U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

CLEAR PATH VIII

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH




QUICK LOOK REPORT

NOVEMBER 19-20, 2020

DECEMBER 10, 2020

Summary

The *Clear Path VIII Exercise* was developed to examine the energy sector's response and restoration roles, responsibilities, plans, and procedures following a catastrophic incident, stressing the interdependencies among multiple critical infrastructure sectors within the state of Utah.

The Clear Path Exercise Series is the annual U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER) all-hazards energy security and resilience exercise series. The Series brings together leading energy sector stakeholders to enhance policies and procedures, identify areas for collective improvement, and strengthen relationships and cooperation among industry and government energy sector partners.

The Clear Path series is the principal forum for enhancing the energy sector's ability to work together in response to catastrophic incidents. The series is a central pillar of DOE's efforts to constantly improve its ability to successfully meet its responsibilities as the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #12 Coordinator and the Sector-Specific Agency lead for the energy sector.

The purpose of the eighth iteration of Clear Path is to examine the energy sector's response and restoration roles, responsibilities, plans, and procedures following a major earthquake along Utah's Wasatch Fault Zone, stressing the interdependencies among multiple critical infrastructure sectors.

The emphasis of this exercise was on defining the roles and responsibilities of energy sector providers, facilitation of resource requests, developing situational awareness, and communications and coordination throughout the impact area.

Exercise Objectives and Core Capabilities

The following exercise objectives in Table 1 are linked to the *U.S. Department of Homeland Security Core Capabilities*, which are distinct critical elements necessary to achieve specific mission areas. The objectives and aligned core capabilities were selected by the exercise planning team.

Exercise Objective	Core Capability
Discuss the energy sector's recovery process that contributes to improvements in energy resiliency and sustainability, and economic recovery for the region.	Economic Recovery
Identify the process to coordinate the restoration of critical energy infrastructure systems by the energy sector and all levels of government to support ongoing emergency response operations, life sustainment, community functionality, and a transition to recovery.	Infrastructure Systems
Describe the process to request, prioritize, deconflict, and process resources/ mutual aid by the energy sector and all levels of government during a multi-jurisdictional/multi-agency response to ensure appropriate size, amount, location, type, and time of arrival of the resources.	Logistics and Supply Chain Management
Explain the process used to develop and deliver a coordinated and consistent message by the energy sector and all levels of government that informs all segments of the affected community on current response and recovery efforts.	Public Information and Warning

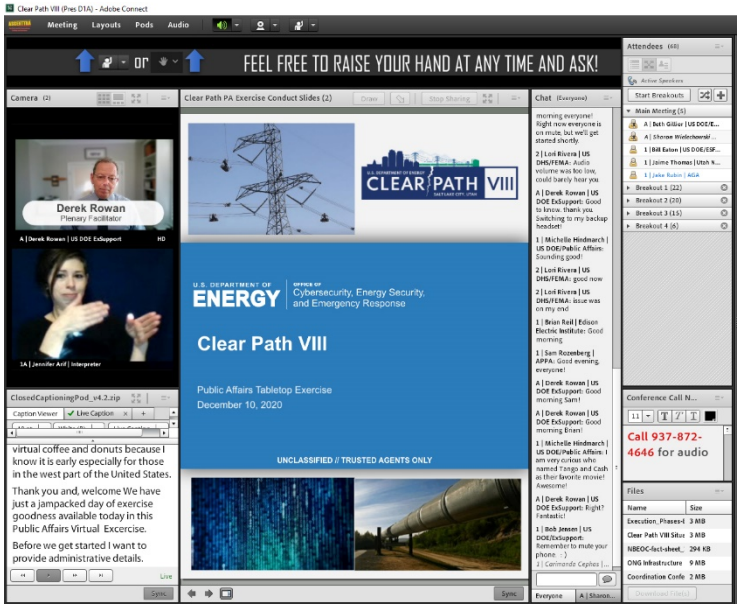
Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated Core Capabilities

Exercise Overview

Clear Path VIII was conducted over three half-days to accommodate all participants and multiple time zones in the unique virtual environment. Days one and two (November 19–20, 2020) involved response and recovery personnel from the energy sector and government partners and focused on the core capabilities of *Economic Recovery*, *Infrastructure Systems*, and *Logistics and Supply Chain Management*. Day three (December 10, 2020) involved public affairs personnel from the energy sector and government partners and focused on the *Public Information and Warning* core capability. The exercise was attended by energy-sector organizations from across the country as well as several state and federal agency partners. Planning team members worked together to develop the exercise core capabilities, objectives, scenario, and evaluation criteria.

