

# CORE INVESTMENTS PROCESS EVALUATION: REPORT OF FINDINGS

County Board of Supervisors  
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Submitted by the Human Services Department



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After extensive research, and in collaboration with stakeholders from multiple sectors, (service providers, funders and strategic plan holders), the process for funding Community Programs (CP) was transformed into a results-based collective impact funding model named Collective of Results and Evidence-based (CORE) Investments. In preparation for FY 2017/18, the County partnered with the City of Santa Cruz in implementing the first funding cycle of CORE Investments by issuing a joint Request for Proposals (RFP) for a three-year term.

## Evaluation Goals

In alignment with collective impact values and principles around continuous improvement, the Human Services Department (HSD) conducted a process evaluation to assess stakeholders' perspectives on the processes implemented to date. The information in this report was gathered to inform an improved go-forward process. This report covers the time period from when the RFP was developed through contract approval by the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) and Santa Cruz City Council (Council).

## Methods

A wide variety of stakeholders (applicants, strategic plan representatives, review panelists, funders, and city and county staff) shared their perspectives on CORE Investments by responding to surveys, focus groups and interviews. The response rates varied but generally were a little less than half of all potential respondents. Some applicants were represented multiple times as they gave feedback through several data collection methods. The process evaluation utilized a mixed-methods analytic approach combining basic statistical analysis of quantitative responses with a wealth of semi-structured qualitative responses.

## Main Findings

Respondents expressed both appreciation as well as frustration with various aspects of the process. Findings were gleaned from their specific suggestions and a complete list can be seen in Appendix A.

1)a)i)(1)(a)(i) Appendix A. The findings are structured in three main thematic areas: Funding Process, Technical Assistance, and Collective Impact. Staff additionally analyzed data by variance in size of budget and by change in agency funding from those agencies who previously received CP funding (Appendix B. ).

### ***Funding Process***

In general, the funders and strategic plan representatives were appreciative of the change in documents and processes, while the applicants had a mixed experience and had many suggestions for improvement. Although access to the RFP was perceived as open to everyone, some applicants found the RFP to be confusing. The majority of applicants felt the application took significant time and was difficult to complete. Expanding the review of the RFP to other stakeholders during the development process was suggested.

There were challenges in understanding the concept of Evidence-Based Programs (EBPs) (Appendix C. ). Applicants had difficulty identifying them and presenting evidence. Separating verification of the level of evidence from the RFP process could help address challenges. For example having an EBP certification process that is not linked to funding would lessen the complexity of the proposal.

Review panelists were appreciative of a well-organized review process. The composition of the review panel was largely commended. Increasing the time available for the review panels to meet and discuss the proposals was suggested. Some applicants and panelists suggested additional criteria to the scoring rubric. Applicants also requested more feedback on their proposals and a mechanism to provide responses to reviewers' questions.

In general, stakeholders requested more information about how the scoring of the proposals related to the final funding award. Funders and strategic plan representatives found the scoring/award process to be transparent while some applicants did not. Strategies to mitigate conflicts of interest when a strategic plan representative is also an applicant need to be identified.

Funded applicants felt that the time required for the contracting process was as expected. Applicants were positive and appreciative of staff's efforts. For the most part, changes that were made to their scope of work during contracting made the implementation of the program easier or the same. Identifying outcomes by strategic plans and including reporting requirements as part of the RFP would help address the frustration caused by reworking outcomes during the contracting process to improve consistency across programs. Applicants noted complications and increased effort from having separate contracts with multiple entities.

### ***Technical assistance***

Overall, Technical Assistance (TA) was greatly appreciated by applicants. Personalized TA was the most helpful form of support. While the group workshops were beneficial for the majority, participants also wanted county staff present to respond to questions about the RFP. Some applicants felt answers on the publicly available *Questions & Answers* document did not provide a full explanation of the RFP instructions. Additional TA would also be beneficial in order to receive ongoing support during program implementation and more frequent training would assist new staff when there is staff turnover.

### ***Collective Impact***

Stakeholders expressed the desire to build on tenets associated with a Collective Impact model. Applicants want greater communication about the larger vision and regular conversation and engagement. Both applicants and strategic plan holders believe that there should be a deliberate selection of plans and that the strategic plans need revision on a continual basis. Respondents expressed concern about the absence of a strategic plan directly addressing poverty. Strategic plan representatives and funders expressed high levels of trust and good communication with staff, however, increased levels of trust between applicants and staff is needed. Additional dedicated resources will be needed to maintain and shepherd CORE Investments moving forward. Other local funders did not determine whether they will participate in CORE Investments. This lack of a unified process among funders led to additional work for applicants.

### **Conclusion**

The findings and thoughts behind this report will be shared with the County Board of Supervisors and Santa Cruz City Council as well as a newly constructed CORE Investments Steering Committee. Staff and this committee will use this report to lead the continued development and evolution of this results-based collective impact effort and inform the next process.

Finally, the development of this report involved many respondents and several data collectors. Special thanks to the applicants, strategic plan holders, review panelists and funders who participated in the process evaluation. Their feedback in assessing CORE Investments implementation will guide the way to improved processes for the next funding cycle.

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# INTRODUCTION

## I. BACKGROUND

For more than thirty years, community-based organizations in Santa Cruz County have received annual funding from the County of Santa Cruz and other local funders to provide safety net services in Santa Cruz County<sup>1</sup>. Over the years, these community-based organizations have demonstrated strong commitment and innovation in their approaches to serve the community, however there were no identified collective results, requirements as to what types of programs were funded, nor agreed upon methods to measure the results of these investments. City Councils and the County Board of Supervisors approved Community Programs funding allocations annually.

At the Board’s request, on April 21, 2015, the HSD submitted a report recommending the planning and implementation of a new funding model for Community Programs (CP). This report included extensive review of research on national, state and regional collective impact funding models and outlined eight critical features associated with these models. The Board directed HSD to assess interest among other CP funders to design and implement a results-based Collective Impact funding model. Based on the expressed interest of the other local funders and in collaboration with numerous stakeholders, the new funding model was developed, now known as CORE Investments.

The table below outlines the alignment between the original eight critical features identified in the April 2015 BOS action and the CORE Investments model.

**Table 1: Eight Critical Features as Implemented by CORE Investments**

	Critical Feature	CORE Investments
Foundation	1. Shared set of results or goals	Identified nine community strategic plans and two results from each plan.
	2. Collaboration and alignment to other initiatives	A joint RFP with the City of Santa Cruz was issued for the first time.
	3. Empirical data on need and disparities informs decisions	At the strategic plan level, data was collected on needs and disparities. At the applicant level, applicants identified age, race/ethnicity, and geography of clients served.
Implementation	4. Tiered approach to Evidence-based Programs (EBPs)	Adopted three levels of evidence for the EBPs. EBPs were identified on the proposals submitted in response to the RFP.
	5. Support for applicant organizations	Both Group and Individual TA sessions were available to applicants.
	6. Clear and transparent proposal review processes	An independent review panel scored proposals as part of an RFP process that was open to all nonprofits applicants. (see Appendix D. )
Impact	7. Fidelity to EBPs	Ongoing reporting and monitoring will address fidelity for funded programs.
	8. Outcomes at the community and program level are monitored and evaluated	At the strategic plan level, 2 results per plan were selected. At the applicant level, program level outcomes were defined by each applicant.

<sup>1</sup> Local “Community Programs” funders included 6 entities: County of Santa Cruz, Cities of Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Capitola, Scotts Valley, and the United Way.

## II. IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

Staff was tasked with translating the critical features into a new funding model. Through extensive collaboration with other funders, the first step of transforming to a results-based collective impact funding model was taken. This process officially commenced with the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) on December 1, 2016 and concluded with contract award on September 26, 2017.

The County and City of Santa Cruz released the joint CORE Investments RFP document. The RFP outlined the intent of the funding process and application requirements, and was open for two months. The RFP process followed public funding guidelines which limits how and what questions can be answered during the open application period.

There were four venues for support in completing the application:

- Bidders Conference and Question & Answer (Q&A) online postings
- Applicant conference
- Group Workshops
- Individualized TA Sessions

Participating in any or all of the forms of TA was optional. One bidder's conference was held and responses to the questions raised at that event were posted online. On-going questions to staff regarding the RFP were electronically submitted by applicants, and the Questions & Answers (Q&A) document was updated weekly and posted to the HSD website. An independent consultant, Nicole Young of Optimal Solutions Consulting, was hired to provide TA to applicants on key elements of the model, with a focus on EBPs and developing program outcomes. The TA was generously supported by the Monterey Bay Peninsula Foundation and the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County. The TA focused on developing a logic model for programs and identifying and selecting appropriate EBPs. Nicole Young offered four half-day group workshops and forty individual sessions to provide tailored coaching to agencies after they participated in one of the group TA workshops.

To provide an objective review of the submitted proposals, a panel of subject matter experts was recruited to score the applications and make funding recommendations. Expert panelists included a wide range of people who pledged they did not have any conflict of interest in participating on the panel. There were four review panels divided by topic area: homelessness, children/youth, seniors, and health. Twice as much money was requested as was available, which resulted in a prioritization of funding some proposals rather than others and most proposals not being funded at the full level requested. After the review and scoring of the applications by the panels, staff applied a community safety net lens to the panels' funding recommendations (Appendix E. ). Staff assessed for geographic representation of services for people in poverty, level of impact to programs that were the sole proposal on that particular safety net need level and impact on agency and program budgets. These recommendations were submitted to the BOS and the Santa Cruz City Council.

Following Board and Council approval, staff and funded applicants worked to revise the proposed Scope of Work (SOW)s and budgets to align with recommended funding levels, address panel concerns and establish consistency across contracts. Based on the proposals staff designed a categorical framework of outcomes that established consistency across similar results. In this effort, staff re-phrased outcomes for the agencies to align with the framework while ensuring that specifics and measurement stayed as proposed. In addition to these changes, it was identified that some programs needed to clarify their outcomes and their related measures. Some funded agencies met with County and City staff and the consultant who conducted the technical assistance workshops while others were provided telephone or written materials as needed. If a

program was funded by both the County and the City the same Scope of Work was utilized by both funders in order to decrease the administrative burden for the contractor. Final County contracts were brought to the County Board of Supervisors on September 26, 2017 for final approval.

### III. REPORT STRUCTURE

This report covers the time period from the development of the RFP through completion of the contracts. It details the methods used to collect information from a variety of stakeholders and the findings are structured in the Results section within three main thematic areas:

- Funding Process
- TA and Communication Support
- Collective Impact

Each section of findings follows a similar format: 1) summary of findings statement, 2) description of findings, and 3) illustrative quotes from respondents. Appendix A. contains a list of all findings.

## METHODS

### I. SOURCES

The process evaluation was designed with multiple stakeholder groups providing input on the thematic areas of the report. Please note that some applicants are represented three times as they gave feedback in the applicant survey, the applicant focus group, and the technical assistance recipient survey. One respondent participated as an applicant and a strategic plan representative. The data collection protocols are in Appendix F.

**Table 2: Number of Respondents by Data Collection Method**

Stakeholder	Survey	Focus Group	Interview
Applicants	28	11	
TA Recipients	64		
Former CP recipients who did not apply	0		
Review Panelists	19		
Strategic Plan representatives		4	
Staff		7	
Other Funders			4

#### A. SURVEYS

**Table 3: Response Rates for Surveys**

Surveys	Invited	Responded	Response Rate
Applicant Survey	68	28	41%
Non-applicant Survey	8	0	0%
Group TA Participant Survey	80	64	80%
Individual TA Participant Survey	61	36	59%
Review Panelists Survey	38	19	50%

#### Applicant Survey

A link to the applicant survey was sent electronically to unduplicated primary contact emails listed on the application (note: these represented all 95 applications that were submitted).

The majority of applicants did not respond to the survey, so the respondents may not be representative of the opinions of all applicants. To protect confidentiality, the survey did not ask for identifying information

from respondents. Twenty of the 28 respondents had received CP funding in the prior year, four were new under CORE Investments, and four respondents did not receive CORE funds. Analyses showed that respondents were representative of the applicant pool by the portion of programs that were previously funded under CP and by strategic plan. It also represented a good mix of small, medium and large organizational budgets.

Respondents were fairly evenly split in terms of size of their organizations budget.

**Table 4: Percentage of Subgroups of Respondents by Agency Budget**

Agencies' Budgets	\$300k - \$700k	\$700 - \$2m	More than \$2m
Percentage	36%	36%	28%

Of the 20 CORE Investments survey respondents that received funding last year through Community Programs, about half received more funding under CORE, about a third received less funding under CORE and a fifth received the same amount. This distribution closely matches the CORE Investments funding profile of applicant agencies.

