

# ACRP 01-32, Update Report 16: Guidebook for Managing Small Airports Industry Survey

## Goal of Industry Survey

While there are common challenges among small airports, each airport is unique, as are their geographical locations. The goal of the industry outreach for ACRP 01-32 was to identify common gaps in small airport management practices for which guidance is desired and any unique geographical needs. It was also designed to gather information on the current use of ACRP Report 16, along with suggested improvements. Also, more detailed information was gathered within each of the four small airport management function areas of the guidebook: business, operations, asset management and communications, as well as commercial service. To assist in writing the guidebook, survey data was gathered on the demographic profile of small airport managers in order to create updates to guidance that correspond with the typical level of professional and educational backgrounds.

## Identification of Survey Candidates

Small airports generally work most closely with their state agencies, especially in states with the FAA State Block Grant program or, in state's that own and operate small airports. Through coordination with the office representing aviation in each state, a list of at least five but no more than 10 airports representing the cross section of small airports in each state anticipated to be willing to participate in a survey was requested. In recommending airports, the state agencies were asked to consider airports that have good management practices in place, as well as those that may be able to identify guidance needs. After repeated outreach, 40 states identified survey candidate airports. Geographically, the airports represented all of the regions of the continental U.S., with the exception of Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. territories. Despite repeated outreach attempts, Alaska and Hawaii were not responsive, and the U.S. territories were not planned to be included in those surveyed. Ultimately, each state that responded provided as few as three and as many as 20 candidates for the survey.

By working with state agencies to identify small airport managers representative of the small airports in their states, it was recognized that the survey response rate would not exactly mirror the breakout of small airports in the United States. However, it did provide a good indication of the types of airport managers who are interested in the project and products.

## Industry Survey

The small airport manager industry outreach survey was sent to 322 airport managers representing 331 facilities. The sample group represented a broad National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) classification cross section, including:

- 39 basic airports
- 148 local airports
- 93 regional airports
- 12 national airports
- 21 non-hub primary airports

- 12 non-NPIAS airports
- Five unclassified airports
- One primary small hub airport

While no commercial service airports were recommended as candidates by state agencies for the industry survey, eight of the non-hub primary airports included in the survey had fewer than 20,000 annual enplanements, which is at the small end of non-hub primary airports, because the lower limit for a primary airport is 10,000 enplanements. Only three of these non-primary airports had more than 100,000 enplanements. One airport that fell within the small hub category was identified as a candidate. The small hub airport was sent a survey, but did not respond.

An electronic survey was sent to the identified airports. The survey was designed to take 15 to 20 minutes to complete. It consisted of 35 multiple-choice, ranking and open-ended questions, allowing the responders to provide as much detail or insight as desired.

During the 30-day survey period, 114 small airport managers responded to the survey for a 35 percent response rate. The respondent sample group exhibited the general demographic and geographical characteristics of the surveyed sample group, described further in the following section.

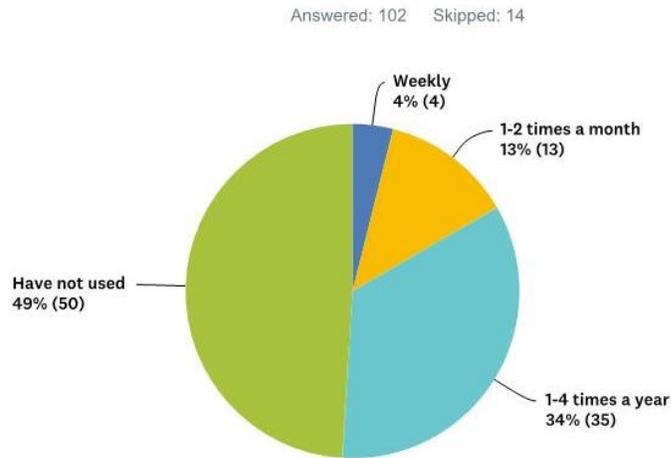
## **Survey Results**

### **Question 1: What is your airport identifier? (Optional, to be used to categorize responses)**

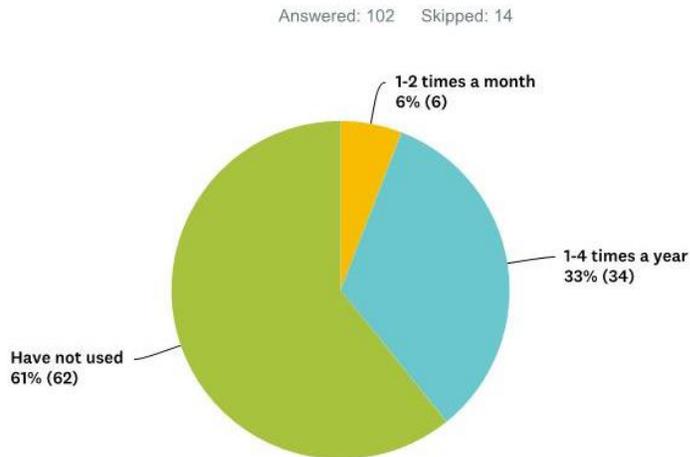
Of the 114 survey respondents, 109 airport managers provided identification of the facility they represent, allowing for further data analysis of their facilities through data sources available from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) (e.g., based aircraft counts). The group of respondents represented the airports in the following NPIAS classifications:

- Nine basic airports
- 42 local airports
- 43 regional airports
- Three national airports
- Nine non-hub primary airports
- Three non-NPIAS airports

**Question 2: On average, how frequently do you use ACRP documents (i.e. reports, syntheses, legal briefs) to advance your airport management skills or address a specific issue?**



**Question 3: On average, how frequently do you reference the ACRP Report 16: Guidebook for Managing Small Airports?**



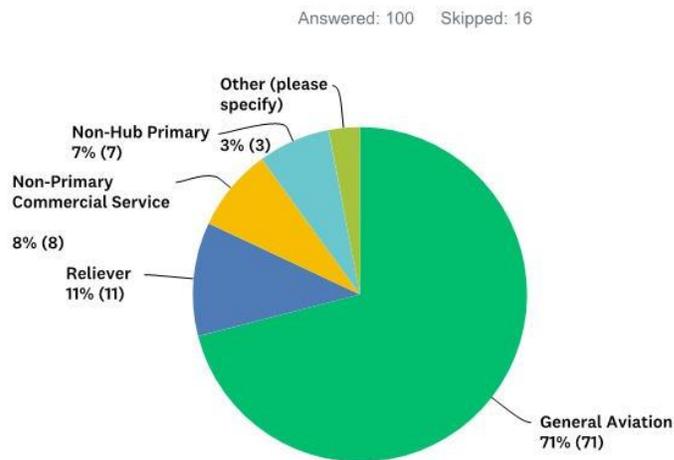
**Question 4: If you have used ACRP Report 16: Guidebook for Managing Small Airports, what do you like the most and/or what section do you reference most often?**

Open-ended question: The chapters on airport finance, airport operations and airport planning were reported as the most frequently used (ranked in the order mentioned above). Additional areas that were highlighted by the respondents were the parts of the guidebook dealing with airport land use issues and the glossary and acronyms (for communicating with policymakers).

