



Alexandria Fund for Human Services Independent Evaluation : Community Engagement Sessions

Survey Results



Community Engagement Session

- During City Council's June 14, 2025, Public Hearing, DCHS staff was directed to work with community partners to develop an operational framework for implementation of the FY 2027-2029 AFHS grant cycle.
- To better understand the priorities, concerns, and aspirations of those directly impacted by the Alexandria Fund for Human Services and other community partners, a daytime and an evening engagement session were held August 6 and 7, 2025. These sessions also provided a platform to gather input on potential recommendations stemming from the independent evaluation.
- Invitations to the engagement sessions were sent to 144 individuals representing 70 organizations. Staff received 52 requests to participate, representing 32 organizations. Ultimately, 46 individuals attended one of the two scheduled sessions.
- As part of our commitment to inclusive, community-driven decision-making, staff distributed a 15-question survey to participants following the engagement sessions. The survey focused on key aspects of the proposed operational framework and funding options for the FY 2027–2029 grant cycle. Thirty-five percent of participants completed and returned the survey
- The responses offer valuable insight into the community's perspectives and provide a strong foundation for shaping responsive, collaborative, and effective strategies moving forward.
- The following slides summarize the survey results and significant themes and trends that emerged from the survey, along with reflections on what these findings suggest for the next steps in our engagement and planning process.

Community Engagement Session Survey

Purpose: To gather input from community stakeholders on options offered during the two engagement sessions.

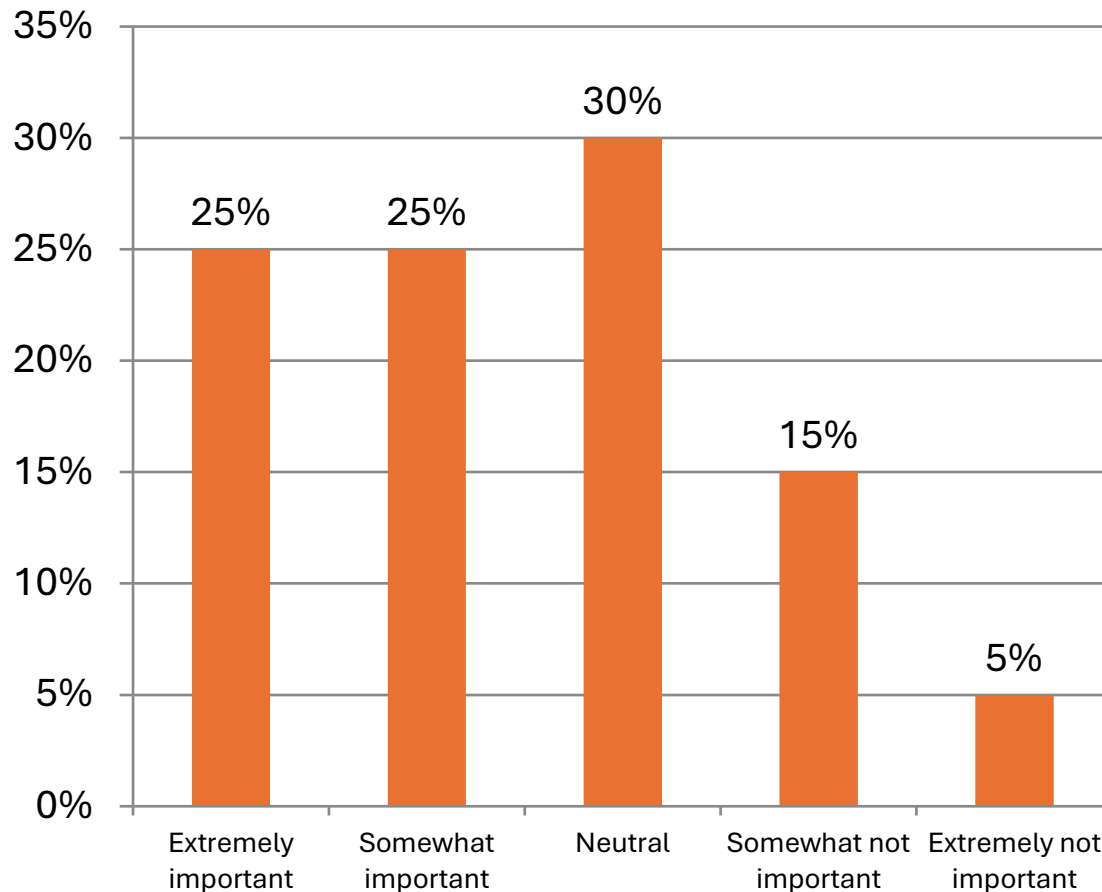
Goal: Ensure decisions reflect the needs, priorities, and concerns of the community regarding the AFHS FY27-29 grant cycle.

Participants: The survey was sent to individuals who participated in one of two engagement sessions. Of those, 20 individuals completed the survey, this represents a 35% return rate.

Method: Following the engagement sessions, a 15-question online survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey. Respondents were given a completion window of just over one week.

Why it matters: Their voices shape our next steps and ensure accountability.

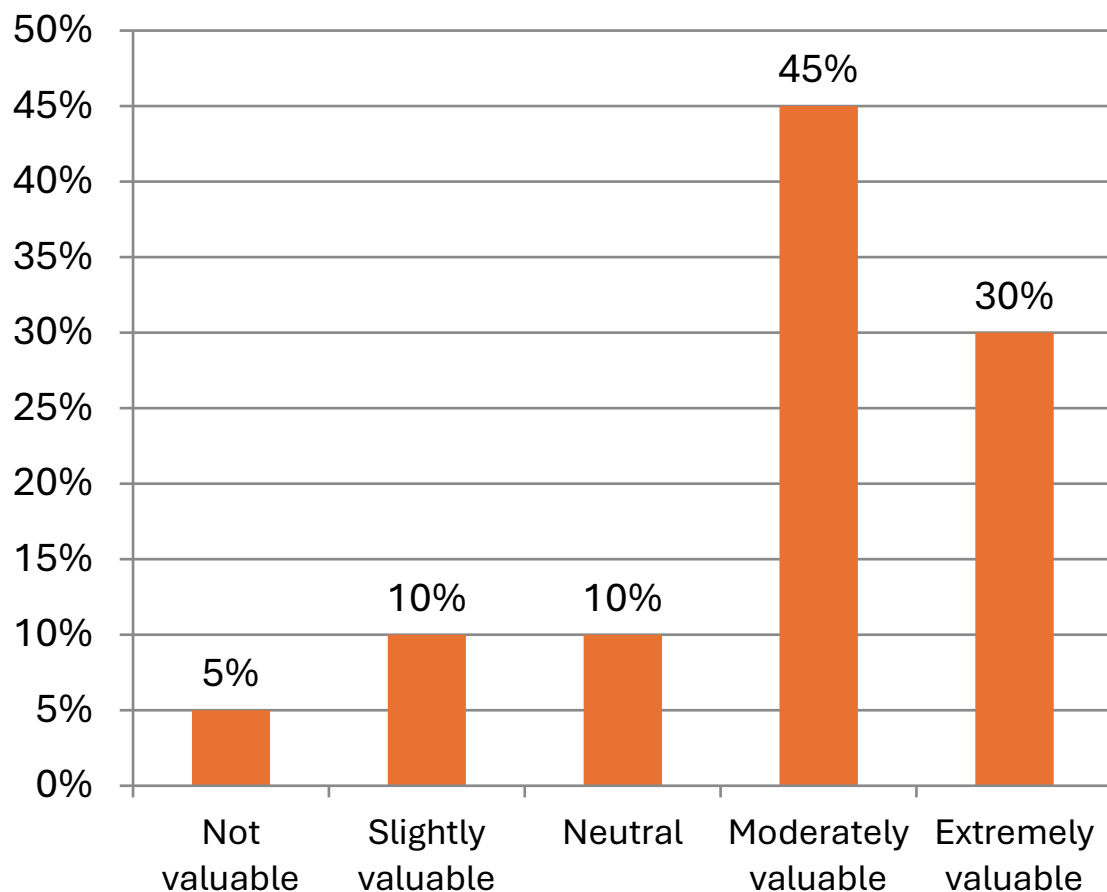
Q1: How important is it to prioritize funding for programs that provide services not already available or duplicated in our community?



