Milwaukee County Credible Messengers

Pilot Results & Evaluation Findings

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Milwaukee County Credible Messengers *(CM)*

CM is designed to align with evidence that supports pathways to desistance. Key activities allow for identity development, social development and allow participants to identify strengths to want to desist from crime.

Credible Messengers Key Activities		Proven Pathways to Desistance
Mentorship	→	Identity Development
Youth Engagement	→	Social Connections
Resource Coordination	→	Employment & Recreational Activities
Family Meetings	→	Family Relationships
Community Collaboration	→	Community Support

Milwaukee County Credible Messengers *(CM)*

- Launched in 2020 to promote public safety and supportive positive outcomes for Milwaukee youth
- Emphasis on those in the youth justice system
- Focuses specifically on impacting youth at all points of system involvement by coordination amongst various partners
- Includes community-based organizations, public health entities, academic institutions, and government agencies

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Partners Agencies

Limitations

- Staff capacity challenges
- Limited data management capacity
- Pilot design and processes
- Leadership transitions across partners agencies
- Shifts in political and environmental climates (COVID-19)

Evaluation Efforts

Evaluation Purpose

- Learn how to enhance the effort for sustainable partnerships, efficient processes, and effective resource allocation.

- Learn how their collaborative efforts impact expected outcomes.

- Demonstrate the value of the efforts and how to address areas of improvement.

- Guide the refinement of the scope of work, expected outcomes and expectations of partners.

- Drive efforts to increase awareness of Milwaukee County Credible Messengers effort.

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Core Evaluation Questions

- How does the community understand Credible Messenger?

- How does the Credible Messenger impact the community?

- How do systems and process impact the implementation of CM?

- Is the effort functioning as intended?

- What are unexpected outcomes of this effort?

- What impact/value of persons with lived experience have on youth life outcomes?

Approach

- **Participatory**: improve accuracy and relevance of reports, improve performance, empower partners, build capacity and sustain network learning and growth.

- **Culturally Responsive**: move beyond only focusing on participation in one aspect of the evaluation.

- **Developmental**: rapid, real-time feedback using diverse, user-friendly feedback techniques with encouragement of learning.
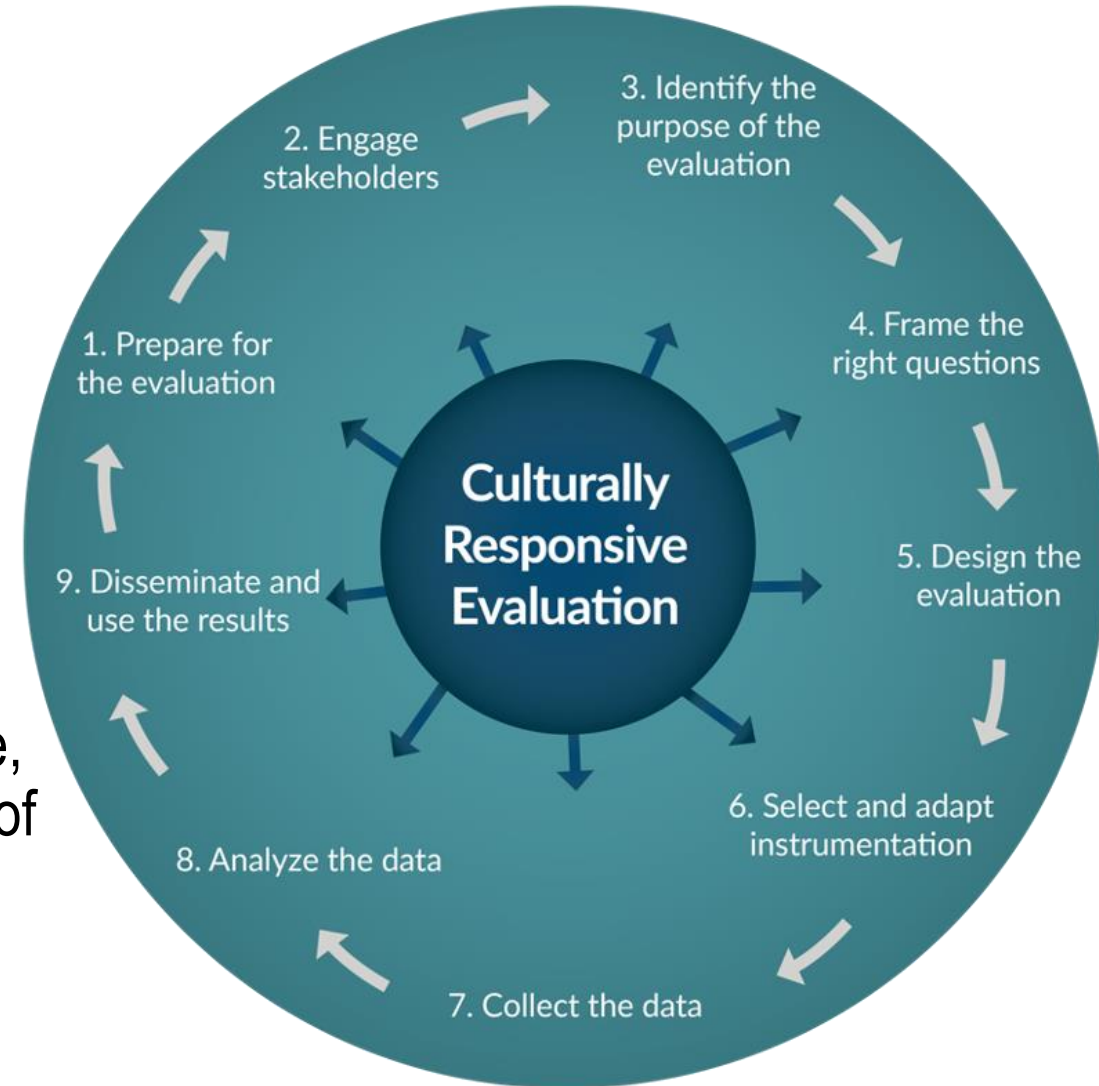
Data Collection

