

# The Center at McKinleyville 2023 Evaluation Report



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## **EXECUTIVE STATEMENT FROM THE CENTER**

2023 was another period of learning and growth for the McKinleyville Family Resource Center Team (MFRC). MFRC onboarded staff to The Center at McKinleyville (The Center), maintained ongoing learning and bonding opportunities, and assessed workplace climate at The Center, an innovative, integrated service center.

In addition, the MFRC team continued to provide direct services to community members in Northern Humboldt County, while also strengthening existing programs and developing new ones. We're excited to share what we have been learning with the community in this year's report.

In the following pages, you'll learn about the process used to onboard and support staff at The Center. MFRC has worked closely with Center partners to ensure that staff from our different organizations have the opportunity to build deep connections and work in collaboration to better serve Northern Humboldt community members.

While working to integrate services at The Center, the MFRC team continued to offer direct services to clients. Due to a variety of factors—including the ending of many pandemic era services, rising costs, and slow wage growth—MFRC has seen a dramatic increase in the number of individuals and families using services. Despite the increase, the integration of The Center has enabled supportive responses to client needs.

MFRC's programmatic work has included strengthening of existing programs. Using the On The Verge model of leadership development, MFRC hosted teen, young adult, and adult leadership cohorts. MFRC also engaged in both internal and external projects around Language Justice. Our goal in both of these efforts is to strengthen some of our most successful work around building community and increasing access to services.

With belonging and access in mind, MFRC began its largest project to date with the introduction of Humboldt Income Program (HIP). HIP will provide 150 pregnant and parenting people with \$920 a month for 18 months. MFRC is proud to be the only rural recipient of this grant from California Department of Social Services.

Finally, MFRC has undergone leadership transformations in 2023. The organization started 2023 with two Co-Interim Executive Directors, Robin Baker and Aristeia Saulsbury, while longtime Executive Director, Hillarie Beyer went on maternity leave. The experiment of shared leadership was successful enough that MFRC ended 2023 with a three-person Co-Executive Director team. We will continue our work to implement The Center's vision of "A vibrant community where people are healthy and connected" as a team and share our learnings in next year's report.

Sincerely,

Aristea Saulsbury, Hillarie Beyer, and Robin Baker

## **BACKGROUND**

The Center at McKinleyville (The Center) is a community space located on the northern coast of Humboldt County. It is intended to be a safe place where all community members can go to connect, access services and resources, and participate in community events and activities. It is a multi-agency collaborative effort between seven partners in Humboldt County: McKinleyville Family Resource Center, Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, Open Door Community Health Centers, Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Social Services, North Coast Child Support Services, and Cal Poly Humboldt's Department of Social Work. The Center opened in January 2022 for staff, and community members could access services there starting in May 2022. The Center is located at 1615 Heartwood Drive in McKinleyville.

While all departments at The Center provide a robust portfolio of services both to the community and their existing staff, this year's evaluation report will primarily highlight work facilitated by the McKinleyville Family Resource Center (MFRC). During 2023, MFRC staff and leadership facilitated numerous activities and supports for The Center and MFRC staff, including numerous training opportunities; facilitation of the Center Partnership Committee (CPC) and facilitation of an On the Verge (OTV) leadership development cohort for existing staff. In addition to the in-house opportunities, MFRC staff worked with community partners to facilitate an English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) and two additional OTV cohorts with high school students and opportunity aged youth in the community. The MFRC partnered with the Sponsored Programs Foundation California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP) at Cal Poly Humboldt to help with evaluation of the activities and programs offered throughout the year.

All the work of The Center and MFRC continue to follow the following vision, mission, values, and goals which were originally identified for the 2017-2019 Strategic Plan and still apply in the 2023 Strategic Plan.

### **Vision**

A vibrant community where people are healthy and connected.

### **Mission**

We engage individuals, family and community partners in building and fostering well-being.

### **Values**

We believe:

- Families are experts in their situation, and we work in partnership with them to help them achieve their goals.

- Families live in the context of community cultural traditions and mores; the primary responsibility for developing the well-being of children lies within the family.
- Families are self-defining and include people who may be biologically related or not.
- Formal and informal connections between people are the most important supports for all individuals (more important than any service we provide).
- Assuring the well-being of individuals and families and the opportunity to contribute to building community is the foundation of a healthy society and requires universal access to support programs and services.
- Building on strengths is the most respectful, enduring, and effective way to engage and support people.
- Outcomes drive us to ensure that our programs and services are focused on quality, hold us accountable for what we do, and create a culture of learning for quality improvement.

**Figure 1: Goals & Focus Areas for The Center at McKinleyville**

<b>Goal #</b>	<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Goal Statement</b>
1	Health & Well-Being	Individuals and families experience health and well-being in all aspects of their lives
2	Connected Community	Residents are connected to one another and engaged in community events and activities
3	Safe & Nurturing Family	Family environments are safe and nurture healthy relationships
4	Economic Stability & Success	Individuals and families are economically stable
5	Collaborative Systems	Success is dependent on systems that are efficient, effective, and responsive



## Overview of McKinleyville

McKinleyville, CA is an unincorporated community located on the coast of northern California and has a population of approximately 16,262 residents. McKinleyville is located in Humboldt County, CA. The largest city in Humboldt is Eureka, which is about 13.4 miles away from McKinleyville. Highway 101 is the main highway connecting the communities along the coast in Humboldt County. According to the McKinleyville Parks & Recreation Master Plan (January 2019), most of the housing in McKinleyville is located in a 4,000-acre rectangle formed by the Pacific Ocean, the Mad River, the foothills, and the airport. Commercial activities are centered along Central Avenue from School Road to Murray Road.

The Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office has a substation in McKinleyville. The substation was built with funds raised by the citizens and business owners in McKinleyville and was opened in 1999. The station provides law enforcement services to the residents of McKinleyville, Fieldbrook, Westhaven, Orick, and all of the other unincorporated areas north of Arcata.

The McKinleyville Community Services District was created in 1970 by voters residing in McKinleyville. Initially, the District had authority to serve water and treat sewer wastes, but residents have since voted to add street lighting powers, recreational powers, and construction and oversight of the McKinleyville Library.

McKinleyville is home to two school districts. McKinleyville Union School District comprises Dow’s Prairie School (Grades TK-2), McKinleyville Middle School (Grades 6-8), and Morris Elementary (Grades 3-5). Northern Humboldt Union High School District has schools in both Arcata and McKinleyville. The high schools located in McKinleyville include McKinleyville High School (Grades 9-12) and Mad River High School, an alternative high school that also serves grades 9-12.

## Demographics

The following tables display secondary data about McKinleyville.