**Table 5: Percentage of Subgroups of Respondents by Prior CP Funding Level**

Funding under CORE compared with CP	Higher agency award under CORE	About the same agency award under CORE	Lower agency award under CORE
Percentage	45%	20%	35%

The Strategic Plans represented by the survey respondents' proposals follow the same pattern as the primary strategic plan identified in all submitted proposals as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Percentage of Survey Respondents by Strategic Plan Compared with Proposals**

Strategic Plan	Survey Respondents	All proposals submitted
Community Roadmap to Collective Mental Health Wellness	14%	20%
Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Prevention & Treatment Plan	3%	3%
Health Improvement Partnership	8%	13%
All In: Toward A Home For Every County Resident	11%	13%
Area Plan on Aging	19%	19%
Youth Violence Prevention Plan	23%	17%
First 5 Santa Cruz County	8%	9%
Child Welfare	0%	1%
Santa Cruz County Master Plan for Early Care and Education	14%	5%

### Non-Applicant Survey

An electronic survey was sent to eight agencies that received Community Programs funding previously or TA training participants that did not submit any proposals. There were no survey responses.

### Technical Assistance Participant Surveys

A separate report was provided by the TA consultant to HSD. This report is used as a source document for the process evaluation. There were 80 participants representing 38 distinct organizations that attended one of the four half-day trainings. Directly after the group training, 80% of participants completed an anonymous survey.

The consultant also provided 40 individual TA sessions to 62 unique participants. Thirty-one distinct organizations participated in TA sessions, with some larger organizations participating in multiple TA



sessions. Fifty-nine percent of those individuals that received individualized TA responded to the follow-up survey, and one participant was not included for lack of email address.

### Review Panelists Survey

Each panelist was sent an electronic survey soon after the conclusion of the panel process. Half of the panelists that reviewed and rated the responses to the Request for Proposals (RFP) provided feedback about the process. Of respondents, 6 (32%) had previously served on a review panel.

## *B. FOCUS GROUPS*

### Applicant Focus Groups

Respondents to the applicant survey were asked if they would like to participate in a focus group to give more detailed feedback. See Appendix B. for details about variance in self-selection. Eleven applicants from nine organizations participated in two focus groups. Since focus group participation was entirely voluntary and it was a subset of survey respondents, there may be a self-selection bias towards applicants who had stronger feelings about the process. The focus groups were facilitated by a neutral Health Services Agency staff member who was not involved in CORE Investments and had experience facilitating focus groups. The questions asked cover similar content as the survey but were structured to encourage open-ended dialogue.

### Strategic Plan Representatives Focus Group

The focus group was facilitated by an HSD staff member. Out of the nine strategic plans that were included in CORE Investments, three plans were represented at the focus group. There were four attendees (two attendees represented the same strategic plan and came from an organization that was also a CORE Investments applicant and previously funded under Community Programs).

### Staff Focus Group

Seven staff members from HSD and the City of Santa Cruz participated in a focus group that was facilitated by an HSD staff member who was not involved in CORE Investments.

## *C. INTERVIEWS*

### Funder Interviews

Interviews with four area funders out of five potential funders were conducted by a HSD Staff over the phone.

## II. ANALYTIC APPROACH

Staff identified findings using a mixed-methods approach to combine basic statistical analysis of quantitative responses with a wealth of semi-structured qualitative responses. Inductive analysis was used to understand the qualitative data. This approach supports triangulation of findings as well as identification of patterns of difference across stakeholder groups. Clustering of quotes was done according to emergent themes. Quotes were used to exemplify the themes. Analyses of the quantitative data from the surveys are interwoven throughout the document.

# RESULTS

## I. FUNDING PROCESS

### A. RFP AND APPLICATION

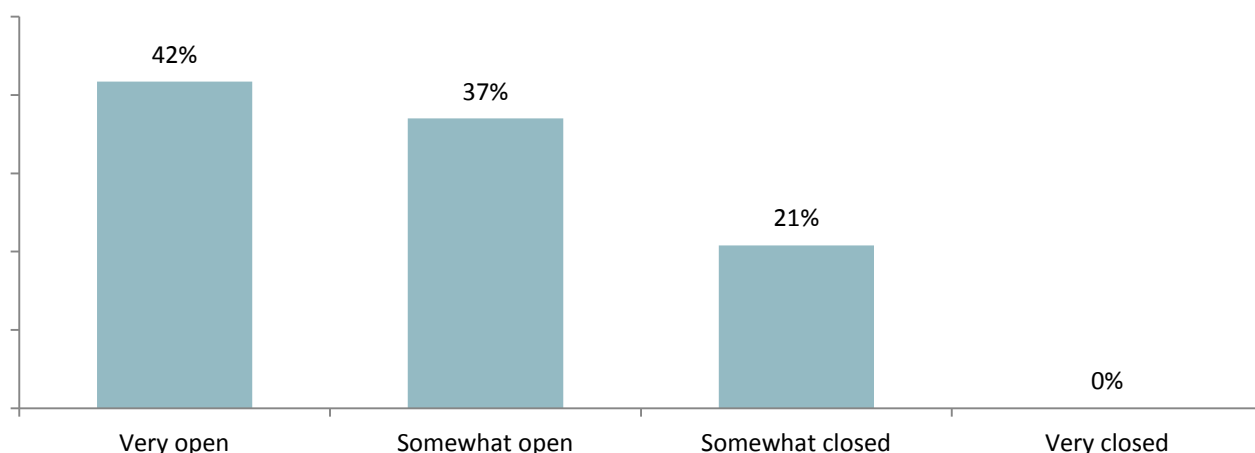
County and City staff developed the RFP and application. The RFP and application were made available on HSD’s internet site. Email communications with the link to the RFP were sent out to all agencies previously funded through the Contract Management Center, all agencies contracting with HSD, and an advertisement was placed in local print media.

**Finding 1: The RFP and application process were open to all.**

The majority of respondents noted that the RFP and application process were available and open to all interested agencies. Funders and applicants shared appreciation of the change which allowed all agencies an opportunity to participate in the process. See Appendix B. for details about variance among applicants.

**Funder:** “Very open-a huge change from the past.”

Figure 1: Perception of Process Openness by Survey Respondents



**Finding 2: Applicants would benefit from a simpler application, although some applicants and panelists suggested additional sections to the application form**

Approximately half of applicants who responded to the survey found it easy to find the information requested for the RFP (52%), slightly less found it easy to complete the forms (43%) and even fewer found it easy to identify the EBP used (38%).

Table 5: Ease of Application components by Percentage of Survey Respondents

How easy or difficult was it to ...	Very Easy	Easy	Difficult	Very Difficult
Find the information requested?	13%	39%	35%	13%
Complete the forms?	13%	30%	40%	17%
Identify the Level of Evidence used (innovative, promising, or model)?	13%	25%	33%	29%

Some applicants noted that the RFP was extensive and more complicated than they had expected, however other applicants found the application to be clear and easy to complete and suggested adding sections to describe staffing, services and theory of change. Review panelists suggested adding a space for an executive

summary of the proposal, more information on community need and how the proposed project connected with the strategic plan results. The budget section was easy to understand.

**Applicant:** *“Spent a lot of time reading the RFP; parsing it out. It was more complicated versus foundations.”*  
**Applicant:** *“I realize they were trying to make it not too much work, but I would suggest allowing for more brief options to talk about need and how you would address need and how you would achieve your outcomes.”*

**Finding 3: Stakeholders suggest gathering feedback more broadly on the RFP and application form prior to release.**

Several stakeholders suggested sending out a draft version for feedback to all stakeholders (strategic plan bodies, applicants and funders) to elicit feedback, in an effort to ensure that the document is clear and to engage all the stakeholders in the process. The order of questions was confusing to some applicants and others wanted additional questions.

**Applicant:** *“Folks didn’t know what to put where in the application. It didn’t have the same flow that I am used to in other grant applications.”*  
**Strategic plan representative:** *“In [another county] we got feedback from key stakeholders on a draft RFP. It was very useful and saved time. We opened up a preview to anyone who was applying, and everyone had a chance to read and give feedback.”*

**Finding 4: The length of time to complete the application was a concern for many applicants.**

A majority of participants felt that the forms took more time than other RFP processes for the amount of funding available. The median time to complete the application was 31.5 hours with a range of responses from 10 to 150 hours excluding one outlier. A little more than half of respondents to the applicant survey thought that the time commitment was extensive (56.5%) compared to the amount of funding available and two-thirds thought the process was harder than other foundation, state and federal RFP processes. See Appendix B. for details about variance among applicants.

**Table 6: Comparison to Foundaiton, State and Federal RFPs by Percentage of Survey Respondents**

How did the CORE Investments RFP process compare to other Foundation, State and Federal RFP processes you’ve participated in?	Percent
This is my first RFP process	8%
About the same	25%
Harder	67%

**Applicant:** *“While I felt the lead-up support made understanding the process, instructions, expectations pretty easy, we still found this process fairly difficult given the amount of time we dedicated to writing the proposals. Often, we are able to meet people in person and present our organization effectively. It can be difficult to share the soul of our work through generic application questions, hence our decision to dedicate an extensive amount of time on writing.”*

**B. EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES**

Evidence-based Programs or Evidence-based Practices (EBPs) were a central component of the application and a focus of the TA. Applicants were provided a list of online clearinghouses in the RFP to identify an EBP for their program. There was some frustration that not all of the clearinghouses were easy to navigate or currently maintained.

**Finding 1: Stakeholders suggested having more support for identifying EBPs and developing a process for verifying EBPs outside of the application process.**

Review panelists commented that they would have benefitted from knowing which proposals met the criteria for the identified level of evidence as validated by an external entity. Applicants would benefit from additional TA in identifying and implementing EBPs. It was suggested the strategic plan holders could be responsible for providing the technical assistance. An independent certification process to verify EBPs and the evidence available could address these goals if implemented.

***Applicant:** “[We want] someone with a masters in social research to help you do it. The irony is there are so many evidence-based programs in [my sector]. It wasn’t that the information wasn’t there; it was getting to that information. [...Have] one-on-one or sector support with actual skilled people that can help with that.”*

**Finding 2: For some applicants, using EBPs was a new concept and the innovative level was not well understood.**

As designed the innovative level was included to recognize self-collected and analyzed data. Several applicants made comments during the focus groups revealing that the innovative level was not communicated clearly and there was a lack of understanding about it. Additionally, some agencies are not used to writing proposals where a demonstration of effectiveness of programs is needed. See Appendix B. for details about variance among applicants.

***Applicant:** “[TA support on] how to make our Innovative EBP stronger with the data we already have.”*

**Finding 3: Refine definition of EBPs to clarify practices and/or programs, as well as how national standards or quality are identified.**

Allowing the use of both Evidence-Based Practices and Evidence-Based Programs was too broad. Additionally, there are practices that do not qualify as an EBP, but are standards established by federal, state or county policy. These policy standards should be addressed in the EBP levels of evidence.

***Applicant:** “You have created a hybrid which provides funding to a PROGRAM which happens to use an evidence-based PRACTICE.”*

***Strategic plan representative:** “Can the RFP [Levels of Evidence] incorporate whether this program is recognized by state or federal standards as an approved service [rather than a peer reviewed publication?]”*

**Finding 4: Some applicants faced logistical challenges in identifying EBPs for their programs. It was also pointed out that academic journals and clearinghouses are not always easily accessible to all applicants.**

Applicants were directed to a list of EBP clearinghouses in the RFP which provided information on EBPs for different populations and issues along with the level of evidence. Some applicants were frustrated that they could not find an appropriate EBP for their program and in order to select one, they needed to research information outside of what was provided in the RFP.

***Applicant:** “I was lucky to have had someone (a researcher) in my agency to help me but there needs to be a [pre-]paid login where you can get access [to professional journal publications].”*

### C. REVIEW PANELS

It is important to note that in the historical Community Programs funding model, organizations did not apply through a juried or panel process. This was a significant change in procedure.

The Review Process consisted of a diverse set of 36 panelists with expertise across all nine strategic plans whose names were vetted by other funders and non-conflicted strategic plan representatives. Panelists included practitioners, researchers, and people with lived experience. Following protocol, names of review panelists were not released until funding was announced when the list of panelists was shared along with the funding recommendations.

Nearly all proposals were assigned to the panel that corresponded with a selected result area in the proposal. A few were distributed to another panel that had similar proposals. The non-conflicted strategic plan representatives met and approved which proposals went to which panels. Of the reviewers, 83% were locals from Santa Cruz County.

The County Auditor's Office provided standardized analysis on the budget portion of each proposal including whether the agency budget meets typical standards, whether there is an agency deficit, and the average CORE funding per participant. Panelists were not provided information on prior CP funding allocations for previously funded agencies/programs.

The Review Panels met for four hours. Each panelist reviewed and scored the applications in advance of meeting with the other panelists. All proposals were rated by the panelists. The reviewers discussed their scores with the entire panel to determine the proposal score and recommend funding amounts.

