



2025 Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot – Post Grant Survey

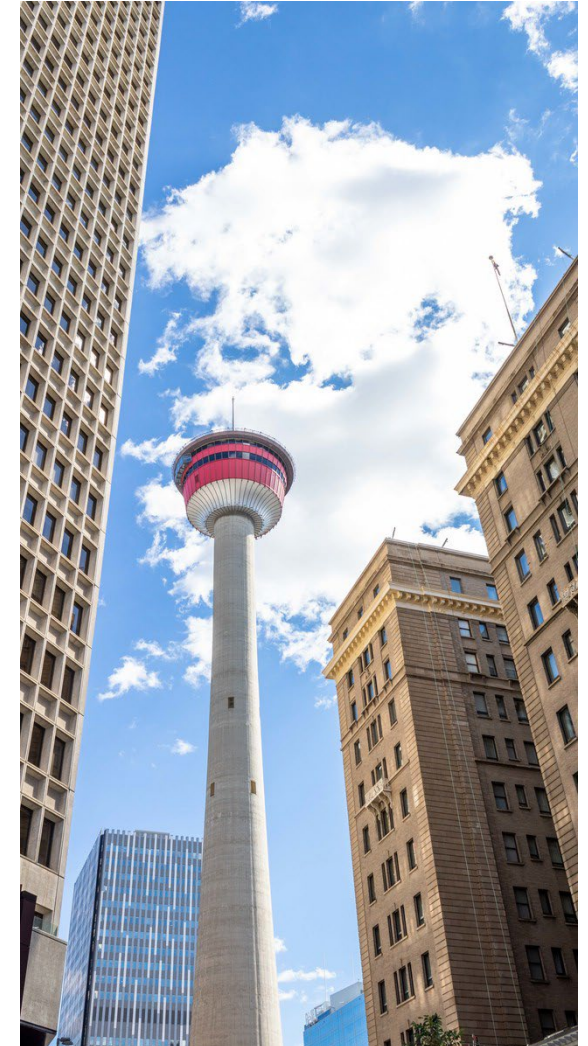
Final report

February 2025

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Background and methodology

Background

In 2024, at the direction of City Council, The City implemented a one-time Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot in Marda Loop and Bridgeland with the objectives of 1) helping businesses prepare for construction and 2) implementing strategies to encourage business patronage during construction. The Main Streets Business Support Grant was implemented as a pilot to evaluate its effectiveness in achieving these objectives. It should be noted that the grant is not compensation. To help evaluate the effectiveness of the grant pilot, a survey was completed with grant applicants and businesses in Marda Loop and Bridgeland.

Methodology

An online survey was distributed to businesses in Marda Loop and Bridgeland who applied for the Main Streets Business Supports Grant via two means. First a unique link was sent to all business who applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot. Second, an open link to the survey was posted on the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot website and was promoted to all businesses in Marda Loop and Bridgeland.

A total of 134 started the survey and 102 respondents completed the survey in full.

The average time to complete the online survey was 10 minutes.

Some charts and tables do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Please note: With relatively small sample sizes, findings should be interpreted as directional in nature only.

For sample sizes with 30 or fewer responses, findings are reported using number of responses rather than percentages.



Key findings

Key findings

The vast majority (89%) of survey respondents applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot.

- Of the small percentage who did not apply for the grant (11%), the most common reasons for not applying included:
 - They were not eligible due to their business licence type;
 - They did not know about the grant; or,
 - They were outside of the eligibility area.

Funds were most commonly used to offset business costs with two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents agreeing that the grant helped mitigate or offset the challenges of construction.

- Only one-third (34%) of survey respondents indicated that the grant helped them attract customers during construction.
- Many survey respondents were happy to receive some financial support from The City through the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot. While not the intent of the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot, it is important to note that many respondents commented throughout the survey that the funds provided were not enough to offset the losses their business experienced due to decreases in foot traffic and sales throughout the construction project. If a grant program like this is offered again, communication plans should be discussed to address the disconnect that has occurred between the intent The City had for the grant and how it was perceived and used by businesses.

The vast majority (91%) of survey respondents who applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot received the funds and found the application process easy (93%).

Key findings (continued)

Nine-in-ten (90%) found the payment process to be effective and that they received payment in a timely manner (93%).

- When asked if anything could be done to improve the payment process, a small minority (14%) of survey respondents commented on providing payment through direct deposit instead of mailing a cheque.

Three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents thought the eligibility criteria reached the businesses most impacted by construction with nearly all (96%) of those who applied indicated that they would apply for the grant again.

- Although survey respondents were appreciative of The City providing a grant to assist with their business operations, marketing and promotion during the Main Streets construction projects in Marda Loop and Bridgeland, there were numerous instances where respondents commented that the funds provided were not enough to offset lost revenue. Further, comments were made about the need to explore providing grant funds based on the size of the business, the potential impact construction could have on the business and the duration of construction activities in the area, not the same grant amount for each business.

One-half (51%) of survey respondents heard about the grant through their Business Improvement Area (BIA).

- The vast majority of survey respondents indicated that The City provided them with enough information about the grant (87%), informed them of the outcome of the grant (87%), provided enough information about the eligibility criteria (86%) and that it was easy to understand inclusion and exclusion criteria (86%).



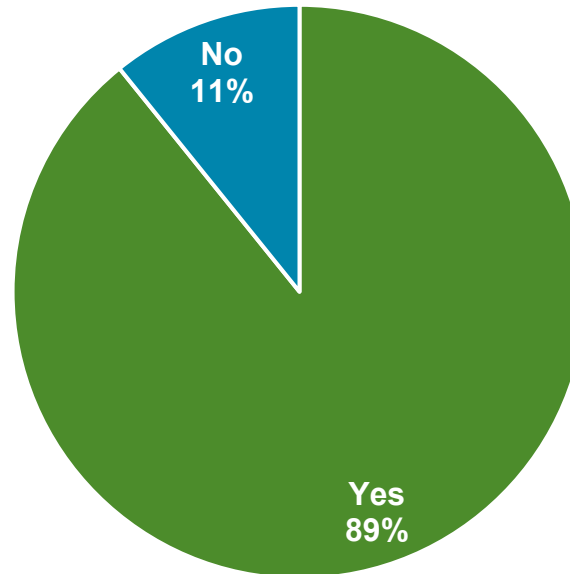
Detailed findings

Application experience

Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot application

Nine-in-ten (89%) survey respondents applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot.

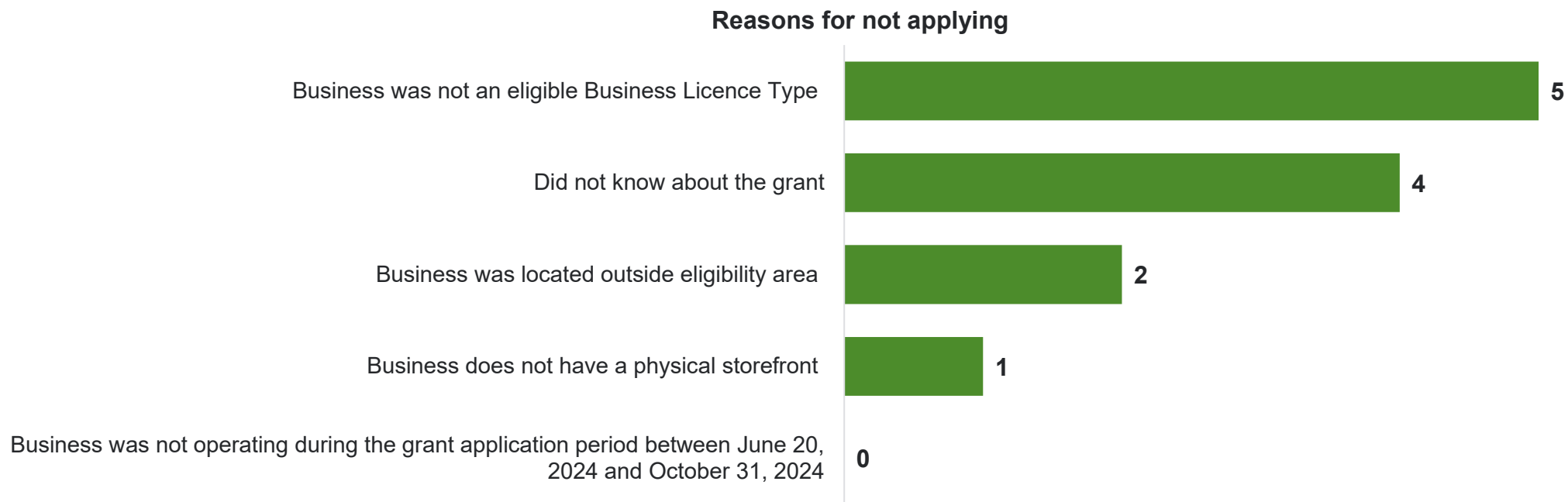
Applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot



Q. Did you apply for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot?
Base: Valid respondents (n=102)

Reasons for not applying for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot

The most common reason for businesses not applying to the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot was that the business was not eligible due to their type of business license with five out of eleven survey respondents selecting this option.



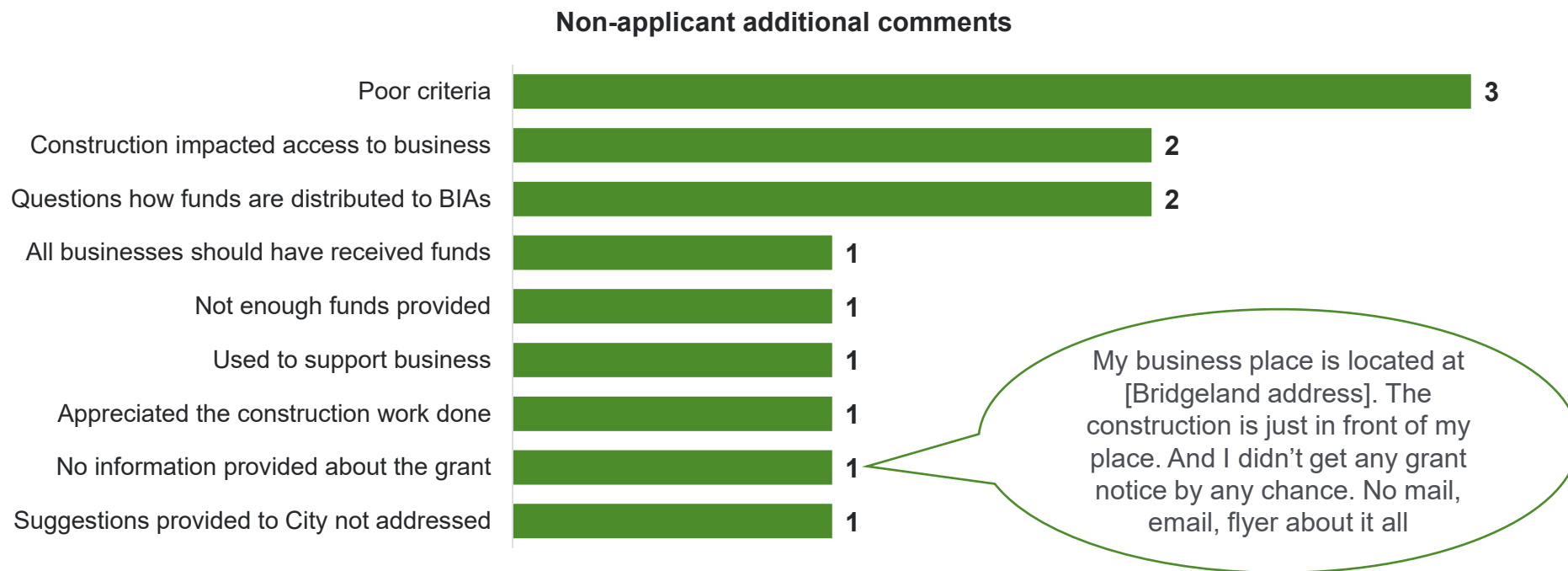
Q. If no, then what reason(s)? Select all that would apply:
Base: Those who did not apply for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=11)

Multiple responses allowed

Caution: Small sample size

Non-applicant feedback about the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot

For those businesses that did not apply for the grant, most common concern was that the grant criteria needed to be clearer.



Q. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to provide The City team about the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot?

Base: Those who did not apply for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=7)

Caution: Small sample size

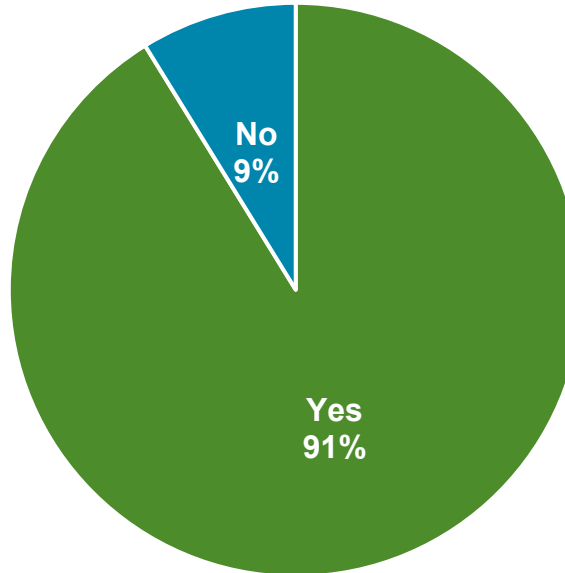
Open-ended question



Received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot

The vast majority (91%) of survey respondents who applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot received the one-time lump sum grant of \$5,000.

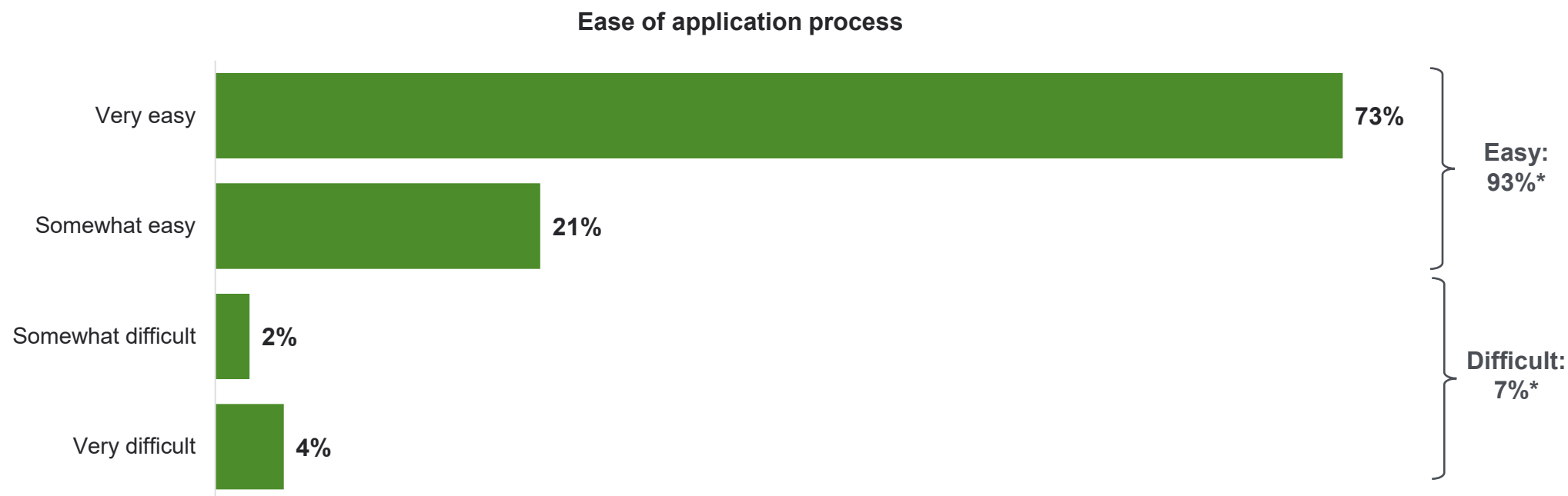
Did your business receive the grant?