**Figure 2: McKinleyville Demographics, 2023**

<b>Population</b>	16,262	
<b>Race &amp; Hispanic Origin</b>	White alone	76.8%
	Black or African American alone	0.4%
	American Indian and Alaska Native alone	3.9%

	Asian alone	4.9%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander alone	0%
	Two or More Races	11.1%
	Hispanic or Latino	10.5%
<b>Language Spoken at Home</b>	English only	91.8%
	Spanish	5%
	Asian and Pacific Islander languages	1.6%
	Other languages	1.6%
<b>Educational Attainments (25 years and older)</b>	High school or equivalent degree	20.6%
	Some college, no degree	29.4%
	Associate's degree	9.1%
	Bachelor's degree	22.5%
	Graduate or professional degree	12.7%
<b>School Enrollment (Age 3 years and older)</b>	Nursery school, preschool	6.7%
	Kindergarten to 12th grade	64.3%
	College, undergraduate	19.4%
	Graduate, professional school	9.5%
<b>Income &amp; Poverty</b>	Median household income	\$68,239
	Percent of persons in poverty	14.1%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census & 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). McKinleyville CDP, California. Retrieved from [https://data.census.gov/profile/McKinleyville\\_CDP,\\_California?g=160XX00US0644910-populations-and-people](https://data.census.gov/profile/McKinleyville_CDP,_California?g=160XX00US0644910-populations-and-people)



**Figure 3: McKinleyville Schools Free or Reduced Price Meals (FRPM) (2022-2023)**

School	Grades	Enrollment	Percent Eligible Free	Percent Eligible FRPM
Dow’s Prairie Elementary	K-2	276	59.1%	67.8%
Morris Elementary	3-5	292	54.1%	58.9%
McKinleyville Middle School	6-8	360	50%	53.9%
McKinleyville High School	9-12	556	48.7%	50.9%
Mad River High School	9-12	29	82.8%	86.2%

Source: California Department of Education, Free or Reduced Price Meals 2022-23<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 4: McKinleyville Schools Racial Demographics (2022-2023)**

School	Race	Percent
Dow’s Prairie Elementary	White	53.3%
	Black or African American	0.7%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.7%
	Filipino	0%
	Asian	1.1%
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	8.3%
	Hispanic or Latino	17.8%
	Two or More Races	15.9%
Morris Elementary	White	53.4%
	Black or African American	1%
	Filipino	0%
	Asian	1.7%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	11%
	Hispanic or Latino	15.1%
	Two or More Races	16.1%
McKinleyville Middle School	White	59.4%
	Black or African American	0.3%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.6%
	Filipino	0.3%
	Asian	0.8%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	6.9%
	Hispanic or Latino	15.3%
	Two or More Races	14.2%

<sup>2</sup> California Department of Education. (2023, April 4). Free or Reduced-Price Meal Data. Retrieved from: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/filessp.asp>

McKinleyville High School	White	52.7%
	Black or African American	0.9%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.5%
	Filipino	0%
	Asian	1.1%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	9.7%
	Hispanic or Latino	12.1%
	Two or More Races	15.8%
Mad River High School	White	62.1%
	Black or African American	0%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3.4%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	10.3%
	Filipino	0%
	Asian	0%
	Hispanic or Latino	10.3%
	Two or more Races	10.3%

Source: California Department of Education, School Accountability Report Cards, 2022-23<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 5: McKinleyville Student Group Demographics (2022-2023)**

School	Socio-Economically Disadvantaged	English Learners	Students with Disabilities	Foster Youth	Homeless Youth
Dow’s Prairie Elementary	68.1%	4.7%	8.3%	0.7%	3.6%
Morris Elementary	59.6%	5.8%	22.6%	0.7%	1.7%
McKinleyville Middle School	54.7%	3.1%	18.6%	1.7%	0.8%
McKinleyville High School	51.6%	1.3%	18.7%	1.6%	4.7%
Mad River High School	86.2%	0%	20.7%	0%	41.4%

Source: California Department of Education, School Accountability Report Cards, 2022-23

<sup>3</sup> California Department of Education. (n.d.). School Accountability Report Card. Retrieved from: <https://sarconline.org/public/findASarc>

## **METHODS**

CCRP utilized a mixed-methods approach for this project. Both primary and secondary data sources are included in the report.

### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data refers to information that is already available to the public. Secondary data was utilized for the background information on McKinleyville, as well as for background information on English Language Advisory Committees, a part of the language justice work.

### **Primary Data**

Primary data refers to information gathered directly from first-hand sources and was the primary type of data collected for this report. Data was collected through surveys, focus groups, and meeting minutes provided by MFRC staff. Survey data was analyzed from the Center Partnership Committee annual self-assessment as well as the pre-post surveys for all staff trainings. Focus groups were conducted with three cohorts from the On The Verge leadership program, and meeting notes were provided from the leadership team and ELAC committee meetings.

## **RESULTS**

### **Community Outreach**

#### **Guaranteed Income Project**

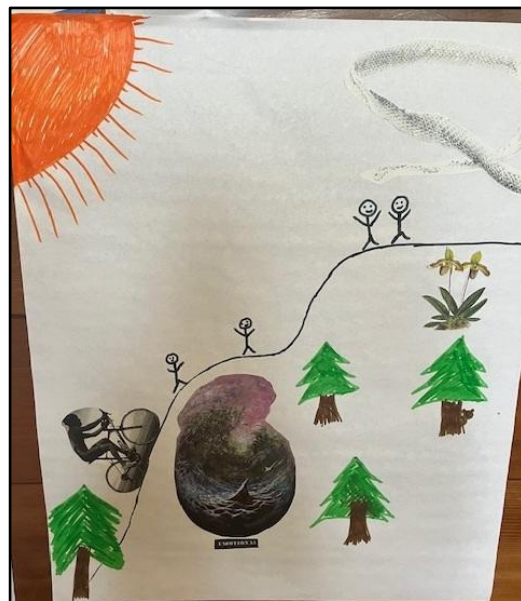
In June of 2023, The McKinleyville Family Resource Center, along with a number of local partner agencies, began the planning phase for a guaranteed income program. The program is funded by the California Department of Social Services with philanthropic matches from Social Finance, The California Endowment, Humboldt Area Foundation, and local donors. Program enrollment opened in December 2023 and is now known as the Humboldt Income Program. Once it begins, the Humboldt Income Program will provide direct payments of \$920 for 18 months to 150 people, no strings attached. To be eligible for the program, people must meet the following criteria: 1) Pregnant people in 1st or 2nd trimester at the time the referral is made, 2) 18 years old or over and living in Humboldt County, and 3) At 200% or below of the federal poverty level. Currently, there are eight referral partners working with the MFRC to enroll people in the program. Program enrollment will continue on a rolling basis until 150 people are enrolled or through May of 2024, whichever comes first.

More details will be available on the program in future annual evaluation reports, but it is important to highlight that this is the first guaranteed income project in Humboldt County, and the only rural community in the state to receive the grant. Conversations with MFRC leadership revealed that they were in a unique position to receive the grant due to the existing network created by the work of The Center. Leadership specifically highlighted the work of the Center Partnership Committee and the On the Verge cohorts and their ability to pull together the commitments from partners in a very short application window. This collaborative effort is just one example of the types of opportunities that are, and will continue to be, available through the work of The Center and their mixed service delivery approach.