**Question 5: If you have used ACRP Report 16: Guidebook for Managing Small Airports, what could be better or what is missing?**

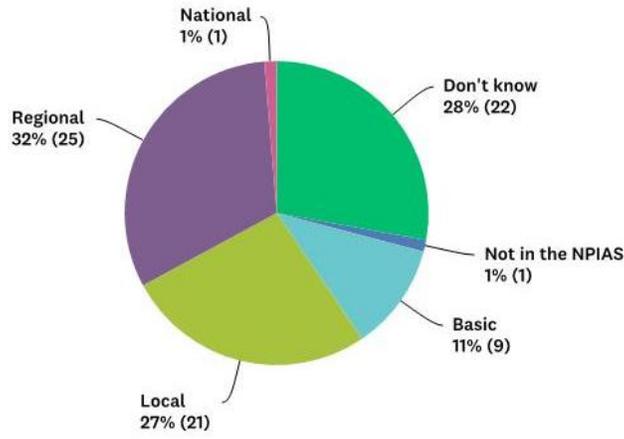
Open-ended question: Areas identified for improvement included expansion of the glossary, more information on fostering relationships with tenants, more how-to information, example documents with best practice tips, less textbook-like, referencing resource information to go beyond the basics, addressing the challenge of the airport being a division of another department, Occupational Safety and Health Administration and insurance information, holding special events, grant assurances and what to expect when managing construction.

**Question 6: What is your airport's category/type?**



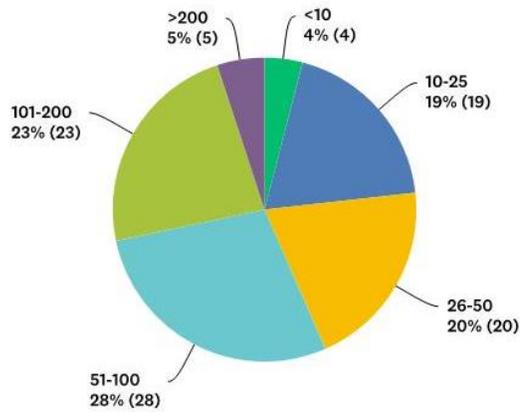
**Question 7: What is your general aviation/reliever airport's NPIAS/ASSET role?**

Answered: 79 Skipped: 37



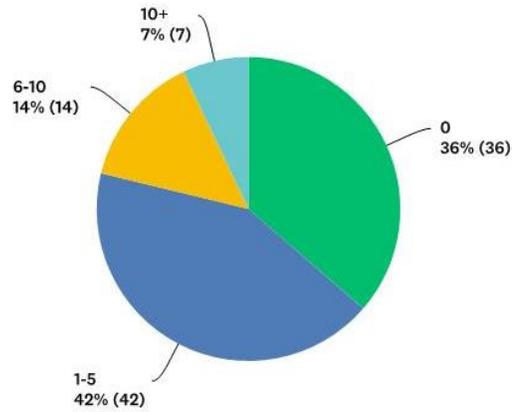
**Question 8: How many total aircraft are based at your airport?**

Answered: 99 Skipped: 17



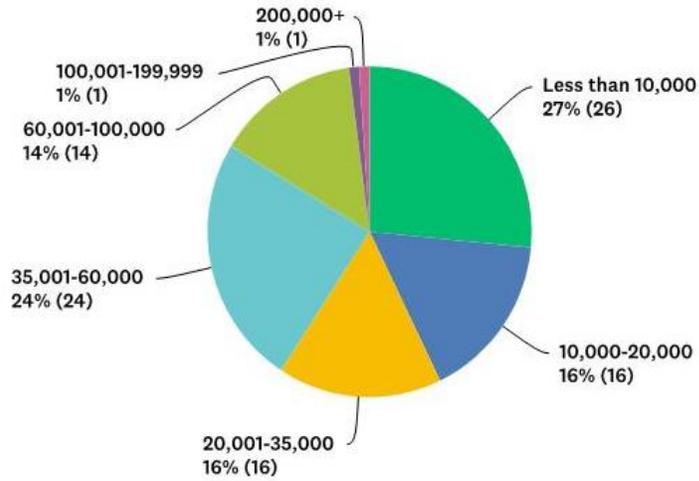
**Question 9: How many jet aircraft are based at your airport?**