Q. Did your business receive the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot, a one-time lump sum grant of \$5,000?
Base: Applied for Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=91)

Ease of application process

The vast majority (93%) of survey respondents indicated that the application process was easy.



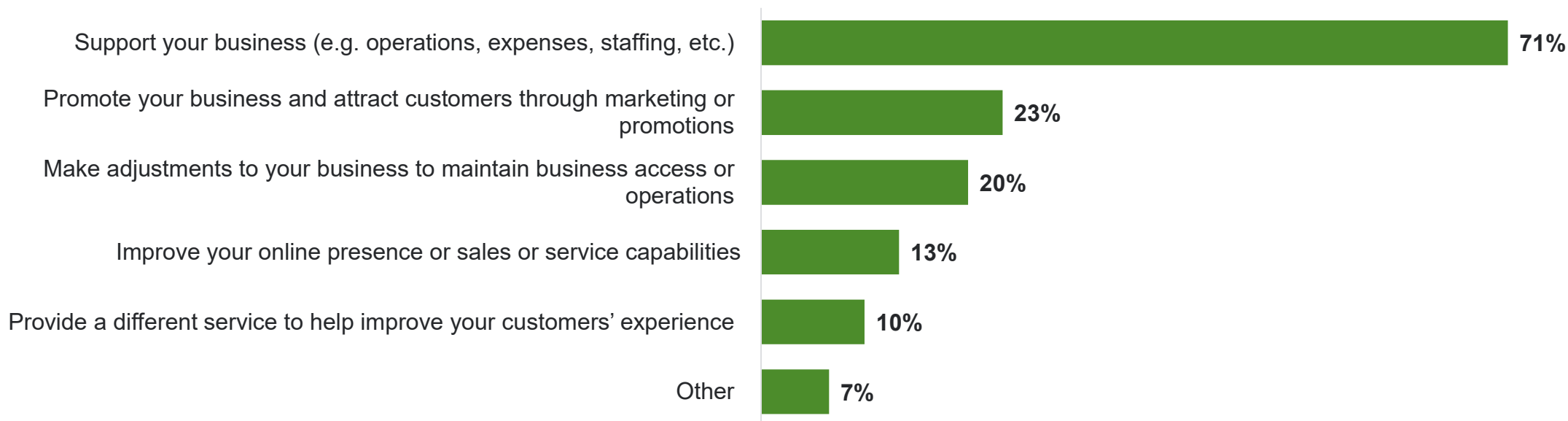
Q. How would you rate your experience applying for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot?
Base: Valid respondents (n=91)

*Rounding

Utilization of the one-time lump sum grant during construction

Seven-in-ten (71%) of survey respondents who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot used the funds to generally support their business. About one-quarter (23%) of successful applicants used the funds to promote their business and attract customers through marketing and promotion activities.

Utilization of the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot



Q. How did your business use the one-time lump sum grant of \$5,000 to support your business during construction?

Base: Those who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=83)

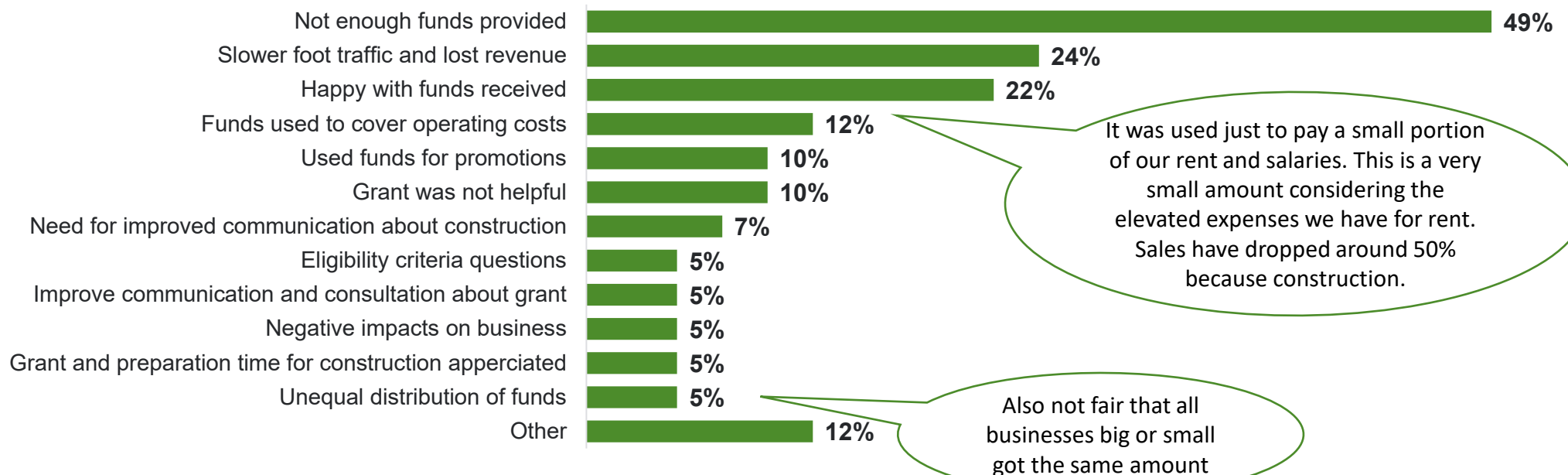
Multiple responses allowed

Additional insights on grant utilization

Around one-fifth of survey respondents indicated that they were happy with the funds and an additional one-in-ten noted that the funds were either used to cover operating costs (12%) or used for promotion (10%).

While not associated with grant utilization, survey respondents used available space to comment on the funds provided with about one-half (49%) of survey respondents stated that the funds that were provided as part of the grant were not enough. In addition, the space provided was also used to discuss the challenges experienced by businesses during construction with one-quarter (24%) of survey respondents commented that they experienced slower foot traffic near their business and lost revenues.

Additional comments on grant utilization



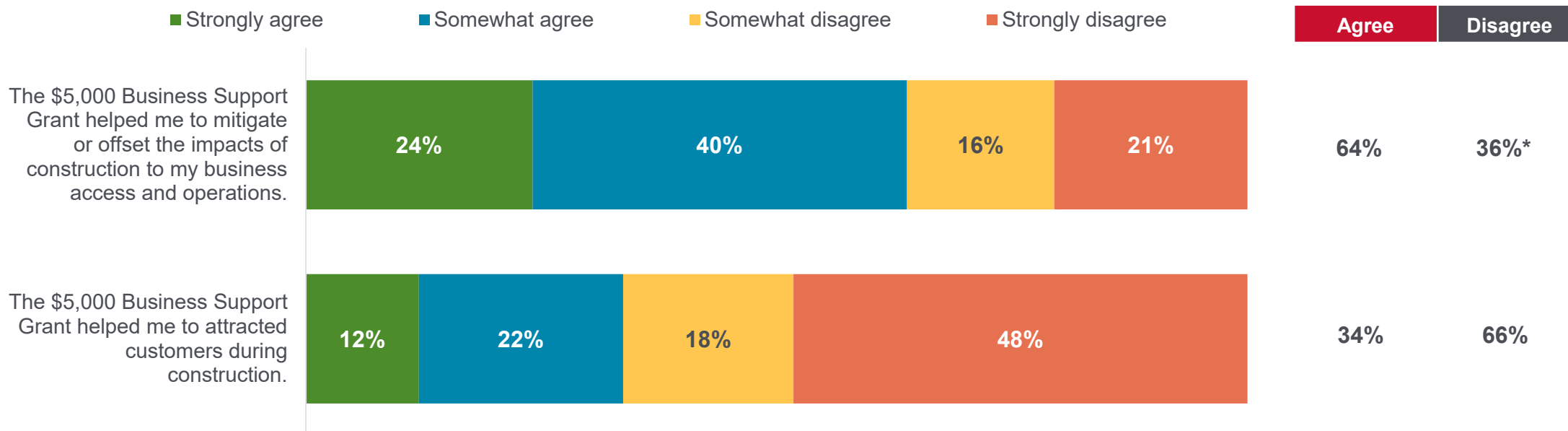
Q. Is there anything else you would like to share about how you used this support?
Base: Those who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=41)

