Collaboration Assessment

Findings: Year One

NEIGHBORHOOD COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

ON THE GROUND RESEARCH

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Introduction

The Neighborhood Collaborative Project is an effort to bring low-barrier services back to Rochester neighborhoods. (For more information on the NCP, please reference the paper, "What is the NCP?", on rocncp.org under Research.) As part of the Neighborhood Collaborative Project (NCP), the research team periodically conducts assessments related to the goal of collaboration. For more information on the NCP and its goals, please visit the NCP website.

Collaboration is one of the six overarching research areas that the research team is studying. The additional areas include: NCP implementation, capacity-building, workforce development, individual wellbeing, and thriving neighborhoods. The focus of this paper is to describe the findings from the baseline collaboration assessment completed by the NCP partners in 2023.

Methods

The research team, On The Ground Research, conducted a literature review and scan to understand the elements of collaboration and to find potential assessment tools. In our search, we found the grounded, reliable, and valid Collaboration Assessment Tool developed by Marek, Savla, and Brock (2014). Their research found eight factors (or domains) of effective collaboration: context, members, process, communication, function, resources, leadership, and perceptions of success. These are described in more detail below. Each factor had 3-12 items that measured the respective factor. For example, items like, "This coalition meets on a regular basis" and "All coalition members participate in decision-making" assess the Process domain. On The Ground Research staff reviewed the CAT to identify and remove any items that did not pertain to the NCP. Nearly all items were kept, and we used the CAT to assess collaboration between NCP partners. The team then imported the assessment into Google Forms for partners to complete electronically. The CAT assessment will be conducted annually to measure collaboration over time.

From late October to mid-November, On the Ground Research (OTG) collected survey responses from NCP partners. Surveys were sent to all the partners within the NCP, and it was encouraged that everyone complete it. This paper discusses the survey and its findings.

Survey

As described above, the survey was adjusted to fit the NCP, and focused on eight (8) collaboration factors listed in the table below. All item responses were Likert-style, closed-ended. This means that respondents could choose from: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree. The responses were converted to numbers to analyze the results. For example, Strongly Disagree was represented by the number one, while Strongly Agree was represented by the number five. Therefore, the higher the score the stronger the agreement with the statement. For a copy of the survey, please email Nicole (nicole@onthegroundny.com).

Context (7 items)	Perspectives on the history between NCP partners and their organizations, the context that they function in, and the NCP's role within the community.
Membership (9 items)	Individual NCP staff and their characteristics, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that contribute to the NCP
Process (9 items)	How the NCP and its organizations carry out their goals and put their plans into action
Communication (9 items)	The formal and informal communication between NCP partners/staff and the larger community
Function (6 items)	Perceptions of the NCP goals and objectives
Resources (10 items)	Financial and human resources needed to achieve the goals of the NCP
Leadership (9 items)	Characteristics of successful leadership within the NCP
Perceptions of NCP Success (3 items)	NCP continued success and sustainability

Results

Responses were collected from 22 total NCP partners representing 11 agencies:

- Action for a Better Community Action Front Center
- Baden St. Counseling and Support Center
- Barakah Muslim Charity
- Beyond the Sanctuary
- C3 Consultancy Services
- Father Tracy Advocacy Center
- Loving Arms Community Outreach
- MC Collaborative
- On the Ground Research
- S.W.A.N. at Montgomery Center
- The People's Pantry

We did not receive responses from Cameron Community or LABA. However, coordinating to get eleven of the thirteen NCP partners to complete this was a feat to be proud of. Loving Arms Community Outreach is one of the NCP Neighborhood Ambassadors under C3 Consultancy Services.

Overall, the findings indicated generally positive responses from NCP partners across the factors. Some improvements could be made, specifically in the Context domain, but the Leadership domain is very strong, which will influence the other factors over time.