#### **Finding 1: There was general support for the composition of the review panels.**

There was a nice mix of individuals from a variety of backgrounds on the panels including professionals in the subject areas and people with lived experience. The panels were mostly Santa Cruz County residents and six subject matter experts from the surrounding area. There was confusion by a few applicants in the focus groups about who was represented on the review panels regarding the percentage of non-Santa Cruz residents and levels of expertise.

***Review Panelist:** "There was a good mix of locals, outsiders, & experienced/inexperienced raters."*

#### **Finding 2: The review panels were well organized and information was provided in a timely manner. Review panelists wanted more time for the panel discussion.**

The materials including the review packets and scoring worksheets were well done and communication with panel members was clear.

***Review Panelist:** "The process was thoughtful and well organized. I appreciated the opportunity to participate as a panelist and would do so again if asked. A Collective Impact funding model is a worthy effort and the County/City team made an outstanding effort to launch this year."*

***Review Panelist:** "Make us be there longer so rushing doesn't happen. Assume an extra hour at least. The process set forward was great, the time allotted was not."*

**Finding 3: One panel should have been split into two separate panels (youth and children). The distribution of applications among panels was not clear to all applicants.**

The children and youth panel had a very large number of applicants. People with expertise in youth success do not always have expertise in early childhood and vice versa. Separating the panels would make them have fewer applications to review and would ensure more focused attention on each group.

**Applicant:** *“Break up the panels regarding children/youth. There is often no cross over in understanding of youth specialists to young children’s issues.”*

**D. SCORING AND FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Scoring applications was done in accordance with the criteria identified in the RFP (Appendix C. ). Panelists reviewed and scored applications in advance of meeting. The scores and comments were discussed among the full panel and through consensus determined the final group score for each proposal. The panel suggestions were reviewed by the strategic plan representatives and staff. Staff completed a further review of funding recommendations using a community safety-net lens. After this final review, recommendations were brought to the decision-making bodies.

**Finding 1: Consider changing the scoring criteria to include points for past performance, previous funding, community need, leveraging other funds and engagement with strategic plan efforts.**

**Applicant:** *“Revise the scoring/funding process to reward applicants for the quality of their ongoing work rather than the quality of their written proposal [.] Revise the funding process to reward applicants for the quality of their application and/or work rather than rewarding them for asking for large funding increases.”*

**Review panelist:** *“[if there is a] section that required description of target population and related need that had points attached to it, it may have helped panel prioritize funding to most vulnerable populations.”*

**Finding 2: Stakeholders wanted greater clarity about how the scoring related to final award amounts.**

There were questions about how the panel recommendations were translated into the Board recommendations. A more defined relationship between proposal scoring and funding recommendations was wanted. In the focus groups it was stated that the process should not encourage applicants asking for more money than what is really needed. Focus group respondents also were hesitant to remove flexibility from a thoughtful process. Having more specific and prescriptive intentions about funding levels for specific areas and achieving specific outcomes from the Board and Council in the RFP will reduce panel decision making regarding funding.

**Applicant:** *“Relationship of scoring to funding not clear. Some aspects of scoring not clear even with feedback after process. Panels not informed of prior funding will force us to all ask for much higher amounts.”*

**Review panelist:** *“In my experience with other RFP/Q processes, determining funding award amounts is determined prior to panel meetings (e.g. fund all programs at full request amount from top rated down until funds are exhausted, or percentage award amounts to groups of applicants by percentile).”*

**Finding 3: The perceived transparency of recommended funding decisions varied by role. Strategic plan representatives and funders felt the portfolio of funded programs represented what they expected while some applicants did not feel it was transparent.**

More than half of applicant survey respondents thought the panel process was somewhat or not at all fair, and slightly less than half thought that the steps in the process were somewhat or not at all transparent.

**Table 7: Clarity in Steps by Survey Respondent Percent**

To what extent were...	Very	Mostly	Somewhat	Not at all
the suggestions made to board/council clear?	40%	20%	15%	25%
the steps in the process transparent?	26%	26%	22%	26%
the panel processes fair?	26%	13%	26%	35%
the decision-making criteria clear?	18%	26%	30%	26%

**Strategic plan representative:** *“It was for me because I was at the table.”*  
**Applicant:** *“The scoring was not shared with those who replied unless they asked. Then only a single number was given with no context to other respondents.”*

**Finding 4: There is an inherent conflict of interest when an applicant is also a strategic plan representative or funder.**

Conflicting roles led to one panel not consisting of the strategic plan owner as the strategic plan representative was also an applicant. This applicant was also not part of the strategic plan holders’ review across panels. Stakeholders including half the strategic plan representatives at the focus group suggested having a clearer policy defining these situations.

**Strategic plan representative:** *“When a strategic plan body is also an applicant, how do we ensure they are represented on the cross panel?”*

**Finding 5: Stakeholders want clear initial funding allocations by specific area in the RFP.**

Stakeholders are unclear how the decision was made to allocate funding to each strategic plan. They want those decisions to be more explicit and the amount of funding by each strategic plan clear and determined prior to the release of the RFP. They would prefer even more specificity in what programs or outcomes are funded under a strategic plan as well. They want community conversations as part of that decision-making process.

**Strategic plan representative:** *“I’m hopeful that the county and city are able to be a little more specific in how they hope to allocate funds in the future.”*

**E. CONTRACTING**

Following Board and Council approval, staff and funded applicants met to revise the proposed Scope of Work (SOW) and budget to align with recommended funding levels, address panel concerns and establish consistency across contracts. Changes were largely made by staff and proposed to agencies and agencies were encouraged to refine the SOWs as needed. Some funded agencies met with County and City staff and the consultant who conducted the technical assistance workshops and others received support through written materials or telephone contact. The consultant and staff assisted funded agencies with finalizing measurable outcomes for their contract.

**Finding 1: Time required for the contracting process was as expected.**

**Table 8: Appropriate time requirements by Percentage of Survey Respondents**

Did the amount of time required seem appropriate for ...	Less than expected	As expected	More than expected
Feedback	0%	82%	18%
Final Signature	6%	66%	28%
Developing the contract	0%	61%	39%

Applicants were positive and appreciative of staff approach, understanding and responsiveness.

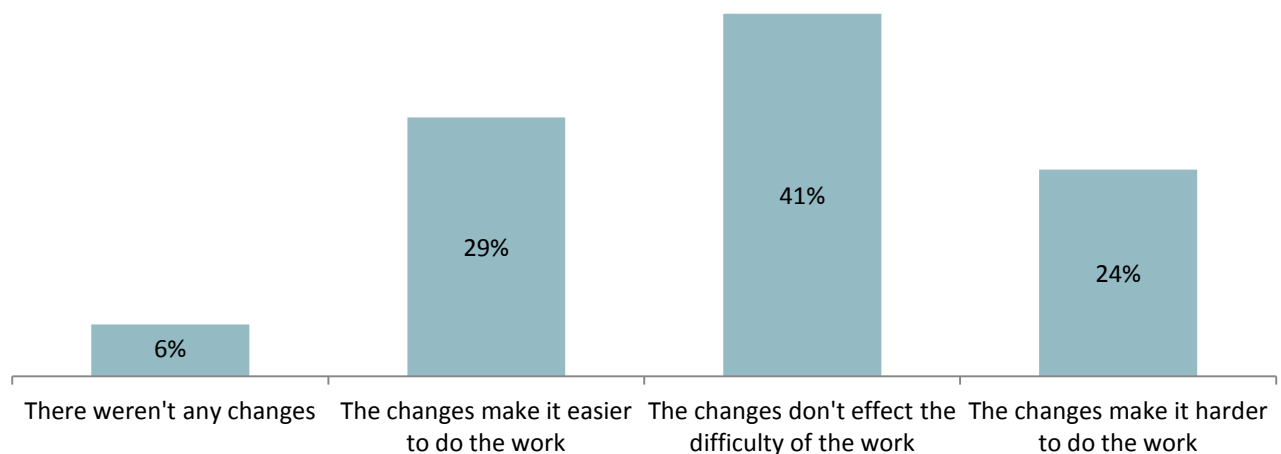
**Finding 2: Generally, the changes to SOW's were not perceived to make them more difficult.**

**Table 9: Finalizing Contracts Steps by Percentage of Survey Respondents**

To what extent were	Very	Mostly	Somewhat	Not at all
the program and services in the proposal understood by County staff in order to co-create the scope?	44%	28%	22%	6%
your voice and perspective heard and integrated in the revision process?	28%	44%	22%	6%
the reasons for changes from the original proposal made clear to all parties?	28%	50%	16%	6%
the steps in the process clear?	22%	50%	22%	6%

See Appendix B. for details about variance among applicants.

**Table 10: Effect of Changes on SOW by Percentage of Survey Respondents: How do changes to your contracted scope from your original proposal effect your work?**



**Applicant:** *“The staff made it super easy to re-do the scope, in fact, I'm shocked at how much work the staff did to re-do our scopes. Usually, I get a blank page and need to re-do everything. But the staff did a lot of work to refine our scope and simplify. I appreciated the interest of the staff to simplify. It will make reporting much easier.”*



**Finding 3: The process used to identify common outcomes across programs during the contracting process was frustrating and time consuming.**

Providing clearer instruction in the RFP on how program outcomes should be described and what the reporting requirements are would help during the contracting process. Identifying outcomes by strategic plan and reporting requirements in the RFP would help address this.

*Applicant: "If the county wants to write our outcomes for us, why are we bothering. [...] Don't have us jump through all the hoops and [then say] 'now you are funded, we want you to measure it some way else'."*

**Finding 4: Complications arise from having multiple contracts with different funding entities.**

Having different signing and reporting processes adds additional and, at times, unclear steps for participants. The City and the County should collaborate to have a more unified process and, if possible, a single funding pool. In addition, in-person requirements are time consuming when they could be done electronically.

*Applicant: "The signature process through the county was very clear and prompt. The signature through the city was much less so, we felt a bit left in the dark on that end. We had to reach out multiple times instead of receiving clear timelines like we did with the county."*

**II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COMMUNICATION SUPPORT**

**Finding 1: Individualized TA was rated as being the most helpful form of support.**

In the individualized sessions participants were most interested in getting feedback or assistance on "Demonstration of Evidence-Based Practices" (81%) and "Program Scope of Work" (67%). The majority of respondents in the independent consultant's report say that as a result of TA regardless of CORE funding, they were able to enhance their program's capacity to measure and report on outcomes (67%), adopt and/or continuously improve implementation of evidence-based practices (53%), and use their planning documents and/or text from their CORE application when applying for other grants/funding (53%). One funder in particular noted the success of this type of technical assistance for CORE applicants, and subsequently offered similar assistance to their applicants. The applications were higher quality and much improved from past funding cycles.

**Table 11: Helpfulness of Application Support by Percentage of Survey Respondents**

How helpful were the following?	Very helpful	Mostly Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not helpful
Individualized TA with Nicole Young	50%	25%	13%	12%
Group Workshops with Nicole Young	41%	24%	23%	12%
Q&A Document	26%	30%	44%	0%
Applicant Conference	17%	28%	44%	11%

*Applicant: "During my technical assistance meeting, I learned that my EBP was not a good fit in how I was presenting it. It was a lot of work to go back to the drawing board and start over, but with the new information I was able to write a strong proposal and get funded. I really appreciate that you offered individual TA sessions!"*

**Finding 2: Group TA training was beneficial for the majority of participants.**

Workshop sessions were highly rated for the how they were conducted as well as participants' learning and application of the content. See Appendix B. for details about variance among applicants in participation in Technical Assistance.

When asked what was least useful, respondents wanted County/City staff present at training. There were many questions about the RFP and the application that the TA consultant could not answer. Participants wanted County/City staff present in order to have their questions about the RFP answered at the time of the TA sessions.

**Finding 3: The process to ask questions for the Q&A document was clear, however applicants felt they needed more instruction on how to complete the application. Applicants requested a richer opportunity to have their questions answered during the RFP process and also to have more open dialogue with the funders.**

Table 12: Clarity of Communication by Percentage of Survey Respondents

How clear were...	Very clear	Mostly clear	Somewhat clear	Not clear
instructions on who to contact regarding questions?	62%	21%	17%	0%
communications about the process?	26%	39%	26%	9%
instructions on how to complete the application?	22%	39%	30%	9%

The Q&A document was found to be helpful to some applicants while others found the process to be frustrating and slow. Some applicants found waiting for the responses to be challenging and not having open communication channels with County staff felt alienating. Providing phone call responses or on-line responses more frequently would have been appreciated.

**Applicant:** "Submitting questions in writing and getting group answers in writing once a week was very frustrating as there was no opportunity for back and forth."  
**Applicant:** "have County staff present at technical workshops (there were more process questions being asked than questions about logic models, etc.)."