The first exercise session was attended by approximately 200 players, observers, and exercise conduct staff and spanned two days. Day one focused on the response mission for the first 48 hours. Day two progressed the scenario approximately 30 days post-earthquake and involved the short and long-term recovery challenges of returning the area to pre-disaster status. The virtual format engaged participants in multiple interactive discussion sessions and activities. The exercise gave participants an opportunity to identify any gaps and areas for improvement in planning, training, equipment, and other related areas to better protect the communities they serve.

The second exercise session was a single half-day event and was attended by approximately 80 players, observers, and exercise conduct staff. Players were provided a unique training opportunity focusing on critical messaging coordination calls to include the National Incident Communication Conference Line (NICCL), State Incident Communication Conference Line (SICCL), and ESF-14 Business and Infrastructure call that occur post disaster. This was followed by participation in a simulated energy sector *Unity of Message* call. The exercise concluded with an active discussion of the energy sector's social media strategy during a catastrophic incident.



Scenario

On December 17, 2020, during a weekday afternoon, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake ruptures the Wasatch Fault—the epicenter is located just south of Salt Lake City on the Salt Lake City Segment and the violent shockwaves extend north toward Ogdon, triggering a rupture of the Weber Segment. Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake, Summit, Tooele, Utah, and Wasatch Counties all experience some level of ground shaking that severely affects critical infrastructure systems and public safety.

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

November 19-20, 2020

Strengths

- The exercise successfully met the goal of bringing together members of each energy subsector, government, and interdependent non-energy stakeholders to discuss their approach to response and recovery in a catastrophic scenario. Discussions were open and honest, and participants candidly shared their gaps and vulnerabilities as well as identified beneficial approaches to bring the community back to "normal."
- Self-sufficiency of energy sector response and recovery teams was noted as a challenge during austere conditions, but the industry has made great strides in working through various mutual aid programs to overcome this. This was demonstrated in real world incidents during the current year when investor-owned organizations and cooperative and public power organizations assisted each other with personnel, equipment, and crew support items (lodging, feeding, etc.) when responding to various disasters in 2020.
- More and more energy producers and suppliers are beginning to adopt the Incident Command System in their management of response and restoration activities during a disaster. They have used this model during responses to various disasters that their facilities and/or mutual aid personnel resources have been involved with. They stated it has helped expedite personnel, track resources, manage by objectives, and maintain a common operating picture. Also, since the Incident Command System is widely used by first responder agencies and emergency management organizations, it has helped members of the energy sector integrate into the local command structure for response and recovery.
- Some energy producers have recognized the need to support employees locally through employee disaster assistance programs. Local employees are affected and need to secure their homes and ensure their families are cared for prior to returning to work. Thus, some of these programs deploy qualified employees from other areas to fill the vacant positions within the affected area, while the local employee is taking care of family and personal business. Some of these programs also provide home electric generation, fuel, food, temporary housing (campers/recreational vehicles), and other essential supplies. These types of programs should be considered by all energy producers to ensure employees remain focused on family first, then return to the job with a clear mind and can focus performing mission essential functions.
- Energy sector partners are committed to rebuilding and maintaining service within the area. While they recognized that rebuilding times may be prolonged, they are there to support the customer base, help grow the workforce, and do their part to help return the community to a "better than" pre-incident state. To ensure the welfare of the energy workforce, personnel may be tasked with non-traditional responsibilities to decrease the need for temporary layoffs or the possible loss of employees that may want to relocate out of the area because of financial hardships.