Context

Survey respondents reported that they have a history of collaborating with other local agencies. Most of the 22 total respondents agreed that agencies involved in the NCP encourage and support the activities of the NCP and that NCP staff represent the cultural diversity in their respective communities. However, some respondents reported that community members are not aware of the NCP or its mission, and most were unsure of whether local political leaders and key community leaders support the NCP's mission. This section was the weakest out of all the sections, as shown in the chart below. However, this is unsurprising considering that this is a new collaborative effort in the community. The responses ranged from 2-5, with an overall average score of 3.75 out of 5. The highest scoring item was #3 with an average of 4.43, while the lowest scoring item was #4, with an average of 3.05. The chart below is listed in question order, reading left to right. Detailed Context findings are available in Appendix A.
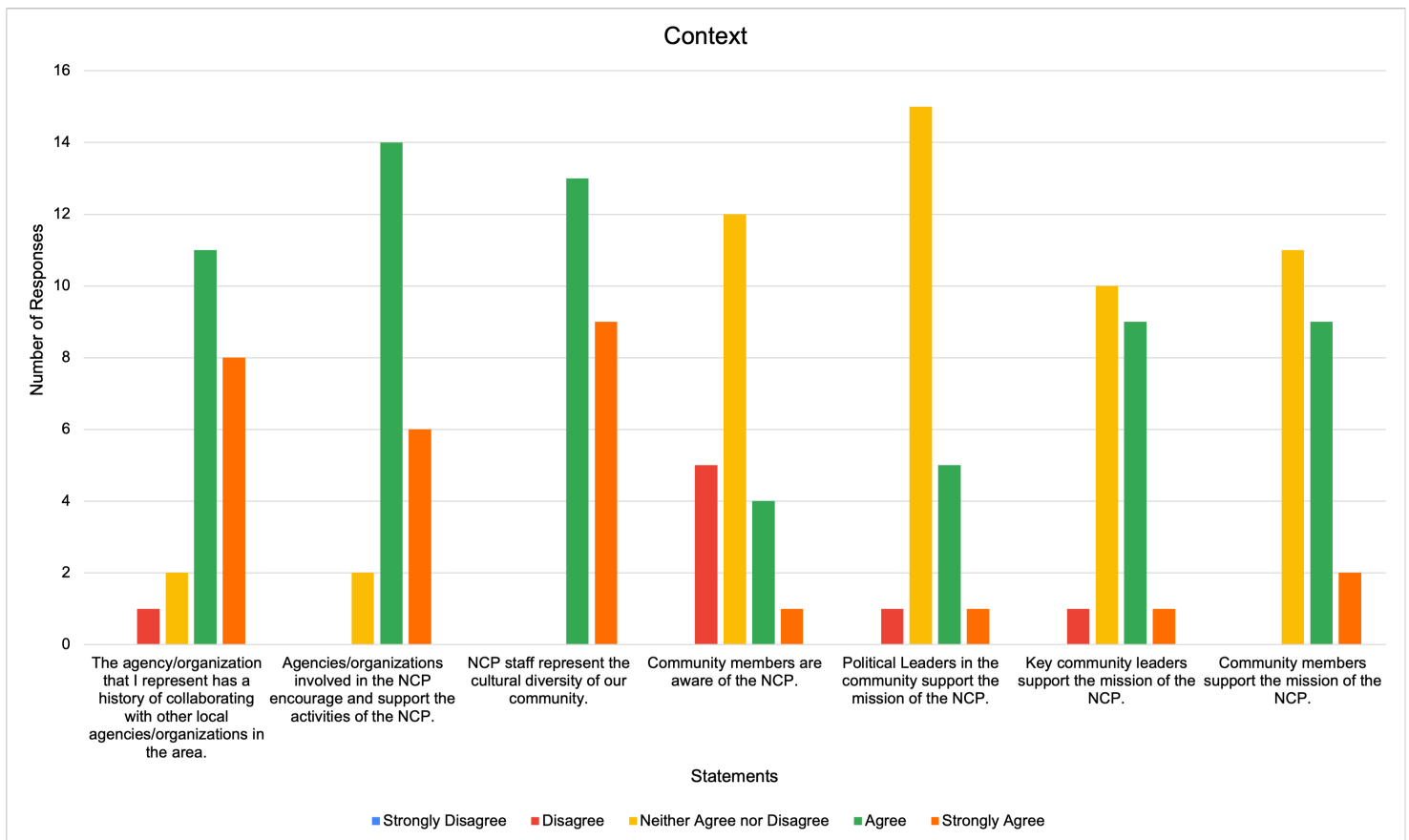
Members

The majority of the 22 respondents agreed that NCP members have an understanding and respect for each other and for the NCP partner organizations. However, many respondents were unsure about whether members trust one another, with eight respondents saying they neither agreed nor disagreed and one respondent disagreeing. There were also differing opinions on whether members of the NCP understand the roles, rights, and responsibilities of all members and organizations participating in the NCP. Additionally, a few respondents were not confident in whether NCP agencies and their staff are distributing power in a manner that is in the NCP's best interest. There also was some doubt in whether partners and staff in their agencies share credit for NCP successes. Responses in this item ranged from 2-5, with an overall average of 4.05 out of 5. The highest scoring item was #6 with an average of 4.57. The lowest scoring item was #7, with an average of 3.76. Detailed Members findings are available in Appendix B.