**Finding 4: Additional access to TA that support applicant agency staff during their current work and through turnover would be beneficial.**

Applicants in the focus groups requested more technical assistance in various formats, both in person and recorded webinars, to ensure that all staff had an opportunity to receive the information even if they could not attend a one-time in-person meeting. Technical assistance that focuses on how aligning program with strategic plan results is part of collective impact would help applicants understand how their work fits into the bigger picture. There is a desire in the applicant focus group for ongoing technical assistance, and not just at the time of an RFP.

**Applicant:** "the education needs to be accessible. Make it in person and webinar accessible and record it. If you only have one person in your agency who wears three hats, it's hard to carve out the time to go. Saving these sessions for posterity so you can bring other people on."

**Finding 5: Miscommunication occurred in part because of using email as the central communication channel.**

The primary means of communication was via email. Some applicants were frustrated because they either missed an email or didn't receive the email communication. Finding various communication methods would be well received by the applicants.

***Applicant:** "We had worked VERY hard to fit the answers into the very small answer spaces and then I happened to find out from a colleague that the answer spaces had been lengthened and we went back and re-wrote the whole proposal. Apparently an email was sent out with this info, but I missed it."*

**III. COLLECTIVE IMPACT**

**Finding 1: Applicants want greater communication about the larger vision and regular gatherings to promote conversation and engagement.**

The desire for a deeper shared understanding of CORE Investments as a collective impact model was noted by both applicants and strategic plan representatives. The respondents voiced that communication and dialogue about the direction and vision of CORE Investments would help agencies feel more secure about the programs they are proposing and feel more connected to the strategic plans. Strategic Plan representatives would like to see more capacity building on each of the funding areas and ensure that all sectors are engaged and participating in the dialogue on Collective Impact.

***Applicant:** "If we want to make a change and make it successful we all need to be connected."  
**Strategic plan representative:** "We need to think hard about building up expertise around each of the funding areas and allocations before we go to RFP; ask who do we need at the table and how are they engaged."  
**Applicant:** "What I missed more than anything is more dialogue at the outset about how the shift was going to work. How the application and RFP process would link to the strategic plans and maybe conversations among people with similar objectives within those strategic plans. [...] There was no collective dialogue, just individual organizations with individual programs out there. That felt difficult."*

**Finding 2: There is a desire for early, frequent and intentional involvement in the planning processes by stakeholders.**

Applicants and to some extent strategic plan representatives wanted higher levels of involvement in the planning process. Funders appreciated receiving information regarding CORE Investments, although only the Funders who were participating in CORE Investments this funding cycle were involved in the RFP development and funding process. Other Funders would benefit from receiving information on the process, such as contracting, templates for reporting and monitoring in order to align with the County and City.

***Funder:** "[We] were invited later in the process after the other funders had been meeting. I'm not complaining, just noticing. The information presented was helpful, and HSD was open to making suggested changes."  
**Funder:** "It would be helpful to understand what the contracting procedure is and templates / reporting / monitoring of contracts to inform other funders so they could potentially align with County. This is an opportunity to learn from each other."*

**Finding 3: An intentional process to identify strategic plans, incorporate them and revise them requires ongoing maintenance. Respondents expressed concern about the absence of a poverty strategic plan.**

Applicants in the focus groups noted that some strategic plan topic areas were missing. The need to select relevant strategic plans that are consistent with the need of vulnerable populations was expressed by some applicants. Strategic plan representatives noted that they wanted to be consistent with new model and ensure that they align with CORE Investments during the next update of their plan.

**Applicant:** *“There was no strategy for selecting strategic plans. [...] There wasn’t much time spent on what is missing and what is critical to the community that we don’t have a plan for. Are we going to ignore that or create one in the future?”*

**Applicant:** *“There was no strategic plan goal that had anything to do with maintaining income of low income people. It ended up going into homelessness prevention which it sort of does but that is a huge stretch.”*

**Finding 4: All funders have not yet determined whether they will participate in CORE. The lack of a unified process among funders is leading to additional work for funded agencies.**

Two funders participated in CORE this funding cycle. Other funders are uncertain about whether they will join in CORE in the future. Some funders had concern that if agencies were not funded under CORE, they may ask the cities for increased funding for those unfunded programs. Funders that did not participate in CORE found this as a positive opportunity to create a new application for their funding. Some applicants expressed concerned that the different application and reporting processes used by different jurisdictions added more work for the agencies.

**Funder:** *“It [Funding through CORE] is going to be considered to join in on the next funding cycle”*

**Applicant:** *“The County should be aware that now agencies have to write and submit three RFPs to get the old CMC funding and write three separate reports for each (1.County & City of SC, 2. City of SV and Capitola, 3. Watsonville.) This is a big impact on agencies that I don't think you anticipated.”*

**Finding 5: Evaluation of the CORE Investments’ model and outcomes was encouraged.**

Several applicants in the focus groups articulated interest in developing processes to review how CORE Investments has made a difference and to identify improvements that need to be made to the model.

**Applicant:** *“I wonder if there is any process to bring together the organizations and the experts to look at what we are doing and this is what we said we would do. How is it looking? How should we improve this?”*

**Finding 6: Levels of trust varied depending on the role of the stakeholder. County and City desire to be neutral led to low levels of trust between applicants and staff.**

Applicant respondents, especially in the focus groups, expressed low levels of trust with staff. They felt their relationship with the County became strained because the RFP process limited direct communication between applicant and staff. Other applicants interpreted the move to a new funding model to mean that their past work was not appreciated or viewed as important.

On the other hand, strategic plan representatives and funders felt high levels of trust with staff and experienced direct and clear communication. The funders and strategic plan representatives noted the inherent challenges in implementing a new funding model and appreciated the opportunity for input into the process.

**Applicant:** *“There was a desire on the county’s part to be very neutral and so when you say ‘a lack of trust’ it can be interpreted as ‘trying to be as neutral as possible’ which could be interpreted as ‘not helpful’. They are trying to move out of a politicized process but it became too neutral with the theoretical aspects to it.”*

**Strategic plan representative:** *“there was a noble effort. Such a big change and some things didn’t work well but it was an outstanding effort. Lots of dialogue supports us trying to improve it.”*

**Funder:** *“Yes, very open and community based process [with opportunities to provide input.]”*

**Finding 7: More staff resources are needed to oversee CORE and facilitate Collective Impact efforts.**

Funder and applicants at focus groups noted that moving CORE Investments forward requires an investment of additional staffing resources and the identification of a backbone agency (or agencies). Selecting a backbone agency is important and needs funding associated with the responsibility.

**Applicant:** *“If the county is going to do this, you need to have more staff. The staff you have works really hard and they are wonderful but you need more staff.”*

## CONCLUSION

As with all change processes of this magnitude, improvements and refinements on how CORE Investments should be implemented in the next iteration are necessary. A wealth of suggestions and experiences have been shared in the collection of this process evaluation. As the model develops, these questions and suggestions from stakeholders will provide staff with important information and inform ongoing community conversations.

A newly constructed Steering Committee will shepherd the continued development and evolution of CORE Investments.

# Appendix A. LIST OF FINDINGS

## **RFP and Application**

- 1) The RFP and application process were open to all.
- 2) Applicants would benefit from a simpler application, although some applicants and panelists suggested additional sections to the application form
- 3) Stakeholders suggest gathering feedback more broadly on the RFP and application form prior to release.
- 4) The length of time to complete the application was a concern for many applicants.

## **Evidence-based Practices**

- 1) Stakeholders suggested having more support for identifying EBPs and developing a process for verifying EBPs outside of the application process.
- 2) For some applicants, using EBPs was a new concept and the innovative level was not well understood.
- 3) Refine definition of EBPs to clarify practices and/or programs, as well as how national standards or quality are identified.
- 4) Some applicants faced logistical challenges in identifying EBPs for their programs. It was also pointed out that academic journals and clearinghouses are not always easily accessible to all applicants.

## **Review Panels**

- 1) There was general support for the composition of the review panels.
- 2) The review panels were well organized and information was provided in a timely manner. Review panelists wanted more time for the panel discussion.
- 3) One panel should have been split into two separate panels (youth and children). The distribution of applications among panels was not clear to all applicants.

## **Scoring and Funding Recommendations**

- 1) Consider changing the scoring criteria to include points for past performance, previous funding, community need, leveraging other funds and engagement with strategic plan efforts.
- 2) Stakeholders wanted greater clarity about how the scoring related to final award amounts.
- 3) The perceived transparency of recommended funding decisions varied by role. Strategic plan representatives and funders felt the portfolio of funded programs represented what they expected while some applicants did not feel it was transparent.
- 4) There is an inherent conflict of interest when an applicant is also a strategic plan representative or funder.
- 5) Stakeholders want clear initial funding allocations by specific area in the RFP.

## **Contracting**

- 1) Time required for the contracting process was as expected.
- 2) Generally, the changes to SOW's were not perceived to make them more difficult.
- 3) The process used to identify common outcomes across programs during the contracting process was frustrating and time consuming.
- 4) Complications arise from having multiple contracts with different funding entities.

## **Technical Assistance and Communication Support**

- 1) Individualized TA was rated as being the most helpful form of support.
- 2) Group TA training was beneficial for the majority of participants.

- 3) The process to ask questions for the Q&A document was clear, however applicants felt they needed more instruction on how to complete the application. Applicants requested a richer opportunity to have their questions answered during the RFP process and also to have more open dialogue with the funders.
- 4) Additional access to TA that support applicant agency staff during their current work and through turnover would be beneficial.
- 5) Miscommunication occurred in part because of using email as the central communication channel.

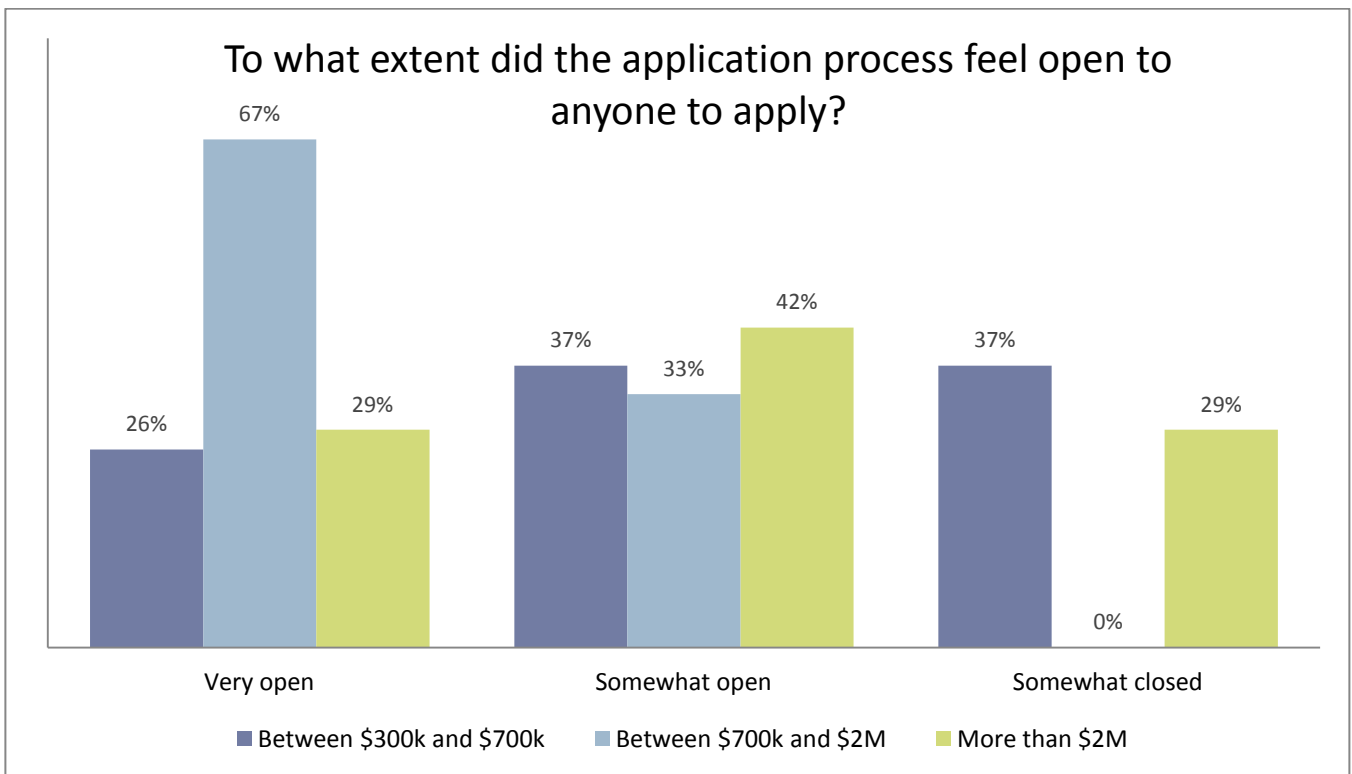
### **Collective Impact**

- 1) Applicants want greater communication about the larger vision and regular gatherings to promote conversation and engagement.
- 2) There is a desire for early, frequent and intentional involvement in the planning processes by stakeholders.
- 3) An intentional process to identify strategic plans, incorporate them and revise them requires ongoing maintenance.
- 4) All funders have not yet determined whether they will participate in CORE. The lack of a unified process among funders is leading to additional work for funded agencies.
- 5) Evaluation of the CORE Investments' model and outcomes was encouraged.
- 6) Levels of trust varied depending on the role of the stakeholder. County and City desire to be neutral led to low levels of trust between applicants and staff.
- 7) More staff resources are needed to oversee CORE and facilitate Collective Impact efforts.