Answered: 99 Skipped: 17



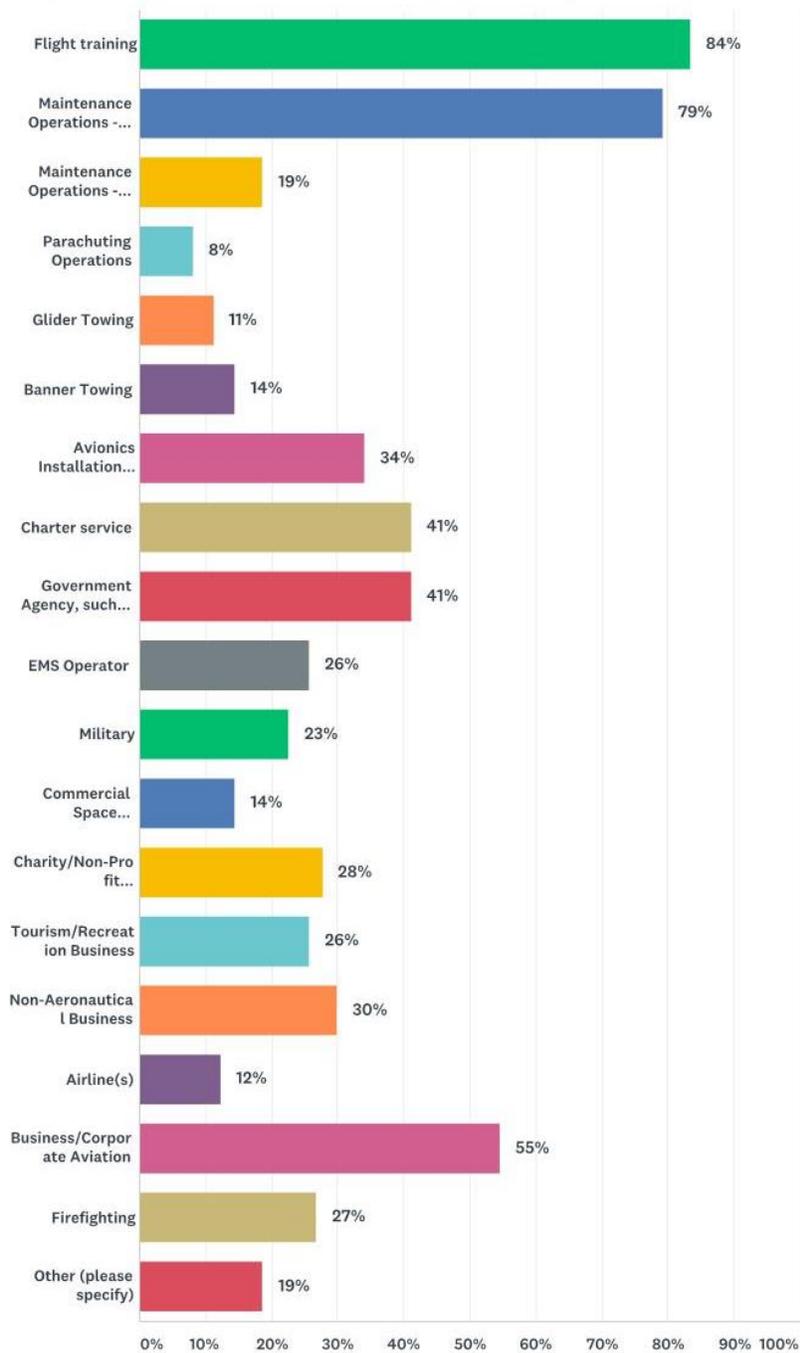
**Question 10: How many estimated annual operations occur at your airport?**

Answered: 98 Skipped: 18



**Question 11: What types of businesses, government entities and enterprises operate on the airport property? (Check all that apply)**

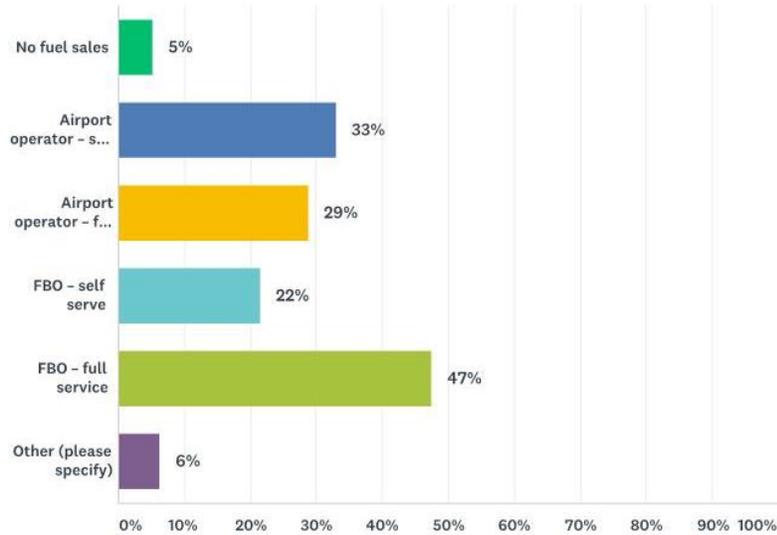
Answered: 97 Skipped: 19



“Other” includes civil air patrol, agricultural application business, university and athletic department, life flight, oil and gas, rental car and a helicopter corporation.

**Question 12: Who provides the fuel services at your airport? (Check all that apply)**

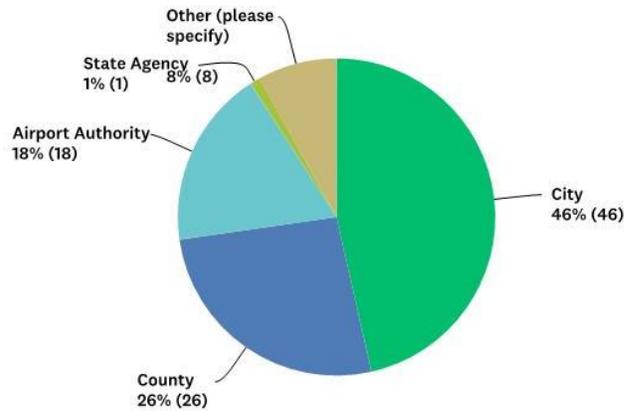
Answered: 97 Skipped: 19



“Other” includes individually supplied and private concessions.

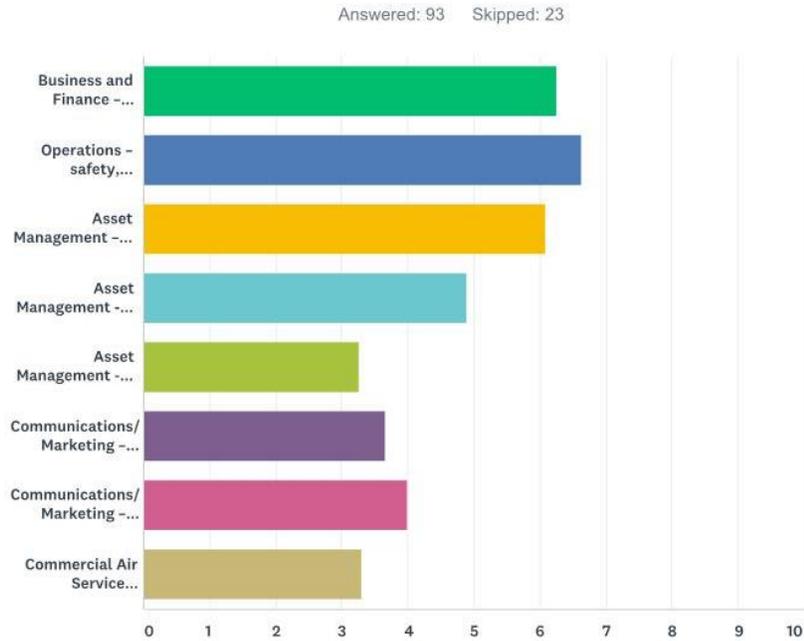
**Question 13: Who is the airport owner (sponsor)?**