Members
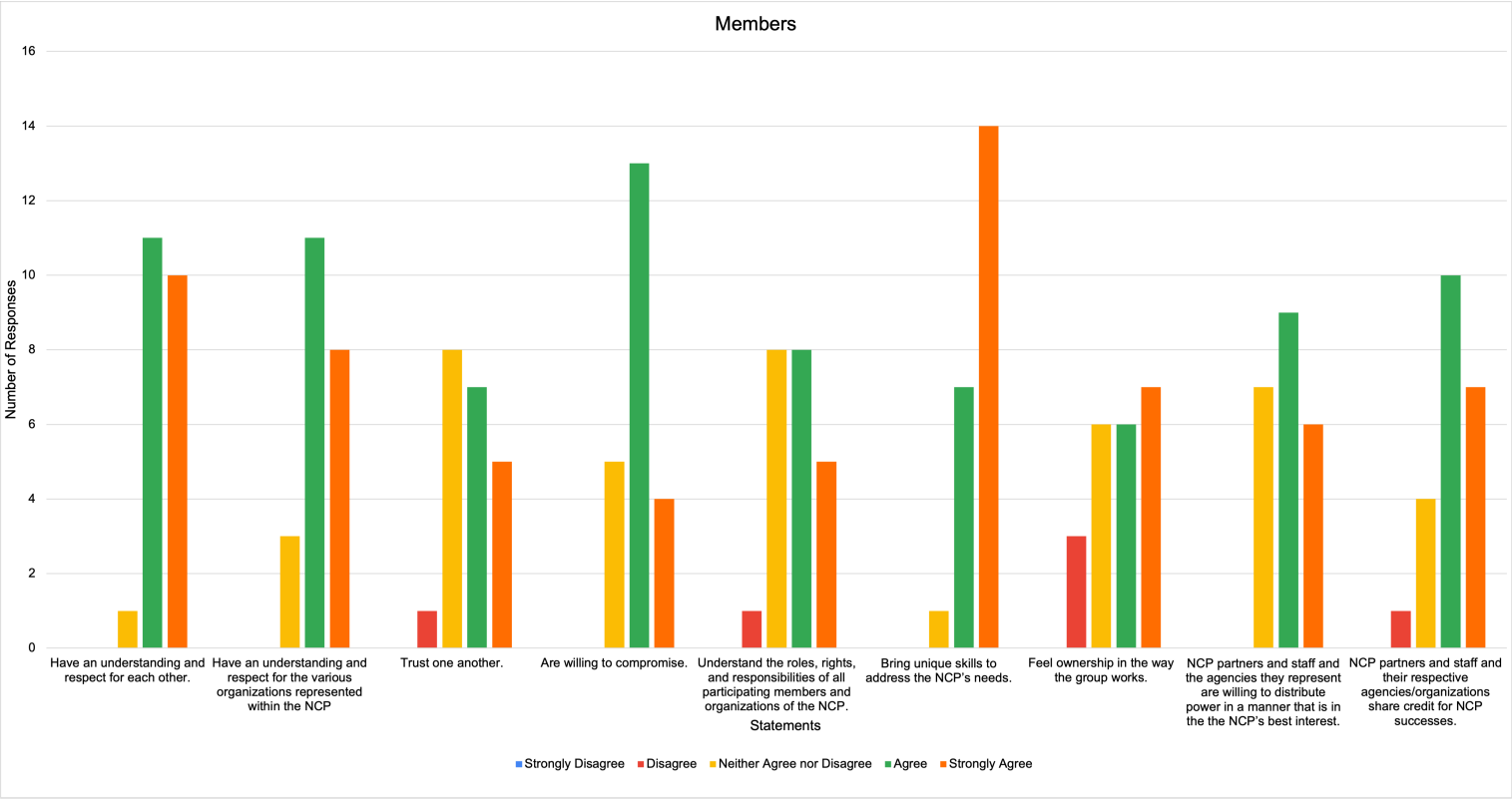
Process

Regarding the process of the NCP and how their organizations carry out the goals of the NCP, most agreed that the NCP is adaptable enough to meet the needs of the community, even as it changes. There was some disagreement on whether all NCP staff members participate in decision-making and if there is a system in place for resolving conflicts between the demands of partner agencies and the demands of the NCP. There was also disagreement on whether there is a system for measuring progress towards goal attainment and whether the NCP is marketing its efforts to the community. Responses in this item ranged from 1-5, with an overall average of 3.86 out of 5. The highest scoring item was #2, with an average of 4.33, and the lowest scoring item was #6, with an average of 3.10. Detailed Process findings are available in Appendix C.
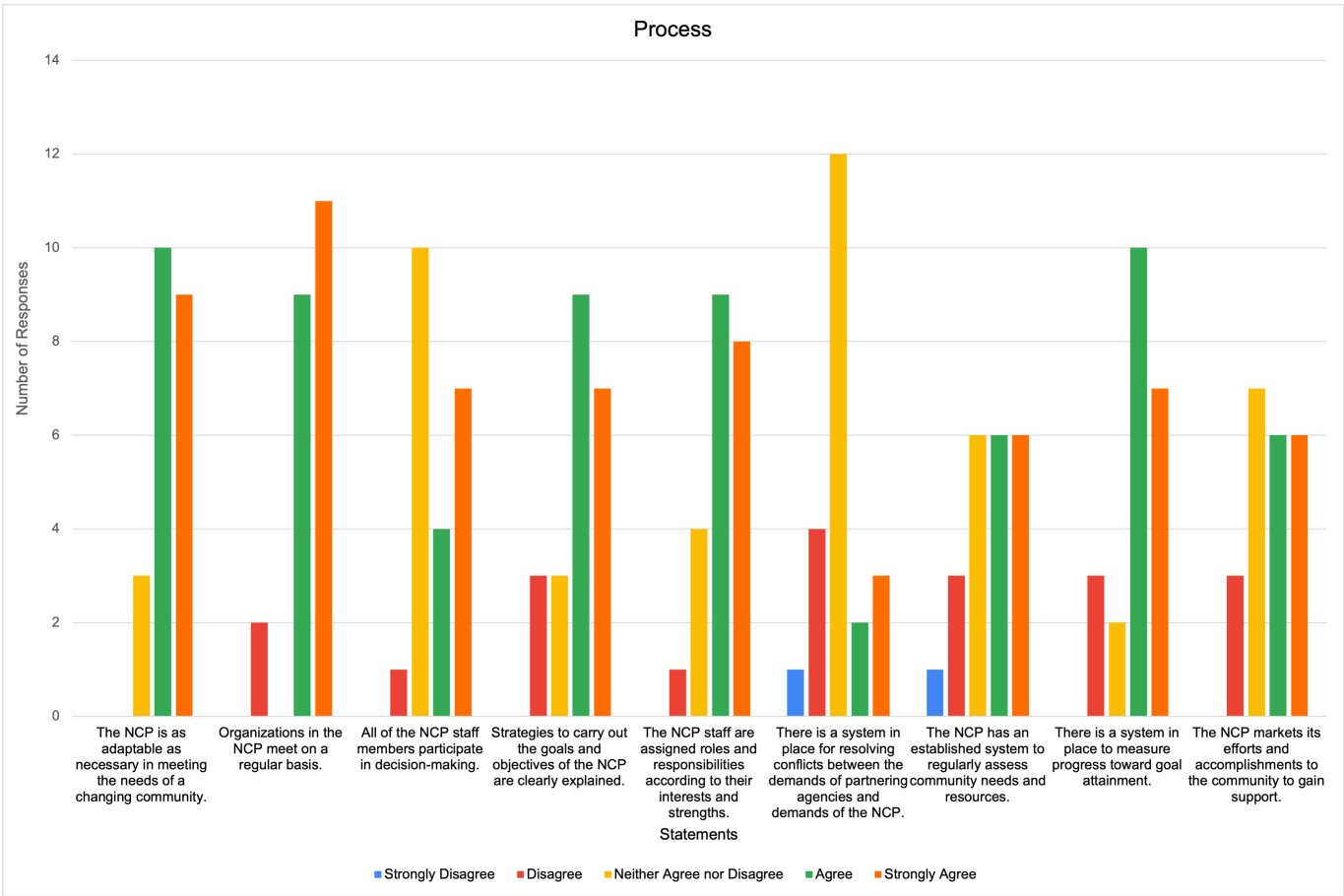
Communication