## Appendix B. VARIANCE IN APPLICANT SURVEY RESPONSES BY DEMOGRAPHIC

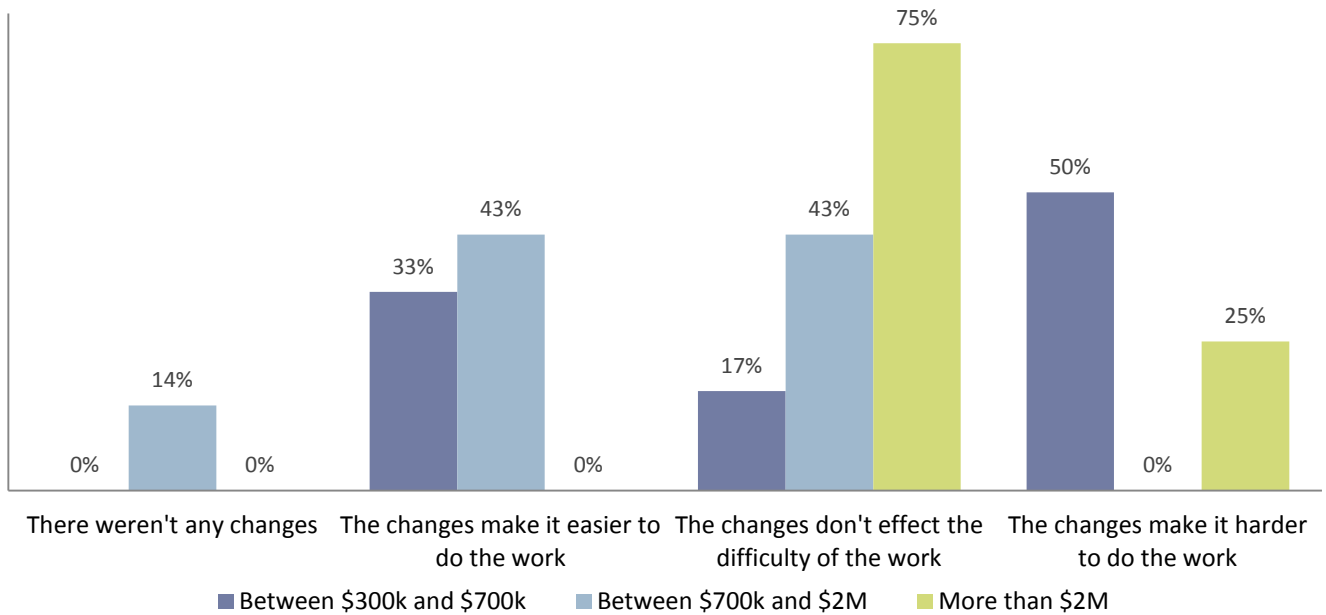
### I. BY AGENCY BUDGET

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Between \$300k and \$700k	10	36%
Between \$700k and \$2M	10	36%
More than \$2M	8	28%

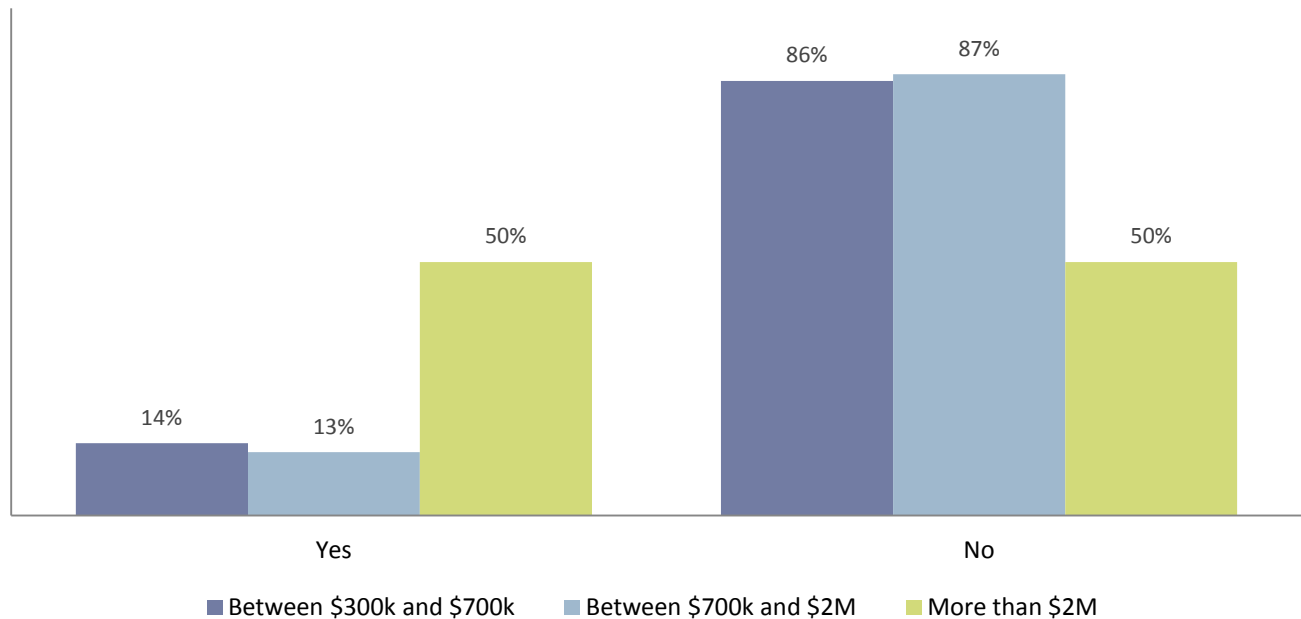




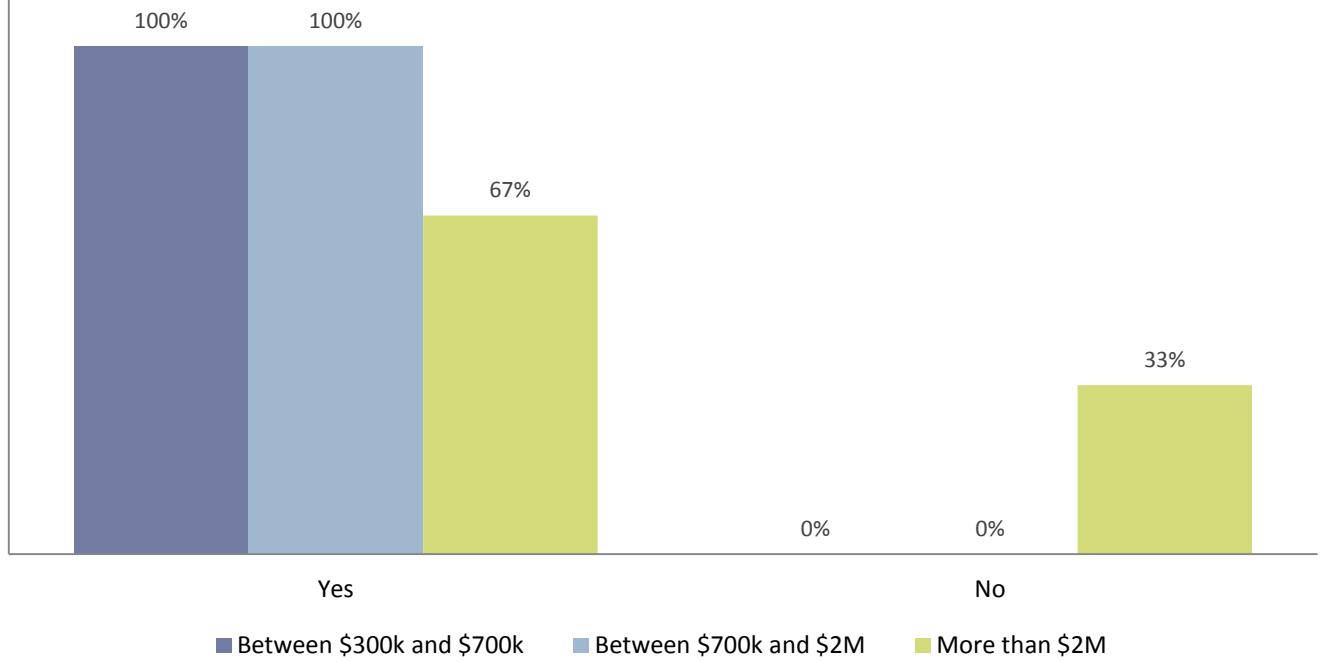
### How do changes in your contracted scope from your original proposal effect your work?



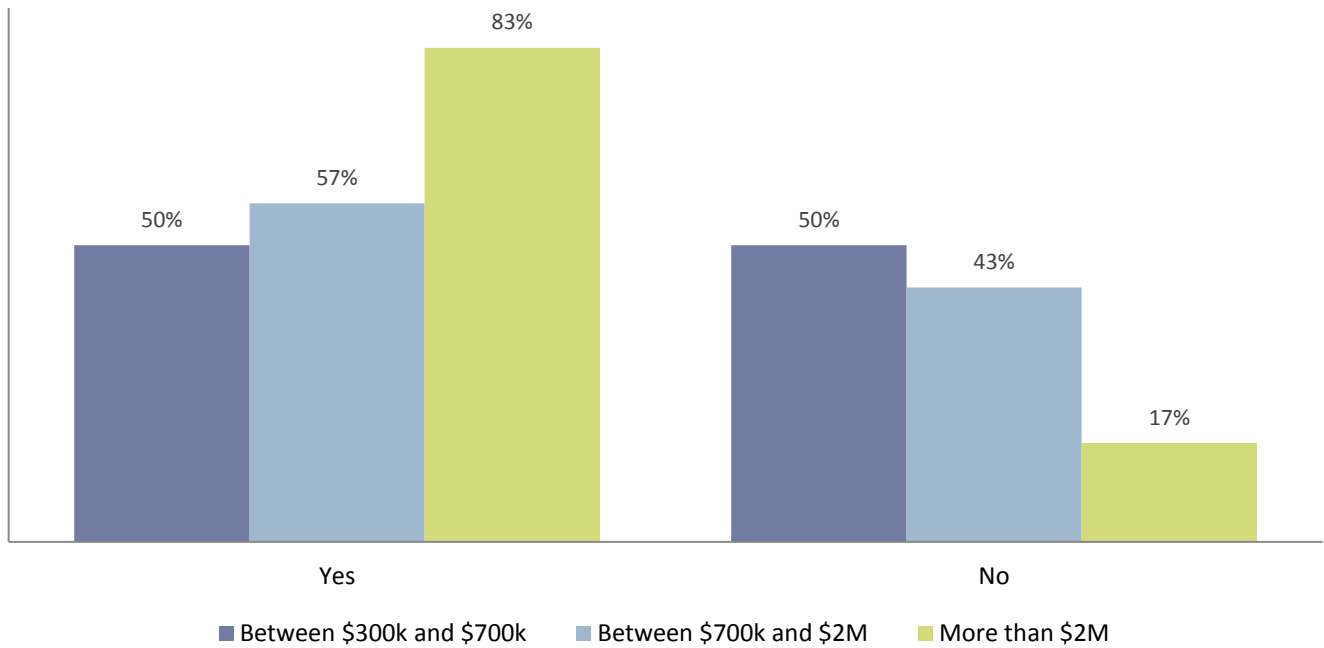
### Did you change how programs would be implemented from previously?



