



American Public Power Association

# 2023 DEED MEMBER SURVEY REPORT

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American Public Power Association

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In fall 2023, the American Public Power Association's Demonstration of Energy & Efficiency Developments (DEED) program surveyed member utilities to assess engagement, preferences, and satisfaction with the program. The survey sought to identify research priorities, satisfaction with DEED's offerings, and opportunities for improvement in key areas of the program.

## Key Insights:

- **Survey Respondents:** The survey captures 58 DEED members' perspectives. 81% of respondents were from municipally owned utilities, 12% represent joint action agencies, and 7% represent state and regional associations. 31% of respondents represent utilities with 10,000 customers or fewer and 69% represent utilities with over 10,000 customers.
- **Satisfaction with DEED:** 84% of respondents reported being satisfied with the program. A significant share of members felt that the program meets its goals — promoting innovation and R&D (83%), maximizing resources to support the program (80%), promoting DEED and increasing member participation (76%), and supporting public power workforce development (71%). Members identified the utility grants, scholarship grants, and the DEED Project Library, respectively, as the top three most valuable program benefits.
- **Investment for Public Power R&D:** A majority of respondents (69%) strongly believe that the level of investment in public power research and development (R&D) needs to increase. Respondents also provided input into what research topics would benefit their organizations in the next five years. The top five selections were:
  - Demand Response / Load Flexibility (65%)
  - Smart Grid / Grid Modernization / Grid Edge Intelligence (64%)
  - Storage (Battery / Pumped Storage) (64%)
  - Transportation Electrification (65%)
  - Cybersecurity (57%)
- **Challenges with Grant Applications:** 64% of respondents reported that their utility has applied for a DEED grant. Of those members that applied, 92% found the application software to be user-friendly, 95% found the application questions to be easy to follow, 97% reported that they were notified about deadlines and extensions in a timely manner, and 92% reported that they were notified about their application's status in a timely manner.

Members that hadn't applied for a DEED grant (25%) reported that the main barriers keeping them from applying were:

  - Not having staff to manage a DEED project (60%)
  - Reporting requirements are seen as too time-consuming (27%)
  - Need more than \$125,000 for the project (13%)
  - Not aware of the application process (13%)
  - Not interested in applying (13%)

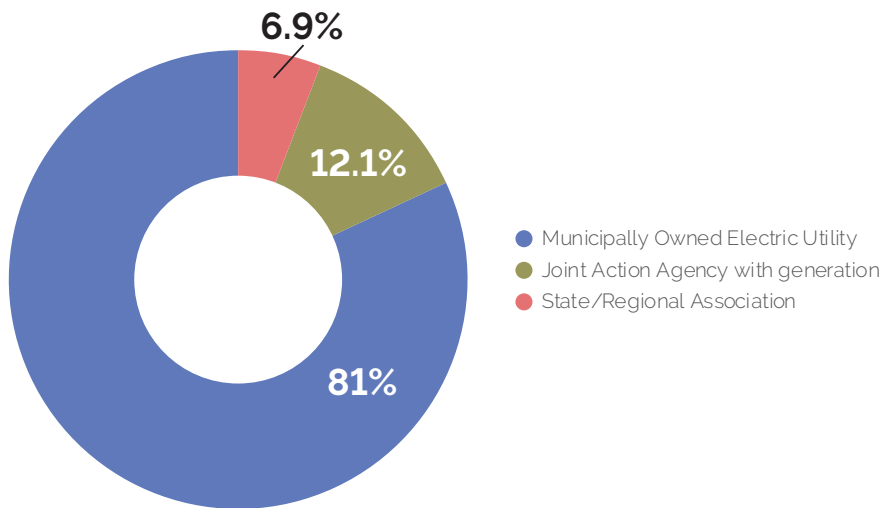
Members also noted that developing a good, innovative project proposal that would qualify for DEED funding was a particular barrier to applying.
- **Suggestions for Improvement:** Respondents reported that having access to more written materials and educational guides (78%) and webinars (76%) would help them in developing a grant proposal. Other suggestions for improving the application process include:
  - Updating the website
  - Assisting in finding partner utilities
  - Revamping the DEED Project Library
  - Creating a new forum for members to collaborate directly with each other, the DEED board of directors, and APPA staff

# 1.SURVEY RESPONDENTS

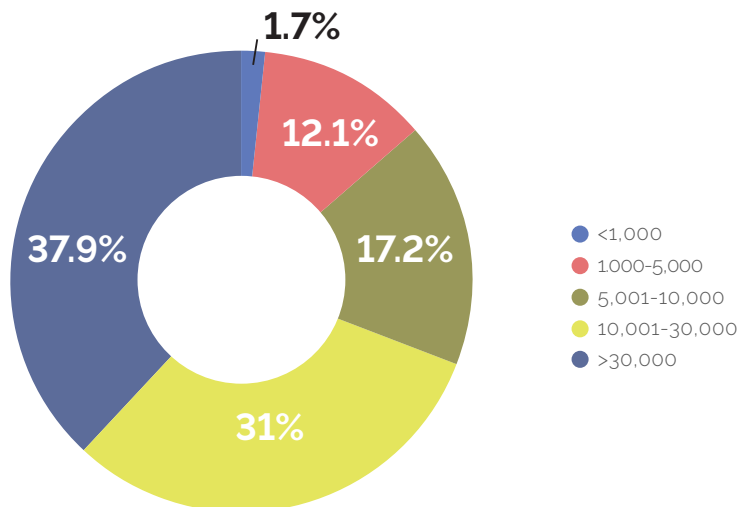
Responses were collected over 40 days using a questionnaire with a mix of quantitative questions about satisfaction and preferences with qualitative inquiries for open-ended feedback. Of 950 active DEED members, the survey received responses from 54 unique member organizations, accounting for 5.6% of all active DEED members, and 58 individual responses. Although the sample size is too small to draw any major conclusions, the responses gathered still provide useful insights that can inform future decisions and improvements.

A large majority of respondents work for a municipally owned utility (Fig. 1), and most of these work for utilities with over 10,000 customers (Fig. 1a). All regions are represented in the sample.