Answered: 99 Skipped: 17



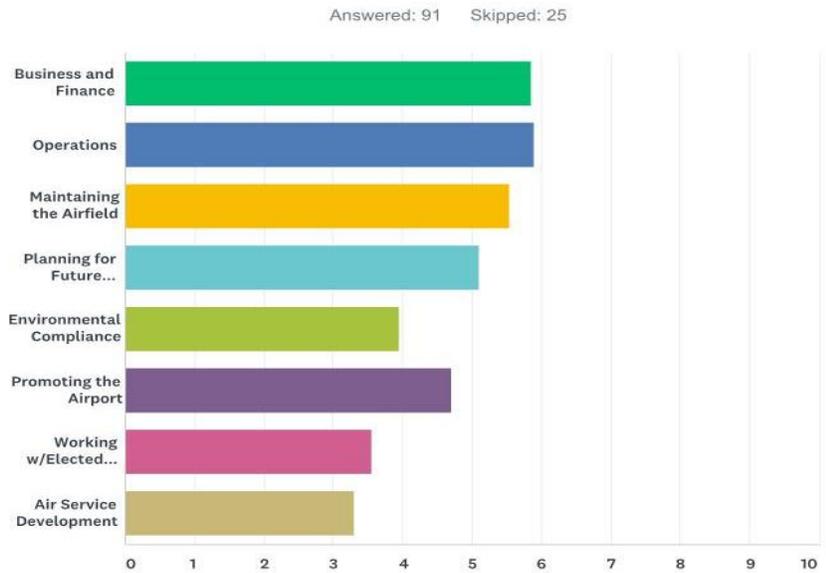
“Other” includes park district, university, nonprofit volunteer group, regional organization and private.

**Question 14: Rank the airport management function areas by the amount of your work time they consume, with 1 being the highest. Select N/A, if a particular function is not applicable to your duties.**



	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEDIAN	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Business and Finance – financial and administrative management	1.00	7.00	2.00	2.75	1.74
Operations – safety, security and operating the facility	1.00	7.00	2.00	2.36	1.61
Asset Management – maintaining the airfield and current assets	1.00	6.00	3.00	2.91	1.42
Asset Management - planning for future improvements	1.00	8.00	4.00	4.10	1.50
Asset Management - environmental documentation and compliance	1.00	8.00	6.00	5.73	1.53
Communications/Marketing – promoting the airport and addressing concerns	1.00	8.00	6.00	5.33	1.72
Communications/Marketing – working with elected officials, boards and commissioners	1.00	7.00	5.00	5.00	1.64
Commercial Air Service Development – attracting and working with the airlines	1.00	8.00	7.00	5.70	2.51

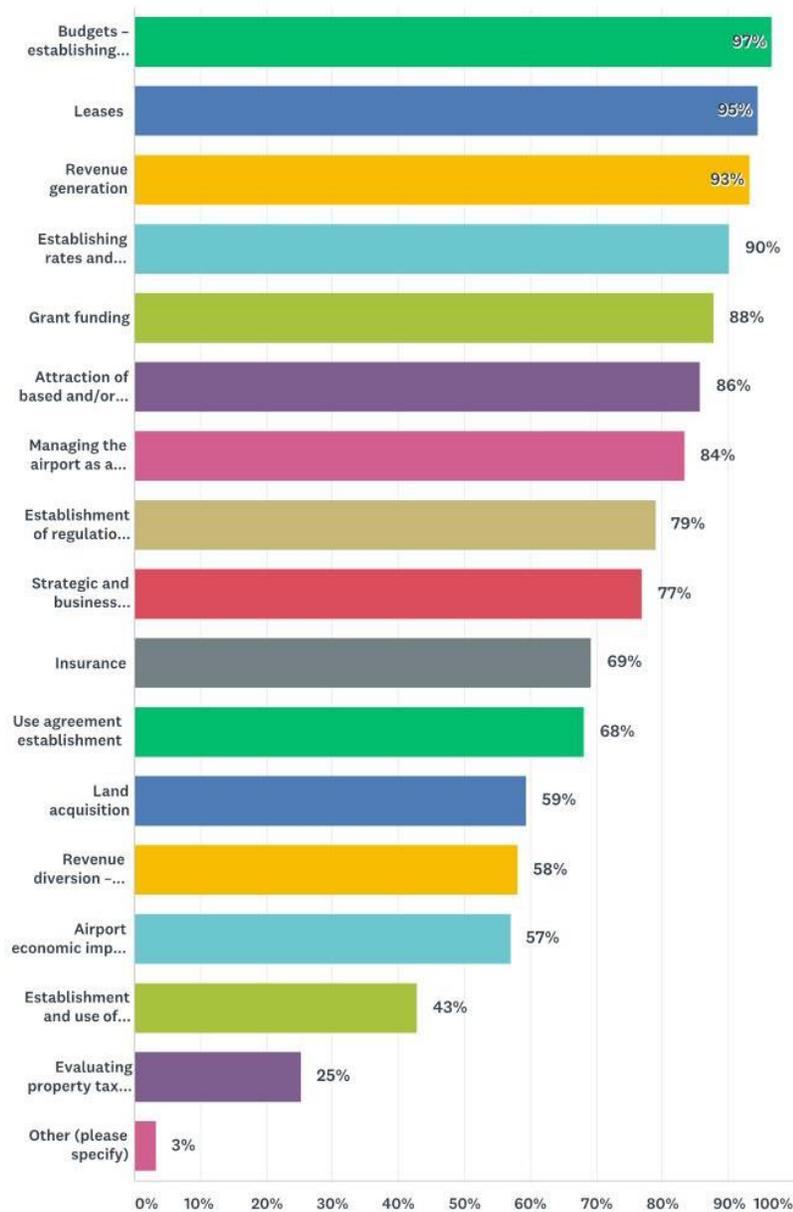
**Question 15: From the most to least, rank the airport management function areas by the amount of additional guidance or information that you would like to have available, with 1 being the highest. Select N/A, if a particular function is not applicable to your duties.**



BASIC STATISTICS					
	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEDIAN	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Business and Finance	1.00	7.00	2.00	3.14	2.08
Operations	1.00	8.00	2.00	3.10	1.98
Maintaining the Airfield	1.00	8.00	3.00	3.46	1.63
Planning for Future Improvements	1.00	7.00	4.00	3.90	1.67
Environmental Compliance	1.00	8.00	5.00	5.04	1.96
Promoting the Airport	1.00	7.00	5.00	4.30	1.98
Working w/Elected Officials	1.00	8.00	6.00	5.45	1.83
Air Service Development	1.00	8.00	5.50	5.70	2.24