Caution: Small sample size

Open-ended question

Impact of the Business Support Grant

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of business who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot agree that the grant funds helped them mitigate or offset the impact of construction on their business operations; however, two-thirds (66%) disagreed that the grant funds helped attract customers during construction.



Q. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
Base: Those who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=83)

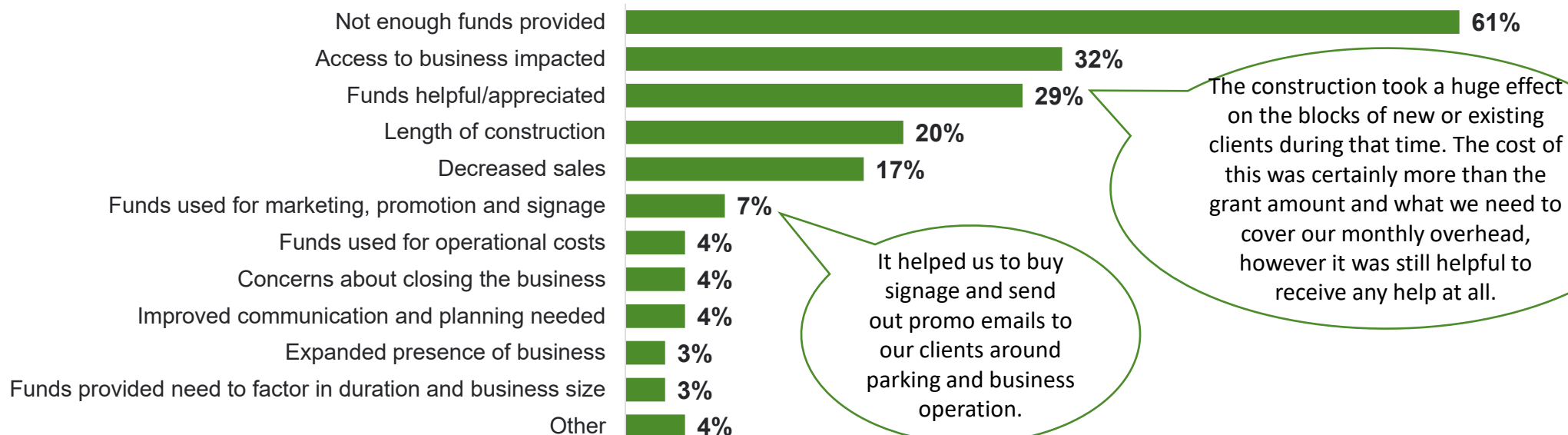
*Rounding

Additional insights on the support provided by the Main Streets Business Support Grant

Three-in-ten (29%) of survey respondents commented that the funds provided through the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot were helpful. While only 7% commented that the funds were to support marketing, promotion and signage, specifically.

Similar to other open ended questions, businesses used the space provided to add additional comments on the general challenges they experienced as a result of the construction. Three-fifths (61%) stated that the funds provided through the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot were not enough. Additionally, one-third (32%) commented that the access to their business was impacted due to construction resulting in road closures, sidewalk closures or decreased foot traffic.

Additional comments on how funds were used



Q. Please explain the extent you agree with the statements (the grant supported mitigating the impacts of construction).
Base: Those who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=69)

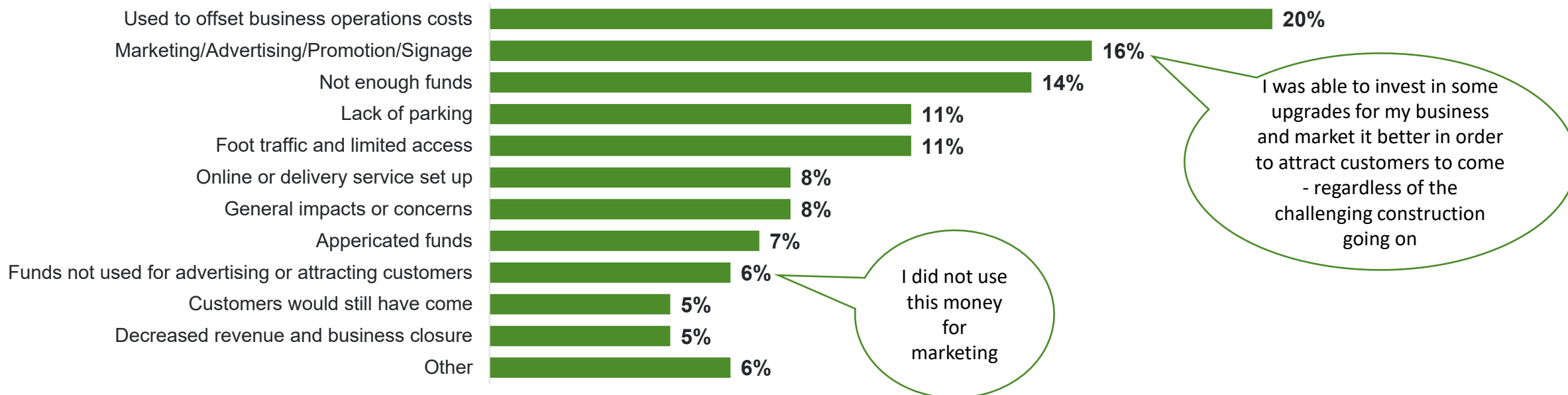
Caution: Small sample size

Open-ended question

Additional comments on funds used for attracting customers

While the intent of the grant was to provide funds to assist businesses in preparing for construction and increasing patronage during construction, one-fifth (20%) used the funds to offset operational costs. In contrast, fewer than one-fifth (16%) indicated that they used the funds on marketing, promotion, advertising and signage. Of note, a small minority (6%) openly stated that they did not use the funds for advertising or attracting customers.