Areas for Improvement

- Participants identified the importance of having an open dialogue between utilities and government officials regarding resilient restoration projects. Specifically mentioned was the lesson learned regarding recent restoration projects in Puerto Rico. With government officials wanting power restoration projects to be underground for future resiliency, the level of effort and work required to convert the system to an underground grid system would extend the timeline for the project by several years, leaving people without power for an extended period of time. The same type of delay could also occur with "green" projects and/or projects affecting historical/cultural areas. The energy sector must be more effectively engaged with local and state government during the restoration planning process and be prepared to discuss the impacts of any regulatory changes made following a disaster. Participants also stated they would coordinate with local and state emergency management to ensure housing, medical, and other welfare needs are provided for energy sector employees until full restoration is completed.
- Credentialling of resources within the energy sector continues to be inconsistent or unaddressed until an incident occurs. Participants discussed the need for a common credentialling and identification process that all members of the energy sector could adopt so that resources coming into a disaster-stricken area would not be impeded by security access points. Coordination is necessary between the energy subsectors, trade associations, local and state emergency management, and local and state law enforcement to determine the most effective and efficient process to implement a credentialling program.
- Participants noted that during a catastrophic incident, restoration may be greatly prolonged due to the energy sector's reliance on a few specialized vendors for personnel and resources. As has been seen in healthcare emergencies where many hospitals rely on the same vendor for a certain personal protective equipment item, there is a logistical struggle to acquire immediate assistance as many of the energy providers rely on the same restoration teams, clean-up and debris removal companies, heavy equipment providers, and consumable goods vendors (components, disposable supplies, tools, etc.). Additionally, other non-energy organizations within the area may also be competing for the same resources for their own recovery efforts. It is important that energy providers coordinate pre-incident with government partners to prioritize infrastructure restoration projects to help alleviate the competition for resources.
- Financial assistance to the private sector through federal recovery programs (such as under the Stafford Act) may be prohibited or limited. Although direct financial support to private sector energy providers from federal agencies during a Stafford Act incident is prohibitive, there are other ways that federal and state partners can support private industry. For example, when fuel is difficult to come by, restoration crews can be designated as first responders allowing them to utilize fuel depots. Each incident is situationally dependent and there are some alternatives or exceptions, but from a planning perspective, private sector entities should not rely on financial or resource support from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The U.S. Department of Energy's Emergency Support Function #12 and its Sector Specific Agency role for Energy, provides support to industry through the Electricity

Subsector Coordinating Council and the Oil & Natural Gas Subsector Coordinating Council. FEMA is prohibited from providing support to a for-profit entity, but municipal or co-operative entities that are under government ownership may be supported.

December 10, 2020

Strengths

- Participants identified multiple best practices for inclusion of vulnerable populations (i.e., deaf and hard of hearing people) in the public messaging strategy. These included using highway message boards, Certified Deaf Interpreters and real-time closed captioning in all briefings, and standard configurations for social media that are useable by screen reader systems to ensure accessibility by as wide of an audience as possible.
- The energy sector trade associations are engaged with member organizations to assist in promoting positive and accurate public information during disasters. While it is primarily the responsibility of the individual organizations to ensure customer facing interaction with the public, the trade associations provide assistance, where applicable. Examples of member support included posting pictures and response and recovery "success stories" on social media platforms of members' deployment activities and providing social media graphic templates to their members to use for public safety messaging in the affected areas. Some association representatives indicated they also monitor social media for "key" words and rumors connected to the incident response. Any misinformation and disinformation that is observed triggers communication with the organizations' members.
- The overview of the government coordination calls and the simulated *Unity of Message* call provided participants with a better understanding of the various communications processes that are in place to exchange information during national or state-level incidents, and ensure a unified, consistent public message campaign.
- Participants recognized the need to use multiple, sometimes non-traditional methods to disseminate public messaging in an austere environment. They discussed the importance of creating a consistent and coordinated message, as well as making sure that the message was delivered effectively. They stated that it would take a variety of messaging tools to reach each audience. The tools identified during the exercise included internet (web pages and social media tools), radio (FM and HAM frequency), multiple language formats, doorhangers/flyers, electronic message boards (static and mobile), public address loudspeakers (first responders roving through neighborhoods), and the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS).