**Figure 1:**  
Which of the following best describes your organization?



**Figure 1a:**  
How many total customers does your utility serve?



## 2. MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

### How Members Receive DEED-Related Information

Members cited email (83%) and DEED's section on APPA's website (61%) as the most common ways they interact with the DEED program (Fig. 2).

### Overall Experience Engaging with APPA/DEED Staff

When contacting DEED staff, a majority (65%) of respondents reported "always" having their questions answered in a timely manner (Fig. 2a).

### Satisfaction with the DEED Web Pages

For those who utilized APPA's website for inquiries related to the program, 89% of respondents reported usually or always being able to find information on DEED quickly and easily. When browsing through DEED's section on APPA's website, the majority of respondents reported searching through the DEED Project Library (81%) and grant-related information (71%) (Fig. 2c).

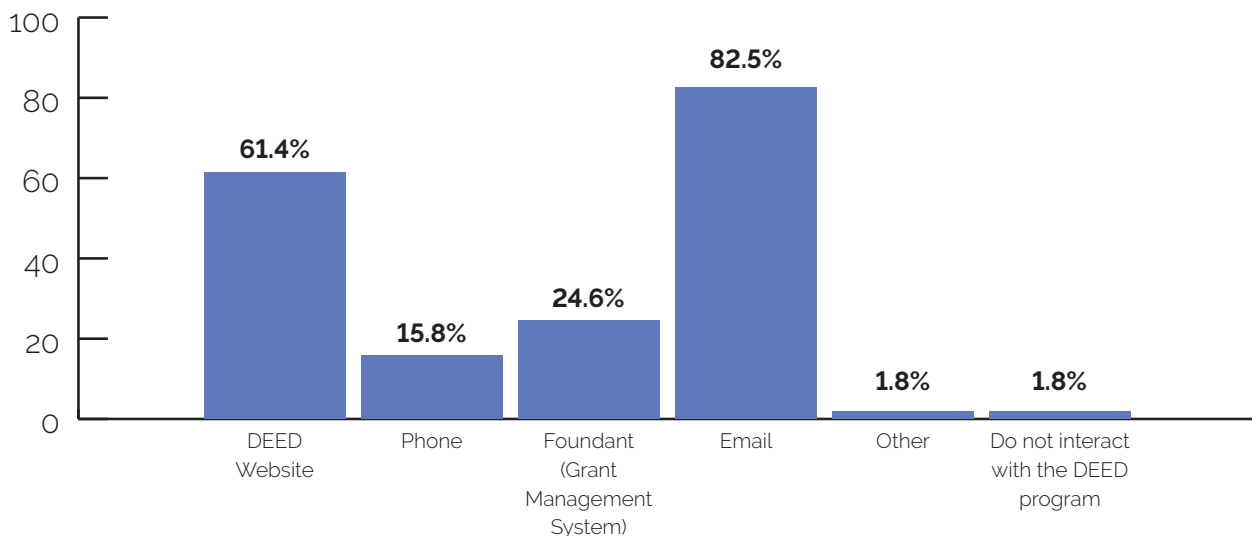
### Satisfaction with DEED-related Information

When asked how satisfied they were with the volume of DEED-related information they receive, most respondents reported receiving "the right amount of information" (85%) (Fig. 2d).

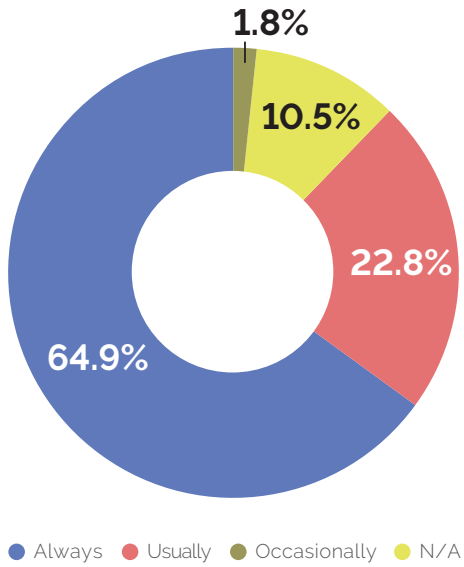
### Member Preferences to Receive DEED Information

88% of respondents stated that they would prefer to receive DEED-related information through the DEED Digest, 66% would prefer to receive information through APPA's website, and 59% would prefer more information on DEED at APPA's conferences (Fig. 2e).

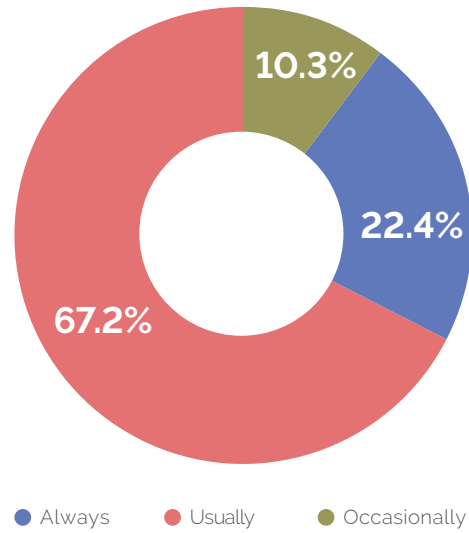
**Figure 2:**  
How do you usually interact with the DEED program? Please check all that apply.