Funding prioritization

50% of the survey respondents indicated that prioritizing funding for programs that are not currently available or duplicated in the community is either somewhat or extremely important.

Q2: How valuable do you think it is to have a Community Advisory Group made up of local stakeholders and SMEs to guide and advise funding decisions?



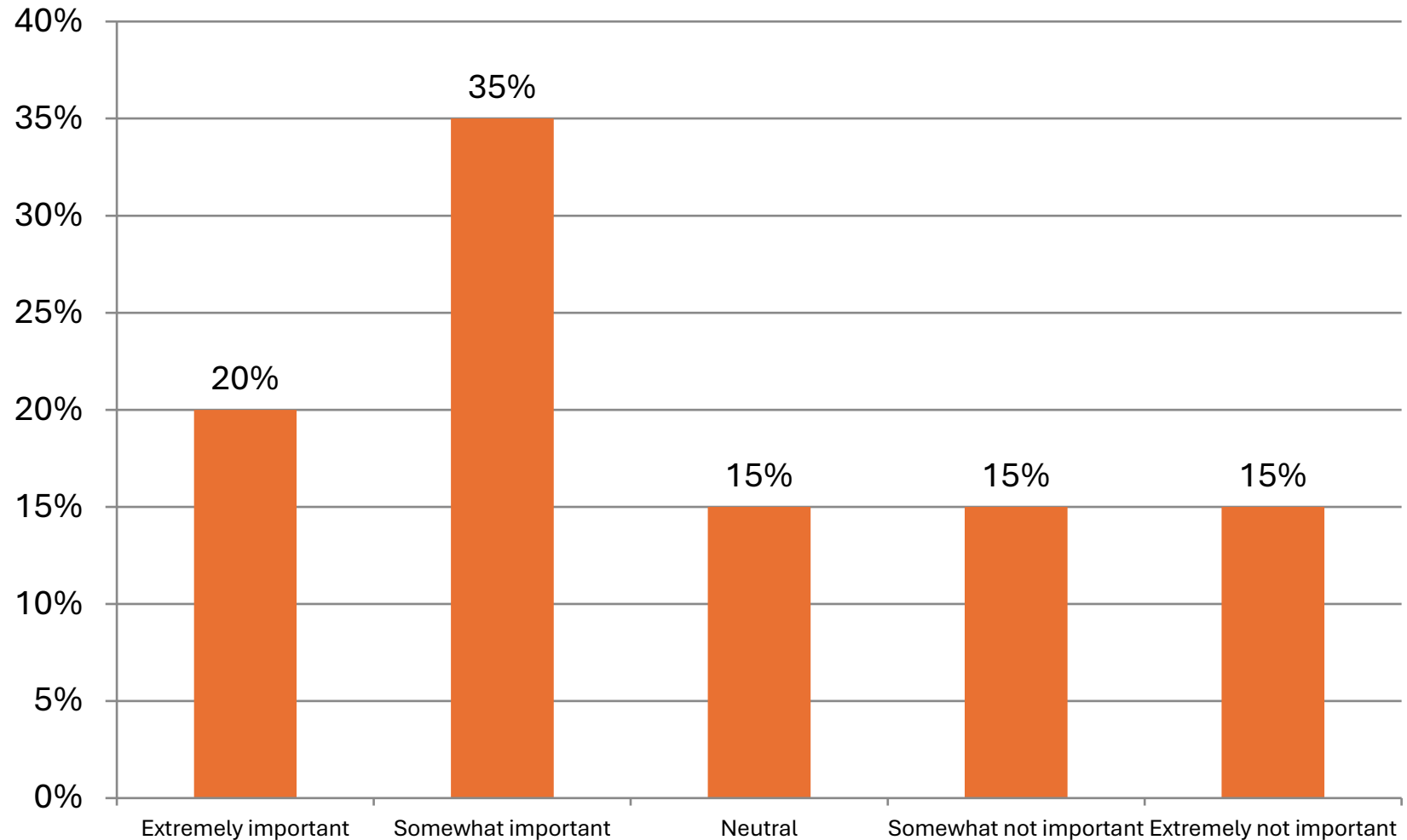
Use of CAG and SME

75% percent of respondents indicated that having a Community Advisory Group (CAG) composed of local stakeholders and subject matter experts (SMEs) is moderately to extremely valuable.

Fund smaller nonprofits

55% of respondents support funding to help smaller nonprofits strengthen capacity and manage grants.

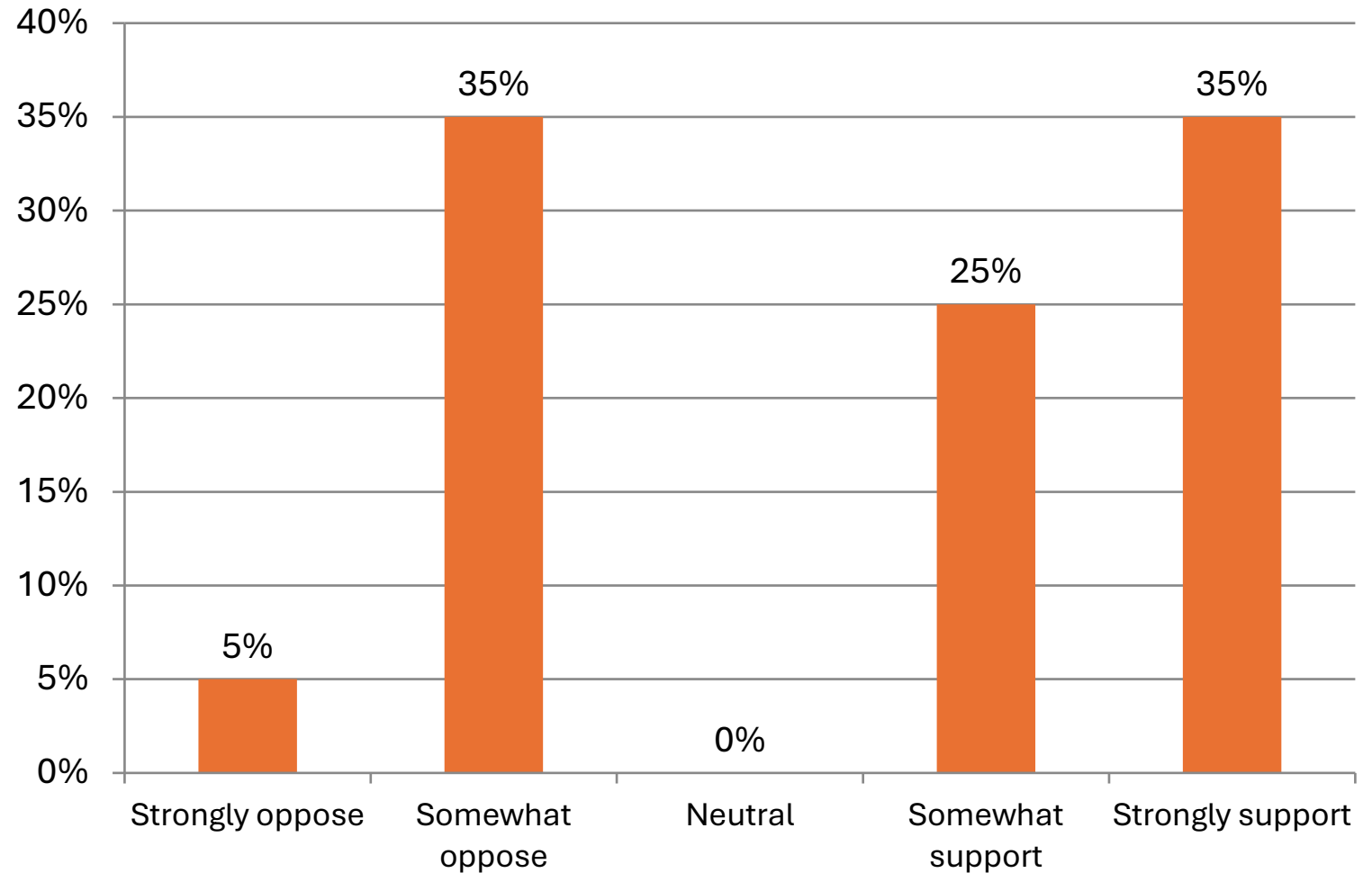
Q3: How important is it to provide funding, specifically to help smaller nonprofits build capacity to apply for and manage grants?