### Did you incorporate new Evidence Based Practices?

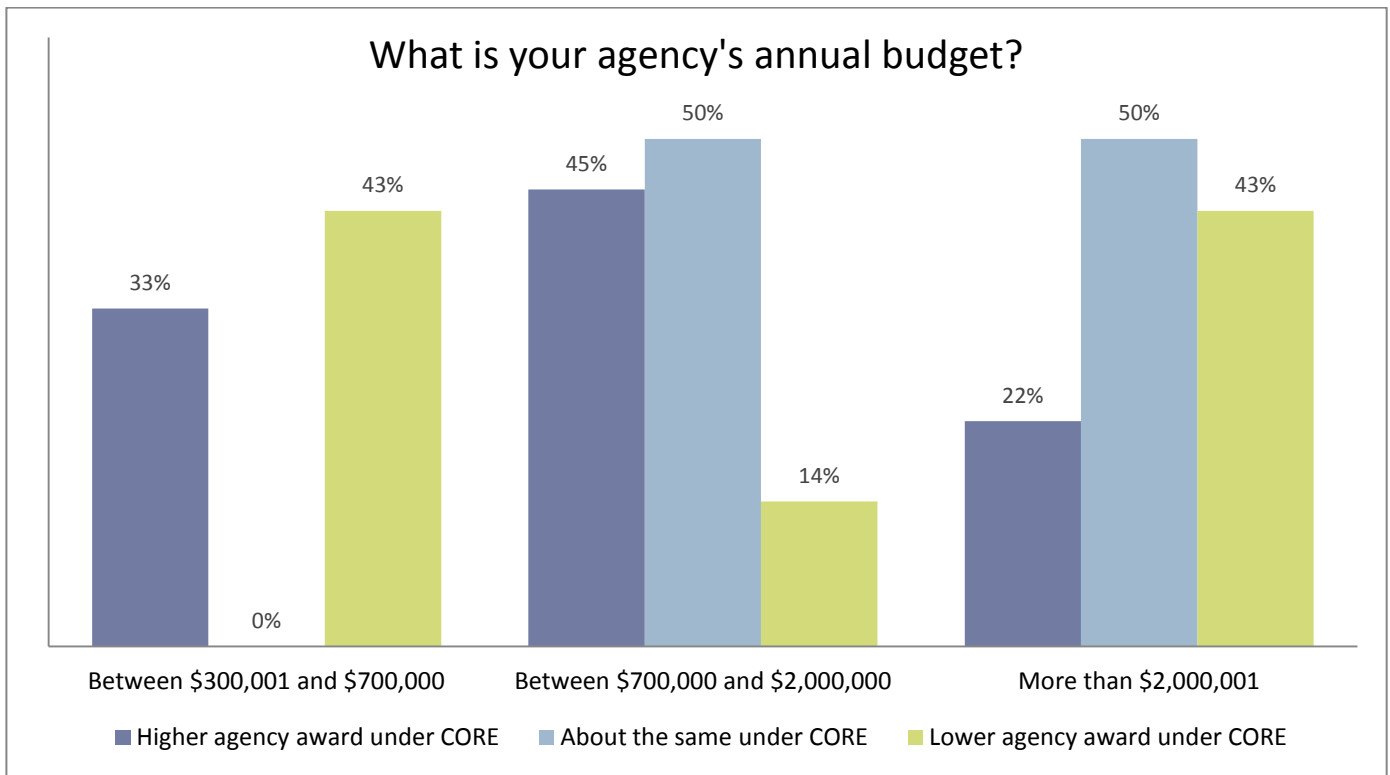


### Did you participate in Technical Assistance?

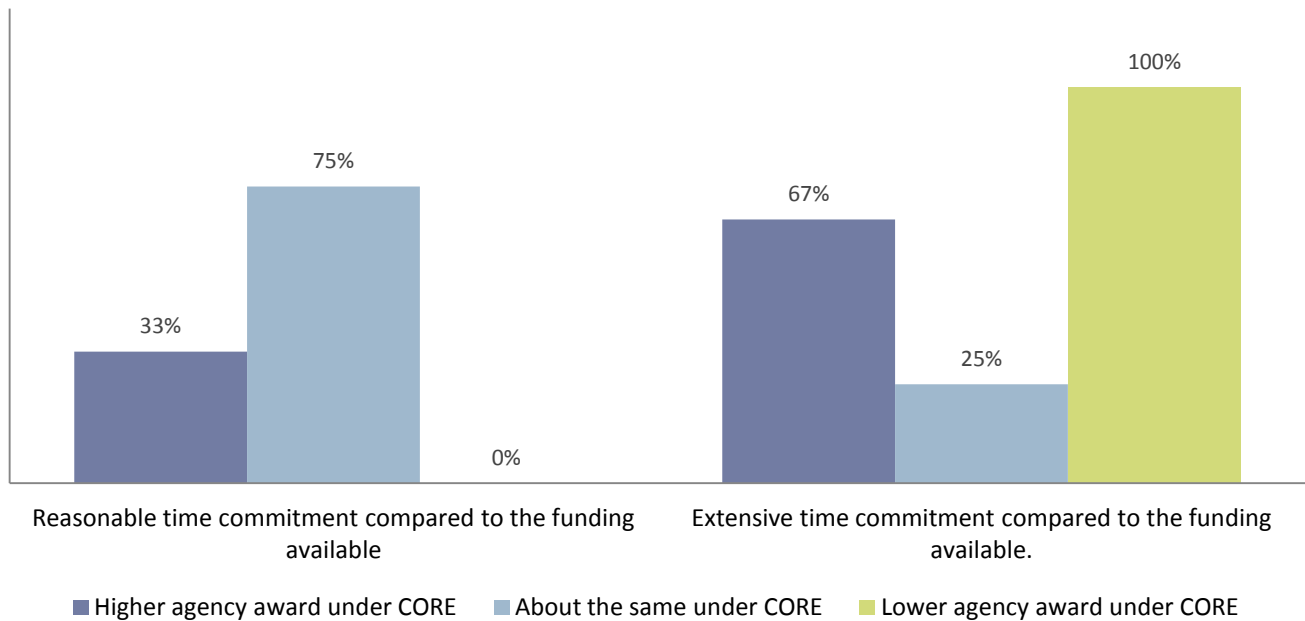


## II. BY AGENCY FUNDING CHANGE FROM COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

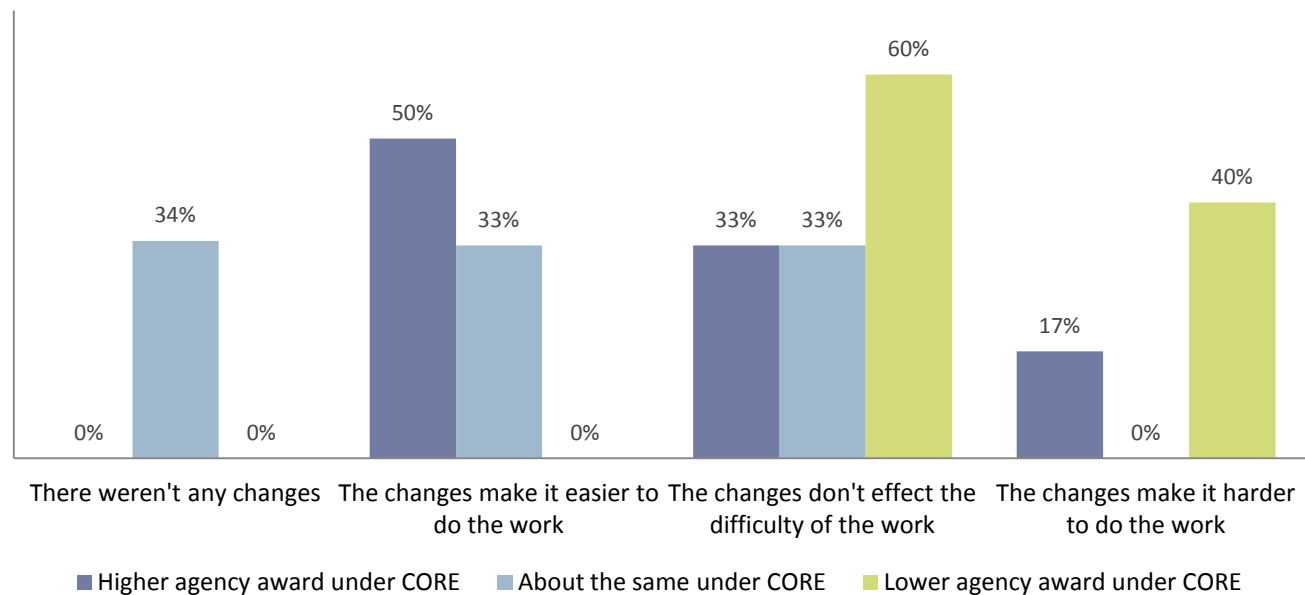
	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Higher award under CORE	9	45%
About the same	4	20%
Lower award under CORE	7	35%



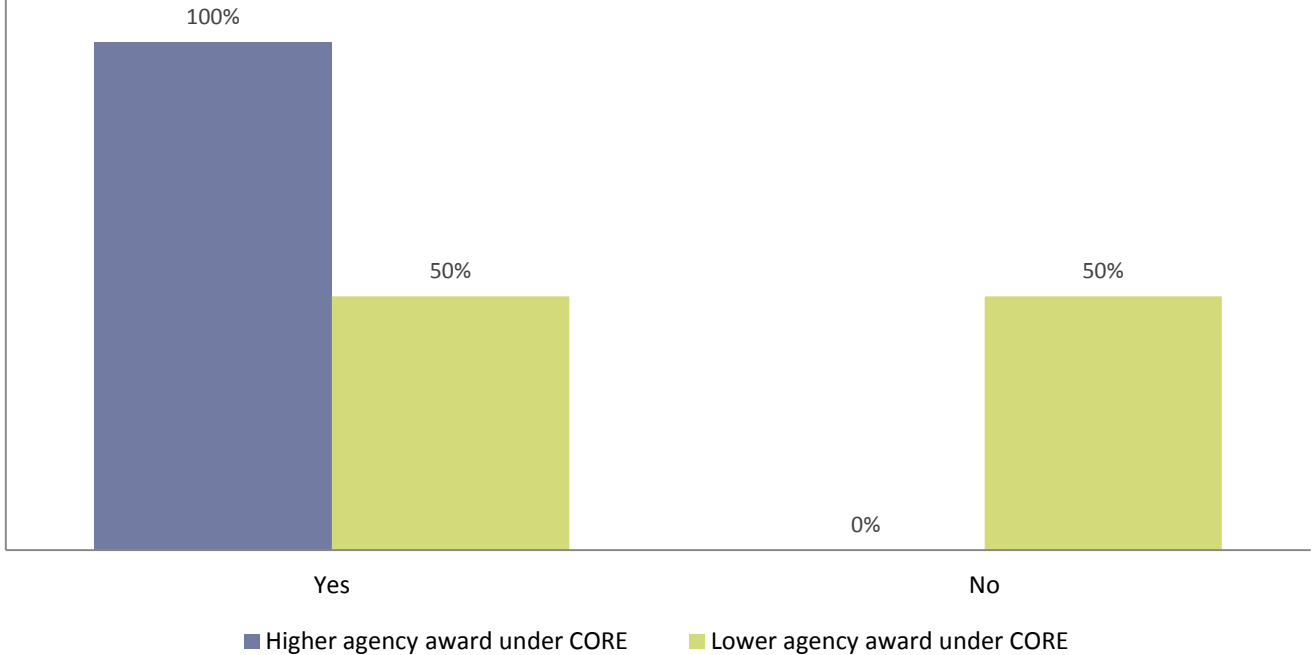
### Considering the level of effort for other RFPs, how did the amount of time spent compare to the funding available?



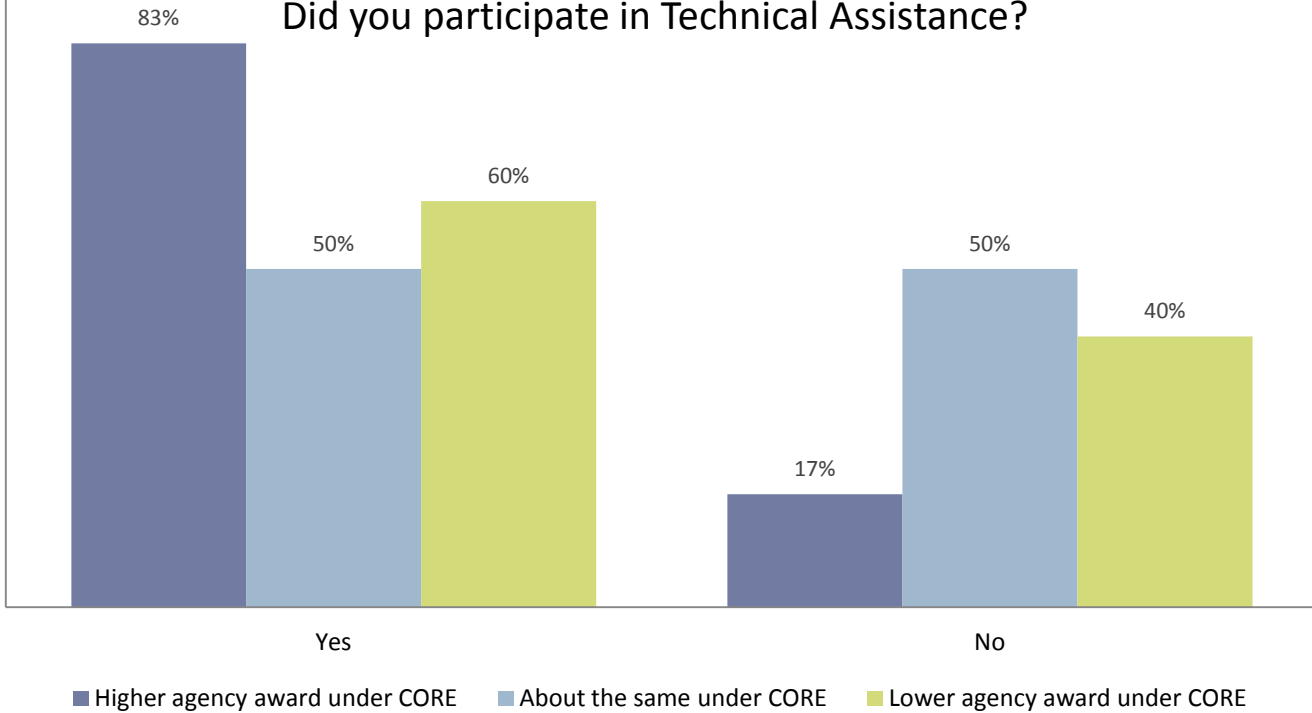
### How do changes in your contracted scope from your original proposal effect your work?