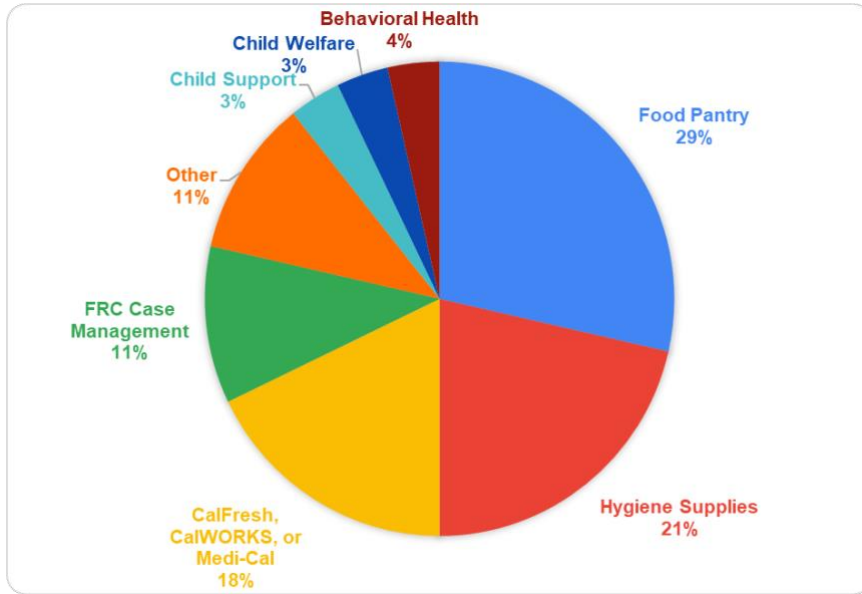
## Community Survey

Through July to September 2023, The Center at McKinleyville Community Survey was administered to community members that have accessed services at The Center or may need to access services there in the future. The Center staff distributed the link to existing clients and through their monthly community newsletter. The survey was available in English and Spanish. A total of twelve people responded to at least one question on the survey. The results are presented below.

Survey respondents had a varying level of interactions at The Center with 18% visiting 1-2 times a week, 55% visiting 1-2 times a month, 18% visiting 2-4 times a year, and 9% who haven't had a chance to visit The Center yet. Of those respondents, 100% spoke English in the home and 10% spoke Spanish. Sixty-five percent (65%) identify as white, 18% as Hispanic or Latino, 9% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 9% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 9% as two or more races. Those that have had a need to access services at The Center have accessed a range of services, which are outlined in Figure 9 below.



**Figure 9. Services & Programs Accessed at The Center**



Survey participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with five statements about The Center. The results of the questions and their responses are outlined in Figure 10 below.

**Figure 10. Feedback on The Center Services**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Center is a place where I can easily access resources.	73%	18%	9%	0	0
The Center feels like a safe and nurturing space.	73%	18%	9%	0	0
The Center staff are helpful.	91%	9%	0	0	0
The Center has helped me form healthy relationships with others.	50%	10%	40%	0	0
The Center is an asset to McKinleyville and surrounding communities.	73%	27%	0	0	0

Community participants were also asked two open-ended questions in which they shared what they liked most about The Center, along with what additional services or programs they would like to see offered. A majority of responses from community members highlighted the staff as what they like most about The Center. They noted how friendly, attentive, reliable, organized, and fast staff have always been in all their interactions. Participants appreciate the centralized

location that is clean and welcoming and provides a mixed delivery approach to services. For specific services, community members like having access to a local food pantry and hygiene closet.

When asked if there are any additional services or programs the community wish was offered only a few suggestions were made including 1) Extended hours that include evenings and/or weekends, specifically for food pantry; 2) Provide a shower service and additional items in the hygiene kit; and 3) More options for behavioral health providers.

*“Friendly staff, clean and tidy organization, and they work with the clients to the best of their abilities.”*

-Community Survey Respondent

*“I like the central location, the mixed delivery and no closed-door approach”*

-Community Survey Respondent

Overall, the relationship The Center has with the local community seems to be thriving, especially considering they had only been open for a little over a year when this survey was conducted. It is evident that community members are accessing services through a number of departments and feel welcome and safe when doing so. The only area of focus where there may be room for more community outreach is with forming healthy relationships with others, as 40% selected this statement as neutral, likely indicating they either aren't sure or would like to see more.

## On The Verge Leadership Program

In 2023, the MFRC facilitated five On the Verge leadership cohorts. On the Verge is a program recognized statewide that is dedicated to developing non-traditional leaders to help address the educational, social, health, and economic inequities that exist within a community. The framework has been used throughout the development of The Center to help participants build relationships with each other, build new skills, and create something together. There were three cohorts completed in 2023, and two that were in early stages of development towards the end of the year. The three completed cohorts included one for teenage students at Arcata and McKinleyville high schools, one for opportunity youth (young people between the ages of 16 to 24 years old who are disconnected from school and work<sup>4</sup>), and one for staff at The Center from a mix of departments. The first cohort in development is with Live Well Humboldt, a network of community health improvement collaborators committed to the following activities: 1) Aligning actions to improve health across Humboldt County, 2) Centralizing data collection and analysis to drive change, 3) Identifying shared measures and targets for community health improvement, 4) Engaging the community and creating broad ownership for local health, and 5) Mobilizing

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<sup>4</sup> Youth.Gov. (n.d.). Opportunity Youth. Retrieved from <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/opportunity-youth>

support to advance health equity and improve community health.<sup>5</sup> The second cohort in development is for adult community leaders who identify as black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

Cohort members were all selected based on recommendations from staff at The Center or by community partners. All participants were paid to participate in the program and attend monthly meetings as well as a couple of day-long retreats throughout the year. To assess the impact of the program on cohort participants, CCRP staff conducted a focus group during the final retreat for the three cohorts that ended in 2023: teens, opportunity aged youth, and The Center staff. Since the three cohorts were composed of different populations of the community, some of the responses were unique to each cohort, but a majority of responses were common themes for the program as a whole.

The first two focus group questions asked participants to share what came to mind when they thought of a community leader before participating in the program and then how they would define a community leader after the program. Before participating in the program, a majority of participants thought of a community leader as someone in an official leadership role who has decision making power, has well-rounded knowledge of all things happening in the community, and is comfortable taking a public stance and making difficult decisions to help carry out a vision. Some shared they think of a leader as someone who is older, has numerous years of professional or educational experience, and is well known and respected in the community they are leading. Leadership qualities mentioned in response to this question included: responsible, cooperative, empathetic, supportive, compassionate, and well-spoken.