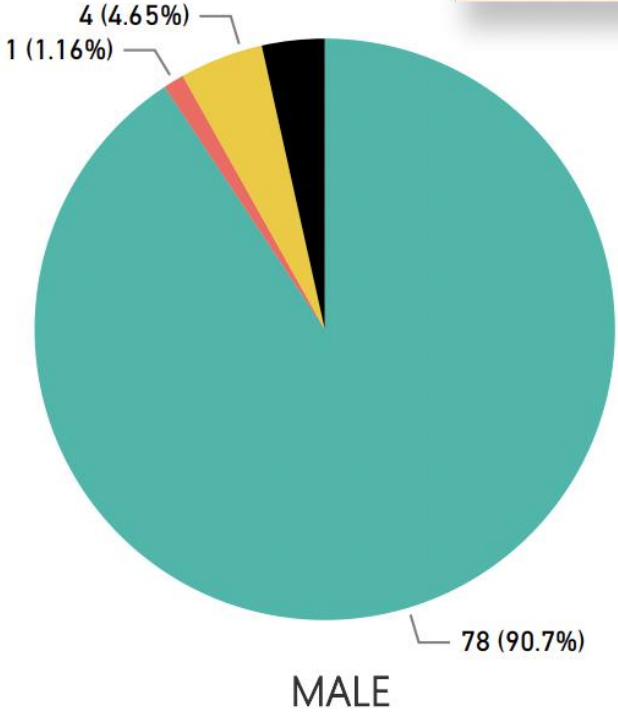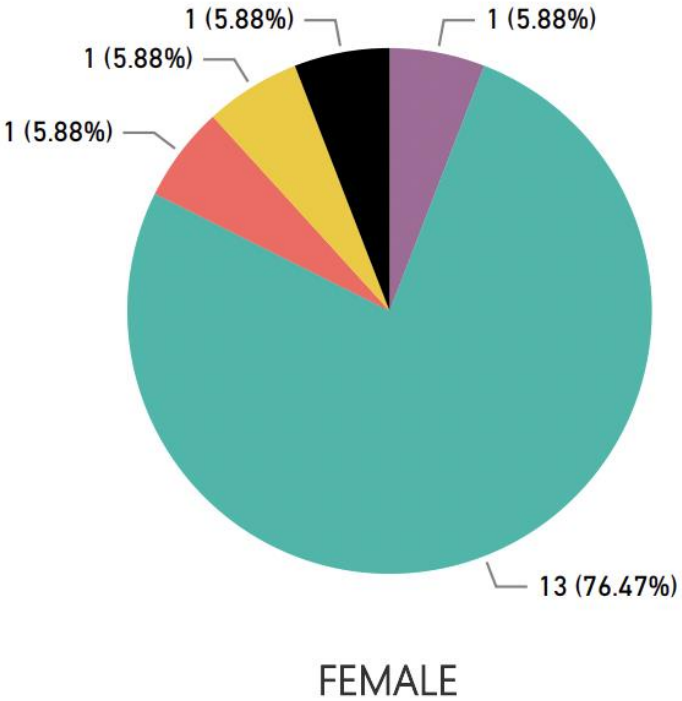| Evaluation Question	Data Collection Method	Source of Data
1. How does the community understand Credible Messenger?	Program Logic Discussion Existing (Secondary) Data Partnership Feedback Survey	Program Logic Synthesis OVP Community Education Series Partner Feedback Results
2. How do systems and process impact the implementation of CM?	Program Logic Discussion Partnership Feedback Survey	Program Logic Synthesis Partner Feedback Results
3. Is the effort functioning as intended?	Program Logic Discussion Partnership Feedback Survey Manual Reporting Tool	Program Logic Synthesis Partner Feedback Results Provider Partners Reports
4. What are unexpected outcomes of this effort?	Program Logic Discussion Partnership Feedback Survey	Program Logic Synthesis Partner Feedback Results
5. What impact/value of persons with lived experience have on youth life outcomes?	Youth Feedback Program Logic Discussion Existing (Secondary) Data	Youth Engagement Program Logic Synthesis CM success stories