Areas for Improvement

- Energy sector members are often lacking in staff support for public affairs roles during large disasters. While larger corporate owned utilities have the depth to surge in public affairs personnel from other branches of the organization, many of the smaller organizations have only handful of personnel (in some cases only one or two) trained in public information. This leaves them to handle the massive

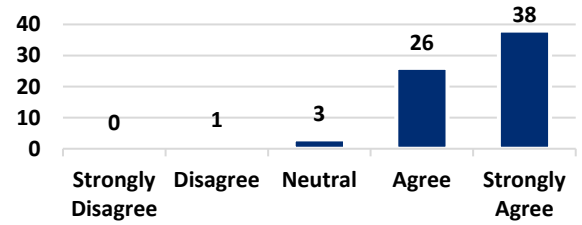
influx of social media messaging and traditional media tasks such as development of press releases and addressing the news outlets. Development of a public affairs “incident management team” by mutual aid partners and trade organization representatives could provide the relief needed to the local public affairs specialists within the energy sector.

- Not all organizations are aware of their social media capabilities. While many participants discussed their social media strategy and the various platforms they use to communicate with the public, several participants were unsure if their organization utilized social media. With social media being one of the most effective means of communication in today’s society, it is important that both private and public-sector entities have a planned strategy and trained staff to provide emergency messaging, measure the effectiveness of their public messaging campaign, and track rumors and misinformation/disinformation during a catastrophic incident. This lack of awareness of a key communication tool could negatively impact the effectiveness of message delivery.

November 19-20, 2020

Post-Exercise Participant Feedback

a. Pre-exercise briefings were informative and provided the necessary information for my role in the exercise.



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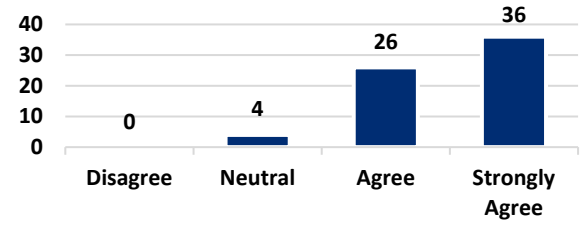
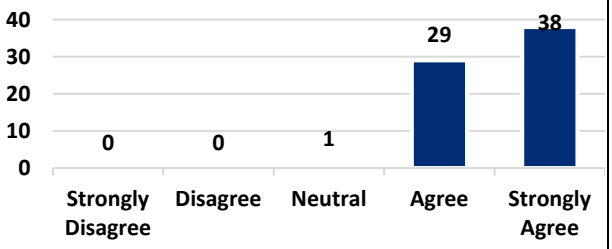
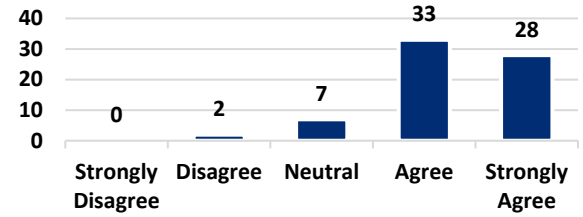


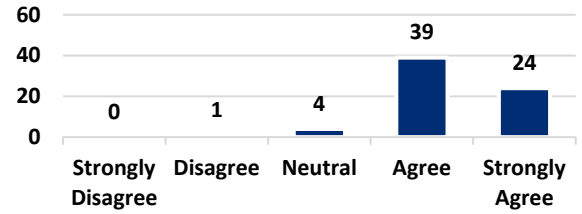
c. The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic.