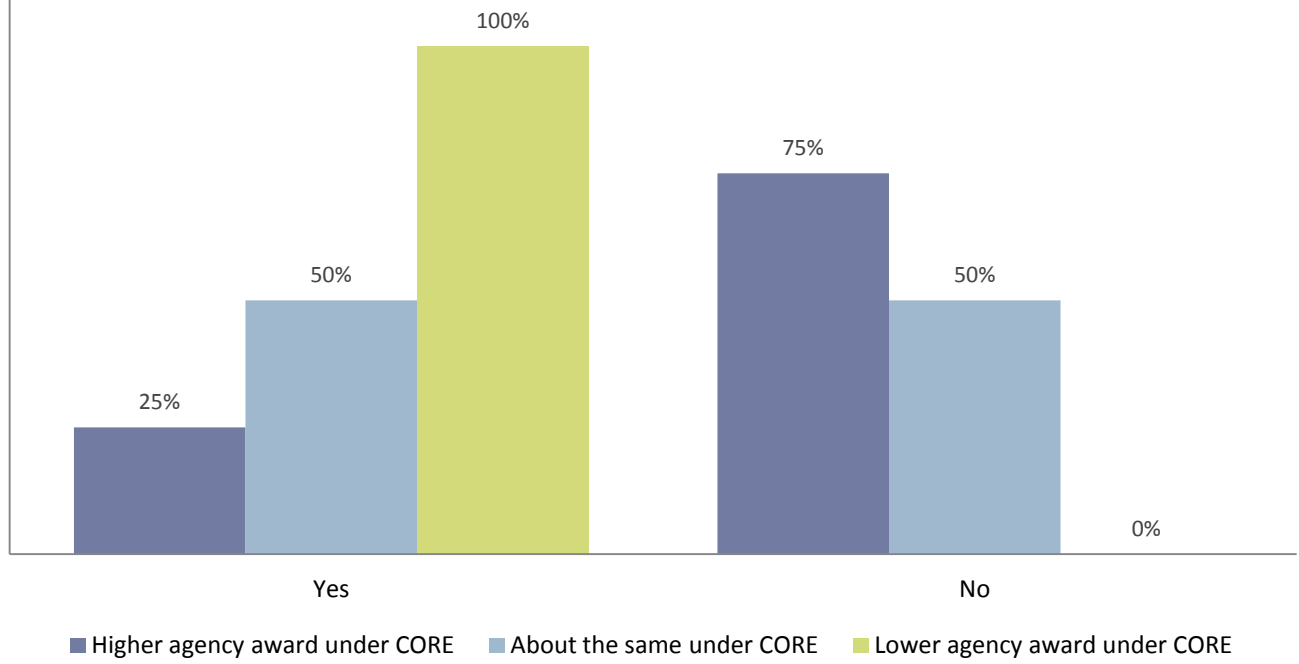
### Did you incorporate new Evidence Based Practices?



### Did you participate in Technical Assistance?



## Would you like to participate in the Focus Groups?



## Appendix C. LEVELS OF EVIDENCE

Level of Evidence	Criteria
<b>MODEL</b>	<p>MODEL practices have the highest level of scientific evidence demonstrating that they are effective. For practices to be considered MODEL, they must meet the following criterion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listed in a credible EBP clearinghouse at the highest level.</li> </ul>
<b>PROMISING</b>	<p>PROMISING practices have valid scientific evidence demonstrating effectiveness. Often these practices can be listed in an EBP clearinghouse as the second highest level of evidence. For practices to be considered PROMISING, they must meet the following criterion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated at least one evaluation by an independent researcher using experimental or quasi-experimental research methods showing a statistically significant positive impact.</li> </ul>
<b>INNOVATIVE</b>	<p>INNOVATIVE practices allow for local innovation and provide some evidence that the intervention is effective. For practices to be considered INNOVATIVE, they must have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated positive outcomes through previously collected data.</li> </ul>

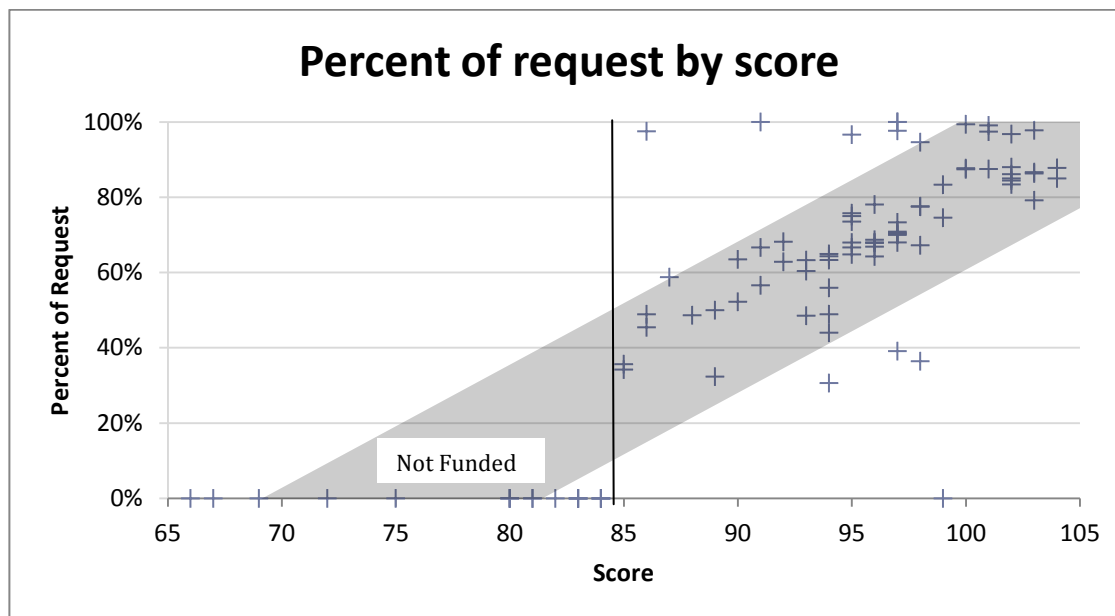
## Appendix D. RFP EVALUATION CRITERIA

<b>RFP Evaluation Criteria</b>	
Review Criteria	<b>Points</b>
<p><b>Scope of Work:</b> The scope of work delineates measurable activities, quality measures and outcomes and the follow criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope of work is clearly linked to implementation of the EBP identified</li> <li>• Activities are quantified, clearly described and the number of recipients is delineated</li> <li>• Measure of the quality of the program will reasonably determine how well the program is being implemented, including measurements of fidelity as appropriate</li> <li>• Outcomes identified are reasonable to expect from the services provided and the measurement(s) of the outcome(s) is appropriate to determine the impact of the program</li> </ul>	35
<p><b>Program Capacity:</b> Applicant demonstrates capacity that the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a history of providing similar or equivalent service delivery for at least one year in the service area for which funding is sought or a related service area</li> <li>• Can reasonably achieve the proposed outcomes</li> <li>• Can collect, analyze and report on implementation and outcomes achieved</li> <li>• Will implement with linguistic and cultural competency</li> </ul>	20
<p><b>Evidence-based Program or Practice - Demonstration of Evidence:</b> The degree to which the applicant has provided evidence for the EBP. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which EBP is likely to impact a Strategic Plan result area</li> <li>• If a Model program, a reputable EBP clearinghouse is cited</li> <li>• If a Promising program, a reputable EBP clearinghouse is cited and/or research presented provides experimental or quasi-experimental evidence of effectiveness</li> <li>• If an Innovative program, data demonstrating positive outcomes is provided</li> </ul>	20
<p><b>Program Budget:</b> The budget request and total program budget is reasonable and is sufficient to achieve the proposed outcomes.</p>	15
<p><b>Partnerships:</b> The program identifies partnerships and the total proposed budget cites matching funds.</p>	10
<p><b>Bonus - Local Vendor</b></p>	5



## Appendix E. SCORE RELATION TO PERCENT OF REQUEST

Proposals with higher scores in general, received a higher percentage of their requested funding. The chart below shows that, in general, as the scores increased, the percent of request awarded also increased. Programs below a score of 85 were not funded.



There were some variance in the relationship between scores and the percent of request that was awarded. On the graph above, these atypical proposals can be seen as outside the darkened area. The variance is due to the following factors:

- There were some large requests that had high scores, yet received less than half funds because the requested amount on the panel was significantly higher than the available amount.
- A panel recommended that some proposals for relatively small amounts with scores in the medium range were close to fully funded.
- A panel recommended that requests under \$50,000 with scores under 95 receive the minimum grant award of \$15,000 and scores over 95, receive the full request if still less than \$50,000.
- One proposal was highly rated, yet the panel recommended it be funded from another County funding source.
- One proposal was recommended for full funding by the panel because it was a mandated local match even though the proposal was scored relatively low.

Note: This appendix is copied from the June 2017 memo presenting the list of scores for CORE funded proposals.

# Appendix F. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

## I. APPLICANT SURVEY

Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to reply to our survey about the CORE Investments. Feedback from this survey will help inform and improve future efforts. This survey is part of a Process Evaluation that looks to collect information in the development of CORE Investments. The Process Evaluation is one of three evaluations (Process, Model, Outcome) that we hope will be conducted on CORE Investments. The Process Evaluation will look at how the steps from RFP creation through contracting were implemented. The Model Evaluation will compare the CORE Investments model to best practices for Results Based Collective Impact. The Outcome Evaluation will look at changes in the community level results.

The survey may take you about 11 minutes. The survey has different pages to ask about Background Information, RFP and Application Process, Review and Decision-Making, Contracting, and Communication. Participation in the survey is voluntary, and will not affect your agency's relationship with CORE Investments. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Because the survey is confidential, we will not be able to personally respond to anything written here.

---

### Background Information

1) What is your agency's annual budget?

- Less than \$300,000
- Between \$300,001 and \$700,000
- Between \$700,000 and \$2,000,000
- More than \$2,000,001

2) How many years has your agency operated in Santa Cruz County?

- Less than 2 years
- Between 2 and 5 years
- Between 6 and 10 years
- More than 10 years

3) Was your program funded under CORE Investments?

- Yes
- No

4) Was your agency previously funded under Community Programs?

- Yes
- No

**Logic: Hidden unless: (#4 Question "Was your agency previously funded under Community Programs?" is one of the following answers ("Yes") AND #3 Question "Was your program funded under CORE Investments?" is one of the following answers ("Yes"))**

5) Under CORE Investments, compared to Community Programs, was your agency awarded more or less money?

- Higher agency award amount under CORE Investments
- About the same under CORE Investments and Community Programs
- Higher agency award amount under Community Programs

Validation: Must be numeric

6) How many proposals did you submit?

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7) Which strategic plan area was the primary one in your CORE Investments application? Please only mark one unless you had multiple proposals.

- Community Roadmap to Collective Mental Health Wellness
- Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Prevention & Treatment Plan
- Health Improvement Partnership
- All In: Toward A Home For Every County Resident
- Area Plan on Aging
- Youth Violence Prevention Plan
- First 5 Santa Cruz County
- Child Welfare Systems Improvement Plan
- Santa Cruz County Master Plan for Early Care and Education

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**RFP and Application**

The questions on this page are in regard to the RFP issued on December 1, 2016 and due on February 6, 2017.

8) To what extent did the application process feel open to anyone to apply?

- Very open    Somewhat open    Somewhat closed    Very closed

9) How clear were ...

	<b>Very clear</b>	<b>Mostly clear</b>	<b>Somewhat clear</b>	<b>Not clear</b>
communications about the process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
instructions on how to complete the application?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
instructions on who to contact regarding questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10) How easy or difficult was it to ...