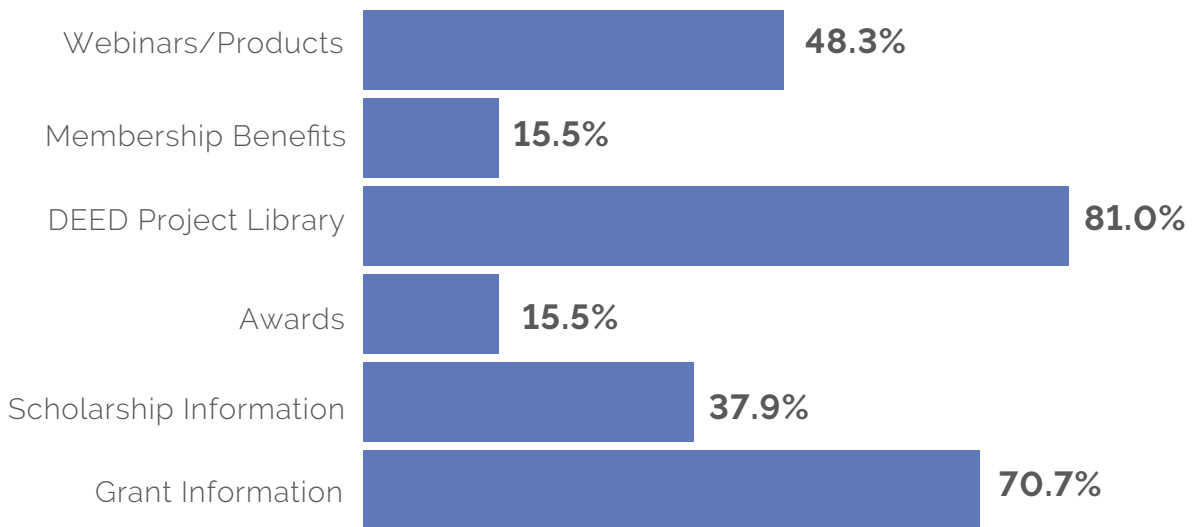
**Figure 2.a:**  
When you contact DEED staff for information, how often are your questions answered in a timely manner?

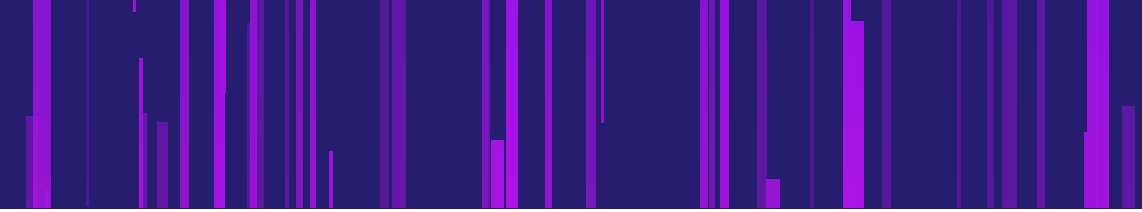


**Figure 2.b:**  
Are you able to find DEED information on PublicPower.org quickly and easily?

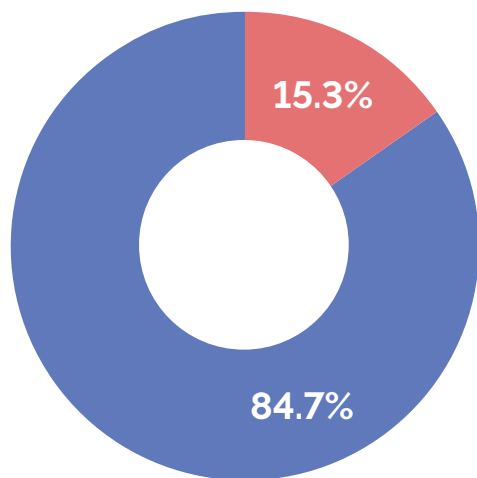


**Figure 2.c:**  
What resources or information are you looking for if and when you visit the website? Please check all that apply



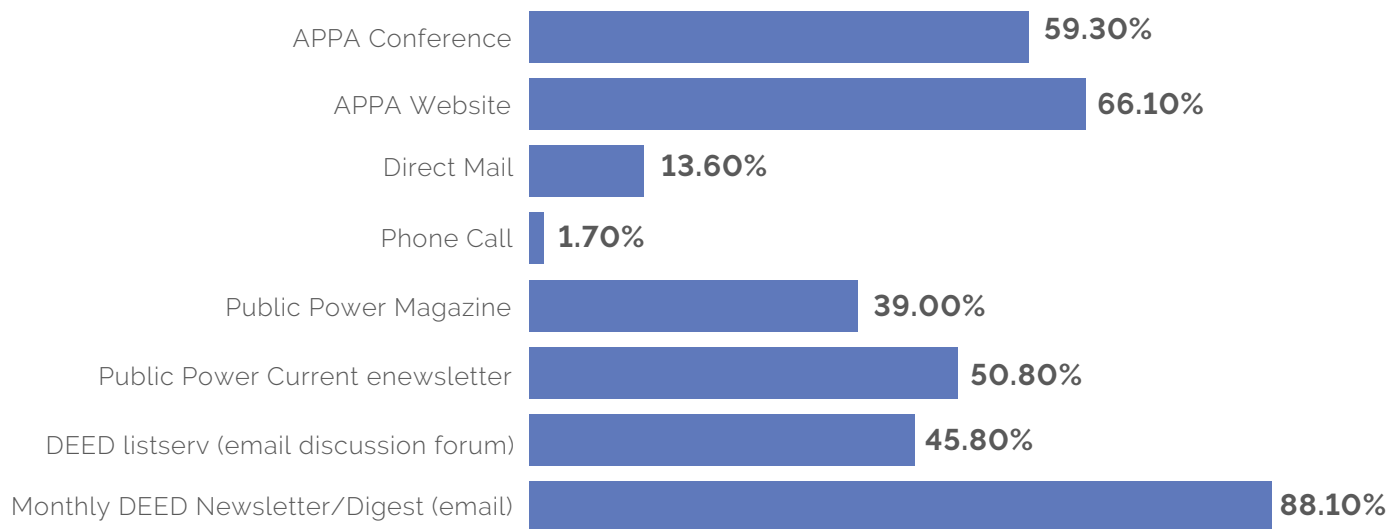


**Figure 2.d:**  
How satisfied are you with the volume of DEED information you receive?



- I received the right amount of information
- I do not receive enough information