Results

Demographics of Youth Served *(by race and gender)*

105
Total Youth Served

Asian · Black/African-Americ... · Hispanic · Unknown · White

FEMALE
- 1 (5.88%)
- 1 (5.88%)
- 1 (5.88%)
- 1 (5.88%)
- 13 (76.47%)

MALE
- 4 (4.65%)
- 1 (1.16%)
- 78 (90.7%)

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Demographics of Youth Served *(by zipcode)*
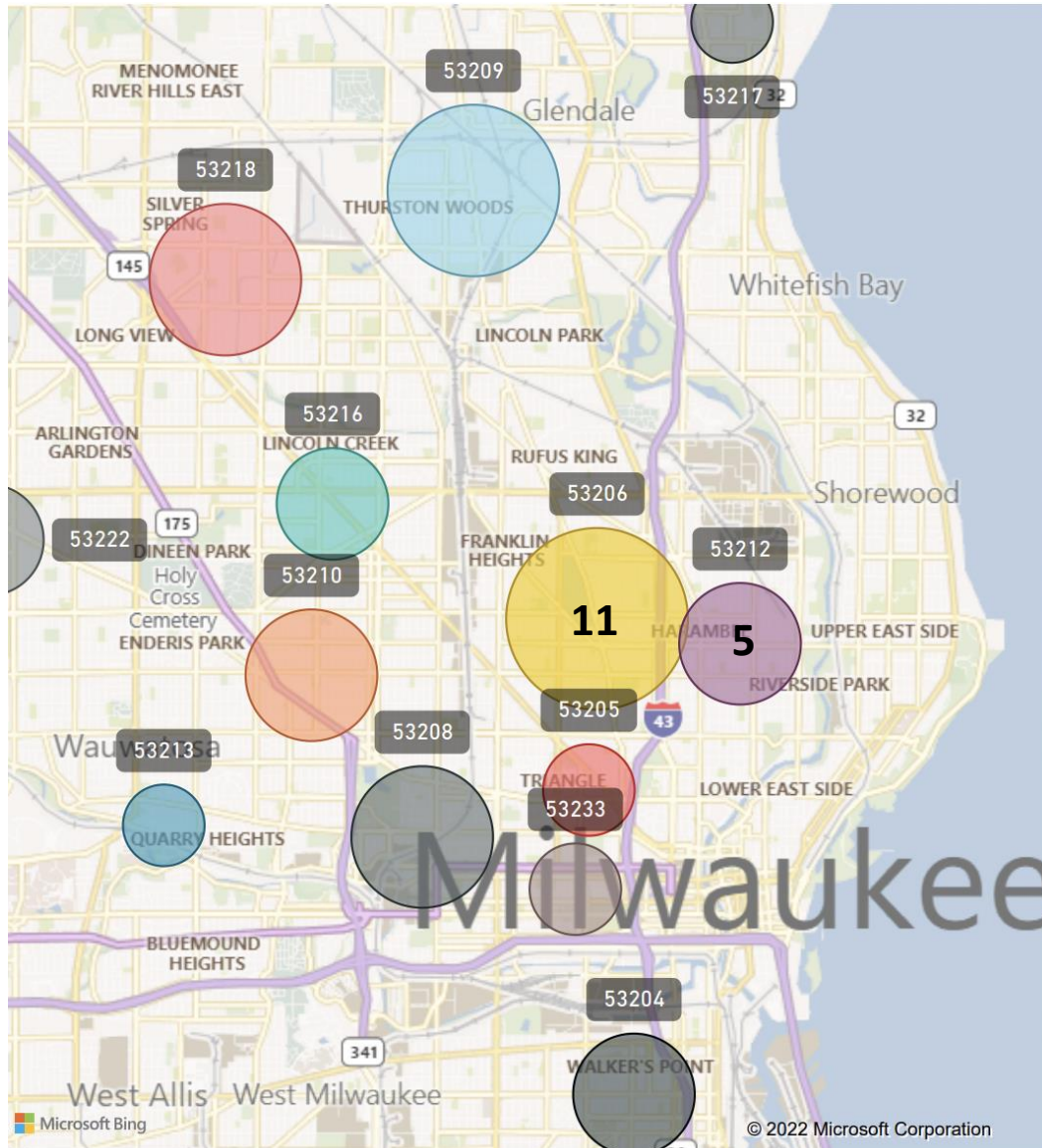
| Zip Code	Count of Youth
Unknown	20
53206	11
53209	10
53218	8
53208	7
53210	6
53224	6
53204	5
53212	5
53216	4
53222	4
53225	4
53215	3
53205	2
53223	2
53233	2
53172	1
53213	1
53217	1
53219	1
53226	1

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77% of program youth have desisted since participating.