The majority of the 22 respondents agreed that NCP partners and staff communicate frequently enough, both formally and informally, to effectively work towards the NCP's goals and objectives. The survey found some areas in need of improvement, such as having members be more open to discussing issues openly and providing a safe environment to discuss disagreements and conflicts, as well as maintaining established communication channels with local community leaders and the broader community. The responses in this item ranged from 1-5, with an overall average of 3.86 out of 5. The highest scoring item was #3, with an average of 4.19. The lowest scoring item was #9, with an average of 3.33. Detailed Communications findings are available in Appendix D.
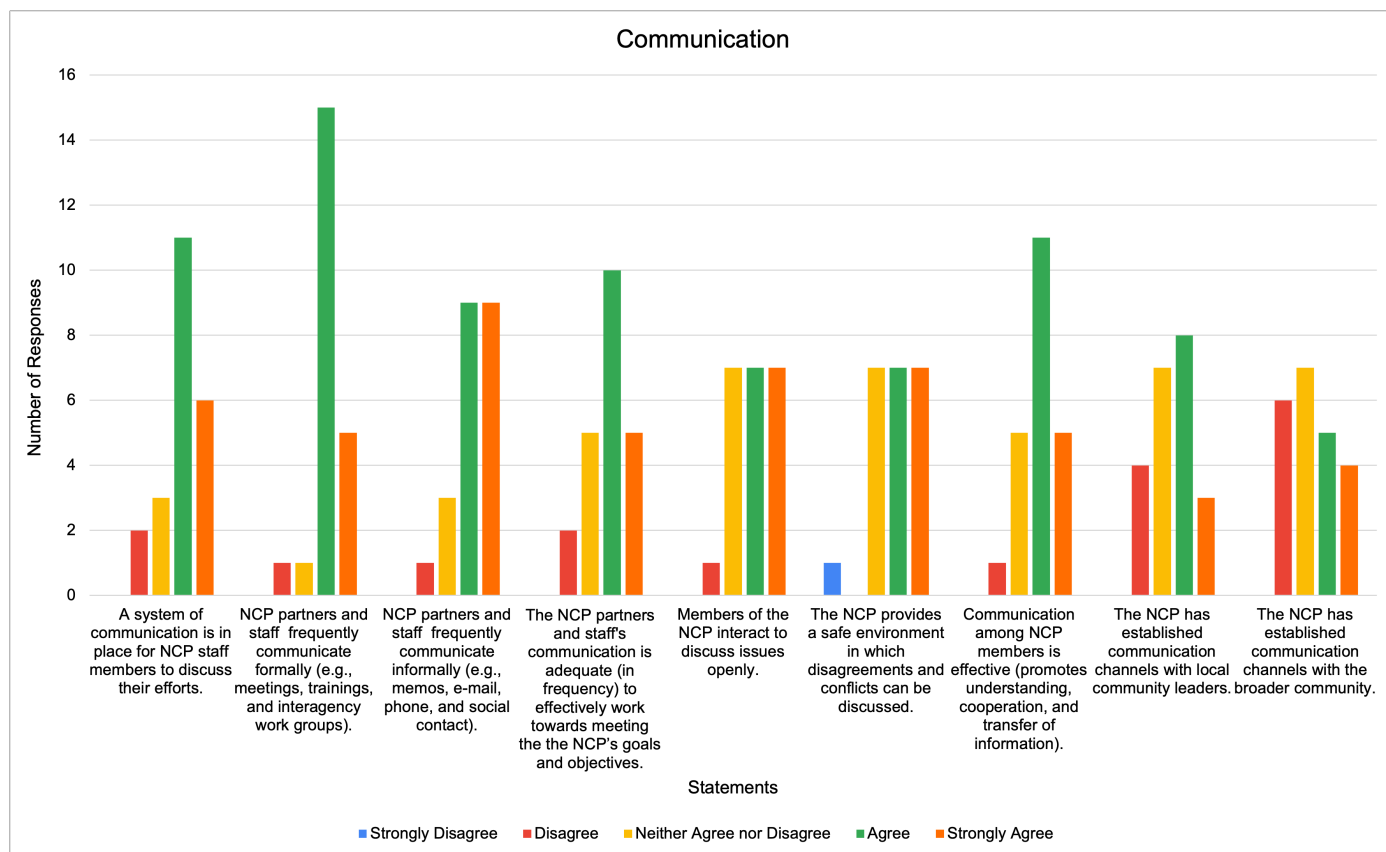
Function