**Figure 2.e:**  
How do you prefer to receive DEED information? Check all that apply.



# 3. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREAS

## Levels of Public Power R&D Funding

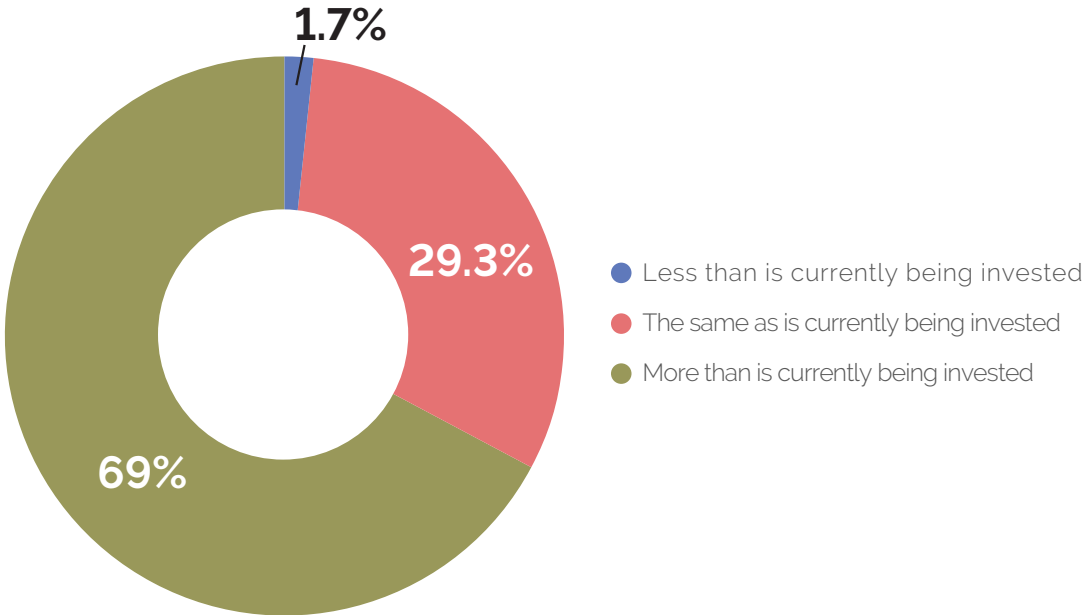
When asked what level of investment there should be into research and development in the public power community, 69% of respondents replied that there should be more than is currently being invested, while 29% indicated that the current level of investment is sufficient (Fig. 3).

## R&D Focus Areas

When asked to rank a list of 16 broad research areas that would most benefit their utility in the next five years, the top five responses were (Fig. 3a):

- 1. Demand Response / Load Flexibility (65%)
- 2. Smart Grid / Grid Modernization / Grid Edge Intelligence (64%)
- 3. Storage (Battery / Pumped Storage) (64%)
- 4. Transportation Electrification (65%)
- 5. Cybersecurity (57%)

**Figure 3:**  
Given the current state of technology in our industry, what do you feel is the appropriate level of investment into research and development for the public power community?





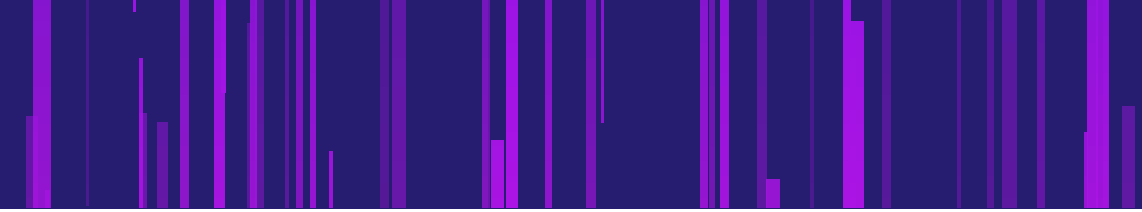
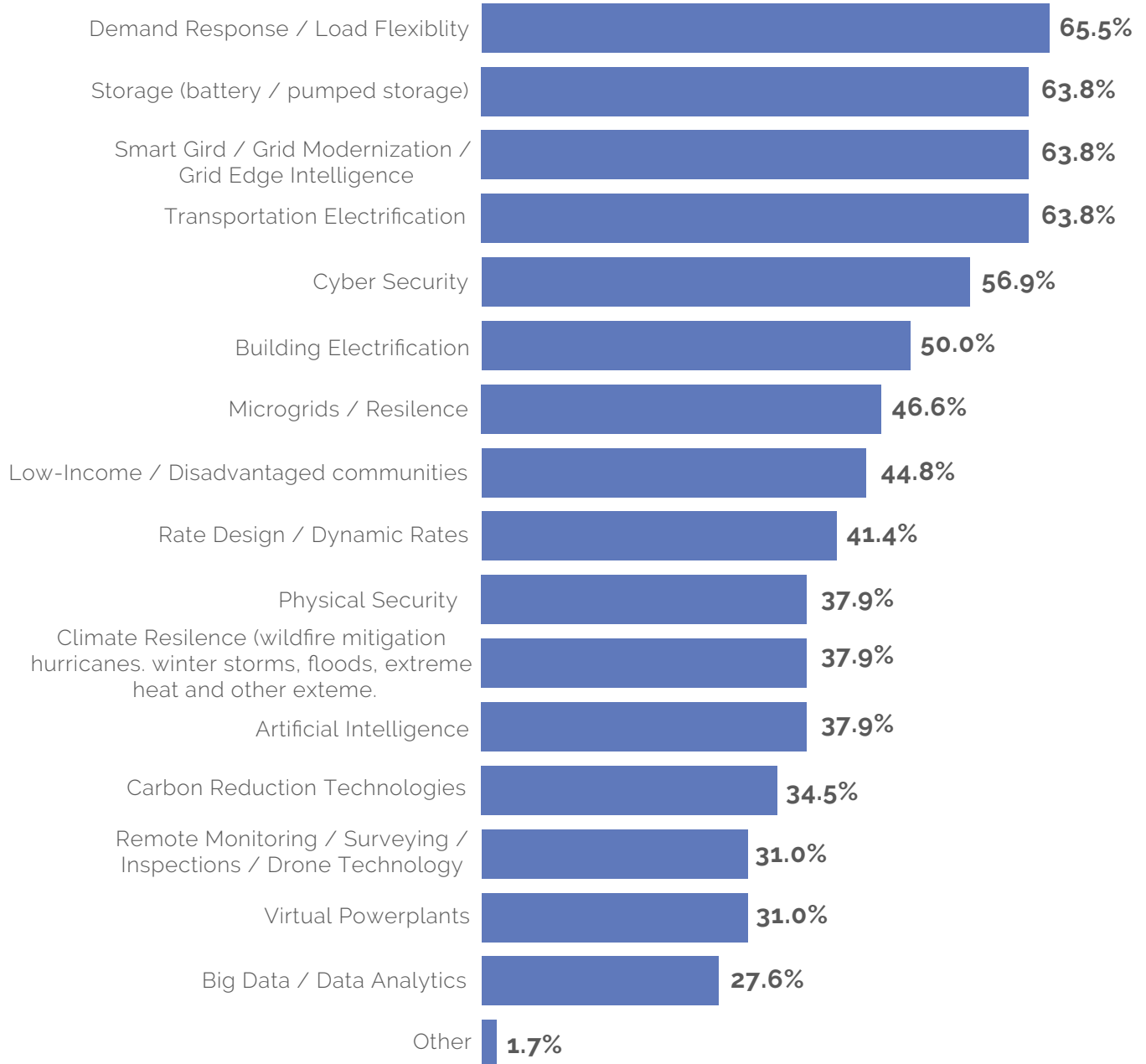