Fewer and larger grants

60% of respondents support larger grants to fewer organizations to increase community impact.

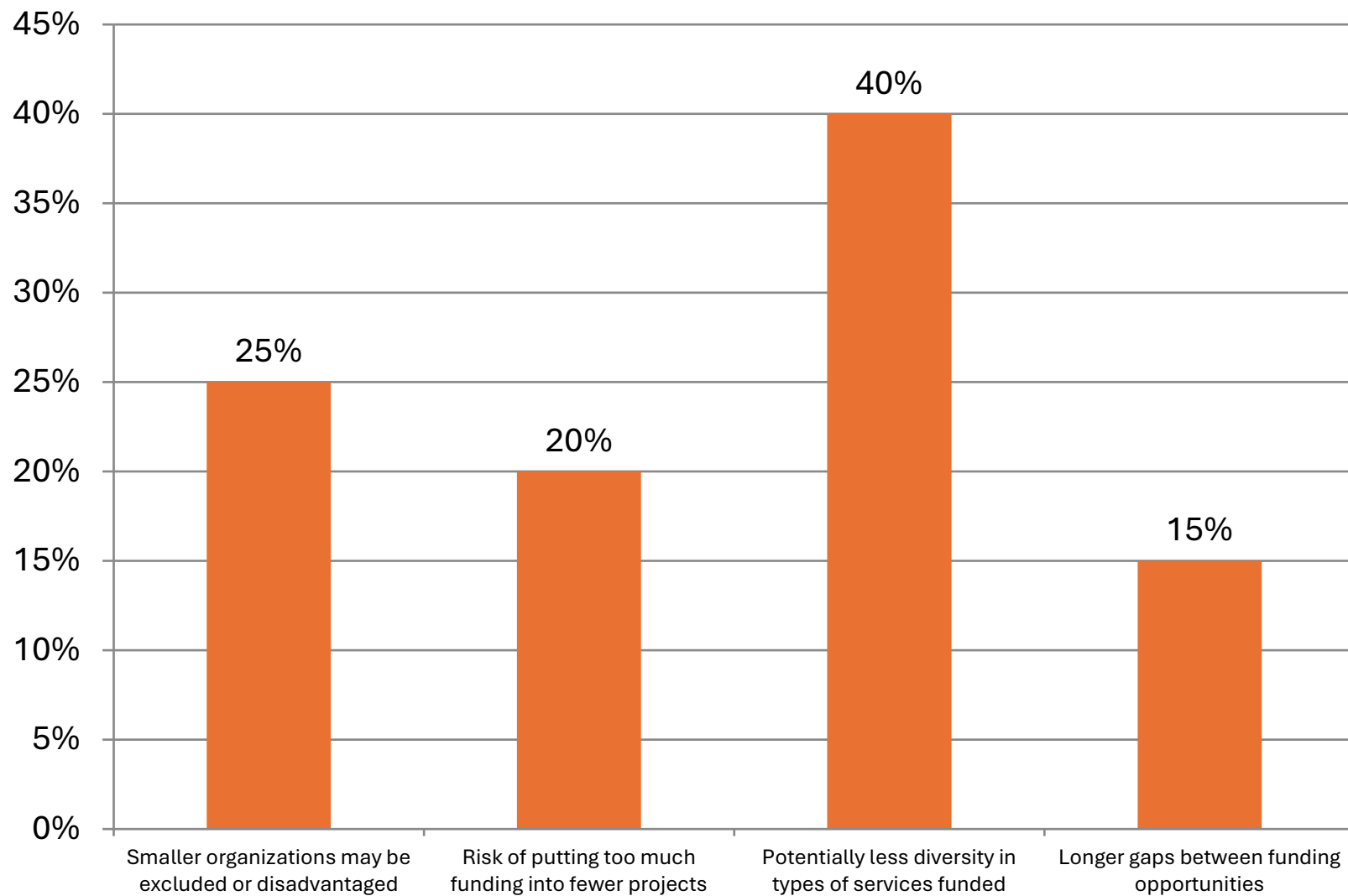
Q4: How strongly do you support the idea of making fewer, larger grants instead of many smaller grants to maximize community impact?



Concerns about fewer larger grants

40% of respondents are concerned that fewer, larger grants may limit program diversity.

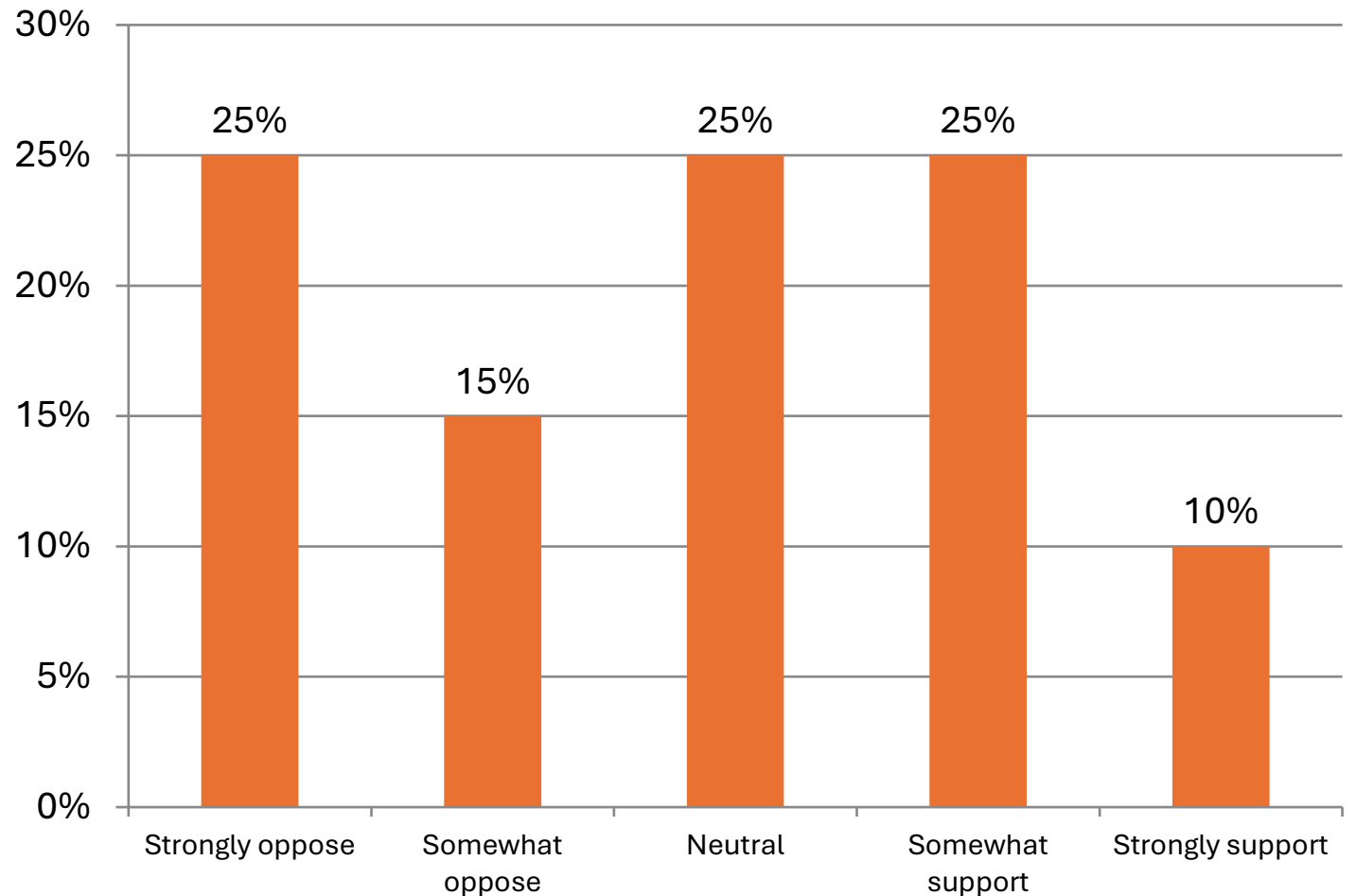
Q5: What concerns do you have about making fewer, larger grants? Choose all that apply.