Additional comments on how funds were used



Q. Please explain the extent you agree with the statement (the grant helped attracted customers during construction).

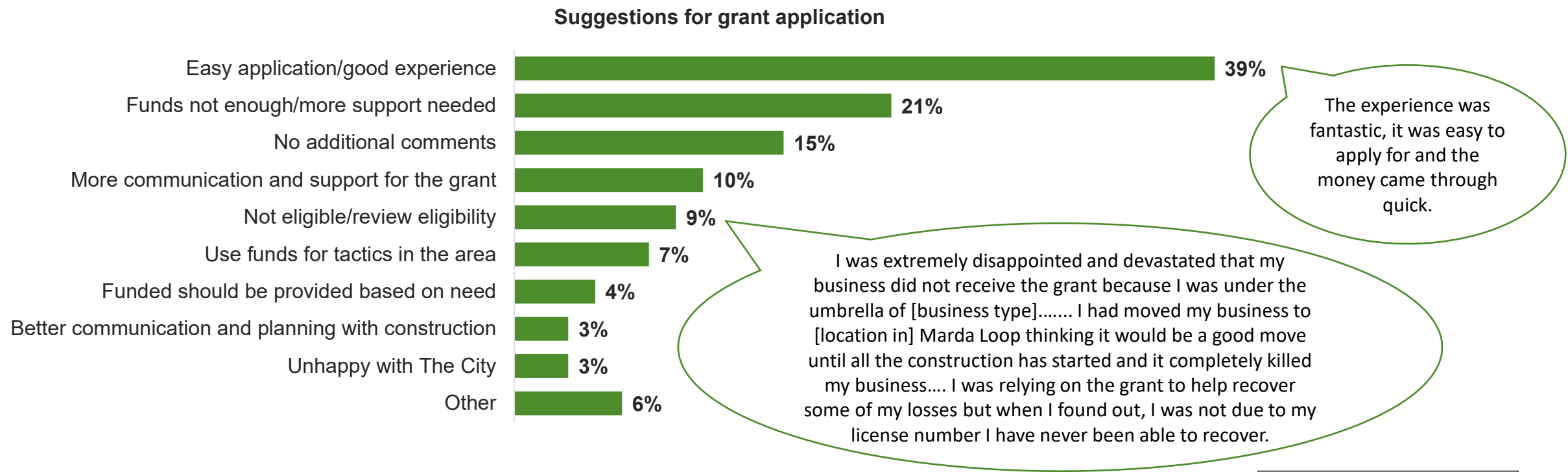
Base: Those who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot and provided comments (n=64)

Caution: Small sample size

Open-ended question

Suggested improvements to the application process

Two-fifths (39%) stated that the application process was easy and that they had a good experience applying. One-fifth (21%) indicated that the funds were not enough and more support was needed.



Q. What could have been done to improve your experience applying for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot?
 Base: Those who provided comments (n=67)

Caution: Small sample size

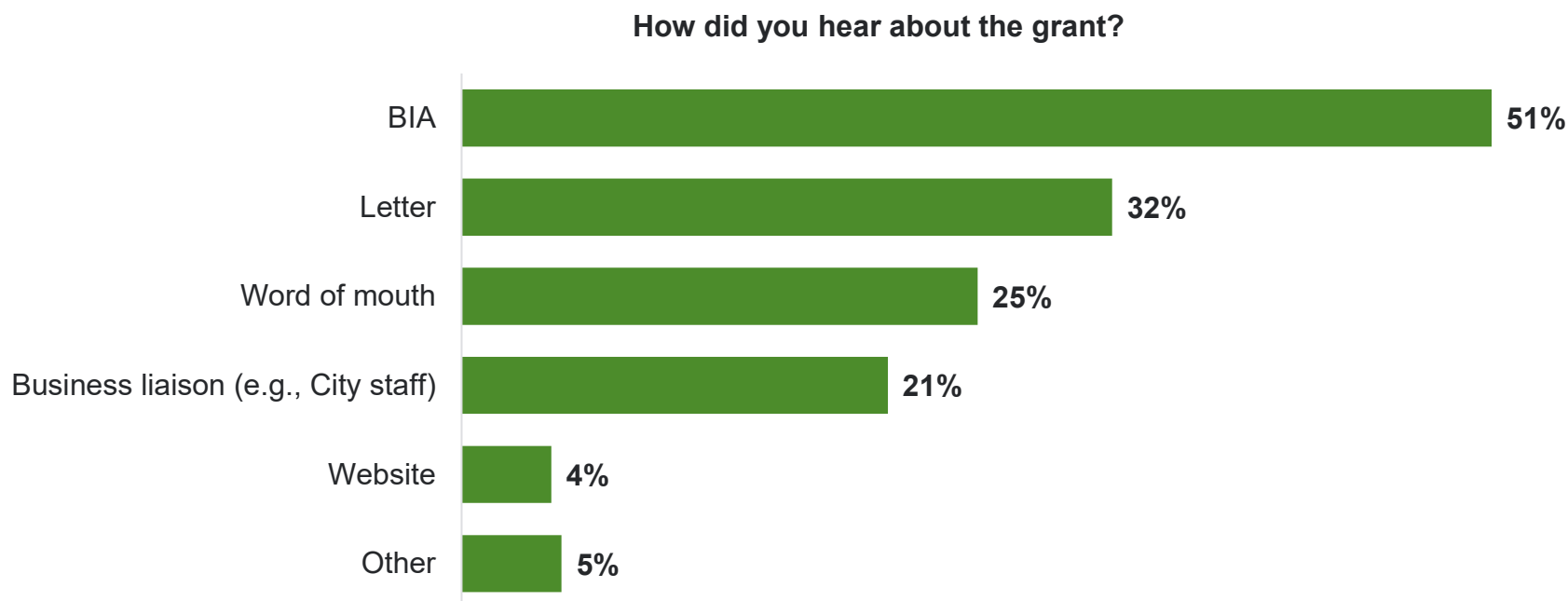
Open-ended question



Communications

Source of awareness about the grant

One-half (51%) of respondents heard about the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot from the Business Improvement Area (BIA), while one-third (32%) heard about the grant funds through a letter.



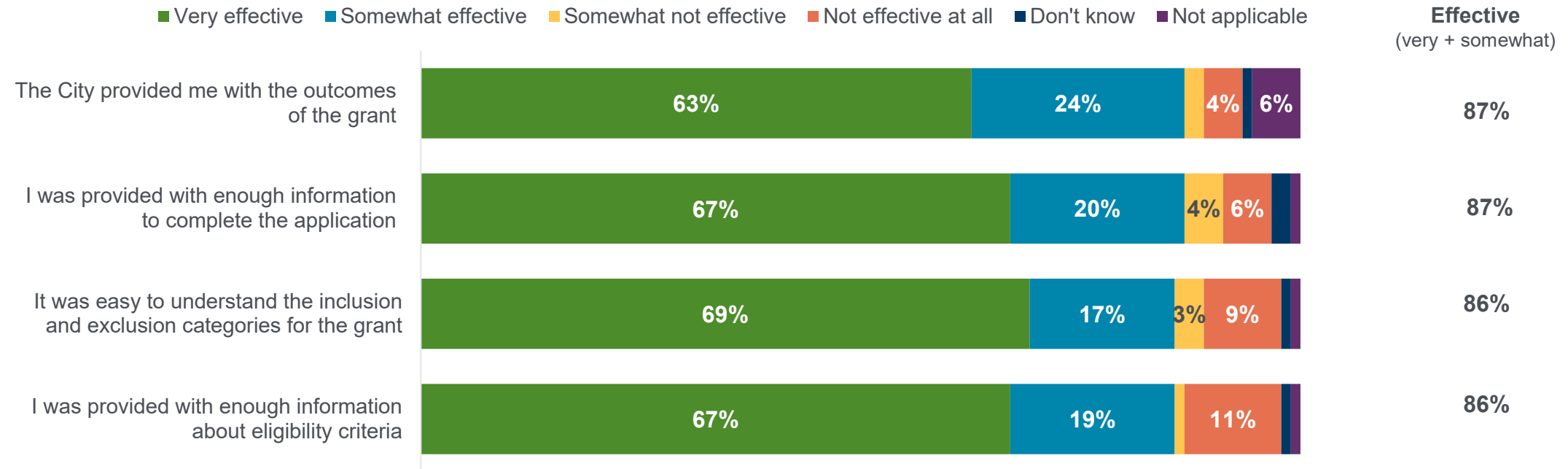
Q. How did you hear about the grant?

Base: Applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=91)

Multiple responses allowed

Effectiveness of communication about the grant

The vast majority (87%) of survey respondents indicated that The City provided them with the outcomes of their grant application and that they were provided with enough information to complete the application.