KEY TERM

Desistance: the process by which criminality, or the individual risk for antisocial conduct, declines over the life-course, generally after adolescence (https://nij.ojp.gov/)

For the purposes of this report, desistance is measured by recidivism (re-offending) and severity of charges.

Count of Youth by Reoffense

No Reoffense	50
One Reoffense	11
Two Reoffenses	4
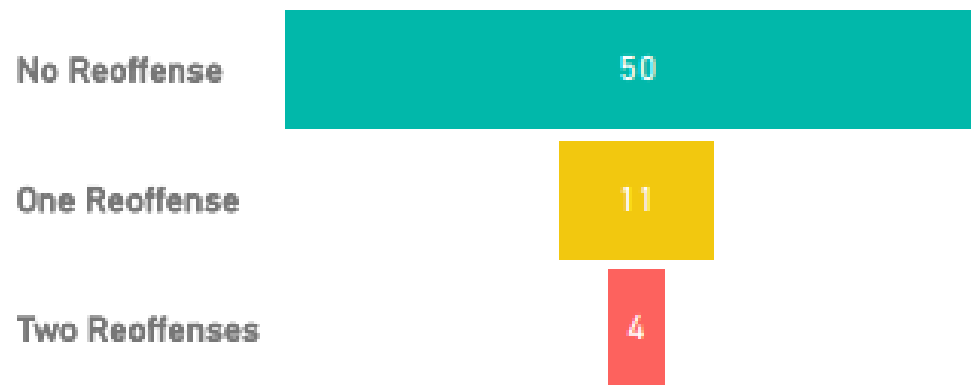
Of the 65 CYFS (Intervention) youth with Credible Messenger Pilot Program hours reported:

50 youth (77%) have desisted* since they began the program.

11 (17%) re-offended once after receiving services.