Figure 3a:

Which research topics would most benefit your utility in the next 5 years? Select all that apply. (Research areas are organized in ascending order: from most responses to least responses received.)



# 4. GRANT APPLICATIONS

## DEED Grants

Most respondents' organizations have applied for a DEED grant (64%) (Fig.4). For those who applied for a DEED grant, 92% found the application software to be user-friendly, 95% found the application questions to be well-written and easy to follow, 97% reported that they were notified about deadlines and extensions in a timely manner, and 92% reported that they were notified about their application's status in a timely manner (Fig. 4a).

## Barriers to Applying for DEED Grants

Members who hadn't applied for a DEED grant (25%) reported that the barriers keeping them from applying were (Fig. 4b):

- Not having staff to manage a DEED project (60%)
- Reporting requirements perceived as too time-consuming (27%)
- Need more than \$125,000 (13%)
- Not sure where to obtain login credentials (13%)
- Not interested in applying (13%)
- Did not know the application deadline (13%)
- Did not have permission to apply (13%)
- Application is too complicated (7%)
- Not aware we were DEED members (7%)
- Did not know that DEED provided funding (7%)

In open-ended responses, members also noted that developing a good, innovative project proposal that would qualify for DEED funding served as a barrier to applying.

## Support for Applying for DEED Grants

Members stated that having access to written materials and educational guides (78%) and webinars (76%) would help them in developing a grant proposal (Fig. 4c). Other suggestions, from write-in responses, included:

- Updating website
- Assisting in finding partner utilities
- Revamping the DEED Project Library
- Creating a new forum for members to collaborate directly with each other, the DEED board of directors, and APPA staff

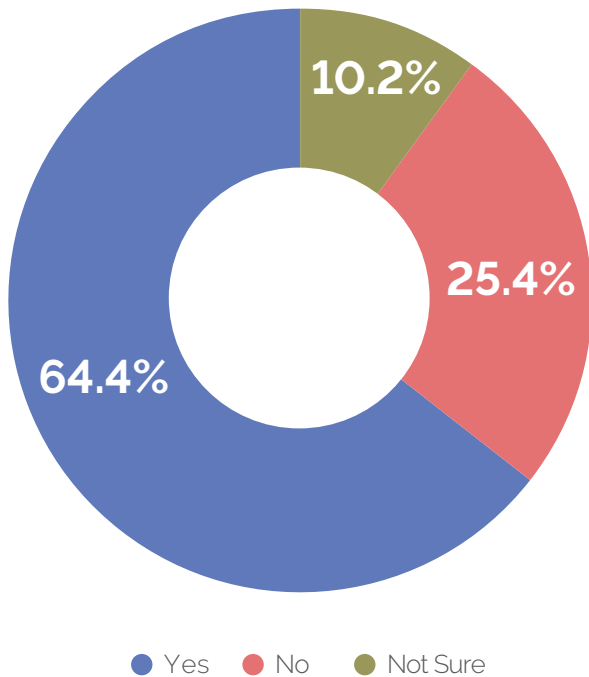
## Federal Grants

41% of respondents reported having applied for federal grants, including for opportunities created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, such as National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Funding. An additional 19% reported that they are considering applying for federal grants (Fig 4d).

## How can DEED Assist with Federal Grants?

Respondents indicated that hosting webinars featuring grant applicants, with APPA staff and DEED board members walking through the process, will help them in the federal grant process (69%). Respondents also indicated listserv messages conveying information related to new grants and federal programs would be beneficial (61%) (Fig. 4e).

**Figure 4:**  
Has your utility applied for a DEED grant?



**Figure 4a:**  
If your utility has applied for a DEED grant

	Yes	No
Was the application software user-friendly?	91.9%	8.1%
Are the application questions easy to follow and clearly written?	94.6%	5.4%
Were you notified about application deadline and extensions in a timely manner?	97.3%	2.7%
Were you notified about your applications' approval/denial in a timely manner?	91.9%	8.1%

**Figure 4b:**  
If you have not applied, what barriers prevented you from applying for grant funding? Check all that apply.