*“You don’t just lead; you communicate with everyone and that is leading as well. Not just one leader, we are all leaders.”*

-OTV Cohort Participant

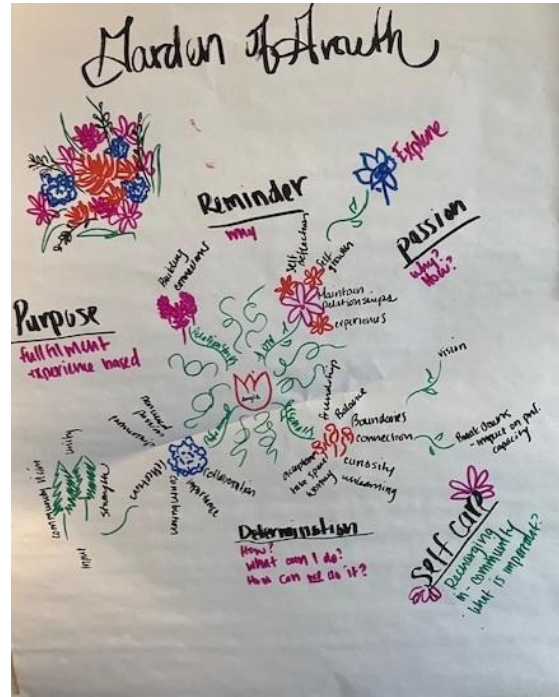
After completion of the program, a majority of cohort members had new ideas for what a community leader is. They think that many of the same leadership qualities exist, but they now believe that anyone can be a community leader, even if they aren’t in an official position of power or at the forefront of a community. Participants now see a community leader as anyone who is willing to listen, speak out, and act on behalf of their community, Someone who is dedicated to helping those around them and building others up as leaders. Some participants think that a leader can not be successful unless the people they are leading are successful as well, a concept that participants think is especially important in rural communities such as ours. Through this program, cohort members learned that they already are, and can continue to be, community leaders, each with their own vision and unique leadership style.

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<sup>5</sup> Live Well Humboldt. (n.d.). Who is Live Well Humboldt?. Retrieved from <https://www.livewellhumboldt.org/tiles/index/display?id=299850684551035088>



The next set of questions asked cohort members to explain which aspects of the program were most valuable to them, along with which of the lessons will have the biggest impact on their development as emerging community leaders. The most valuable aspects of the programs were similar among the three cohorts, with the primary theme being that participants felt heard and respected by their program leaders and peers. The program leaders helped them to find the power within themselves to feel safe in speaking up and sharing their open and honest thoughts, while also being vulnerable at times. The intimate nature of the groups allowed them to break down emotional barriers with one another and form personal connections that they can continue in their work, life, or educational settings beyond the program. Numerous participants alluded to the idea that “building confidence in your personal life leads to confidence in your professional life” (OTV Program Participant), which is why the aspect of personal relationship building was so important to participants.



Each cohort participated in different lessons and projects throughout the year and had different ideas on which activities made the biggest impact on their development as a leader. For the teen group, participants appreciated the lessons on inclusivity and learned how important it is to take the time to let people express themselves and share personal stories. The open conversations helped them to develop new perspectives on our local communities, and they now feel more confident in their ability to communicate and lead a diverse group of people.

*Being able to be myself is a big power to have. I bring a vulnerability that helps others feel comfortable...I didn't realize how much power I had, but OTV helped with this, and I can use it to affect change.*  
 OTV Cohort Participant

The opportunity youth cohort had similar feedback but also shared how much they liked learning about the statistics on local substance use (a topic related to their cohort project) and all the resources available in our community. The lessons helped them to recognize the importance of communication

and collaboration across different sectors of the community. The Center employees, who were tasked with planning the Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings, learned how much work goes into coordinating meetings and developing effective methods for collaboration within those



meetings. The coordination helped them to understand the complexity of leadership and how it is impossible for one person to do it all.

Participants were next asked how the program shifted the relationship with their peers or greater community— all cohort members shared they now feel more connected to both. Through the monthly meetings and retreats, participants had the opportunity to get to know people they wouldn't normally interact with and realized how much they had in common with one another. The program provided a safe space for them to share their personal and professional experiences and not feel judged. Through these interactions, participants feel more confident in their ability to collaborate with intention and care to develop and lead new opportunities for their communities.

*They [OTV meetings] feel like home. Something you look forward to even if it's just once a month. There is no restriction or barrier in terms of how you are...it makes it empowering to be able to come to a place and be who you are.*  
-OTV Cohort Participant

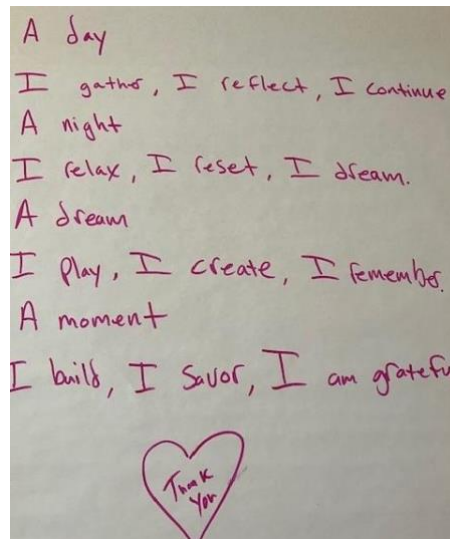
When asked if there were any changes they would like to see or additional lessons or activities, participants had just a few suggestions. Multiple people suggested there be more clarity on the program enrollment materials, as some were unclear on what to expect going into the program. More information on the program's goals, purpose, and intentions early on would be useful not only for participants but also for their parents, teachers, or colleagues, as they need time away to participate in program activities. While the schedule seemed to work fine for the teens and opportunity youth cohorts, some participants from The Center cohort suggested there should be more collaboration on setting the schedule. This collaboration would be helpful to their personal and professional lives, as there were sometimes conflicts with OTV activities. All program participants would also like more time together, either through an increase in meeting frequency or extension of the one-year program. They would like to use the additional time to engage with each other, work on their projects, and to do more outreach in the community and/or with the other cohorts.

Each cohort was asked if there were any topics or activities that were not covered in the program that they were hoping for. Some participants would be interested in receiving a book or a journal that would help them to track what they're learning and skills they are developing. Participants suggested defining more tangible milestones at the beginning of the program, so they can celebrate when those milestones are met. They were very proud of their projects, and some participants suggested establishing a plan for follow up opportunities so they can see the evolution of their work. Additionally, participants liked the few presentations from community-based organizations and would be interested in receiving more.

Overall, participants were very happy with their experience in the program, and numerous participants said it was a "life changing experience." They plan to nurture and grow the skills

they learned and use them in both professional and personal spaces for the rest of their lives. Participants look forward to more opportunities to collaborate and lead others in the community.

When asked if there was anything else they wanted to share, all participants acknowledged how much they appreciated the program leadership. Many shared that they had never felt such respect from an adult or someone they see to be in a position of power, but the leaders of this program always made them feel safe and empowered them to be open and honest. Numerous participants noted that going into the program they thought it would just be something to put on their resume, but shortly after starting, they recognized it was much more than that. They hope that this program can continue to expand to more people in the community as it was beneficial to them in so many ways.



## Language Justice

One of The Center at McKinleyville's main tenets is to be an open and welcoming place for all. The Center believes in language justice and that the connection between language and culture is beneficial to a community's well-being. Language justice is the belief and advocacy for society to honor language and culture as human rights. Language justice often involves building and sustaining spaces within organizations that embrace multilingualism. Language justice has significant implications, as communication gaps act as a significant barrier for people advocating for the services they need. Without proper methods of communication, portions of community voice may be lost. Language justice ensures that all voices are heard and understood in the process of community change.