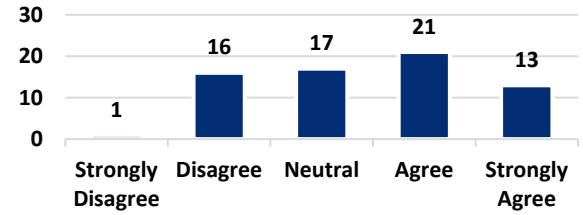
d. Exercise participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines.



e. Participants were actively involved in the exercise.



f. The virtual exercise environment was as productive as an in-person exercise?



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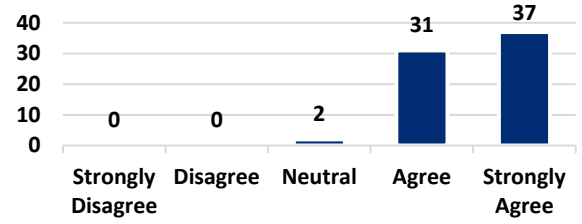

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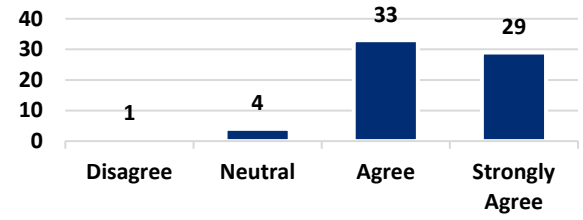

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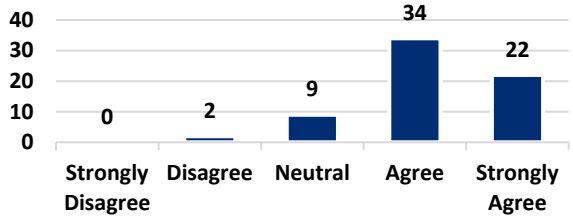

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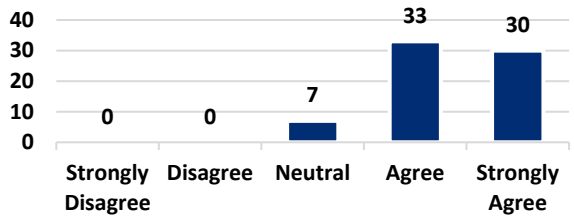

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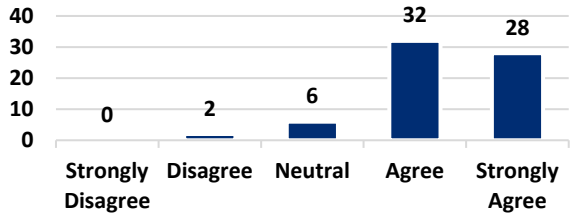

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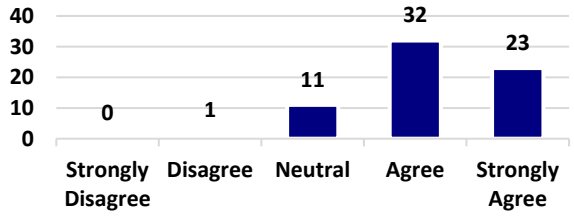

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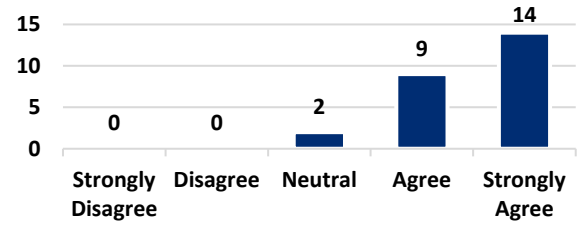

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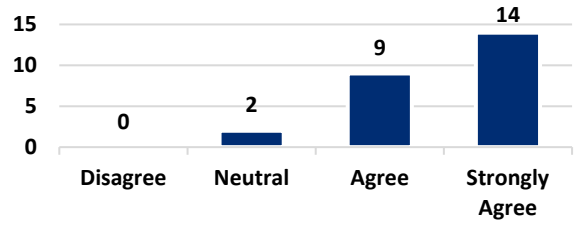