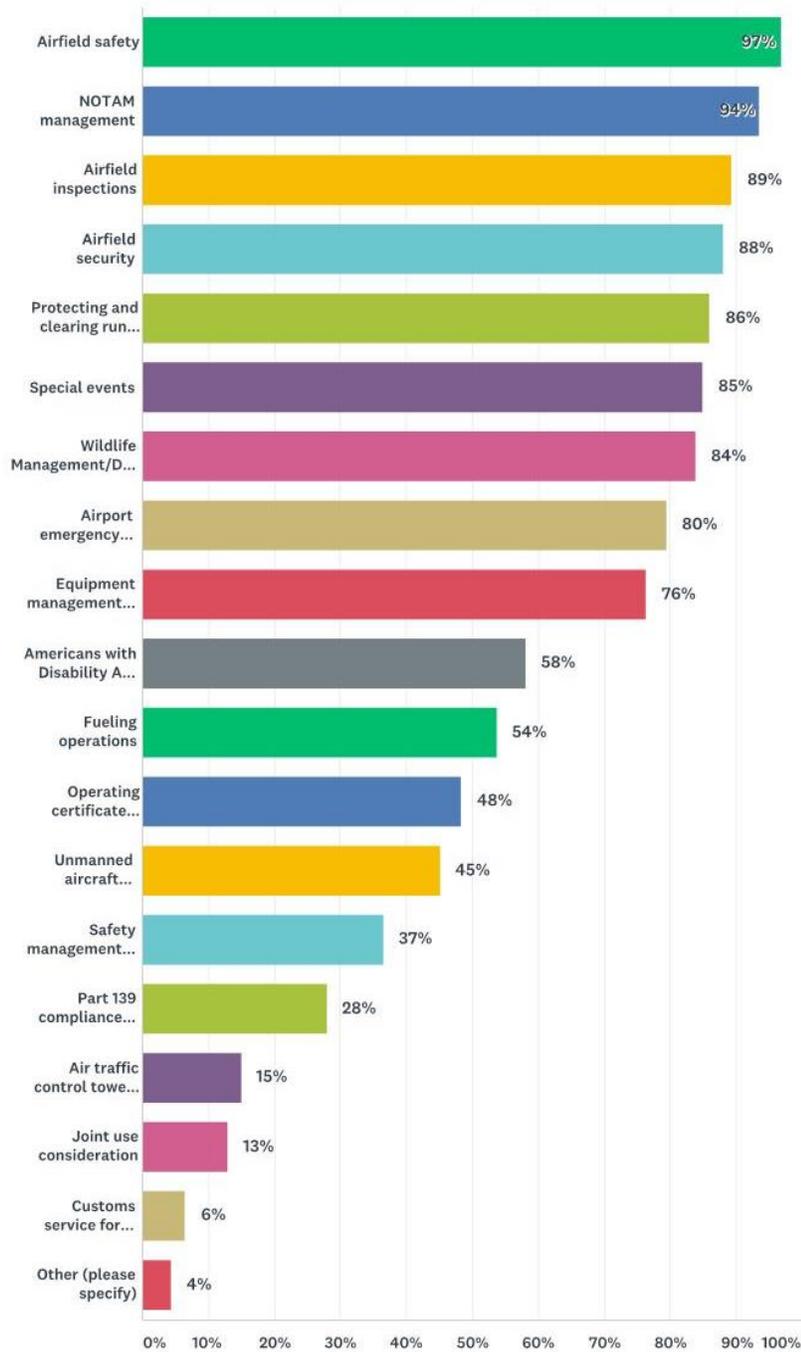
**Question 16: Within the business function area, check all tasks that apply to your airport management responsibilities.**

Answered: 91 Skipped: 25



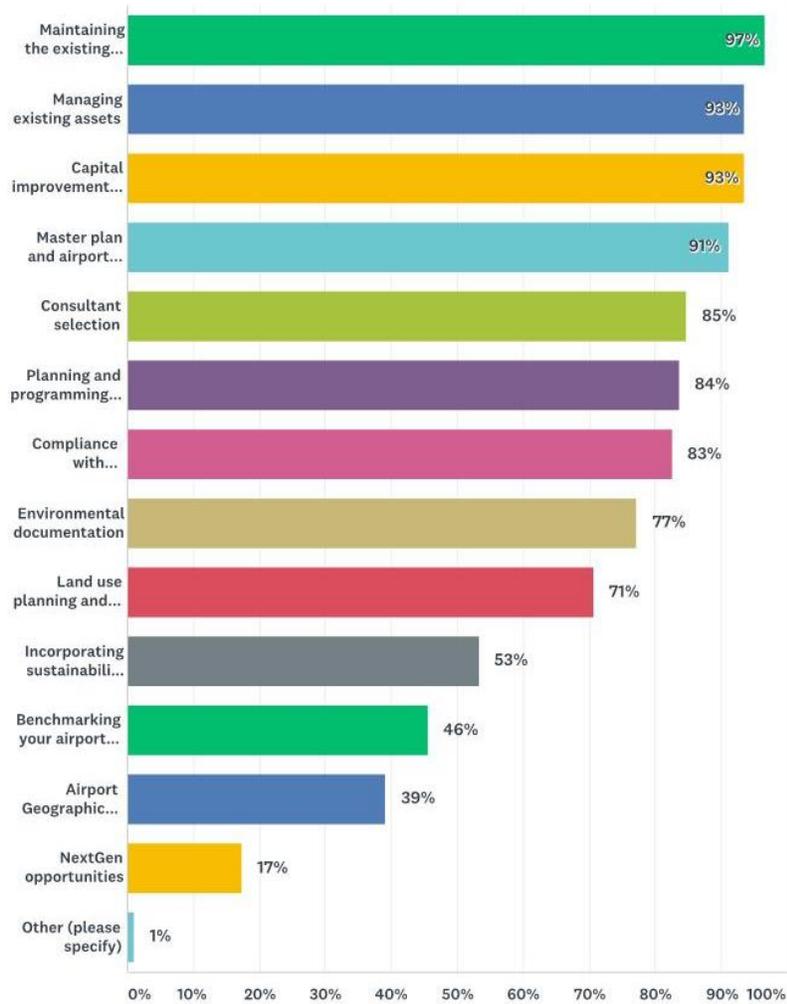
**Question 17: Within the operations function area, check all tasks that apply to your airport management responsibilities.**