The Center at McKinleyville has sponsored and co-hosted events and programs in the community to support language justice efforts countywide. The following subsection gives a brief outline of one the activities they have recently supported.

## English Learner Advisory Committee

English Learner Advisory Committees are mandatory for schools in California that have at least 21 English Learner students. When Arcata High reached this threshold, The McKinleyville Family Resource Center (MFRC) staff was contracted by Northern Humboldt Union High School District (NHUHSD) to engage with Spanish Speaking families and facilitate the formation of the English Learner Advisory Committee at Arcata High School. A full report on

the ELAC committee is available upon request to MFRC staff, but this section will provide an overview of the evaluation work done so far and recommendations to come from it.

The MFRC has established itself as a leader in conducting language justice and equity work and is known in the community as a safe place for Spanish speakers. With this expertise, they are able to provide families with spaces to engage, learn, and share experiences and concerns around parent and school engagement while centering students in the work. During the 2022-23 academic year, staff worked with parents from Arcata High School to provide foundational information on the school system. Specifically, families were provided with information about administrative roles, attendance, resources, and school system structures and methods of communication between the parents and school administration. The group also provided a space for concerns, clarifications, advocacy, and feedback from parents to the administrators. During this time, the school took several steps to improve language access in Spanish, including translating some of the documents that parents need to be engaged in their children's education and hiring a bilingual administrator who can take responsibility for the ELAC going forward

There has been a steady increase from 2017 to 2022 of English learners attending Arcata High School, with a total of 27 English Learner students enrolled at the end of the 2022 school year. With numbers increasing, so is the need for student and parent support. NHUHSD contracted with MFRC for the 2023-24 school year to continue to support the school to meet this state requirement.

## **Staff & Leadership Development**

### Onboarding Training Reflection

After years of planning and community collaboration, The Center at McKinleyville officially opened its doors to the community on May 20, 2022, with a grand opening and ribbon cutting celebration. Prior to opening services to the community, all staff participated in two full days of training (May 3 & 4, 2022) and then weekly half-day trainings moving forward. Following each day of training, staff were asked to participate in two evaluation activities. The first was a pre-post training evaluation administered via Survey Monkey. The results of those findings were analyzed by CCRP and presented in the 2021-22 Evaluation Report.

The second evaluation activity was a handwritten questionnaire. The first question *“How will your work or practice change as a result of participating in the training”* was given to staff at the end of each training day and was put in a sealed envelope with the staff member's name on it. The envelopes were stored by leadership, and, about a year later, staff were given back the same form and asked to answer the question, *“How has your work or practice changed as a result of participating in the training?”*. The number of responses to the paper questionnaire varied by

each date, and, while there was a good turnout of responses for the first question, the responses to the follow up a year later were limited. However, there were still some major themes that emerged through responses from the first day of training, and this section will summarize them by each day of training.

*Day 1- Introduction:* Through this first day of training, staff highlighted how they had a clearer understanding of the shared goals and visions of all the departments housed at The Center. With this new understanding, staff felt they would be able to provide more support and advocacy to their clients. They were looking forward to building strong collaborations with other departments and continuing to share their knowledge with one another. A year later, staff have utilized the relationships and knowledge established during those first few months not only to help provide direct services to clients but also to apply for grants that require a consortium of community organizations.

*Day 2- Land Acknowledgement:* Staff responses highlighted how the training on land acknowledgements will help them to educate both clients and outside partners about the land on which they reside and are working on. Numerous staff said they would commit to taking more time to research the cultures of the clients they work with and will use that information to help inform their assessments and plans for service.

*Day 3- Racial Equity:* This day of training helped staff learn to work with a multitude of people from different backgrounds, and to develop more self-awareness of the microaggressions that can exist when working with communities different than one's own. They learned tools to help call out those microaggressions and have the hard conversations around racial equity, and staff have continued to use those tools a year later.

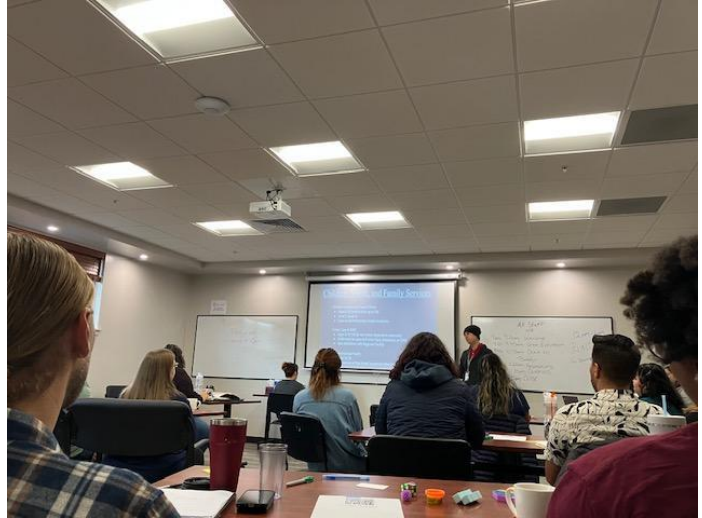
*Day 4- Mental Health First Aid:* Through this training, staff learned to recognize some of the signs that indicate a person may need mental health support. They learned tips for how to take these signs into account as they work not only with clients but with their coworkers as well. The conversations helped some staff to break down their stigmas around mental health and know that they have someone to go to when they need help.

*Day 5- Safety Policy:* The discussion of The Center's Safety Policy helped staff to acknowledge that the idea of safety may mean different things to people and that it's a personal and individual feeling. Staff shared that they plan to be more conscious of their interactions with clients and coworkers, especially when discussing trauma.

*Day 6 & 9- Onsite Program Collaboration:* Staff left the two days of training with a new awareness of all the different programs and services available through The Center. Respondents noted feeling more confident in their ability to refer families to other resources and trust that

their clients will be well taken care of. They were interested in learning more from individual staff members, and staff have continued to use these relationships to build new coalitions and programs throughout The Center.

*Day 7- Five Goal Areas:* The theme from this day was similar to previous days in that staff were looking forward to promoting their services to a diverse group of community members and establishing The Center as a safe place for all as a way to integrate into the community. Additionally, they were looking forward to collaboration with other programs to help achieve their goals together.



*Day 8- Evaluation:* This day helped staff to understand the importance of evaluation, both for an individual and for a group. Some staff shared that after the training, they could be open and honest about their experiences in the workplace and plan to use the new knowledge tools to give clients that opportunity to provide feedback as well.

*Day 10 & 11 - Centering Justice:* Staff left this training feeling more prepared to use appropriate language in the workplace to ensure that everyone feels welcome. Respondents recognized how important it is to constantly learn and grow and have continued to use those practices since opening.

### Additional Staff Training Opportunities

Following the eleven days of onboarding training, all staff represented in The Center had the opportunity to participate in trainings throughout the year. For two of the training sessions, the same process for the onboarding reflection was followed, and staff answered two questions- one right after the training and one six months to a year after the training. This section will summarize the reflections of two trainings: 1) Working With Challenging Clients: Tools & Insights for Practice, and 2) Queer Justice in the Workplace.