Q. How effective would you rate the communication you received about the following elements of the grant?

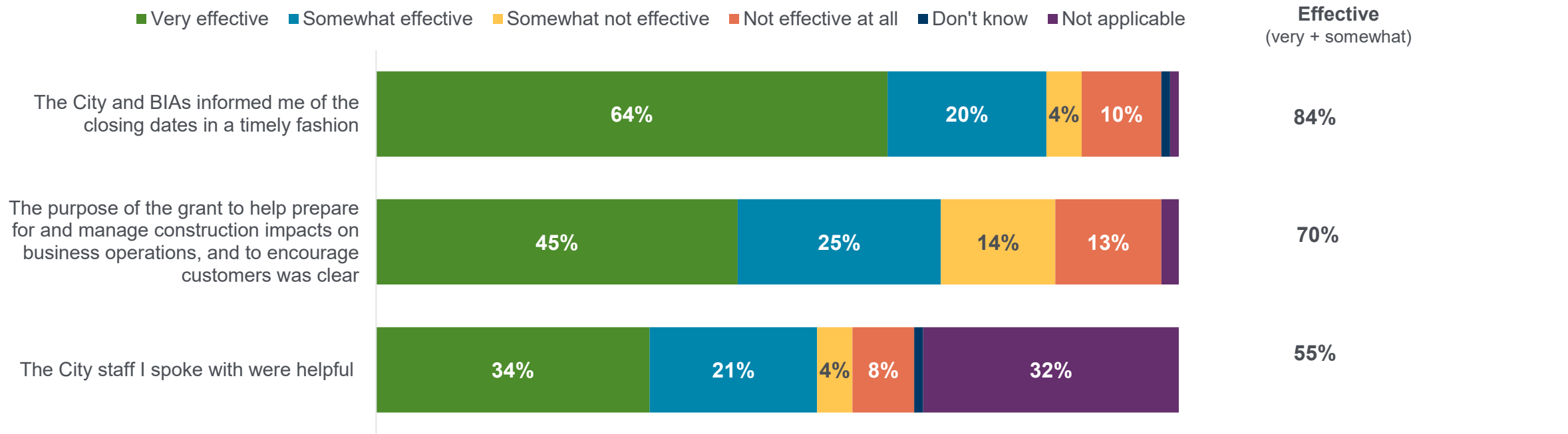
Base: Applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=91)

Data labels <3% not shown

Effectiveness of communication about the grant

(continued)

Around one-half (55%) of survey respondents indicated that The City staff they spoke with were helpful; however, one-third (32%) of survey respondents indicated that this statement was not applicable which may mean that they did not speak to City staff specifically about the application.



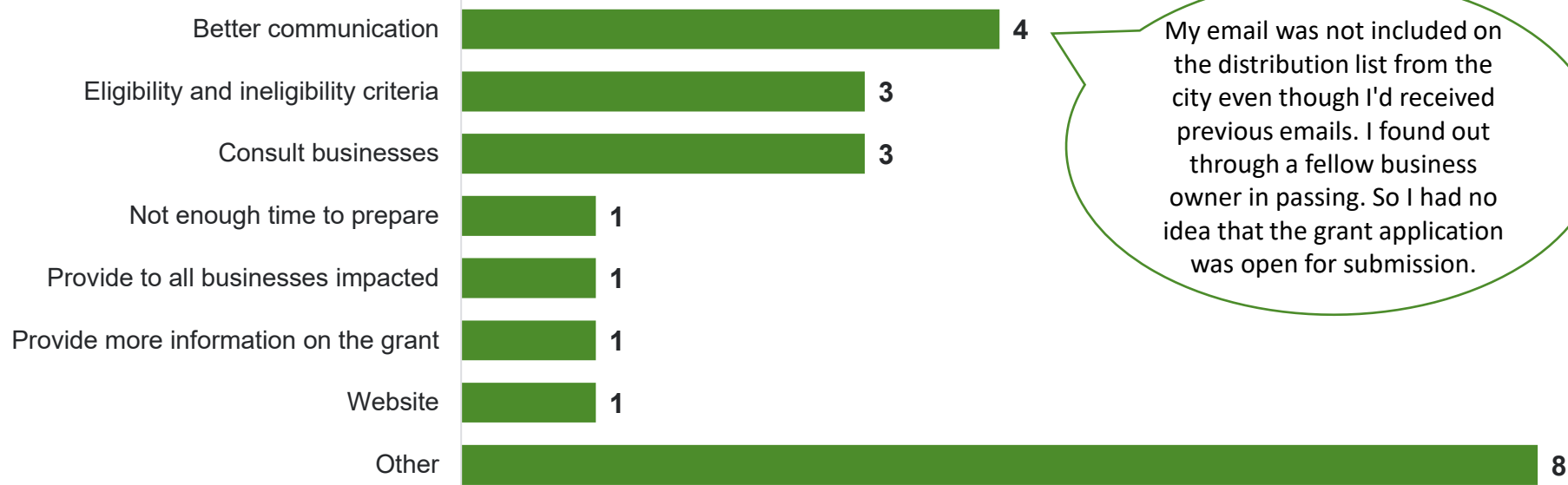
Q. How effective would you rate the communication you received about the following elements of the grant?
Base: Applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=91)

Data labels <3% not shown

Suggestions for improving grant communication

When additional feedback was provided by survey respondents, better communication was noted as an important step to improve communication about the grant. In addition, a handful of survey respondents indicated that businesses should be consulted about the grant beforehand.

Additional comments on grant communication



Q. Is there any way to improve the communication about the grant?
Base: Those who answered not effective to any response (n=22)

Caution: Small sample size

Open-ended question



Payment process

Effectiveness of grant payment process

The vast majority (90%) of survey respondents indicated that the payment process was effective.



Q. How effective was the grant payment process?

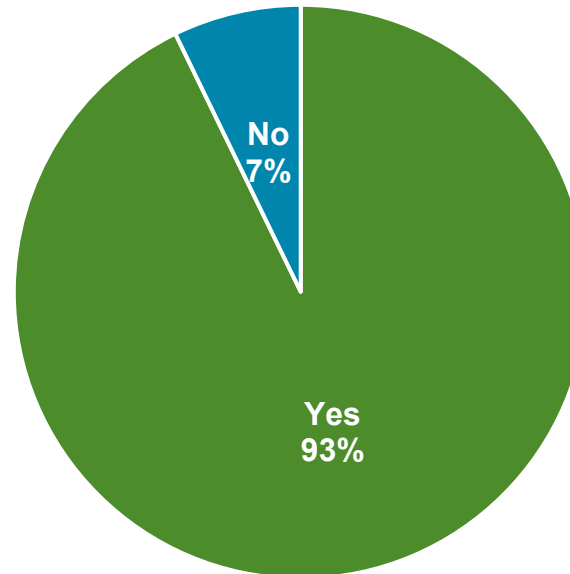
Base: Those who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=83)

*Rounding

Timeliness of grant payment

More than nine-in-ten (93%) indicated that they received their payment in a timely fashion.