Answered: 93 Skipped 23

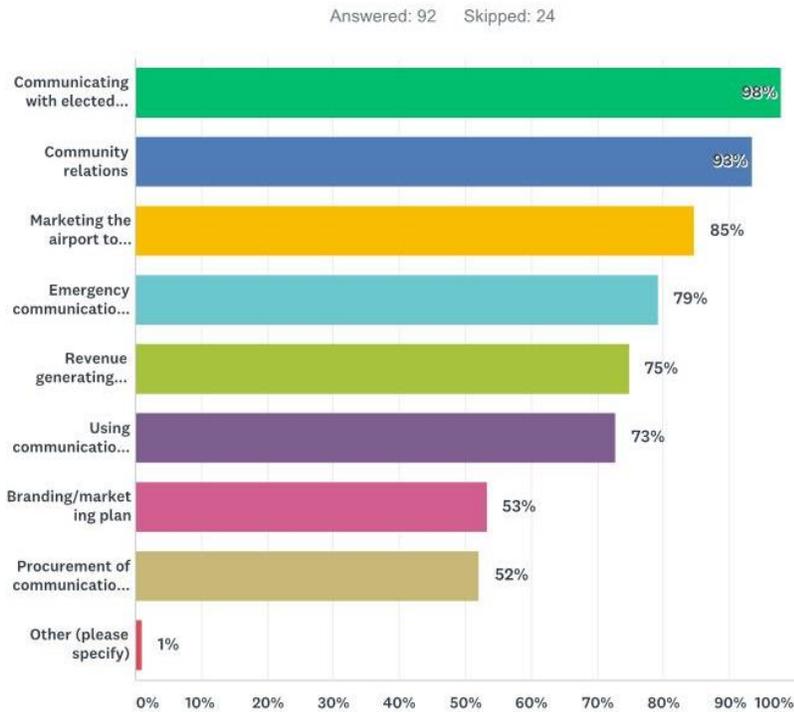


**Question 18: Within the asset management function area, check all areas that apply to your airport management responsibilities.**

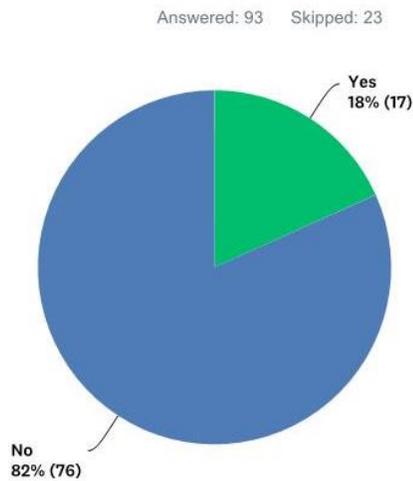
Answered: 92 Skipped: 24



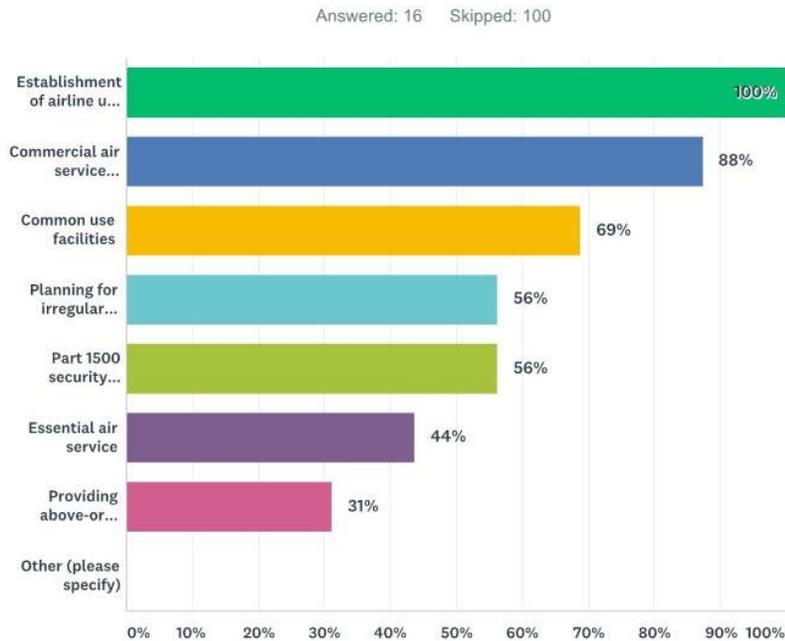
**Question 19: Within the communications/marketing management function area, check all tasks that apply to your airport management responsibilities.**



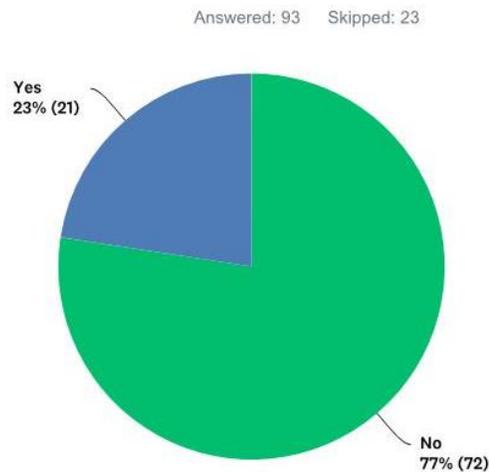
**Question 20: Does your airport have commercial air carrier service?**



**Question 21 (for those that answered “yes” to Question 20): Within the commercial air service function area, check all areas that apply to your airport management responsibilities.**



**Question 22: Do you or your airport staff have written standard operating procedures or best management practices in any of the management areas (business, operations, asset management, communication/marketing, commercial service) that you would like to offer as reference material for this project?**



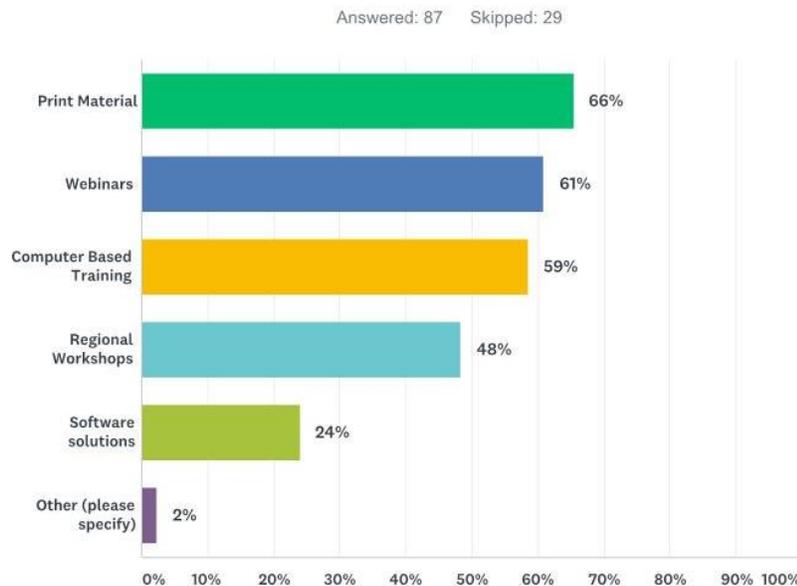
**Question 23 (for those that answered “yes” to Question 22): If you would like to offer reference materials for this project (per Question 22), please provide the contact person’s name and phone number and/or email address.**

Outreach was conducted with respondents providing contact information.