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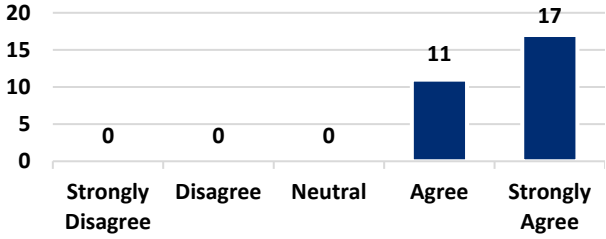

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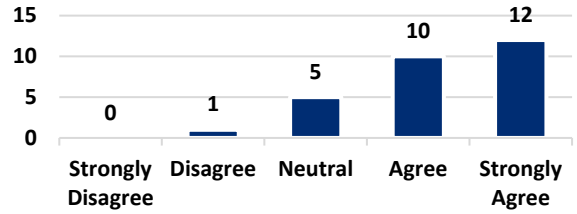

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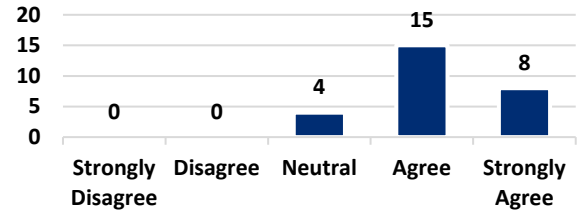

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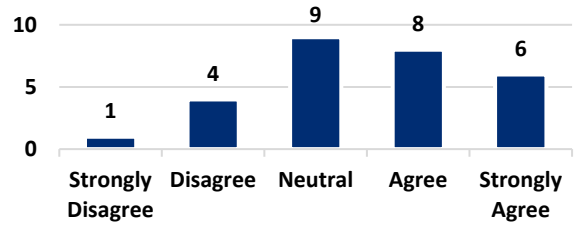

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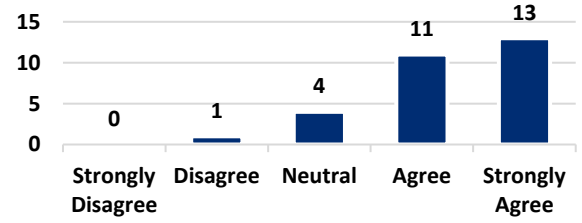

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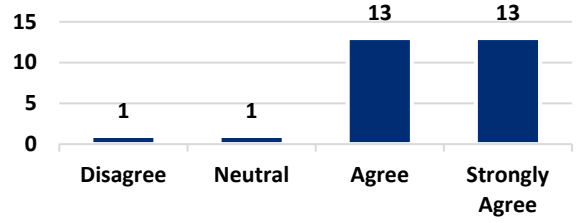

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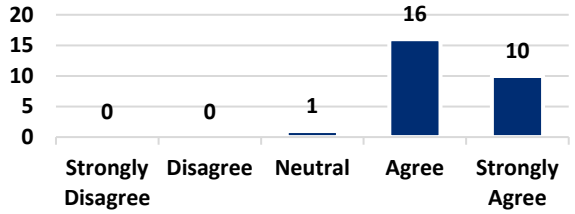

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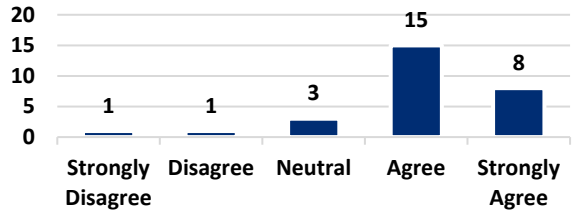

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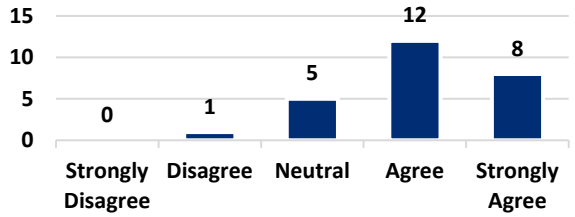

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