Timeliness of grant payment



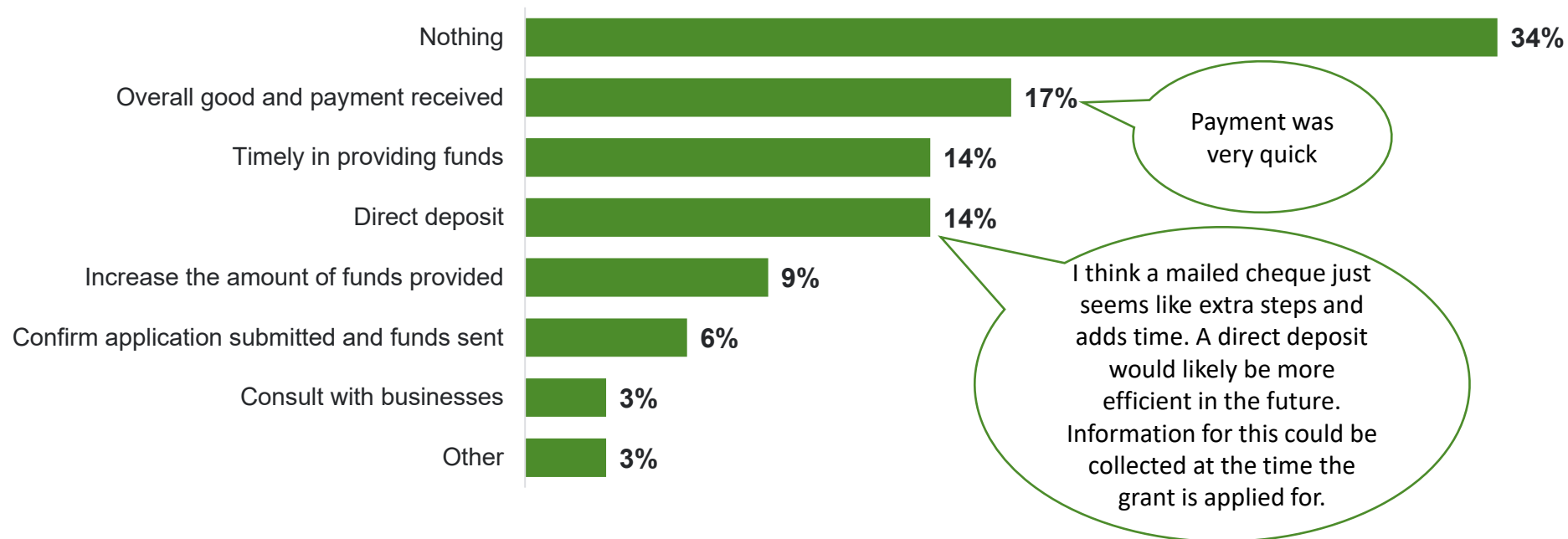
Q. Did you receive your payment in a timely fashion?

Base: Those who received the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=83)

Suggestions for improving payment process

One-third (34%) of respondents did not have anything additional to say about the payment process. When comments were made about two-in-ten (17%) commented on the process being good and receiving funds. A small minority (14%) commented that direct deposit would be a good improvement as some survey respondents were delayed in receiving their funds due to the Canada Post strike.

Additional comments on payment process



Q. What, if anything, could be done to improve the payment process?
Base: Those who answered not effective to any response (n=35)

Caution: Small sample size

Open-ended question



Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility requirements*

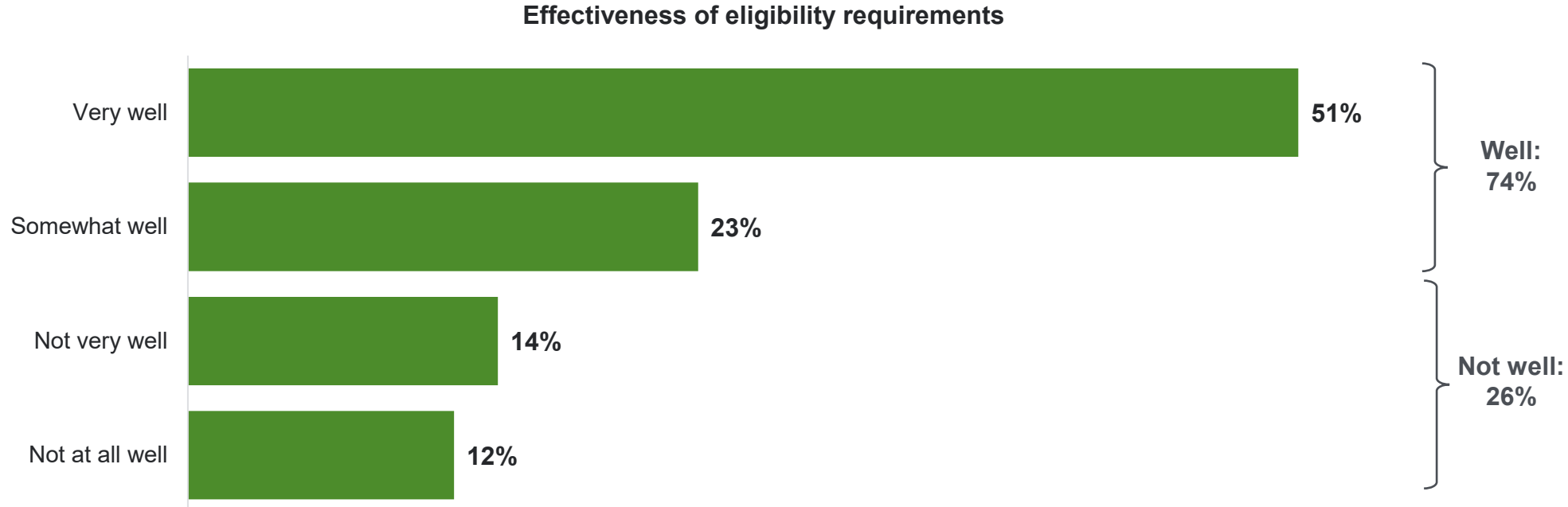
To be eligible for the Main Streets Business Support Grant pilot, businesses must have met all of the following criteria:

- Provide in-person retail sales, product rentals or consumer services, which require customers to travel to the site of business to complete the business transaction.
- Operate with a physical storefront location (both main floor entrances and upper floor businesses) within one city block of 2024 planned construction activities for Marda Loop and/or Bridgeland Main Streets projects.
- Be licenced by The City of Calgary and possess one or more of the Licence Types identified for the pilot.
- Be operational at any point during the grant application period between June 20, 2024, and October 31, 2024.

*The eligibility requirements of the support grant were shown to survey respondents before the following questions were raised.

Effectiveness of eligibility criteria in reaching impacted businesses

Three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents thought the eligibility criteria reached businesses most impacted by construction.



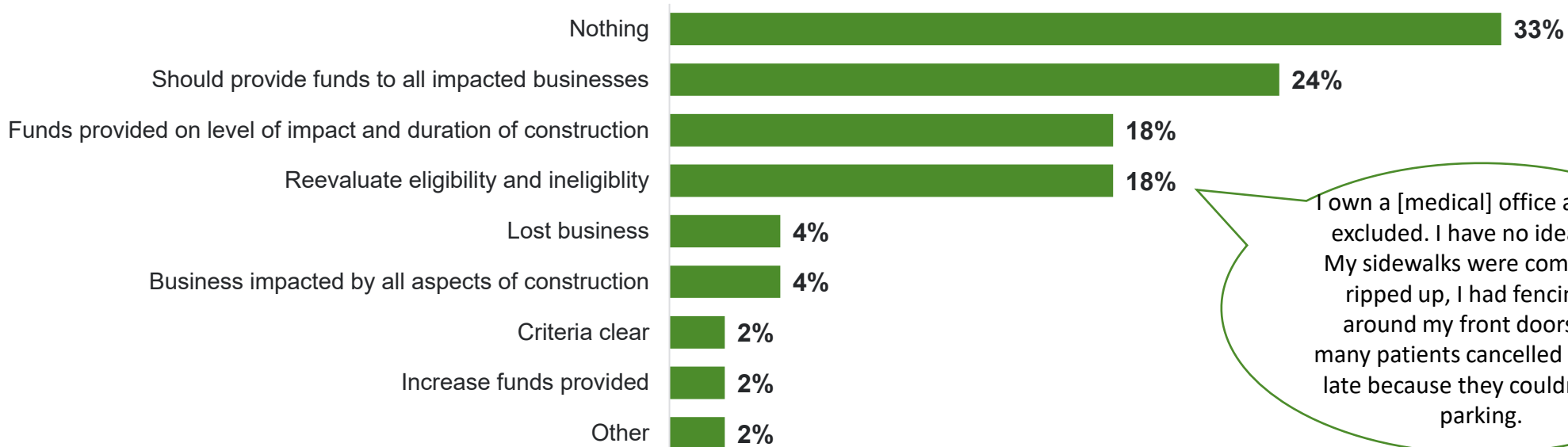
Q. How well do you feel the eligibility criteria reached the businesses most impacted by construction?