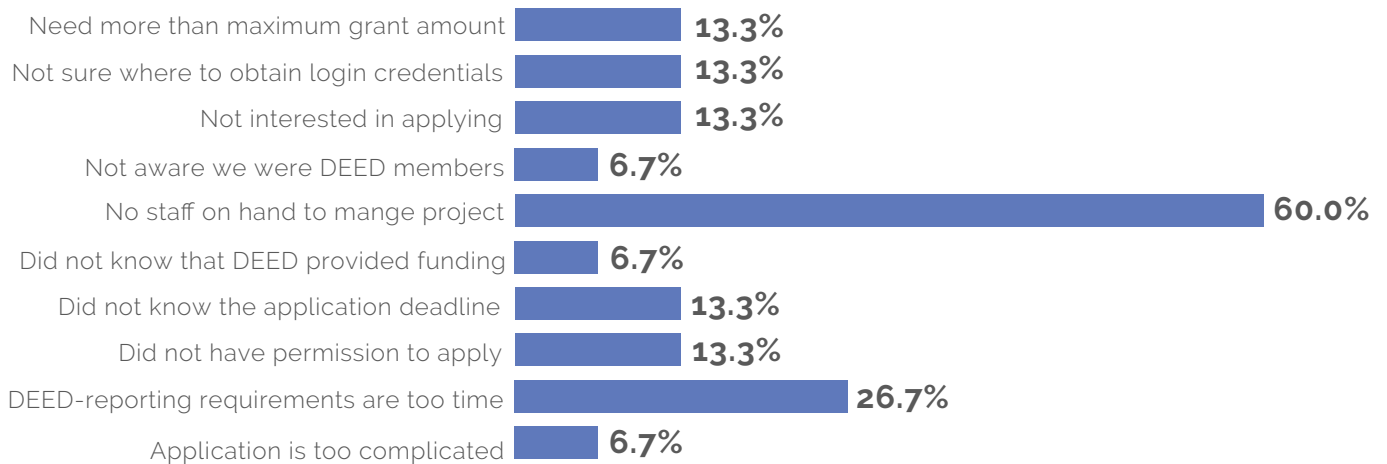


Figure 4c:

How can DEED best assist you in developing grant proposals? (Check all that apply)

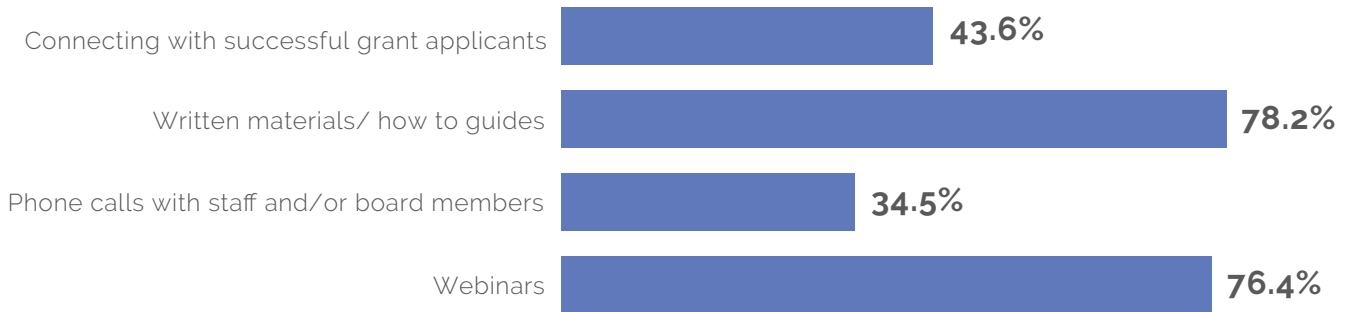


Figure 4d:

Has your utility applied, or is it considering applying for, federal grants?

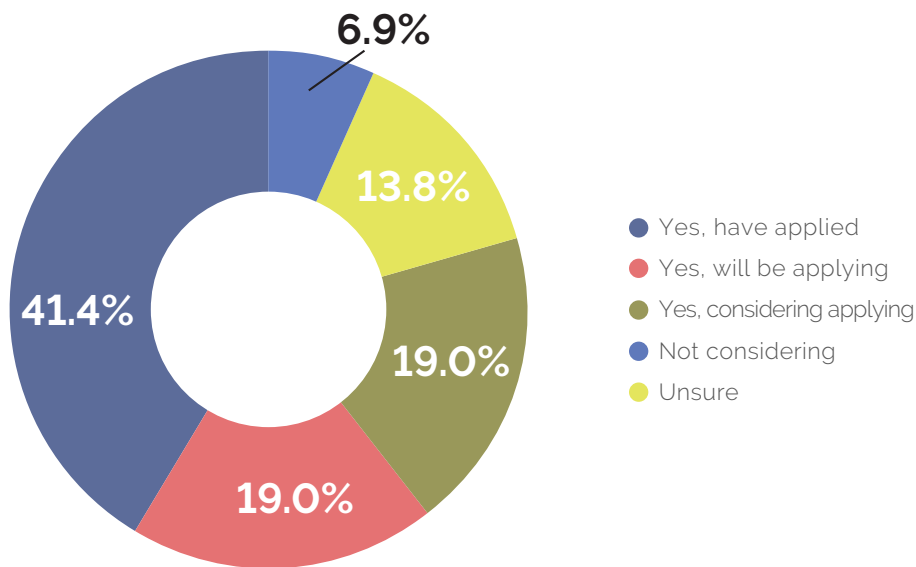
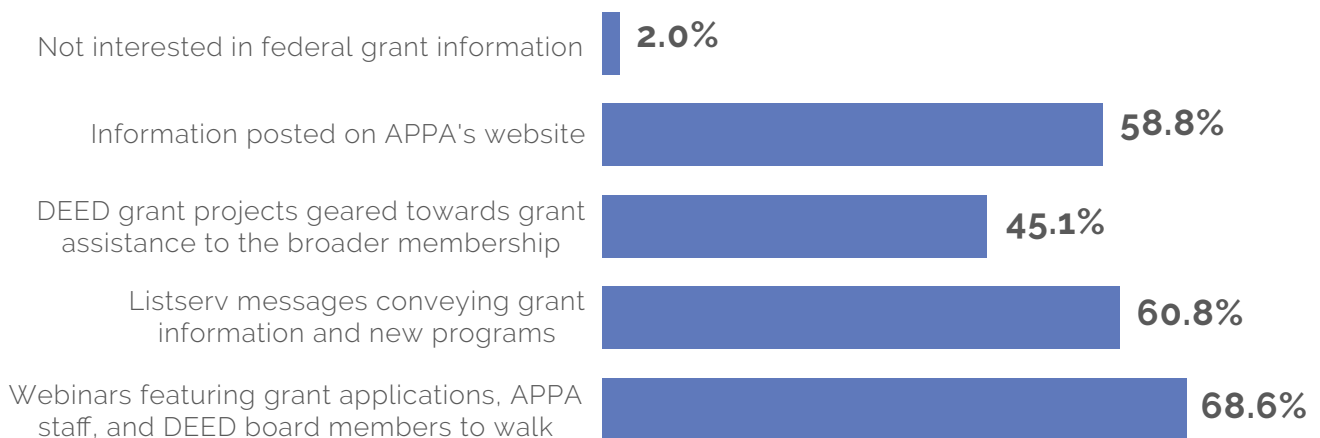


Figure 4e:

How can DEED best assist you in the federal grant process? (Check all that apply)



## 5. DEED BENEFITS

Respondents ranked utility grants as the most valuable benefit of the DEED program, followed by student internship grants and the DEED Project Library.