In terms of the goals and objectives of the NCP, the majority of respondents agreed that the NCP clearly defined the problem it seeks to address, as well as the short and long-term project goals. While most agreed, some were unsure or disagreed on the clarity of the NCP's goals. A similar pattern was found when asked whether members agree on the NCP goals and objectives. There was also some uncertainty about whether the goals and objectives for the NCP can be realistically attained, although most respondents agreed that they can. Responses in this item ranged from 2-5, with an overall average of 4.13 out of 5, making it one of the stronger items in the survey. The highest scoring item was #2, with an average of 4.52, and the lowest scoring items were #3 and #4, with an average of 3.95 each. Detailed Functions findings are available in Appendix E.
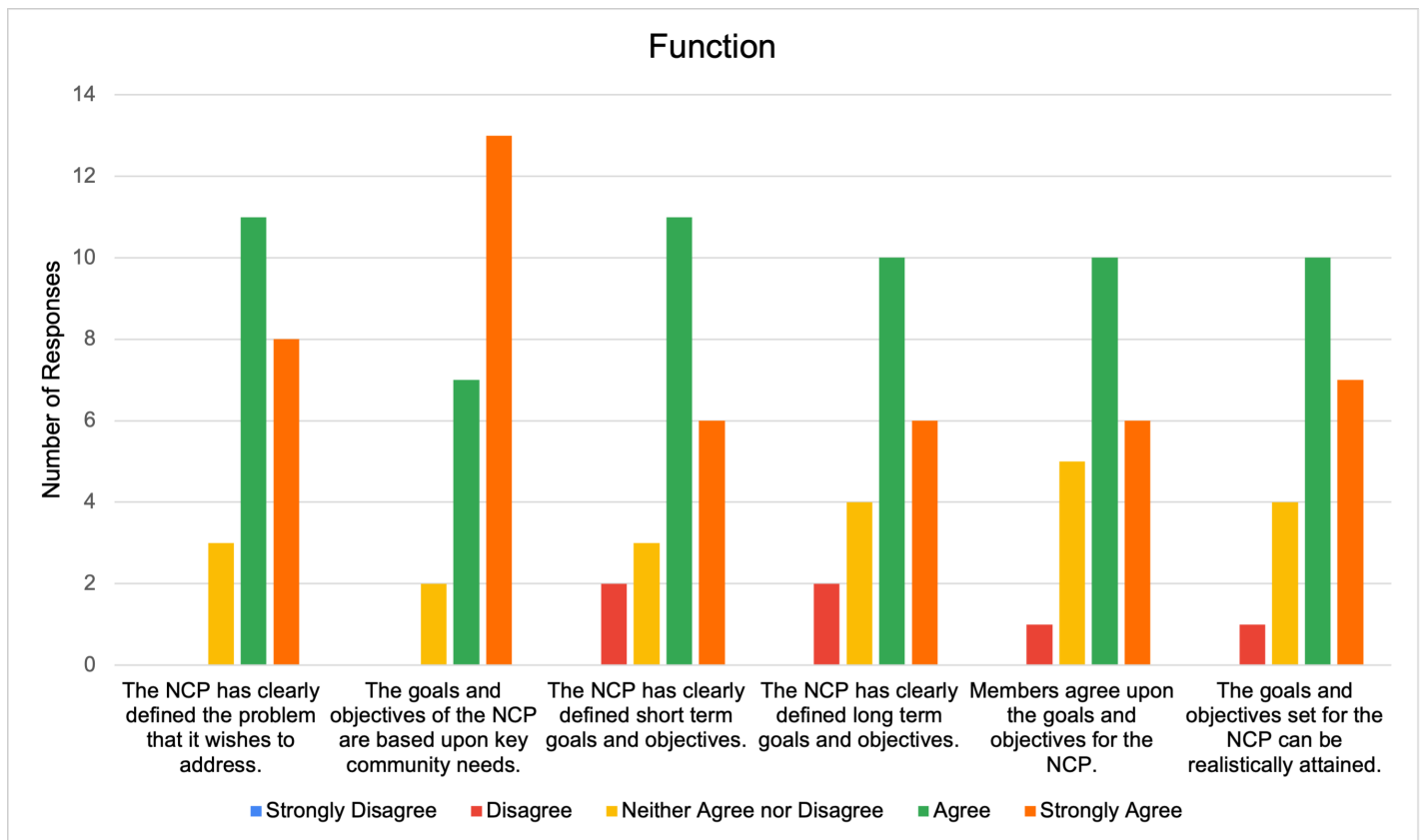
Resources