Base: Valid respondents (n=99)

Suggestions for refining eligibility criteria

One-third (33%) of survey respondents indicated that they had nothing else to add regarding the eligibility criteria. One-quarter (24%) commented that all businesses that were impacted by construction should have been provided the grant funds and one-fifth (18%) indicated that grant funds should be provided based on impact and duration of construction.

Suggestions on eligibility criteria



I own a [medical] office and was excluded. I have no idea why. My sidewalks were completely ripped up, I had fencing all around my front doors and many patients cancelled or were late because they couldn't find parking.

Q. What could be done to refine the eligibility criteria to support businesses most impacted by construction?
Base: Valid respondents (n=45)

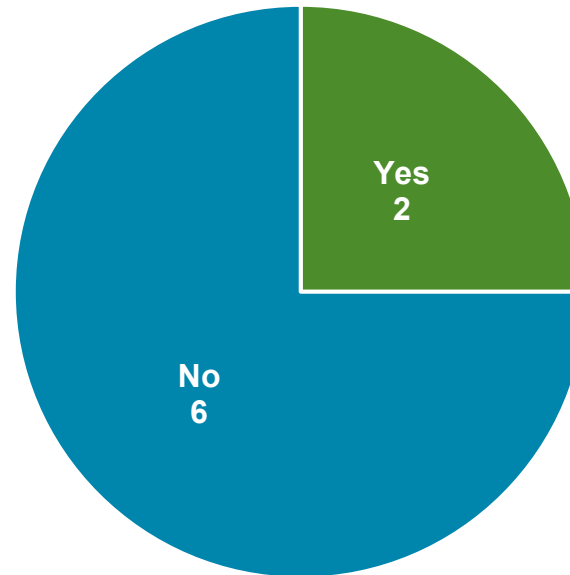
Caution: Small sample size

Open-ended question

Understanding reasons for ineligibility

Six of the eight survey respondents who did not receive the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot did not understand why they were not eligible for the funds.

Understanding reasons for ineligibility

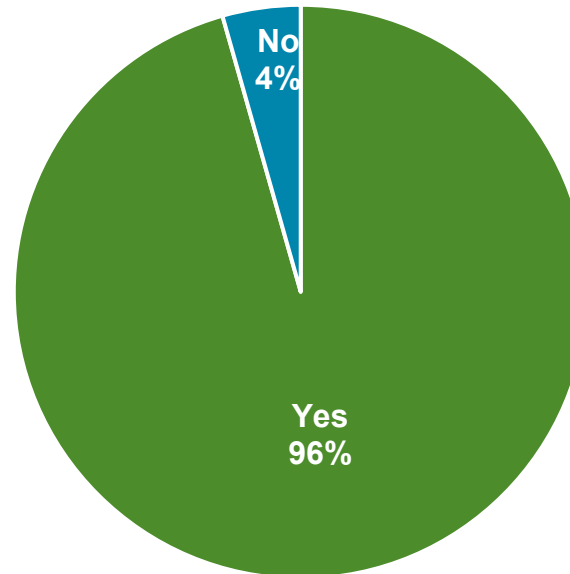


Q. Did you understand why you were not eligible?
Base: (n=8)

Likelihood of reapplying for The Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot

Nearly all (96%) of survey respondents would apply for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot again.

Likelihood of applying for grant again



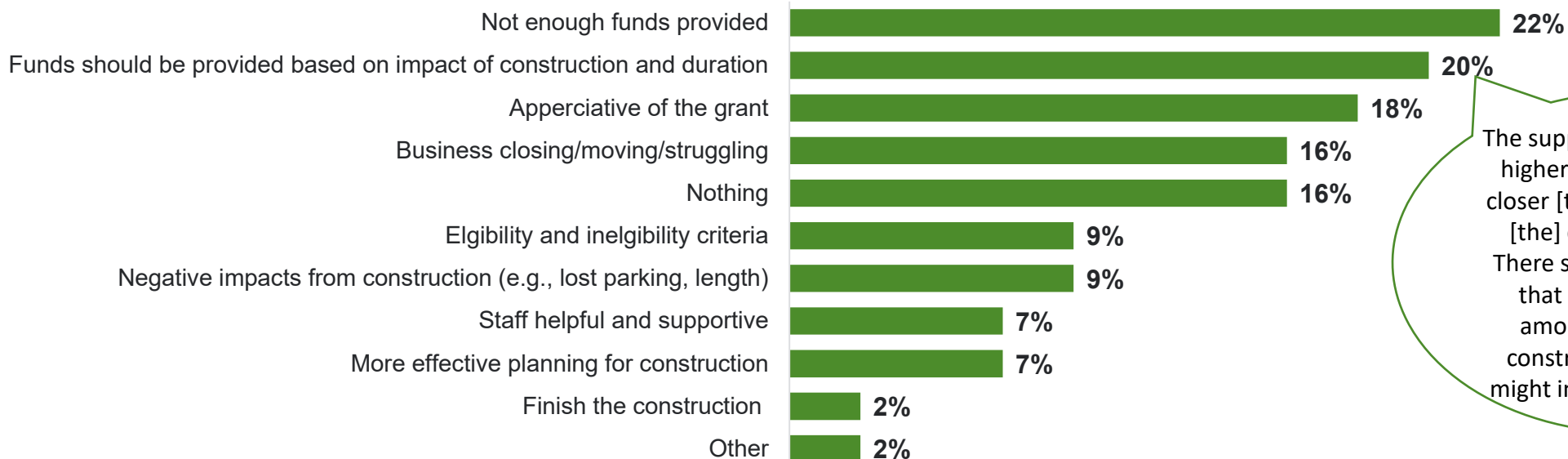
Q. Would you apply for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot or something similar again?

Base: Applied for the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot (n=91)

Additional feedback on the Main Streets Business Support Grant

Two-in-ten survey respondents commented that not enough funds were provided (22%) and that funds that are provided from the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot should be based on the impact construction is having on the business and the duration of construction (20%).

Additional comments on the grant



The support grant should be higher if the [business is] closer [to construction] and [the] disruption is long. There should be a formula that can calculate the amount of months of construction and how it might impact the business.

Q. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to provide The City team about the Main Streets Business Support Grant Pilot?
Base: Valid respondents (n=45)

Caution: Small sample size

Open-ended question



Business respondent firmographics



Firmographics

Industry of business	
Hospitality	19%
Retail	28%
Personal service	29%
Health services	6%
Professional and consultant services	7%
Animal care services	2%
Education, art, music services	4%
Automotive services	0%
Other	5%

Number of employees	
1-5	48%
6-10	22%
11-25	14%
26-50	10%
51-100	3%
101-150	1%
151-200	0%
201-499	0%
500-999	0%
1000 or more	0%
Don't know	1%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Years in operation	
Less than 1	3%
1-2	12%
3-5	21%
6-10	23%
11-20	20%
More than 20	21%
Don't know	0%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Base: All respondents (n=102)

Firmographics (continued)

Location in a business improvement area	
17 th Ave Retail and Entertainment District	0%
4 th Street South West BIA	0%
Beltline BIA	0%
Bridgeland BIA	52%
Calgary Downtown Association	0%
Chinatown BIA	0%
Crescent Heights Village BIA	0%
Greenview Industrial BIA	0%
Inglewood BIA	0%
International Ave BRZ	0%
Kensington BRZ	0%
Mainstreets Bowness BIA	0%
Marda Loop BIA	46%
Montgomery BIA	0%
Victoria BIA	0%
My business is not located in a BIA.	3%

Base: All respondents (n=33)



Contact

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