when working with consultants and making sure all documents are processed to continue working with consultants on time. This involves many approval signatures.
12	No significant impact.
13	no
14	Addition of CARES funding has complicated budgeting process and disbursement, but we are grateful for the additional support.
15	not
16	The pandemic has created delays due to dental office staff limitations and BPHC Procurement requirements. These problems are not directly connected to RWSD or IDB Fiscal.
17	We continue "business as usual"
18	With staff working remotely, it takes more time and there are technology challenges.
19	No impact to contracting procedures at agency.
20	Obtaining signatures has been difficult with many managers and staff working remotely.
21	It impacted the organization in the beginning of the pandemic. There were delays on getting signatures on documents and having them reviewed timely but once all the logistics were worked out it has been very seamless.
22	There has not been an impact with fiscal and contracting procedures due to the pandemic.
23	No impact.
24	We use adobe to sign documents instead of signing hardcopy.
25	Most of this is being done remotely, sometimes in person, so that it slows down the process somewhat.
26	It hasn't really impacted it
27	Signatures, covid specific work duties of administrative staff
28	It has not had significant impact on our end.
29	No impact in general, however the contract is a bit challenging to manage as it is not formatted for electronic signature.

- 30 working remotely, but requiring "wet" signatures as well as sending contract forms that are not electronically fillable causes delays as not all staff have ability to print, fill out and/or sign, and scan from their homes. Having forms that allow for electronic signatures and fillable forms would reduce processing time.
-
- 31 The pandemic has forced us to work remotely. We have managed best as possible. With new Accountants on board, the remote environment has made it a little more difficult for training purposes. Like I said, we have managed but in office training would be a lot more productive.

2021 AAM RECOMMENDATIONS

AAM Survey Recommendations

- Q20 split the questions for next year's survey.
- Break out the survey into two sections to better analyze the needs of companies per company size.
- Add staff satisfaction questions to understand the needs from staff.

2021 AAM RECOMMENDATIONS

BPHC Recommendations

- Review provider invoice records, and then get explanations for outlier needs/concerns. Want the causes, and report on a bi-annual basis.
- Help support Part A funded agencies with the expressed need for salary increase by providing information in trends.
- Collect more agency level data by having the Contract Managers collect information on staff satisfaction and retention. To learn why we are losing staff.
- Change the expectations of when agencies will receive the Handbook to maybe May, to give BPHC enough time to edit it for the current FY. Agencies can still use the Scope of Work and Work Plan to move forward the first 2 months.