	<b>Very Easy</b>	<b>Easy</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	<b>Very Difficult</b>
understand the instructions?	( )	( )	( )	( )
find the information requested?	( )	( )	( )	( )
submit questions?	( )	( )	( )	( )
complete the forms?	( )	( )	( )	( )
learn about the process?	( )	( )	( )	( )
identify the Level of Evidence used (innovative, promising, or model)?	( )	( )	( )	( )

11) How helpful were the following?

	<b>Very helpful</b>	<b>Mostly Helpful</b>	<b>Somewhat Helpful</b>	<b>Not helpful</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Applicant Conference	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Q&A Document	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Group Workshops with Nicole Young	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Individualized TA with Nicole Young	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

12) How did the CORE Investments RFP process compare to other Foundation, State and Federal RFP processes you've participated in?

- ( ) This is my first RFP process
- ( ) Easier
- ( ) About the same
- ( ) Harder

13) Considering the level of effort for other RFPs (Federal, State or Foundation grants), how did the amount of time spent compare to the amount of funding available?

- ( ) I don't know how much time fund development typically takes

- ( ) Minimal time commitment compared to the funding available
- ( ) Reasonable time commitment compared to the funding available
- ( ) Extensive time commitment compared to the funding available.

14) How many hours, did your agency take to complete one CORE Investments application? Do not include hours spent with Technical Assistance since we have those hours tracked.

\_\_\_\_\_

15) Please tell us more about any of your answers to the previous questions that you wish to clarify.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16) What suggestions do you have to make the process clearer or easier in the future?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Proposal Review and Decision Making

These questions pertain to the review of submitted proposal on February 6,2017 through decision-making on May 16, 2017.

**Page exit logic:** Skip / Disqualify Logic**IF:** #3 Question "Was your program funded under CORE Investments?" is one of the following answers ("No") **THEN:** Jump to

17) To what extent were

	Very	Mostly	Somewhat	Not at all
the decision-making criteria clear?	( )	( )	( )	( )
the steps in the process transparent?	( )	( )	( )	( )
the panel processes fair?	( )	( )	( )	( )
the suggestions made to board/council clear?	( )	( )	( )	( )

18) What could be done to make the process or decisions clearer or better?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Contracting

This page refers to the process of developing and executing contracts from May 16, 2017 through September 26, 2017.

19) To what extent were

	<b>Very</b>	<b>Mostly</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
the steps in the process clear?	( )	( )	( )	( )
your voice and perspective heard and integrated in the revision process?	( )	( )	( )	( )
the reasons for changes from the original proposal made clear to all parties?	( )	( )	( )	( )
the program and services in the proposal understood by County staff in order to co-create the scope?	( )	( )	( )	( )

20) Did the amount of time required seem appropriate for ...

	<b>Less than expected</b>	<b>As expected</b>	<b>More than expected</b>
Developing the contract	( )	( )	( )
Feedback	( )	( )	( )
Final Signature	( )	( )	( )

21) To what extent

	<b>Very</b>	<b>Mostly</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
does the contract accurately represent the program you will be implementing?	( )	( )	( )	( )
does the budget format accurately allow for the cost of activities in the SOW to be represented?	( )	( )	( )	( )
will you be able to report on the quality measures and outcomes written in your SOW?	( )	( )	( )	( )

22) How do changes to your contracted scope from your original proposal effect your work?

( ) There weren't any changes

- The changes make it easier to do the work
- The changes don't effect the difficulty of the work
- The changes make it harder to do the work

23) Please tell us more about any of your answers to the previous questions that you wish to clarify.

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24) What could be done to make the process better?

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Communication and Technical Assistance Support

This page refers to Technical Assistance Support and Communications throughout the entire Phase I.

**Logic: Show/hide trigger exists.**

25) Did you change how programs would be implemented from previously?

- Yes
- No

**Logic: Hidden unless: #25 Question "Did you change how programs would be implemented from previously?" is one of the following answers ("Yes")**

26) Did you incorporate new EBPs?

- Yes
- No

**Logic: Show/hide trigger exists.**

27) Did you participate in Technical Assistance?

- Yes
- No

**Logic: Hidden unless: #27 Question "Did you participate in Technical Assistance? " is one of the following answers ("Yes")**

28) Have you applied concepts discussed during TA to programs or organizational structure?

- Yes
- No

29) What could be done to make communication and technical assistance better?

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Closing

30) Any other comments you would like to share?

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**Logic: Show/hide trigger exists.**

31) We will be holding focus groups to discuss CORE Investments through Phase I. If you would like to participate in a focus group, please select yes below and you will be directed to a separate survey to enter your contact information. Your name will not be connected with your answers on this survey.

Yes

No

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Thank You!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your responses are very important.

**Action: URL Redirect: Focus Group Volunteer**



## II. APPLICANT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### Introductory Paragraph

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our focus group about the CORE Investments. Feedback from this focus group will help inform and improve future efforts. This meeting is part of a Process Evaluation that looks to collect information in the development of CORE Investments. Right now we are focusing our inquiry on the RFP, application, review, and contracting process. All of you completed the online survey and those scores and comments are being included in the report already.

The focus group will take no more than 90 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and will not affect your agency's relationship with CORE Investments. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Because the focus group is confidential, we will not be personally identifying anything that you say during it. Moreover please do not share others comments outside of this room. We would like to record the session, if everyone is in agreement to do that. Do I have your permission to record? (If yes, TURN ON recorder).

Just to start the discussion, would you please share your name and one word to describe your morning.

### RFP and Application

1. How did it compare to other RFP processes?
  - a. Probe: What things did you think were well done
  - b. Probe: What things you would like to see changed
2. What suggestions do you have to improve the instructions written in the RFP?
  - a. Probe: Would more specificity been helpful?
3. What suggestions do you have to change the process on how clarifying questions about the RFP are answered?
  - a. Probe: To what degree is it helpful having staff answer questions about the RFP and a consultant to provide support?  
Probe: Do you see a role that is different between staff answering questions and the consultant building capacity?
  - b. Probe: What additional support around EBPs would have been helpful?
4. What suggestions do you have to improve the application form?

### Proposal Review and Decision Making

5. What decision-making criteria do you think should be included?
6. How should scoring be related to funding amount?
  - a. Probe: How stringent should the formula be? (Such as a score of a 90 gets funded at 90%)
7. What would make the process clearer and more transparent?

### Contracting

8. What did you appreciate about the contracting process?
9. What could be improved?

### Closing

10. Any other comments?

Thank you!

### III. TA SURVEY

It is important for me to know what you thought of today's session and find out if there is anything I can do to improve future trainings. Please take a few minutes to fill out this form. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

Circle the number that best describes your level of agreement with each statement. On this scale, 1 is the lowest rating, and 5 is the highest rating.

	Low		Med		High
1. The information was presented effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The session was well organized.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The trainer actively engaged me in the learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I learned concepts and skills that are useful and relevant for my work.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am likely to apply these concepts and skills to my work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Overall, I was satisfied with the session.	1	2	3	4	5

7. How would you rate the level of difficulty of the materials and discussion for you?  
 Too easy                       Too hard                       Just right

8. What was the most valuable thing you heard or learned in today's training?

9. What was the least useful thing you heard or learned in today's training? What would have made it more useful?

10. Was there anything you had difficulty understanding during today's training? If yes, please describe.

11. What is one thing you will take from this training and put into practice?

#### IV. REVIEW PANELISTS SURVEY

We want to thank you again for your time and the hard work of being on the CORE review panel. We are excited about moving our community forward with this process that you have played a critical role in. To inform us about your experience and improve the process in the future we would like to get your feedback with this brief survey.

1) Which review panel were you on?

- Health
- Seniors
- Children and Youth
- Homelessness

2) Have you been on an RFP review panel before?

- Yes
- No
- Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_

3) What did you like about the process?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) What suggestions do you have to improve communication leading up to the panel?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5) What suggestions do you have to improve the application itself?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6) What suggestions do you have to improve the process on the day of the panel itself?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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#### Additional Comments

7) If you are interested in coming to the presentation to the board of supervisors or city council on May 16 to potentially give a brief statement about your experience, please enter your name.

\_\_\_\_\_

8) If you can't come to the meeting but would like to make a statement that we may include in a brief or report, please do so here.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9) Please let us know if there is anything else you would like to share with us.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Thank You!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

## V. STRATEGIC PLAN REPRESENTATIVES FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### Introductory Paragraph

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our focus group about the CORE Investments. Feedback from this focus group will help inform and improve future efforts. This survey is part of a Process Evaluation that looks to collect information in the development of CORE Investments. The Process Evaluation is one of three evaluations (Process, Model, Outcome) that will be conducted on CORE Investments. The Process Evaluation will look at how the steps of Phase One--from RFP creation through contracting—were implemented. The Model Evaluation will compare the CORE Investments model to best practices for Results Based Collective Impact. The Outcome Evaluation will look at changes in the community level results.

The focus group will take about 90 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and will not affect your agency's relationship with CORE Investments. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Because the focus group is confidential, we will not be personally identifying anything that you say during it. Moreover please do not share others comments outside of this room.

### Demographics

We want to share a bit about the roles that you may have played in the process...

Previously funded under community programs?

Applicant?

Review Panelist?

On strategic plan representative cross-panel groups?

### RFP and Application

1. How did it compare to other RFP processes?
  - a. Probe: what things did you think were well done
  - b. Probe: what things you would like to see changed
2. What suggestions do you have to improve the instructions written in the RFP?
  - a. Probe: would more specificity been helpful?
3. To what degree did you support or help programs to apply for CORE investments?
4. To what extent did the application process feel open to anyone?

### Proposal Review and Decision Making

When thinking about implementing a funding cycle again in two years, what guidance can you provide?

1. Were the decision making criteria clear?
2. What decision-making criteria do you think should be included?
3. To what extent was the process transparent?
4. Were suggestions made to board/council clear?
5. Were board/council decisions clear?
6. To what extent do the programs funded under your strategic plan represent the type of work that you expected would be funded under your strategic plan?
7. To what extent do the programs funded represent your strategic plan?

### Contracting

8. To what extent are programs funded under your strategic plan more likely to be using EBPs?

a. Probe: Is this important to you?

Communication and Technical Assistance support

9. Were there sufficient opportunities to provide input and help to co-create CORE Investments?

10. Were you kept sufficiently informed throughout the RFP and Decision-Making?

a. Probe: What was done well? What could be improved?

11. Will you be changing or revising your strategic plan in light of CORE investments?

a. Probe: How? When?

12. Do you see any benefit in bringing agencies funded under your strategic plan together with the strategic plan body?

b. Probe: How would you like to see this happen?

Closing

13. Do you have any additional suggestions to improve the processes in the future?

14. Any other comments ?

## VI. FUNDER INTERVIEW

### Introductory Paragraph

Thank you for taking the time for this interview about the CORE Investments. Feedback from it will help inform and improve future efforts. This interview is part of a Process Evaluation that looks to collect information in the development of CORE Investments. The Process Evaluation is one of three evaluations (Process, Model, Outcome) that will be conducted on CORE Investments. The Process Evaluation will look at how the steps of Phase One--from RFP creation through contracting—were implemented. The Model Evaluation will compare the CORE Investments model to best practices for Results Based Collective Impact. The Outcome Evaluation will look at changes in the community level results.

The interview will take about 30 minutes. Participation is voluntary. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Because the survey is confidential, we will not be personally identifying anything that you say during it. We are also asking all of these questions to all of the funders, so feel free to skip or answer that you don't know for any of the questions.

### RFP and Application

1. How did it compare to other RFP processes?
  - a. Probe: what things did you think were well done
  - b. Probe: what things you would like to see changed
2. To what degree did you support or help programs to apply for CORE investments?
3. To what extent did the application process feel open to anyone?

### Proposal Review and Decision Making

4. Were the decision making criteria clear?
5. What decision-making criteria do you think should be included?
6. To what extent was the process transparent?
7. To what extent do the programs funded represent the type of work that you expected would be funded?

### Contracting

8. What changes do you see from Community Programs as it was previously implemented?
9. How do changes affect your organization?

### Communication and Technical Assistance support

10. Were there sufficient opportunities to provide input and help to co-create CORE Investments?
11. Were you kept sufficiently informed throughout the RFP and Decision-Making?
  - c. Probe: What was done well? What could be improved?
12. Is your organization considering funding programs through CORE Investments in the future?
  - a. Why or Why not?

### Closing

13. Do you have any additional suggestions to improve the processes in the future?
14. Any other comments?

## VII. STAFF FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

The topic areas we will be discussing are the following:

- A. RFP Development, Release, and Ongoing communication
- B. Incoming Application and Review Process
- C. Expert Review Panels including the Pre-panel process (ID, Outreach communication), Execution, and Post-Panel Process
- D. Final allocation suggestions process
- E. Set Aside process

The following questions in relation to each topic area:

1. What were we trying to accomplish (objectives)?
2. Where did we hit (or miss)?
3. What caused our results?
4. What should we start, stop, or continue doing?