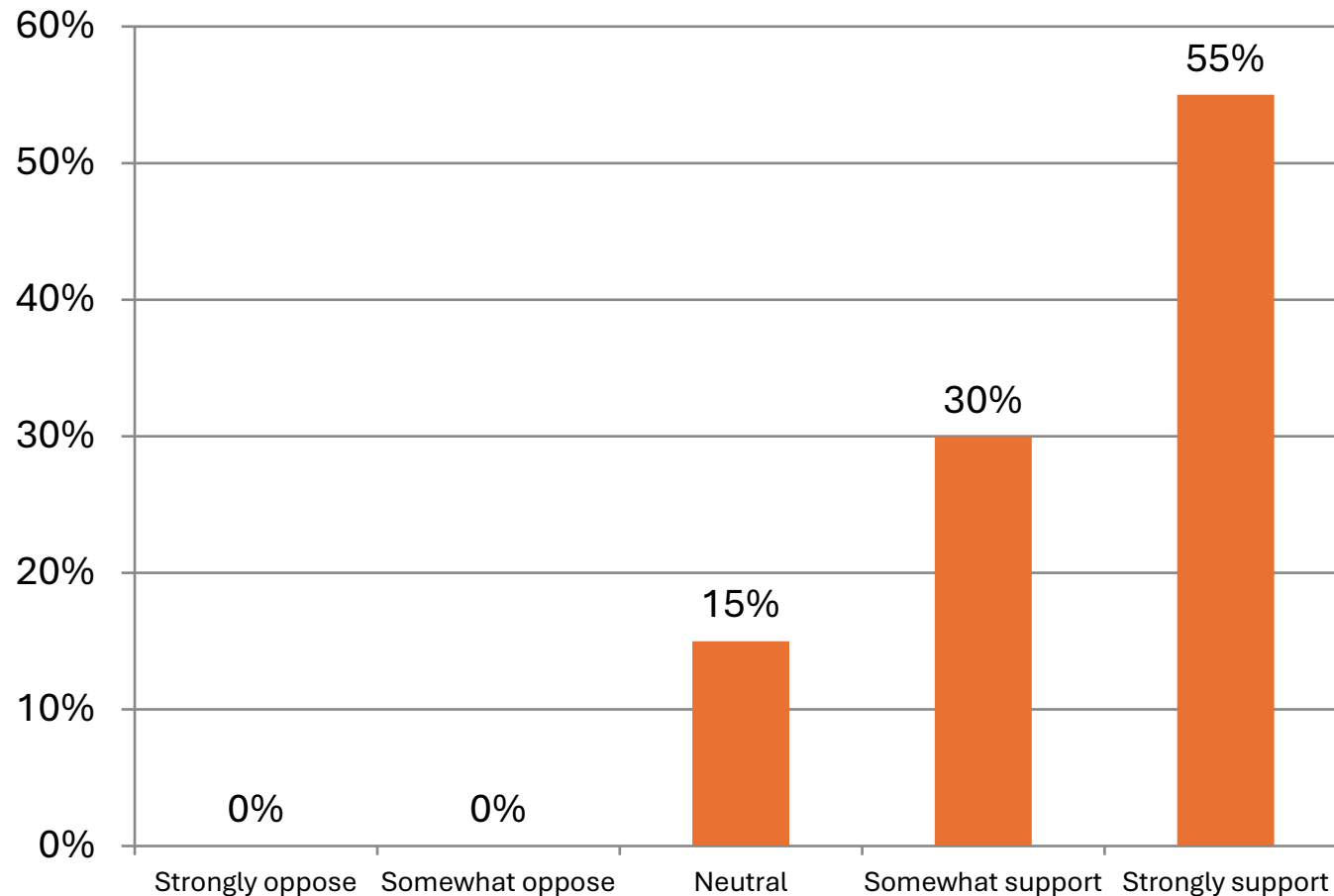
Funding cap and allocation

40% of respondents opposed capping the number of grants or funding amounts per organization.

Q6: Overall, do you support implementing caps on the number of grants and funding allocation per organization?



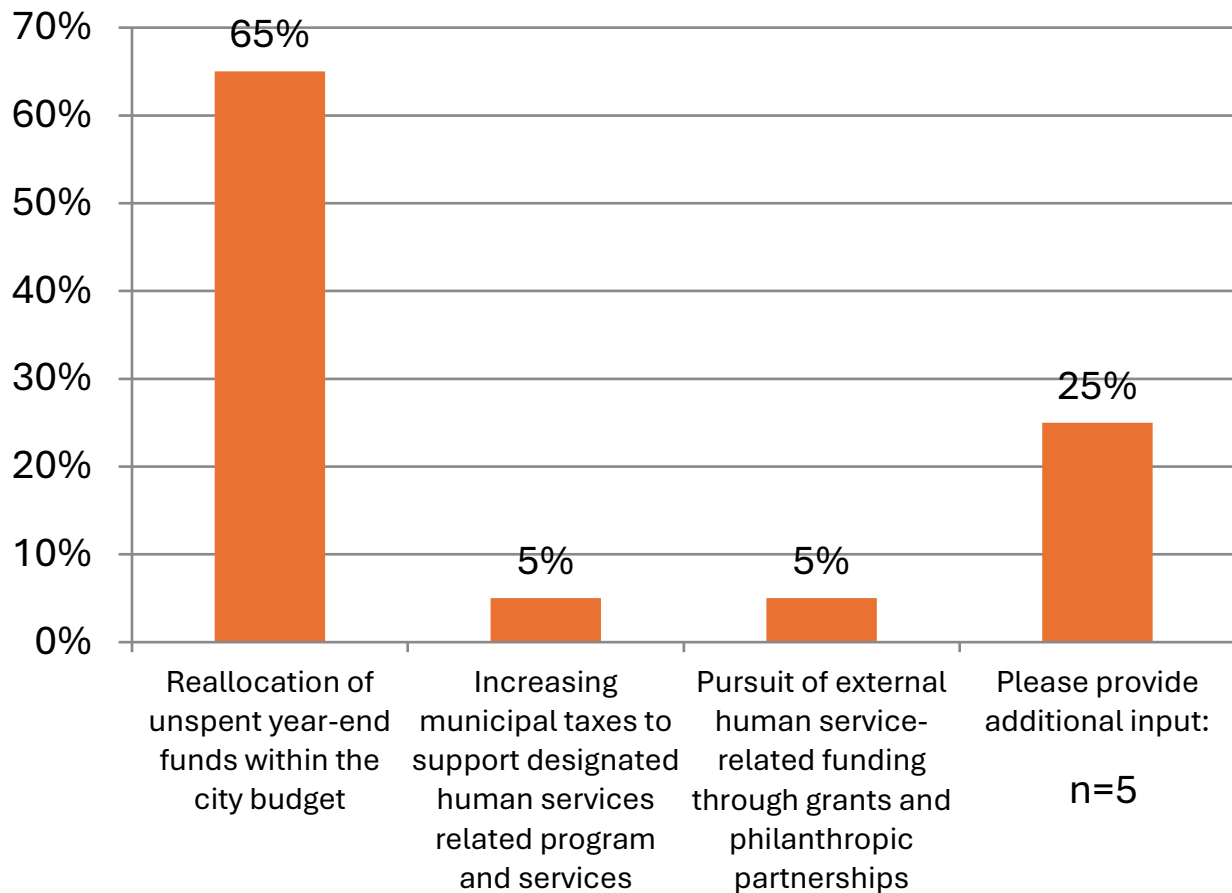
Q7: To what extent do you support the use of direct contracts to secure services for persistent, survival-related conditions that are not otherwise available in the community, particularly when a disruption in funding could destabilize critical service pr