A little less than half of the 22 respondents did not agree that there is adequate financial support, with three respondents disagreeing and five respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. A majority of the respondents agree that there is adequate in-kind support to maintain NCP operations, with only four respondents disagreeing and four respondents neither agreeing or disagreeing. Most agree though, that agencies in the NCP provide resources to support the NCP operations, and that NCP partners seek outside sources of financial and in-kind support for NCP operations. Most respondents also agree that the professional expertise, skills, and specialization of NCP staff members have been identified and are used to advance the goals of the NCP, and that the NCP utilizes the cultural assets of the community. Many were neutral about whether there are plans in place to secure future funding for NCP operations and whether there are sufficient funds to sustain NCP operations for the next three years. Lastly, there were differing opinions on whether resources from the communities, such as clerical assistance and financial support, have been identified and used to advance the goals of the NCP. Responses ranged from 2-5, with an overall average of 3.86. The highest scoring item were #6 and #8, with an average of 4.19 each. The lowest scoring item was #3, with an average of 3.52. Detailed Resources findings are available in Appendix F.
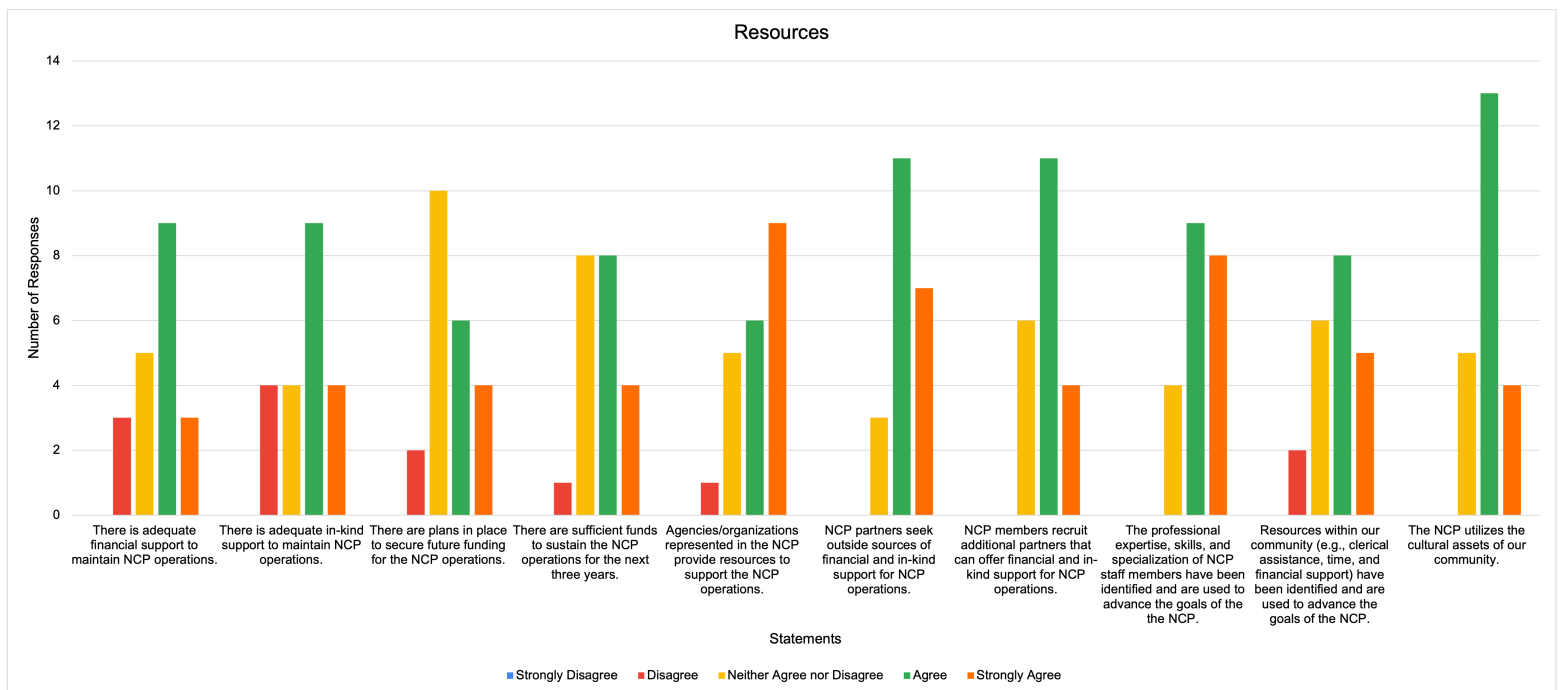
Leadership

When asked who they consider to be the leader or leaders of the NCP, many respondents considered Jocelyn (C3 Consultancy), Janelle (On The Ground Research), and Andy (MC Collaborative) to be the NCP leaders. This section is the highest scoring, with most respondents ranking "strongly agree" for each question. The responses in this item ranged from 2-5, with an overall average of 4.52 out of 5, making it the strongest category in the survey. The highest scoring item were #2 and #6, with averages of 4.67. The lowest scoring item, #1, is not far behind, with an average of 4.48. It should also be noted that everyone unanimously agreed that their selected leaders have strong interpersonal skills. Detailed Leadership findings are available in Appendix G.
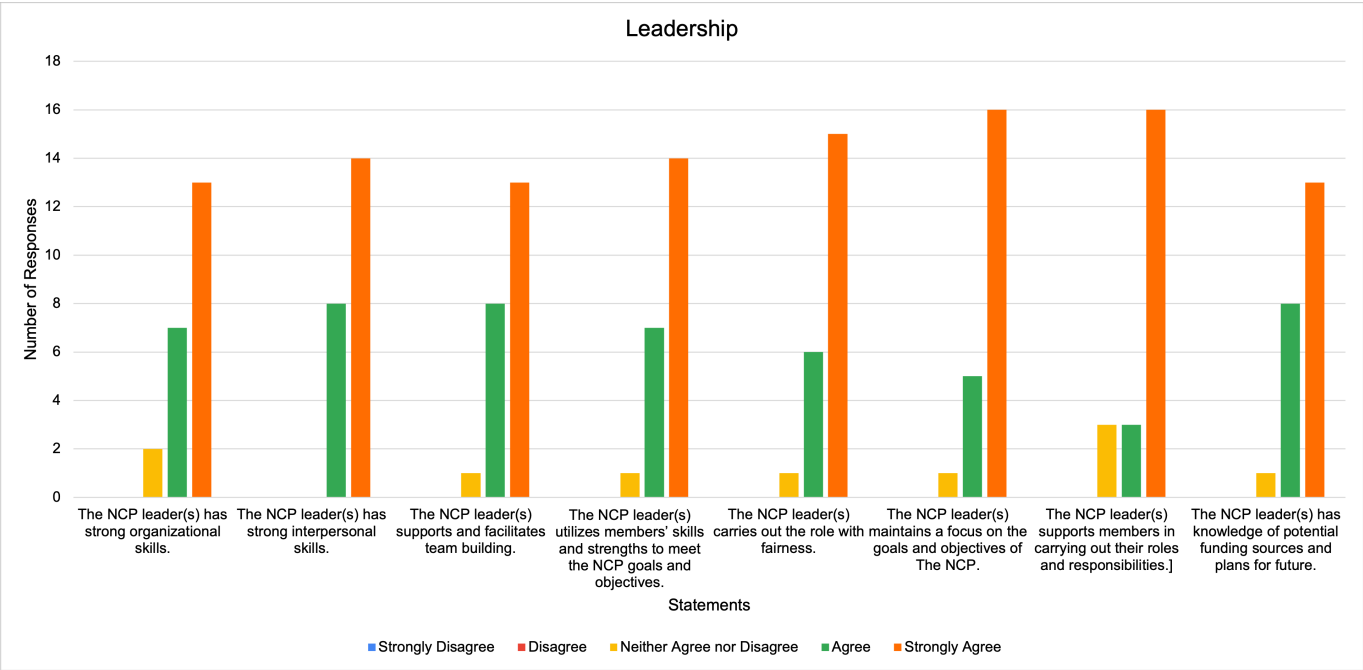
Perceptions of NCP Outcomes