## Working With Challenging Clients: Tools & Insights for Practice

This reflection activity received twenty-three responses right after the training, and thirteen (56%) six months to a year later. When asked how their work or practice will change as a result of participating in the training, the main theme to emerge was that staff intended to be more self-aware of their emotions and level of engagement in the work. They learned tools to help identify and address their feelings to help ensure they can be their best selves to work with the clients. In addition to the self-awareness tools, they learned new strategies for having compassionate interactions with clients, even when the conversations seem hard. Multiple staff noted that they were reminded not to take things personally, and that they must be aware of their own implicit biases.

*“I feel more comfortable being myself in this space at The Center. The more I can accept myself, the more I can be present for clients and my coworkers”*

-Staff Pre-Post Survey Respondent

After working at The Center for a while, staff reflected on how the training has continued to change their work or practice by practicing daily reflections and continuing to focus on self-awareness. When working directly with clients, they try not to just focus on the stressors or trauma but to focus on protective factors and the ways these skills can be incorporated into the daily lives of clients. Some staff noted that they can now acknowledge their own stigmas around mental health, which has allowed them to be more welcoming and impartial when working with clients.

## Queer Justice in the Workplace

This training reflection activity was one of the most successful in terms of response rate, as there were twenty responses right after the training and eighteen responses (90%) about a year later. Respondents to the first question of how it will change their work going forward noted how transformative the conversation was in helping them to understand the trauma that often exists within the LGBTQIA community and how they can work together to facilitate safe spaces for both their clients and coworkers. For a number of participants, this was the first time they had this type of conversation in the workplace, and they shared how it will help them to be more aware of their own biases and be sure they are always using inclusive language. Staff appreciated the opportunity to have the open and honest conversations with their fellow employees and are looking forward to continuing the conversations and learning more from one another.

*“I feel that we have all embraced queer justice, and all have collectively made a much more comforting and welcoming environment for queer individuals and others.”*

-Staff Pre-Post Survey Respondent



Over a year later, staff continue to use the knowledge gained during the training. A number of staff shared how they are able to focus more on listening to everyone's unique experiences and challenges and focus less on trying to connect based on their own personal experiences. Staff continue to use inclusive words and are mindful of preferred pronouns to try to make clients and coworkers feel safe and comfortable. There are more open conversations about queer justice in the workplace and a number of departments have created groups focused on diversity, equity and inclusive and have even planned special events. Overall, this training was very impactful to staff and leadership, and many noted that it helped them be better in the jobs.

## **Workplace Climate Survey**

Between August-November 2023, the MFRC leadership team worked with CCRP to develop a workplace climate survey for all The Center staff to help understand the overall experience of working at The Center after being there for a little over a year. Additionally, the survey was meant to help assess if there is a shared vision among staff. A total of 40 respondents answered at least one question on the survey. The results presented below are not reflective of all staff working at The Center but represent the perspective of about 80% of staff. Of the respondents, 59% work full time (30-40 hours a week), 8% for 20-30 hours a week, 18% for 10-20 hours a week, and 15% occasionally (less than 10 hours a week).

The survey also included a couple of demographics questions about staff. Of the 39 staff members that responded to the question about race and ethnicity, 8% identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, 31% as Hispanic or Latino, 10% as black or African American, 64% as white, and 8% as two or more races. Thirty-eight participants responded to the question about primary language spoken in the home. 97% percent responded that they speak English as the primary language in the home, and 16% indicated they speak Spanish.



The first question asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with statements about working at The Center. Figure 6 below summarizes their responses.

**Figure 6. Workplace Climate Question Table**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
I have regular contact with other programs working out of The Center.	15%	50%	25%	10%	0
I am actively collaborating with other programs at The Center.	10%	46%	28%	13%	3%
All-staff trainings led by The Center have helped me to understand the work of other programs.	33%	49%	18%	0	0
I feel I am a valued part of The Center.	31%	54%	13%	3%	0
The workplace environment is healthy and safe.	52%	31%	13%	5%	0
Clients feel comfortable coming into The Center.	26%	62%	13%	0	0
We are making progress in meeting the goals envisioned for The Center.	18%	54%	28%	0	0
We are developing a shared vision for The Center.	26%	57%	18%	0	0
The leadership team takes into account my ideas and suggestions.	23%	33%	41%	3%	0

The survey also included a number of open-ended questions in which staff were asked to describe more about their experiences working at The Center. When asked what they think the benefits are of having all the agencies located in one facility, the major themes to emerge were convenience and accessibility.

The benefit of convenience was referenced for both clients and staff. Clients have a “one stop shop” for services in an environment that staff intentionally work towards making feel welcoming and safe for everyone. By providing in-person, wrap-around services in one location, staff noted it takes some of the stress off their clients, as they don’t have to spend additional time or gas money to access resources.



For staff, it is convenient, as they are able to refer and make warm hand offs for their clients. This can mean filling out a referral form and sending it directly to someone they know in the

*“The Center has given me a sense of hope for social safety nets in a way I haven’t felt in years”*

-Workplace Survey Respondent

building, or in some situations they are able to walk the client over directly to another service provider. By providing these warm hands off, staff feel especially confident that clients are getting the services they need when they visit The Center. With the co-location, service providers have a better understanding of the specific services each agency currently provides, and they usually receive prompt communication when any changes are made. With all these benefits, staff noted an increase in accessibility to services.

Staff were also asked to share how their placement in an integrated service agency changed the way they work, and, again, common themes emerged. Respondents again highlighted how their new professional relationships not only help make additional services more accessible, but they are also able to better explain the processes of other departments and tell clients what to expect. Some staff noted they have a more holistic and community-based approach in their work, as they have gained a broader perspective and have an easier time of grasping the larger context of needs across the community. Finally, in some cases it has allowed some departments to be more competitive for shared funding opportunities as they apply as a collaborative.

Overall, staff had very positive things to say about their experience working at The Center. They responded that some of the things they like most about working there are the people, the friendly atmosphere, the feeling of safety, and all the support from team members and directors. When asked if there were any changes to recommend to leadership, there were just a few common themes to emerge which are outlined below:

- More opportunities for all staff connections that allow time for discussion not only of individual program operations but also values and visions for The Center as whole.
- Schedule a recurring meeting time to provide updates on agency partnerships and programs to ensure that new staff and interns are aware of all the services.
- Expand community outreach efforts.
- Allow meeting rooms to be booked further in advance.

*“I love working in a place that allows me to grow and feel supported. My bosses and other staff support me to try new things, fail or learn, and advance in ways one could only hope for in a workplace.”*

-Workplace Survey Respondent

## Center Partnership Committee

### Committee Description

The Center Partnership Committee (CPC) is made up of representatives of core partners at The Center at McKinleyville selected by their organizations. These individuals represent a broad cross-section of employees and all of the core partners and programs within The Center. Committee members are trusted by their peers and empowered by organizational leadership to make decisions regarding The Center's daily operations. The CPC meets as often as necessary to ensure quality of partnership and fidelity to the Strategic Plan. Responsibility for facilitation of the CPC is shared by members of the CPC.