Use of direct contracts for survival related conditions

85% of respondents support using direct contracts to address persistent, survival-related needs.

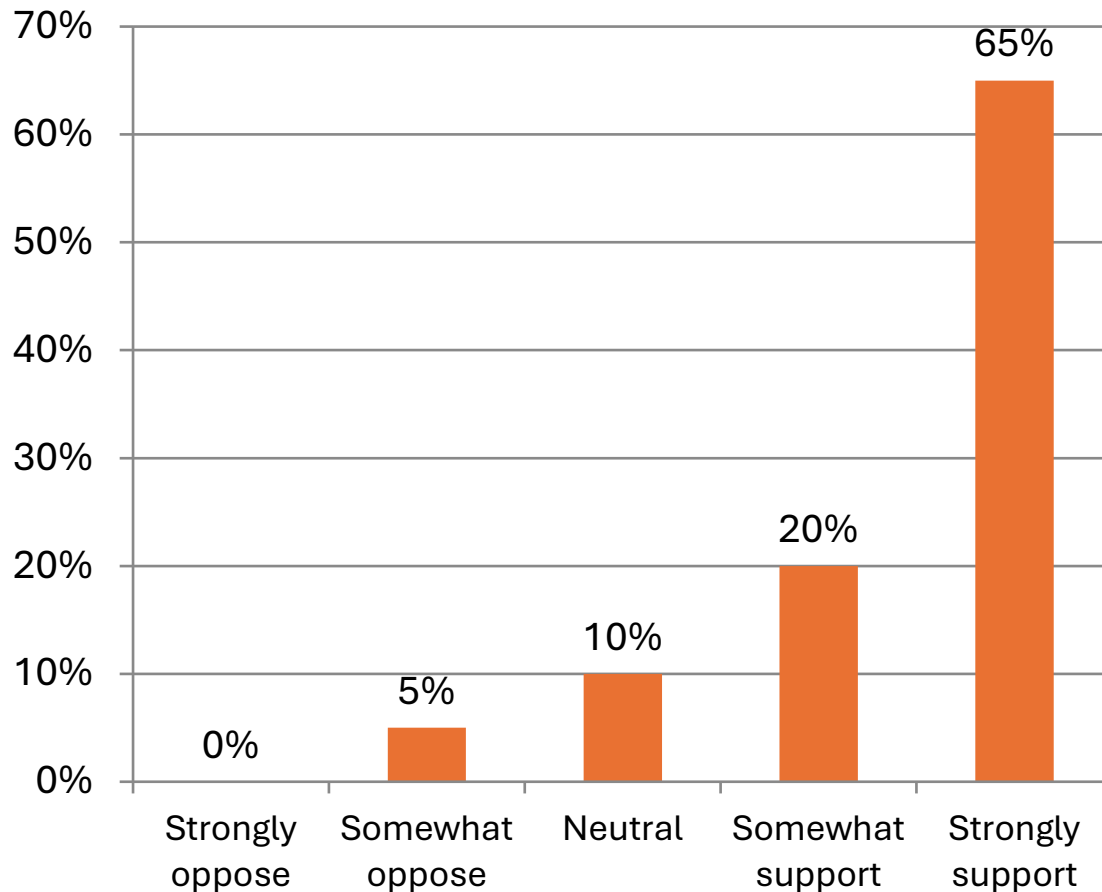
Q8: What would be the most effective way to structure an increase to the City of Alexandria's AFHS budget to ensure it keeps pace with rising service demands and inflation?



Effective way to increase AFHS funding

- 65% support reallocating unspent departmental funds
- 25% offered additional input, including:
- Pursue external funding / new revenue sources
- Consider all three funding options
- Need more clarity on specific programs
- Skepticism about implementation under current leadership
- Concern: "Alexandria will be lucky to keep basic services running".

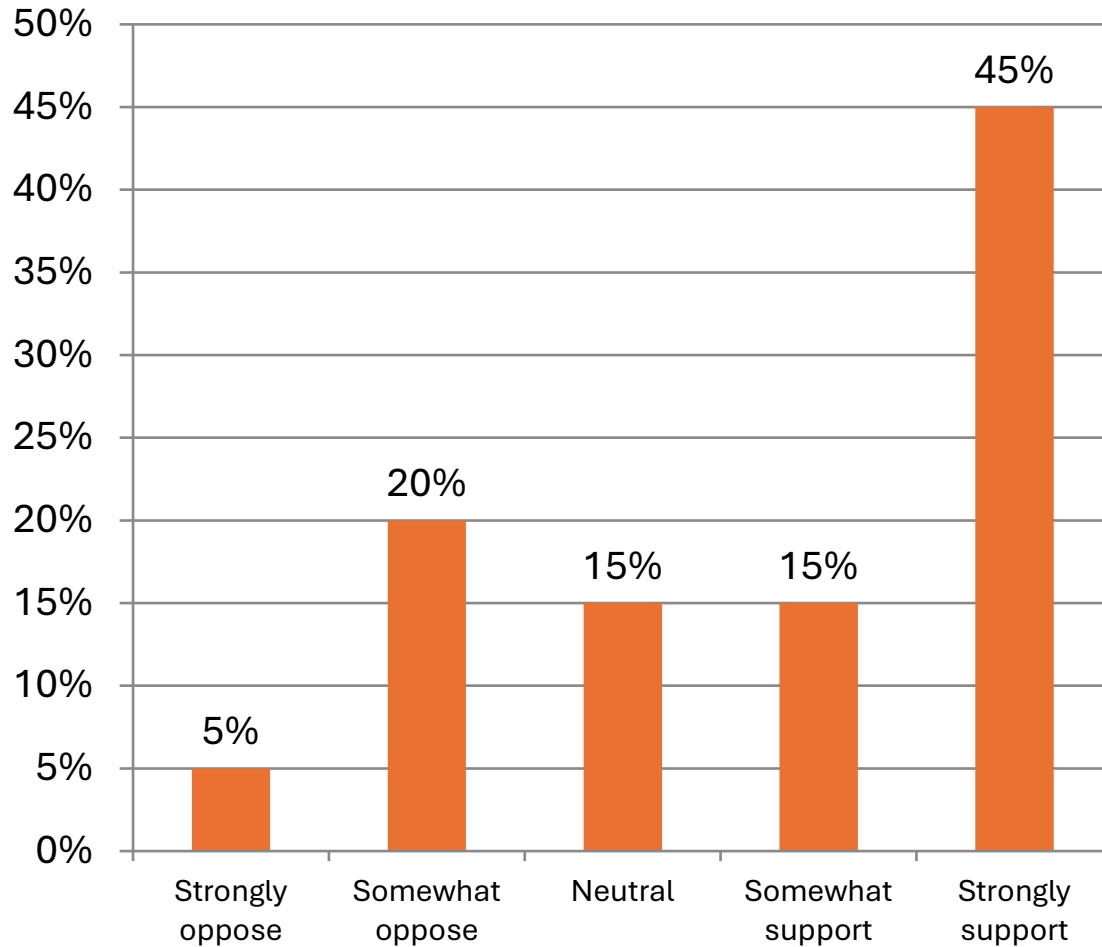
Q9: Should multi-year grant funding include a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to help organizations maintain service levels over time?