Most respondents were at least somewhat confident that the NCP will exist in the community after the project is finished, will continue to successfully achieve its goals and objectives, and that the NCP will continue to make a difference within the community it serves. This section was scored on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being "Not at all confident", and 7 being "7- Very confident for future success". The responses ranged from 2-7, with an average of 5.38 out of 7. The highest scoring item was #3, with an average score of 5.86. The lowest scoring item was #2, with an average of 5.43. Detailed NCP Outcomes findings are available in Appendix H.
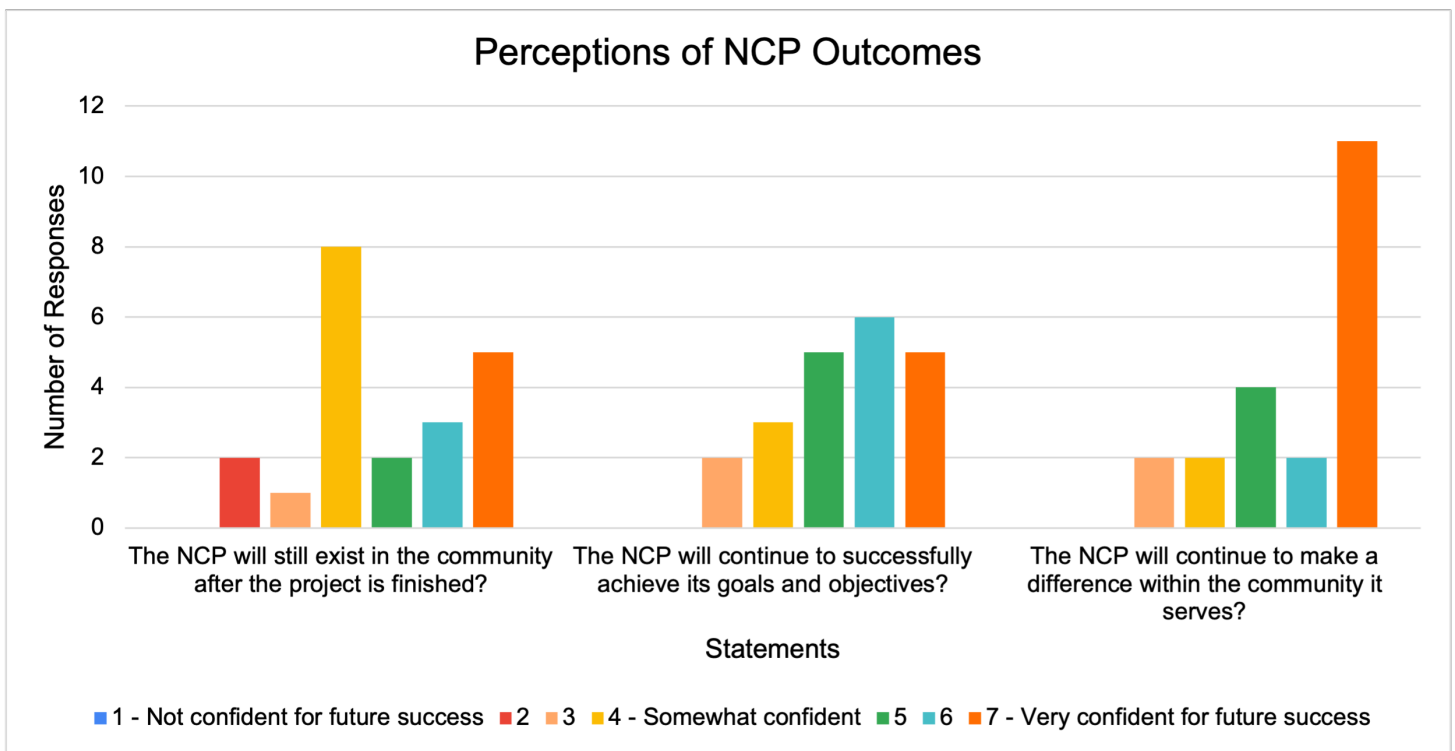
Additional Feedback

At the end of the survey, The 22 respondents were asked to provide any additional comments. A few mentioned that they appreciate the NCP's mission to have local agencies collaborate with one another instead of "working in silos", even going as far as to say it is what the city needs. There was also interest in learning more about all the NCP agencies and staff. Other comments included an interest in discussing the billing and payment cycle to better handle working around the county's schedule and mitigate issues regarding behind payments.