#### Responsibilities:

- Review and revise existing partnership agreements, MOUs, and policies annually
- Refer issues specific to each partner organization to the designated partner representative to be resolved within that partner organization
- Support and centralize committees and workgroups of The Center
- Review and plan cross organizational trainings
- Ensure that The Center programs are in line with both the Evaluation Plan and Strategic Plan
- Develop and adopt agreements and policies to address internal conflicts
- Receive feedback from staff and support staff to resolve internal conflicts
- Ensure that The Center Operating Procedures are in line with each organization's legal and programmatic mandates and requirements
- Meet bi-annually with the Community Advisory Group to receive feedback from program participants to ensure quality and co-plan the Community Input Events
- Advance the work and provide oversight and quality assurance of the Strategic Plan
- Disseminate information about decisions made by The Center Partnership Committee to staff, partners, and public

### CPC Annual Self-Assessment

Since 2019 when the CPC first began to work together, they have responded to an annual self-assessment survey tool. The tool was initially modeled after the Center for Health Care Strategies Partnership Assessment Tool for Health (PATH), then subsequently adapted based on input from previous evaluators and MFRC leadership. The PATH tool was originally designed for community-based organizations and health care organizations in existing partnerships that are working towards improving health outcomes in their communities. The tool pursued three primary objectives for partnerships: (1) Understand progress toward benchmarks characteristic of effective partnerships; (2) Identify areas for further development; and (3) Guide strategic

conversations.<sup>6</sup> Tailored for the CPC, the tool now assesses progress across ten different domains pertinent to their partnership. Insights gleaned from the annual survey assist in fulfilling the objectives set forth by the PATH tool. A full report of all their responses is available upon request to The Center leadership, but this section will highlight some of the areas where there was significant improvement or room for growth between 2019 to 2023.

The first section was synergy which included twelve synergy activities for respondents to choose from. Out of those, there were three that saw a significant increase in the number of group members that ranked the activities as going ‘Extremely’ or ‘Very Well’. In 2023, all the group members ranked the following activities as going ‘Extremely’ or ‘Very Well’, a significant increase from 2019 when 57-71% of respondents gave these activities that high of a ranking:

- Respond to the needs and problems of the community.
- Build strong collaborations related to creating work environments that meet the needs of families and their employees.
- Build stronger community relationships across cultural groups.

*“Participants appear sincere and genuine. Our values and concerns are discussed openly and with understanding. Consensus occurs regularly.”*  
-CPC Member

Even with these improvements, there are still some areas for growth as some group members still think they are doing ‘Somewhat Well’ with two synergy activities: 1) Obtaining support from individuals and organizations in the community that can either block the partnerships’ plans or help move them forward, and 2) Ability to carry out comprehensive activities that connect multiple services, programs, or systems.

The leadership evaluation section also saw improvements with 100% of members now agreeing that they do ‘Very Good’ or ‘Excellent’ at resolving conflict among partners and helping the partnership to be creative and look at things differently. Some members would still like to see

*“Outstanding leadership. Incredibly smart people at the table. The combination of the group’s leadership skills is absolutely fantastic.”*  
-CPC Member

improvement in a couple of areas including the leadership taking responsibility for partnerships; combining the perspectives, resources, and skills of partners; and recruiting diverse people and organizations into the partnership. Overall, CPC members appear to be happy with their connection to each other and the facilitation from leadership. Respondents noted feeling fully engaged and consistently informed about the topics being discussed.

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<sup>6</sup> Center for Health Care Strategies. (2017, October). Partnership Assessment Tool for Health. Retrieved from: <https://www.chcs.org/resource/partnership-assessment-tool-health/>

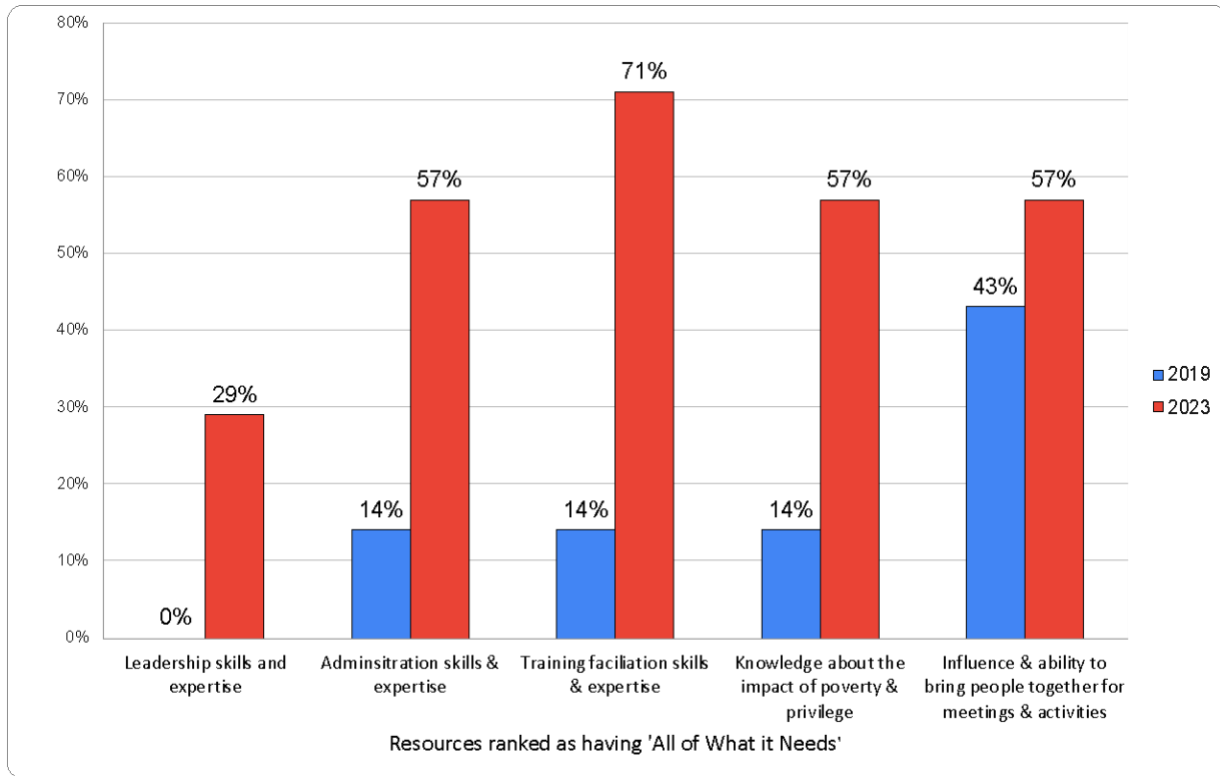
In terms of efficiency, there is still some room for growth as 14% think they are making ‘Excellent Use’ of financial resources, which is the same ranking as in 2019. There were also improved rankings for the efficiency activities with 71% ranking use of in-kind resources as ‘Excellent’ in 2023, which is up from 14% in 2019. Similarly, 57% ranked use of time as ‘Excellent’, which is also up from 14% in previous years. Group members noted that they are interested in developing a long-term meeting plan and agendas, as well as developing a clear budget for ongoing learning opportunities to help improve efficiency.