### Usefulness of DEED Products

When asked about the usefulness of DEED products, DEED project reports (75%), webinars (74%), and the DEED Project Library (72%) received the highest satisfaction ratings (Table 5a).

### Quality of DEED Products

When asked about the quality of various DEED materials, respondents reported highest satisfaction with the DEED Project Library (80%), followed by DEED utility grants (74%), and the DEED section of APPA's website (74%) (Fig. 5b).

### Interest in DEED Products

Apart from DEED grants and the project library, respondents expressed interest in accessing project reports and abstracts, webinars, and toolkits (Fig. 5c).

**Table 5a:**  
How satisfied are you with the usefulness of the following DEED product types?

PRODUCT TYPES	VERY OR SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	NEUTRAL	VERY OR SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NOT AWARE
Toolkits	0%	16%	56%	28%
Webinars	2%	7%	74%	18%
Whitepapers	0%	15%	64%	22%
DEED Reports/Abstracts	2%	11%	75%	13%
Presentations	0%	12%	70%	18%
Spreadsheets/Calculators	0%	15%	49%	36%
Monthly DEED Newsletter/Digest	2%	9%	72%	18%
DEED listserv (email discussion forum)	0%	19%	47%	33%
DEED Project Library	5%	14%	72%	9%
Awards: Energy Innovator Award	0%	16%	55%	29%
DEED section of the public power website ( <a href="https://www.publicpower.org/deed-rd-funding">https://www.publicpower.org/deed-rd-funding</a> )	9%	16%	70%	5%
Earning points towards your utility's Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) program designation	2%	11%	53%	35%
Grants of up to \$125,000 for innovative utility projects	4%	5%	71%	20%
DEED internships & scholarships	4%	9%	70%	18%
Utility/Vendor Matching Platform (DEED Idea Exchange)	2%	20%	32%	46%

**Table 5b:**

How satisfied are you with the quality of the following DEED product types?

<b>PRODUCT TYPES</b>	<b>VERY OR SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>VERY OR SOMEWHAT SATISFIED</b>	<b>NOT AWARE</b>
DEED Project Library	5%	11%	80%	4%
Grants of up to \$125,000 for innovative utility projects	2%	7%	74%	17%
DEED section of the public power website ( <a href="https://www.publicpower.org/deed-rd-funding">https://www.publicpower.org/deed-rd-funding</a> )	11%	9%	74%	6%
DEED reports/abstracts	0%	13%	72%	15%
DEED internships & scholarships	4%	7%	71%	18%
Monthly DEED Newsletter/Digest	2%	11%	70%	17%
Presentations	0%	13%	67%	20%
Webinars	2%	15%	66%	18%
Whitepapers	0%	15%	62%	23%
Awards: Energy Innovator Award	0%	15%	57%	28%
Earning points towards your utility's Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) program designation	2%	11%	53%	34%
Toolkits	2%	22%	49%	27%
DEED listserv (email discussion forum)	2%	19%	48%	31%

**Table 5c:**

What is your level of interest in the following DEED product types? (Columns indicating "not applicable" have been omitted.)

<b>PRODUCT TYPES</b>	<b>VERY DISINTERESTED</b>	<b>SOMEWHAT DISINTERESTED</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>SOMEWHAT INTERESTED</b>	<b>VERY INTERESTED</b>
Grants of up to \$125,000 for innovative utility projects	3.70%	0.00%	5.60%	18.50%	70.40%
DEED internships & scholarships	3.70%	1.90%	9.30%	18.50%	61.10%
DEED Project Library	1.90%	0.00%	5.60%	29.60%	59.30%
DEED reports/abstracts	0.00%	0.00%	9.30%	25.90%	55.60%
Webinars	0.00%	3.70%	11.10%	29.60%	51.90%
Toolkits	0.00%	0.00%	11.10%	27.80%	50.00%
Presentations	0.00%	0.00%	13.00%	31.50%	48.10%
Spreadsheets/calculators	0.00%	0.00%	14.80%	25.90%	44.40%
Monthly DEED newsletter/digest	0.00%	3.70%	11.10%	38.90%	42.60%
Earning points towards your utility's Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) program designation	1.90%	1.90%	11.10%	24.10%	42.60%
Whitepapers	1.90%	0.00%	13.00%	40.70%	40.70%
DEED section of the public power website	1.90%	0.00%	14.80%	40.70%	38.90%
Awards: Energy Innovator Award	0.00%	1.90%	20.80%	32.10%	30.20%
Utility/vendor matching platform (DEED idea exchange)	0.00%	1.90%	22.20%	35.20%	25.90%
DEED listserv (email discussion forum)	1.90%	5.60%	14.80%	48.10%	22.20%

## 6. DEED STRATEGIC GOALS

Overall, members feel that the DEED program performs well with respect to meeting the program's stated strategic goals.