COLA Adjustment

85% of respondents somewhat/strongly support a COLA adjustment.

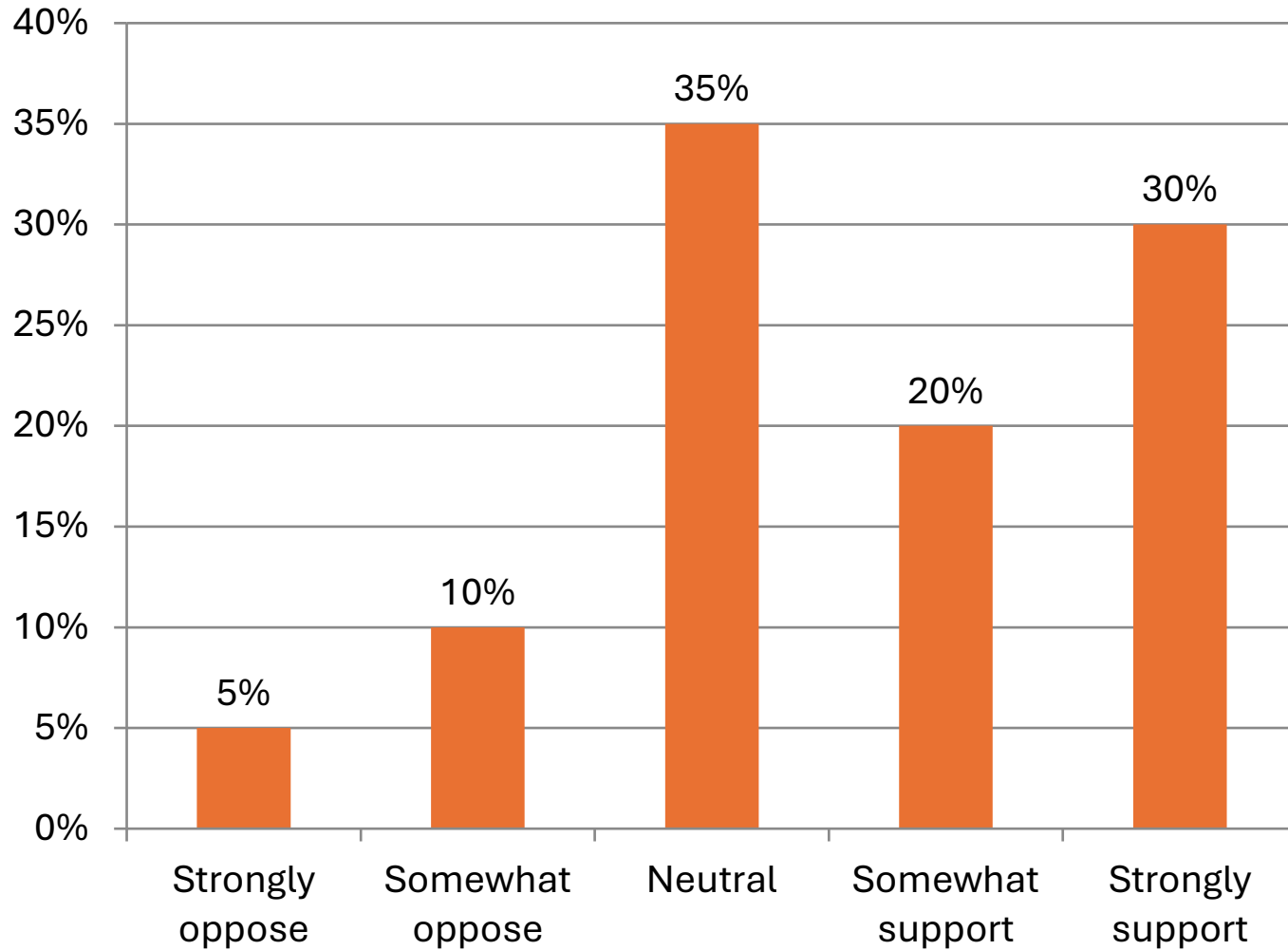
Q10: Would you support adding a mini grant process to complement existing funding opportunities?



Mini grants

60% of respondents indicated somewhat/strongly support adding mini grant process.

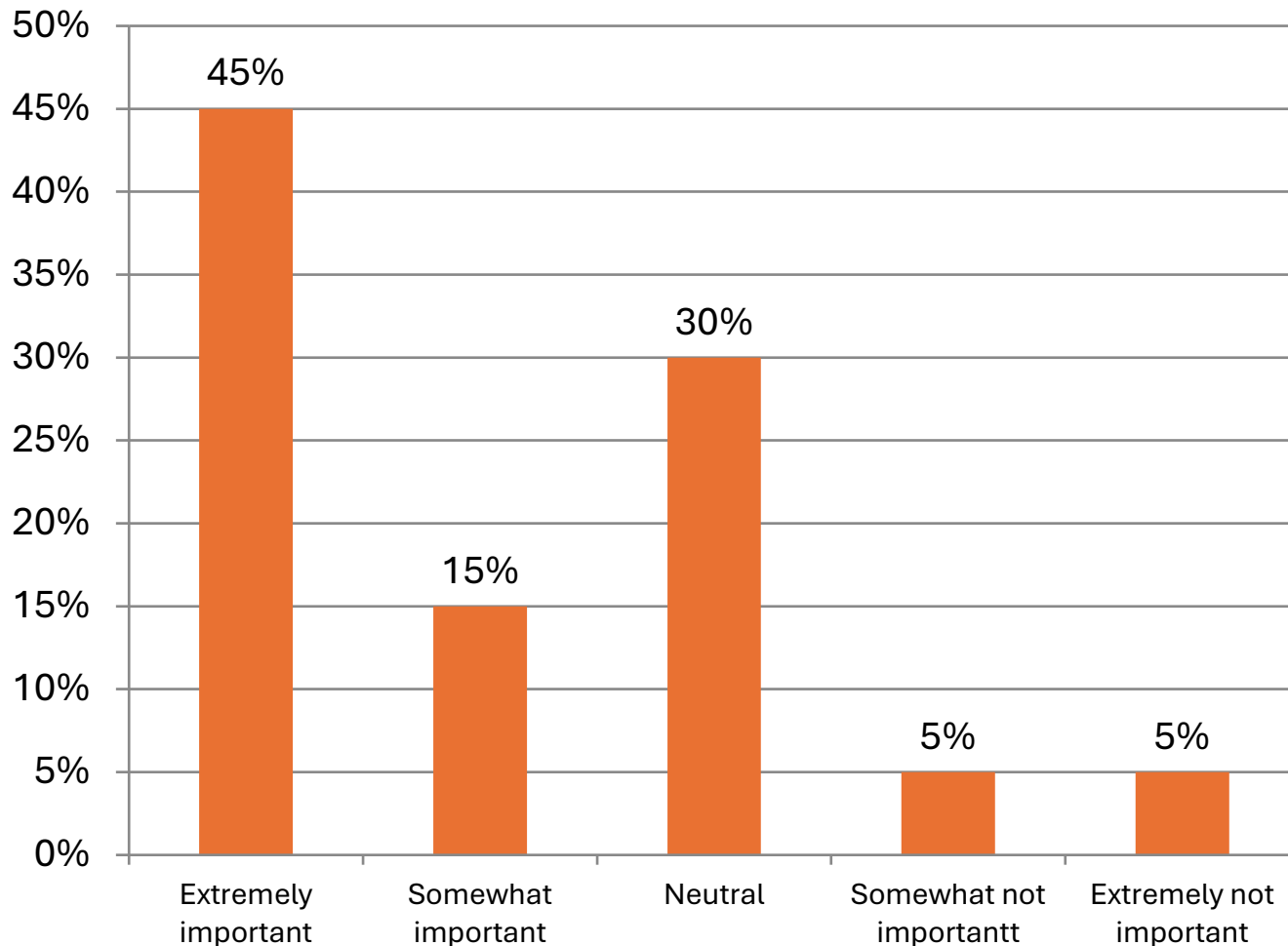
Q11: Would you support adding an incubator grants process to complement existing funding opportunities?