Conclusion

Overall, the perceptions of collaboration within the NCP are positive. There are areas that can be improved upon, such as establishing networks with the community and resolving conflicts within the NCP, but being that the NCP was active for less than seven months at the time of the survey, the results are promising. Over time, the increased collaboration between organizations will hopefully create a stronger partnership, especially with the strong leadership indicated by the partners.

Appendix

Appendix A: Context

Context Items	Average
Majority of staff members in the NCP represent the cultural diversity of the community	4.43
Most organizations have a history of working with other local organizations in their area	4.24
Agencies in the NCP overall support and encourage the activities of the NCP	4.19
Community members could support the mission of the NCP more	3.57
Key community leaders in the community could support the NCP more	3.48
Political members in the community could support the NCP more	3.29
Community members could be more aware of the NCP	3.05
Section Average	3.75

Appendix B: Members

Member Items	Average
Most members of the NCP bring unique skills to address the NCP's needs	4.57
Overall, members of the NCP have an understanding and respect for each other	4.38
Majority of NCP members have an understanding and respect for the various organizations represented within the NCP	4.19
Overall, NCP partners and staff and their respective agencies/organizations share credit for NCP successes	4.05
NCP partners and staff and the agencies they represent are willing to distribute power in a manner that is in the the NCP's best interest	4
Members of the NCP could be more willing to compromise.	3.95
Members of the NCP could trust each other more	3.80
Members of the NCP could understand the roles, rights, and responsibilities of all participating members and organizations of the NCP.	3.76
Members of the NCP could feel more ownership in the way the group works.	3.76
Section Average	4.05

Appendix C: Function

Function Items	Average
The goals and objectives of the NCP are based upon key community needs.	4.52
The NCP has clearly defined the problem that it wishes to address.	4.24
Members mostly agree upon the goals and objectives for the NCP.	4.05
The goals and objectives set for the NCP can be realistically attained.	4.05
The NCP could have more clearly defined short term goals and objectives.	3.95
The NCP could have more clearly defined long term goals and objectives.	3.95
Section Average	4.13

Appendix D: Process

Process Items	Average
Organizations in the NCP meet on a regular basis.	4.33
The NCP is as adaptable as necessary in meeting the needs of a changing community.	4.24
The NCP staff are usually assigned roles and responsibilities based on their interests and strengths.	4.10
There could be a more concrete system in place to measure progress toward goal attainment.	3.95
Strategies to carry out the goals and objectives of the NCP could be more clearly explained.	3.90
More NCP staff members could be involved in decision-making.	3.81
The NCP could market its efforts and accomplishments to the community more	3.71
The NCP could have a better system to regularly assess community needs and resources.	3.62
There could be a better system in place for resolving conflicts between the demands of partnering agencies and demands of the NCP.	3.10
Section Average	3.86

Appendix E: Communication

Communication Items	Average
NCP partners and staff frequently communicate informally	4.19
NCP partners and staff frequently communicate formally	4.10
The NCP provides a safe environment in which disagreements and conflicts can be discussed.	4
Members of the NCP could discuss issues more openly.	3.95
Communication among NCP members could be more effective	3.9
There could be a better system of communication for NCP staff members to discuss their efforts.	3.9
The NCP partners and staff's communication could be better in working towards meeting the NCP's goals and objectives.	3.81
The NCP has established some communication channels with local community leaders.	3.43
The NCP has established some communication channels with the broader community.	3.33
Section Average	3.86

Appendix F: Resources

Resources Items	Average
The professional expertise, skills, and specialization of NCP staff members have been identified and are used to advance the goals of the NCP.	4.19
NCP partners seek outside sources of financial and in-kind support for NCP operations.	4.19
Agencies/organizations represented in the NCP provide resources to support the NCP operations.	4.10
The NCP could utilize more of the cultural assets of our community.	3.95
NCP members could recruit additional partners that can offer financial and in-kind support for NCP operations.	3.90
The NCP could find more resources within our community that can be used to advance the goals of the NCP	3.76
There may be sufficient funds to sustain the NCP operations for the next three years.	3.71
There could be more in-kind support to maintain NCP operations.	3.62
There could be more financial support that helps maintain NCP operations.	3.60
There may be some plans in place to secure future funding for the NCP operations.	3.52
Section Average	3.86

Appendix G: Leadership

Leadership Items	Average
The NCP leader(s) maintains a focus on the goals and objectives of The NCP.	4.67
The NCP leader(s) has strong interpersonal skills.	4.67
The NCP leader(s) carries out the role with fairness.	4.62
The NCP leader(s) supports members in carrying out their roles and responsibilities.	4.57
The NCP leader(s) utilizes members' skills and strengths to meet the NCP goals and objectives.	4.57
The NCP leader(s) has knowledge of potential funding sources and plans for the future.	4.52
The NCP leader(s) supports and facilitates team building.	4.52
The NCP leader(s) has strong organizational skills.	4.48
Section Average	4.58

Appendix H: Perceptions of NCP Outcomes

NCP Outcomes Items	Average
There is some confidence that the NCP will continue to make a difference within the community it serves	5.86
There is some confidence that the NCP will still exist in the community after the project is finished?	5.86
There is some confidence that the NCP will continue to successfully achieve its goals and objectives?	5.43
Section Average	5.38