**Question 24: What is the biggest airport management challenge that you currently face?**

Open-ended question: Airport financial sustainability is, by a tremendous margin, the top issue listed by airport managers, either directly or through associated concerns such as addressing stagnant general aviation (GA) activity, funding for capital development, expanding nonaeronautical uses or grant procurement. Small staffs compared to the responsibilities were also identified as a challenge. Maintaining compliance with regulations was also identified as a challenge, as was communication with elected officials, boards and the general public. Controlling off-airport obstructions was also identified as a concern. For those respondents with air service, maintaining and attracting service was identified as a concern.

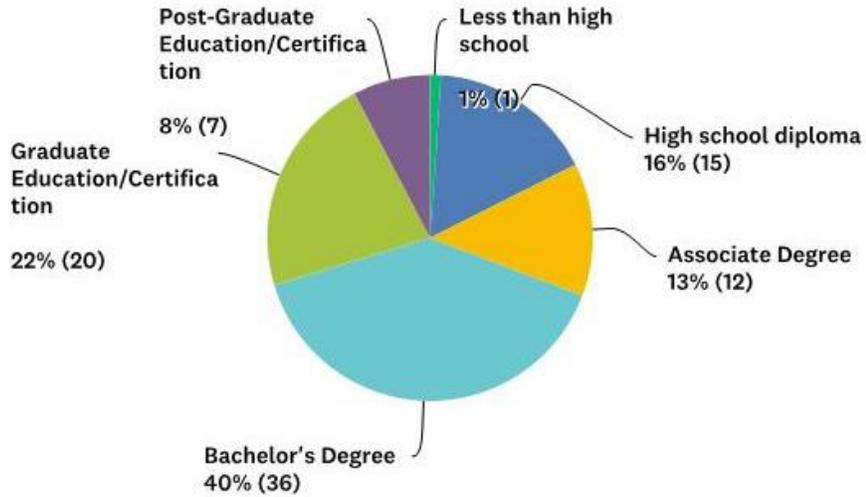
**Question 25: In addition to the guidebook, which other methods of presenting updated material would help you utilize this guidebook more efficiently?**



“Other” includes American Association of Airport Executives’ Digicast and the need for communication to small rural airports from those with resources.

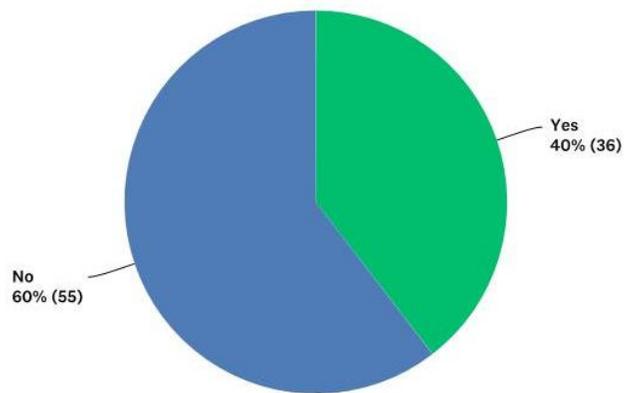
**Question 26: What is the highest level of education that you have completed?**

Answered: 91 Skipped: 25

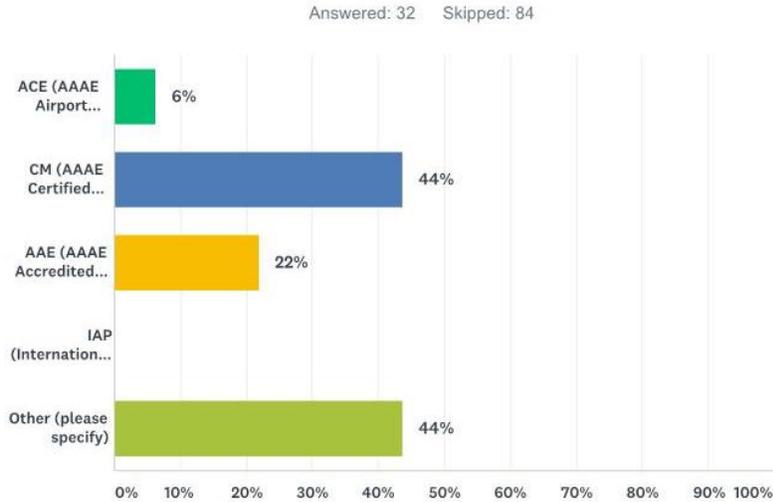


**Question 27: Do you have a degree in airport management or other aviation-related field?**

Answered: 91 Skipped: 25

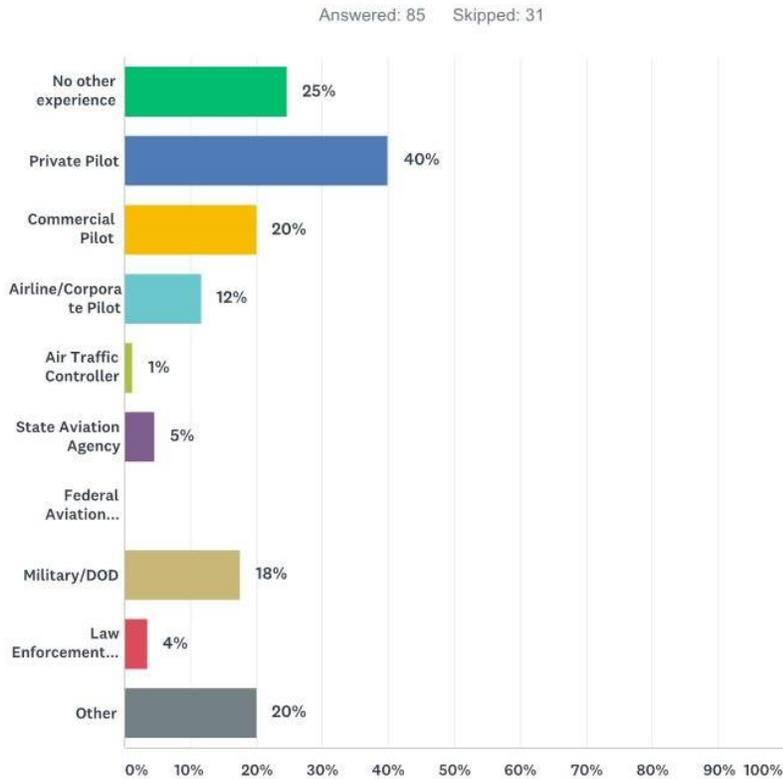


**Question 28: Do you have any aviation industry certifications?**



“Other” includes pilot certificates, military training, National Air Transportation Association fixed-base operator (FBO) operations training and Southwest Chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives Certified Airport Executive.