Among the four strategic program goals, members felt that the program performs well in promoting innovation (56% rated the program's performance in meeting this goal as excellent) and maximizing resources (50% rated the program's performance in meeting this goal as excellent). However, there is room for improvement in increasing participation (37% rated the program's performance in meeting this goal as excellent) and workforce development (43% rated the program's performance in meeting this goal as excellent) (Fig. 6)

**Figure 6:**  
How well do you feel the DEED program performs in regard to meeting the stated DEED program goals?

GOAL	EXCELLENT	FAIR	AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE
Promote Innovation and R&D	55.8%	26.9%	15.4%	1.9%
Maximize Resources to Support the DEED Program	50.0%	30.8%	19.2%	0.0%
Promote DEED & Increase Participation	39.2%	37.3%	19.6%	3.9%
Public Power Workforce Development	43.1%	27.5%	27.5%	2.0%

## 7. PROGRAM SATISFACTION

84.2% of respondents said they were either somewhat or very satisfied with the DEED program (Fig.7), an improvement from 70% in 2020 (Fig. 7a).

**Figure 7:**  
Overall, how satisfied are you with the DEED program?

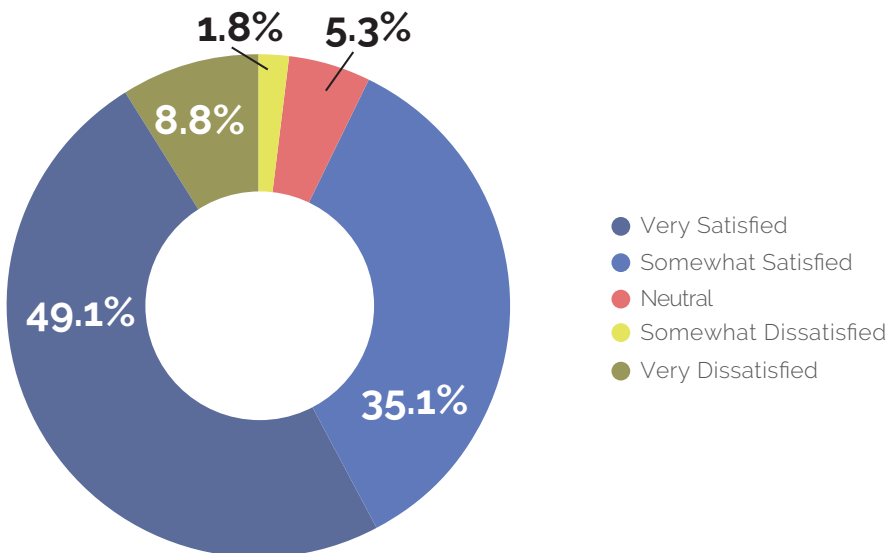
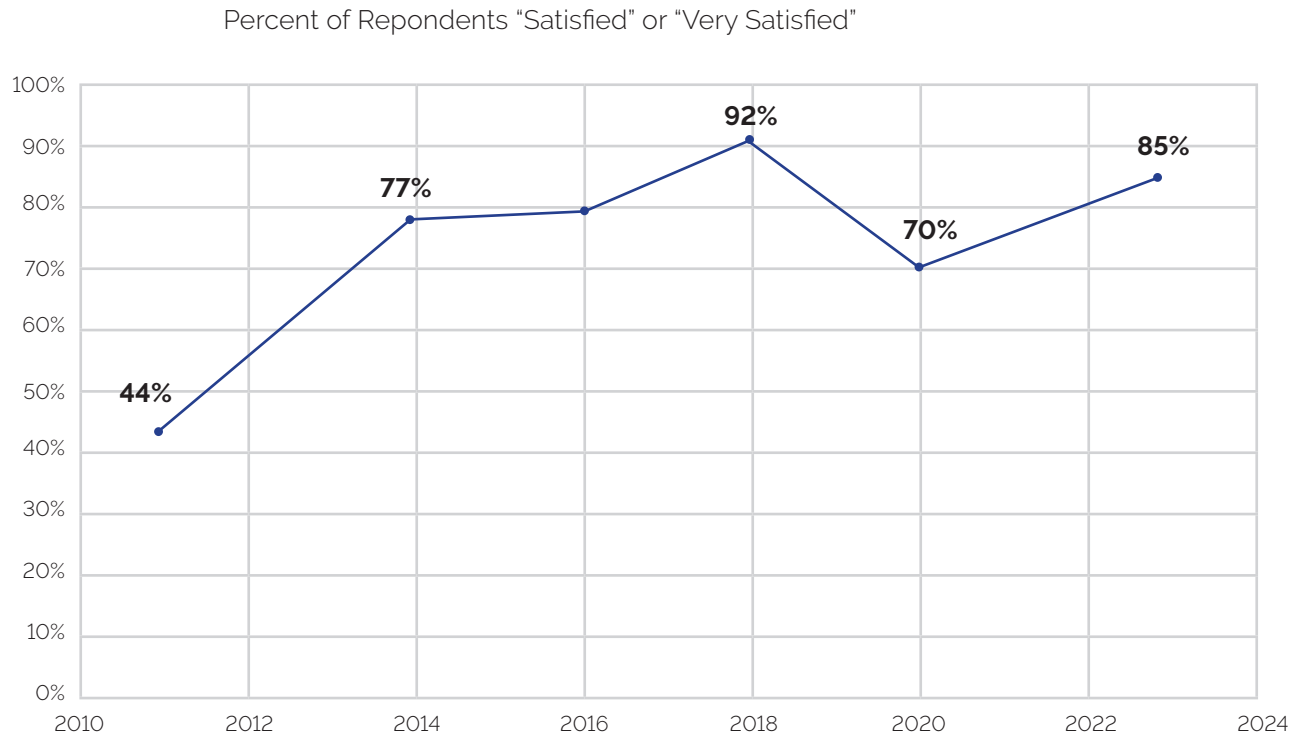




Figure 7a:  
Overall program satisfaction, 2011-2023.



## 8. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Members were asked to provide additional feedback and suggestions for improvement. This open-ended feedback is summarized below:

- Provide additional funds for innovative grants and internships.
- Improve the website's functionality and ease of usage.
- Improve the functionality of the web-based application.
- Create a forum to replace the listserv as a base of sharing information and fostering dialogue.
- Update the DEED Project Library and make it more easily navigable.
- Provide more membership options through APPA regular membership.
- More communication forums to provide program updates.

**AMERICAN  
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