Incubator grants

50% of respondents indicated somewhat/strongly support adding incubators grant process.

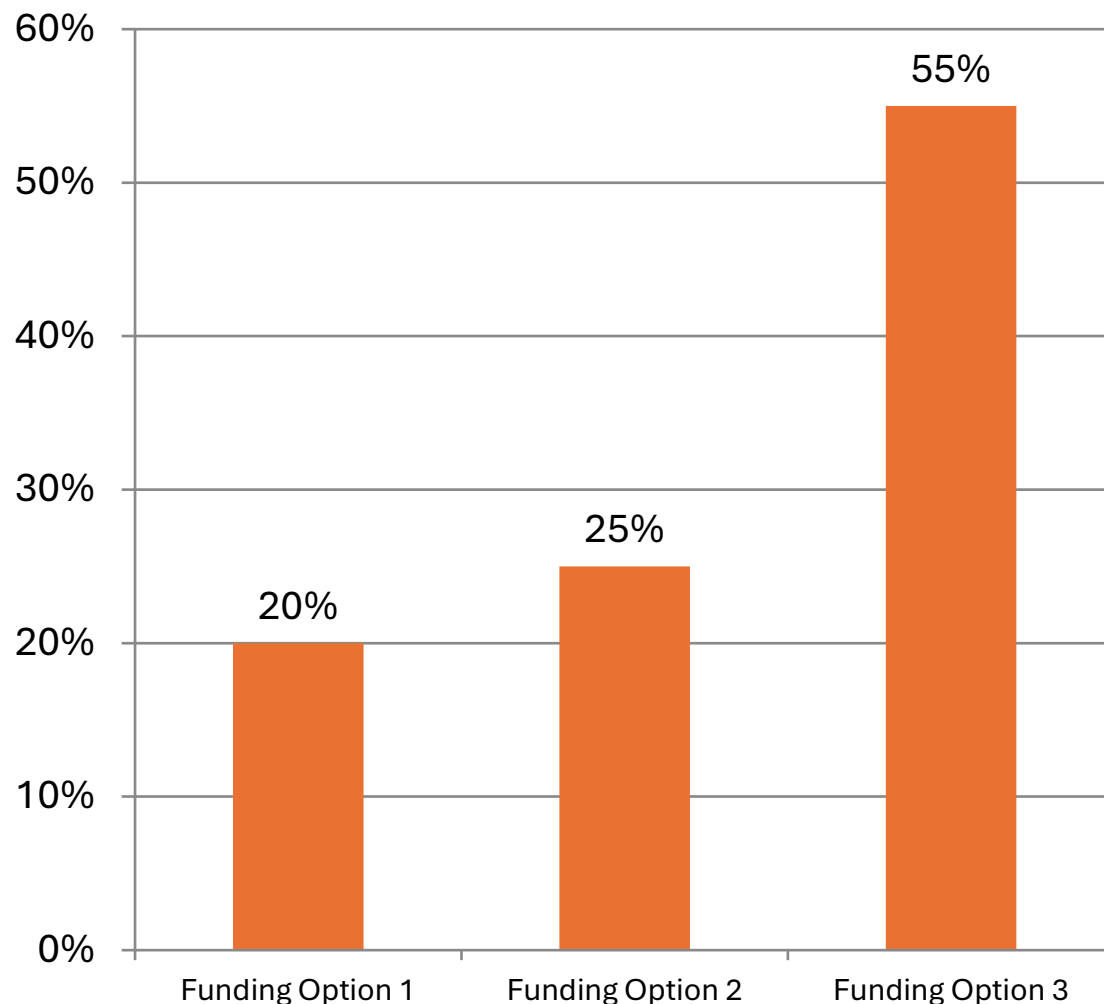
Q12: How important is it to have a simplified (abbreviated) application and reporting requirements for programs awarded mini or incubator grants?



Abbreviated application and reporting requirements

60% emphasize the importance of streamlining AFHS application and reporting processes for mini and incubator grants.

Q13: Of the three AFHS funding options presented, which option do you prefer?

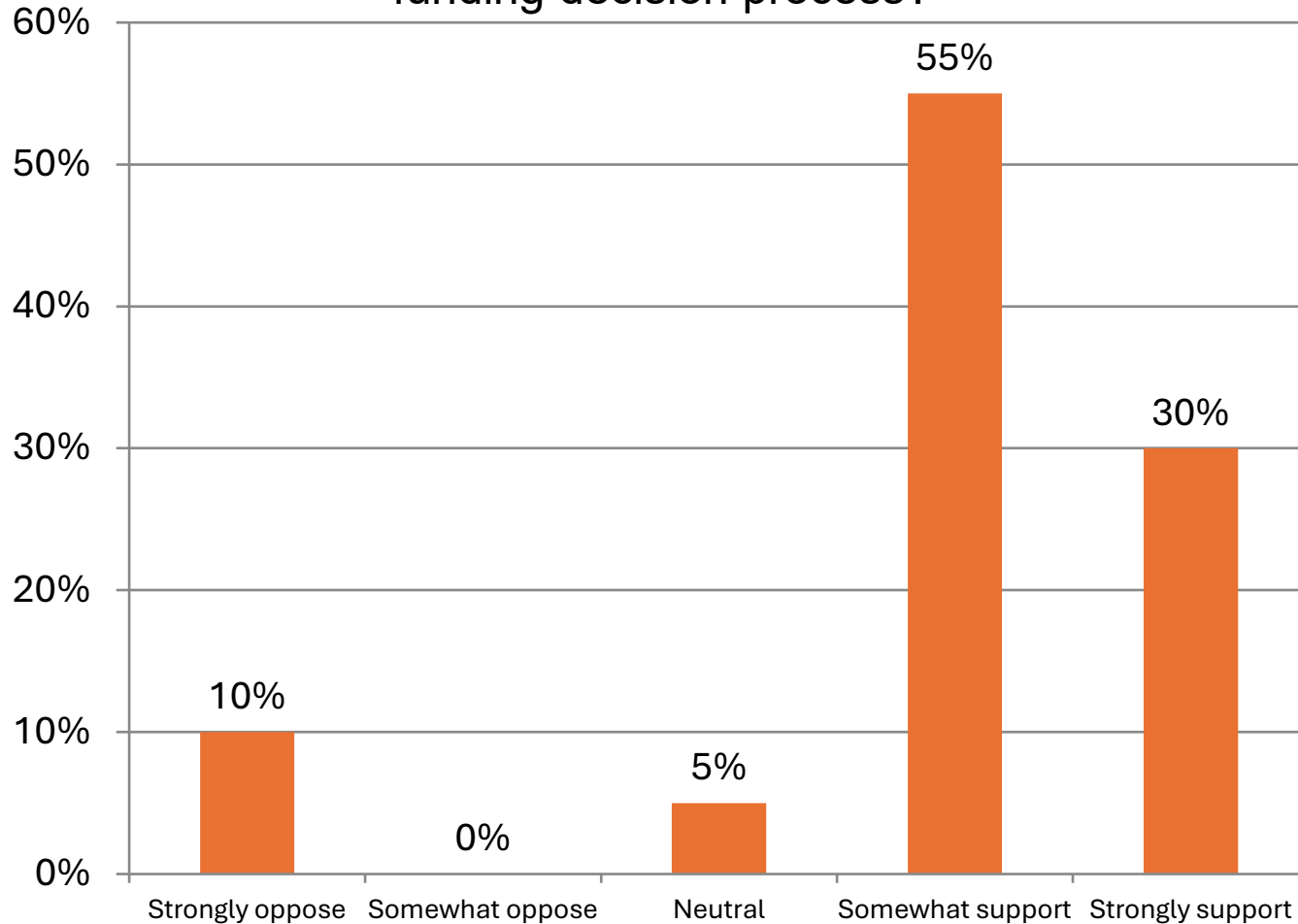


AFHS funding options

55% of respondents indicated a preference for Funding Option 3, which includes:

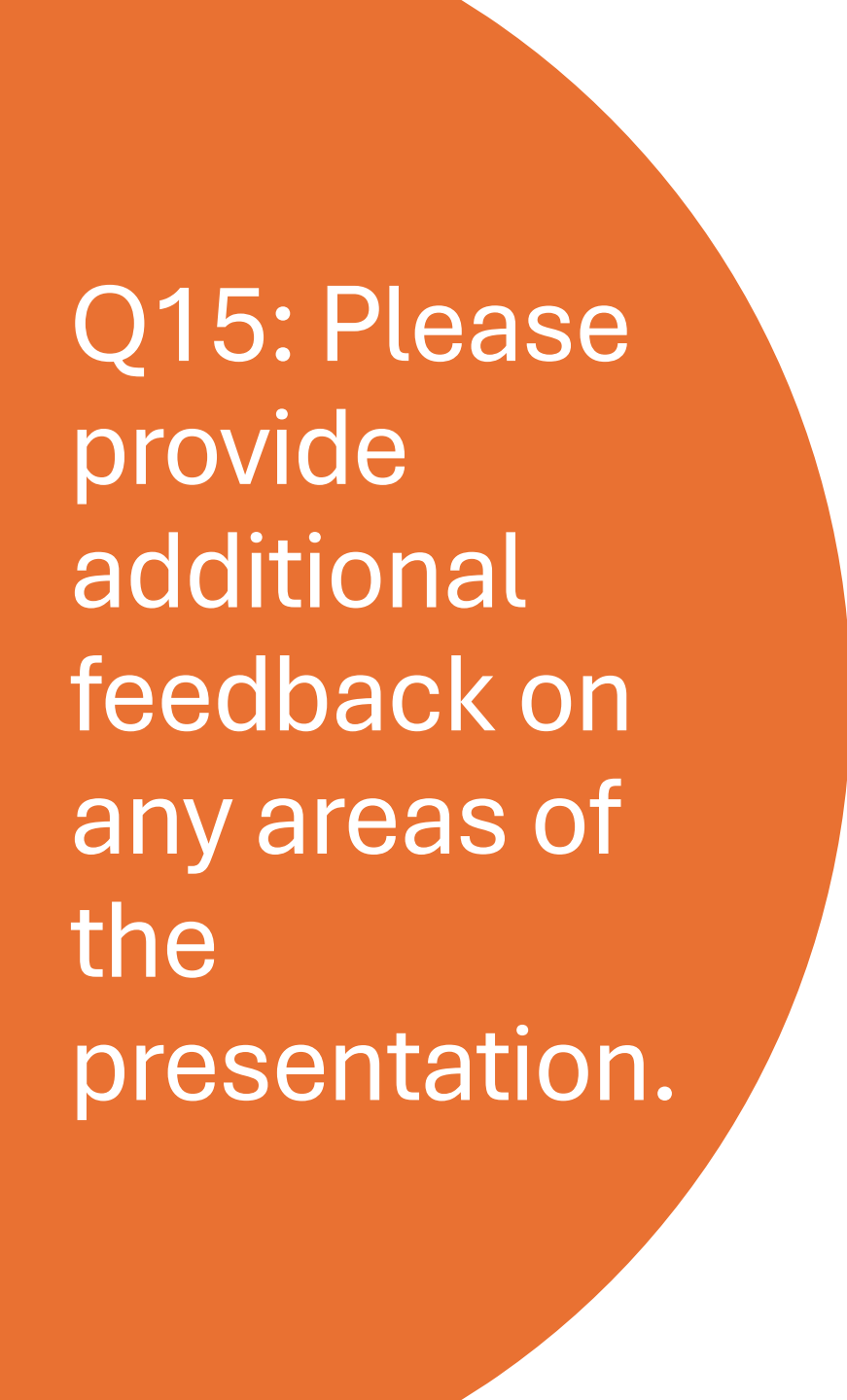
- Employ the AFHS competitive grant process primarily for stabilization and thriving services;
- Allocate a total of \$1,505,000 of the \$1,996,430 for competitive grant process;
 - \$1,375,000 for competitive grants.
 - \$130,000 to support mini/incubator grants.
- Allocate \$491,430 to procure services for persistent conditions related to survival.

Q14: Do you support using grant priorities focused on the five outlined areas to support stabilizing and thriving services as part of the funding decision process?




FY 27-29 Grant Priority Areas

85% of respondents support prioritizing funding based on the five key areas identified in the independent evaluation to stabilize and grow services.

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Q15: Please
provide
additional
feedback on
any areas of
the
presentation.

Question 15 of the survey invited participants to share additional comments and feedback about the presentation. Of those who completed the survey, 12 respondents provided written feedback. The next three slides highlight key themes that emerged from their responses.

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Q15: Please provide additional feedback on any areas of the presentation.

- **Funding Structure:**
While increasing the AFHS base amount, removing funding caps, and introducing mini and incubator grants offer flexibility, there is concern these approaches could dilute the overall impact on human services.
- **Grant Priorities:**
There is broad agreement with the five outlined grant priorities from the independent evaluation. *“However, we feel that working to provide students with a stable home environment is an important expected outcome that should be added to the “Thriving” category”.*
- **Funding Constraints:**
Given limited funds, priority should be given to stabilizing services.
- **Equity Concerns:**
Some respondents expressed concern that priority populations or smaller organizations might be overlooked if funding is restricted to programs that avoid duplicating services.

Q15: Please provide additional feedback on any areas of the presentation.

- **Procurement & Mini Grants:**
Utilize a procurement process to fund survival-related services. Implement mini grants through a simplified application process for both new and existing programs. Consider setting funding amounts between \$25,000 and \$75,000, with clear scoring criteria to guide selection and allocation decisions.
- **Funding Concerns:**
There is concern that the current AFHS funding levels are insufficient to fully support stabilization services, which may require additional funding sources outside the AFHS.
- **Grant Priorities:**
While the five grant priorities are generally accepted, some respondents noted overlap between these priorities and the outcomes focused on stabilizing and thriving services.
- **Funding Caps:**
Consideration of a \$50,000 funding cap has been raised to help manage allocations effectively.

Q15: Please provide additional feedback on any areas of the presentation.

- **Funding Priorities:**
AFHS should prioritize basic needs—such as food, medical care, and homelessness—where residents are most vulnerable. Funding cannot support every nonprofit equally.
- **Grant Amounts & Reporting:**
Defined grant amounts simplify the application and planning process for nonprofits. There are no major concerns about the application or biannual reporting requirements, which help ensure transparency and accountability to taxpayers.
- **Clear Framework Needed:**
Establishing clear definitions for survival, stability, and thriving categories is essential to guide committee prioritization.
- **Progress & Details:**
Staff efforts are moving in a positive direction, though attention to implementation details is critical.
- **Equity & Inclusion:**
Deaf and hard of hearing individuals should be explicitly recognized as a priority focus population.