The effectiveness of administration and management of the partnership has remained relatively consistent over the past few years based on the data that is available. In 2023, the CPC members ranked five out of the nine activities listed in the evaluation tool. Out of the five ranked, three had the same or improved rankings from previous years with a majority of members ranking them as ‘Excellent’ or ‘Very Good’. These activities include minimizing the barriers to participation in the partnership’s meeting and activities; organizing partnership activities, including meetings and projects; and evaluating the progress and impact of the partnership. Though all activities had at least three members rank them as “Excellent”, there were only two activities which had lower rankings than previous years and may benefit from additional attention in future years. These activities include coordinating communication among partners, and preparing materials that inform partners and help them make timely decisions.

The next section was non-financial resources which asked members to define to what extent their partnership has what it needs to work effectively based on fifteen different resource categories. All the rankings have improved since 2019, but Figure 7 below shows where there have been the most significant changes in ranking over the past four years. In 2023, there were just a few areas that 29% or more rank as only having “Some of What it Needs”, and again may benefit from some extra attention from the group.

- Knowledge about applicable laws & legal procedures
- Data and information
- Connections to political decision-makers, government agencies, and other organizations/groups
- Partner organizations’ support of their representatives participating in the CPC

**Figure 7. CPC Ranking of Non-Financial Resources**



In terms of financial and other capital resources, the results have varied over the years. Figure 8 below shows that group members think they could always use additional resources to help share their vision with the community.

**Figure 8. CPC Ranking of Financial & Capital Resources**

Financial & Other Capital Resources	Year	All of What It Needs	Most of What It Needs	Some of What It Needs	Don't Know
Money	2019	0	43%	29%	29%
	2023	0	29%	71%	0
Space	2019	29%	14%	29%	29%
	2023	57%	29%	14%	0
Equipment and goods	2019	57%	14%	0	29%
	2023	14%	43%	43%	0

Feedback on decision-making has remained consistent over the years, mirroring other categories. All express feeling 'Extremely' or 'Very' comfortable with the partnership's decision-making process and consistently support decisions 'All' or 'Most' of the time. Additionally, all members indicate that they rarely feel excluded from the decision-making process, with 'None' or 'Almost None' reporting feeling left out.

Though this commitment can require a lot of time and work, all the members agree that the benefits of participating in the CPC 'Exceed' or 'Greatly Exceed' the drawbacks. The benefits of participation that members were asked to rank are as follows:

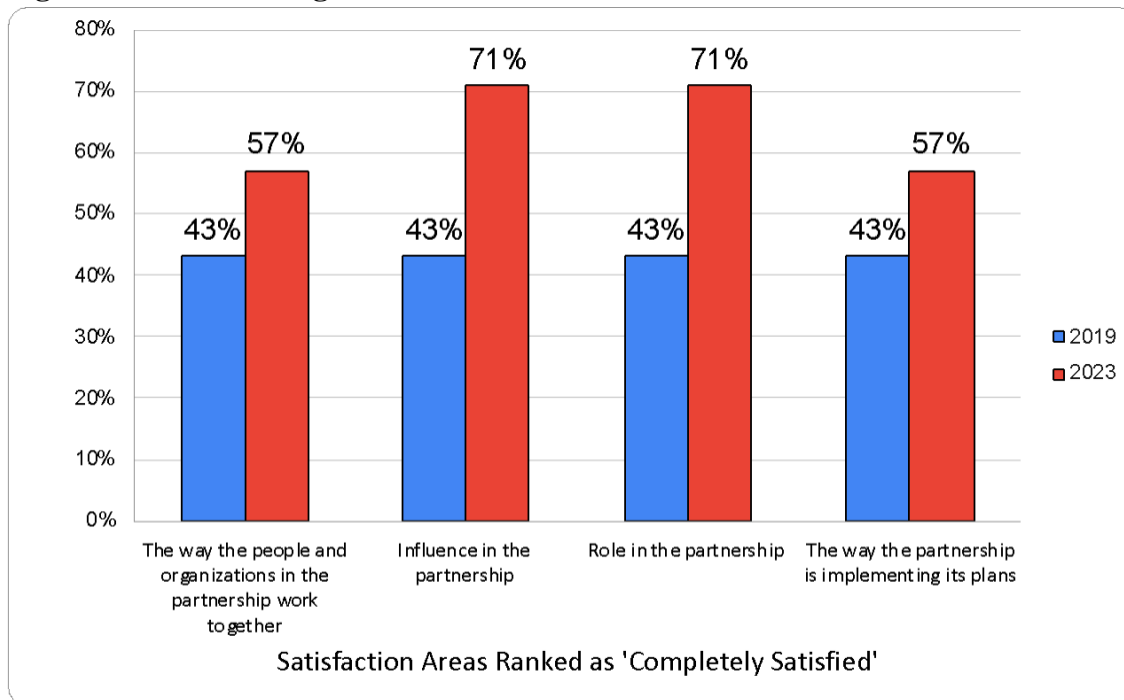
- Enhanced ability to address an important issue
- Development of new skills
- Increased utilization of expertise or services
- Acquisition of useful knowledge about services, programs, or people in the community
- Development of valuable relationships
- Ability to have a greater impact than I could have on my own
- Ability to make a contribution to the community
- Support for funding development efforts
- Participation in a learning organization

In addition to ranking the benefits, members were asked to review six potential drawbacks and select 'Yes', 'No', or 'No Response' based on their experiences. With 43% of respondents selecting 'Yes', the primary drawback to participation was diversion of time and resources away from other obligations. The two other drawbacks selected by 14% were 1) frustration or aggravation, and 2) insufficient credit given to me for contributing to the accomplishments of the partnership.

The final section of the survey asked members to rank their level of satisfaction in five different areas. All areas of satisfaction were ranked as 'Complete' or 'Mostly' satisfied in 2023, and four of the five areas saw an increase in the 'Complete' satisfaction level between 2019 to 2023, which is displayed in Figure 9 below. Though there is always room to grow in a partnership, it is evident through these survey results that the members of the CPC continue to work well together in meeting their goals and vision for The Center.

*“Involvement in the CPC has been highly satisfying for the professional connections and community initiatives.”*  
-CPC Member

**Figure 9. CPC Ranking of Areas of Satisfaction**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this report, the following recommendations are made. These recommendations should be accompanied by evaluation activities to measure the impact of efforts.

1. Continue to facilitate opportunities for cross-agency collaboration that help educate all staff on The Center services and resources.
2. Facilitate opportunities to form new collaborations between departments, and discuss progress on shared goals.
3. Develop new systems or activities that allow all staff at The Center to feel comfortable contributing ideas and suggestions.
4. Form new partnerships that help promote the services and resources provided at The Center throughout the community.

5. Continue to leverage the skills and expertise of the Center Partnership Committee members that enable them to identify and implement collaborative strategies that address the needs of both the community and The Center employees.
6. Expand opportunities for community leadership development that allow both youth and adults to gain experience.
7. Continue to expand and engage community partnerships that support equity and diversity across the community, with an intentional focus on bi-lingual students and their families.