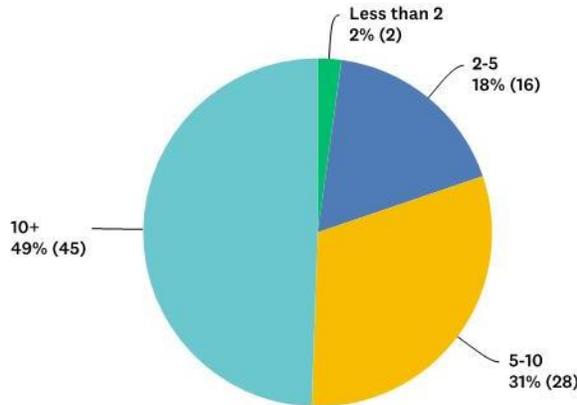
**Question 29: What other aviation-related experience outside of airport management (if any) do you have?**



“Other” includes accident investigation, aviation associations, other federal government agencies, airline management, internships, airport consulting, aircraft maintenance, aircraft dispatcher, airport construction, military and aviation law.

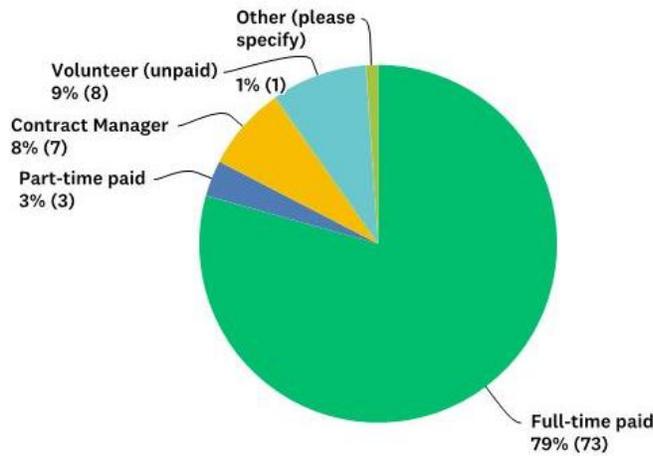
**Question 30: How many years of airport management experience do you have?**

Answered: 91 Skipped: 25



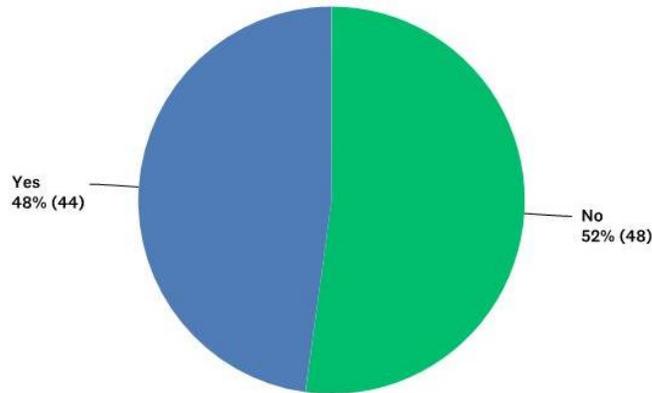
**Question 31: What type of an airport management position do you presently hold?**

Answered: 92 Skipped: 24



**Question 32: Do you have any other professional roles or responsibilities, in addition to managing the airport?**

Answered: 92 Skipped: 24

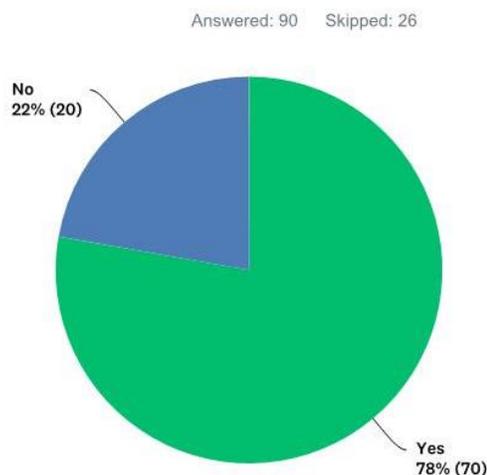


Those that responded “yes” have responsibilities that include pilot, city/county engineer, public works director, city manager, military, economic development, membership on a board, FBO management, adjunct professor and association leadership.

**Question 33: What is the best resource that you have used or training that you have completed that has helped you meet your current responsibilities?**

Open-ended question: FAA advisory circular, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association materials, state aviation groups, previous business experience, accredited airport executive/certified member/airport certified employee, military experience, meeting with state aeronautics and FAA staff, internet research, ACRP information, experience of other airport managers, consultants, conferences, state seminars, involvement in statewide aviation association, networking, being a pilot, experience at a larger airport, fuel company training, textbook and webinars.

**Question 34: Do you believe that there are adequate educational opportunities and resources available to help you meet your responsibilities as an airport manager?**



For those responding “no”: need tailored information to guide operator and owners of very small publicly and privately owned or operated landing facilities; more training to bring employees up to speed quickly; regional best practice workshop targeted to specific challenges that can fit within limited travel budgets; low-cost education resource, online training/certification/classes; more information share amongst small airport managers; ACRP material simplified for small airports; utilize state association to target smaller airports.

**Question 35: Is there any other information you wish to provide to the researchers related to managing small airports?**

Open-ended question:

- Recreational Aviation Foundation supports owners and operators of rural and backcountry airfields. Have a land manager’s guide for state and federal agencies that explains the role of these airfields.
- Never give up.
- Show genuine concern when dealing with others.
- FAA regulations seem to be designed as “one size fits all.”
- Greatest challenge in running an airport is finding the right level of community support and governance.
- Airport management takes time and patience and establish your priorities.
- With additional regulations, it is very difficult to keep up without additional staff or consultants.