4 youth (6%) re-offended twice after receiving services.

*only adjudicated offenses were considered

Of the youth who reoffended, those who decreased or had no change in severity of offense had more service hours.
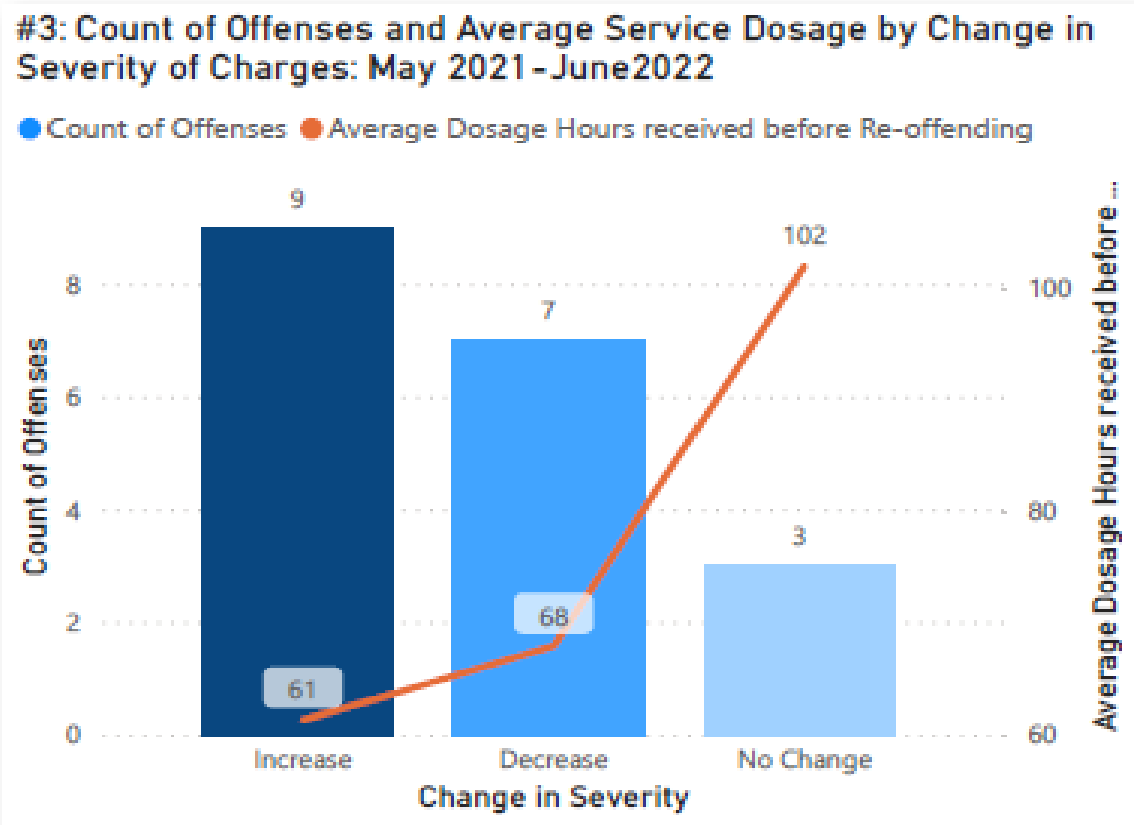
Figure C: Average scores for how for how effective expected activities are to advancing the Credible Messenger goal. *(1=low, 5-high)*

Activity	Score
Collaboration events	3.3
Family meetings	3.6
Youth engagement	4
CM training	4.36
Resource coordination	4
Case planning	3.45
Outcome reporting	3.45

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Although a high indication of effectiveness, contract expectations only graze the support CM mentors provide to youth and the Milwaukee community.

CM mentors are transforming the lives of youth with activities that are not explicitly expected or thoroughly captured.

- Career development: (job connections, resume building, etc.)
- Health relationship building: (parent coaching, communication techniques, conflict resolution, etc.)
- Personal responsibility: (financial literacy, grocery shopping, goal setting, self-advocacy)
- Social emotional development: (self-awareness, coping, self-reflection)
- Conflict meditation: (resolve bounties, deescalate verbal/physical conflicts, group-based violence interventions)
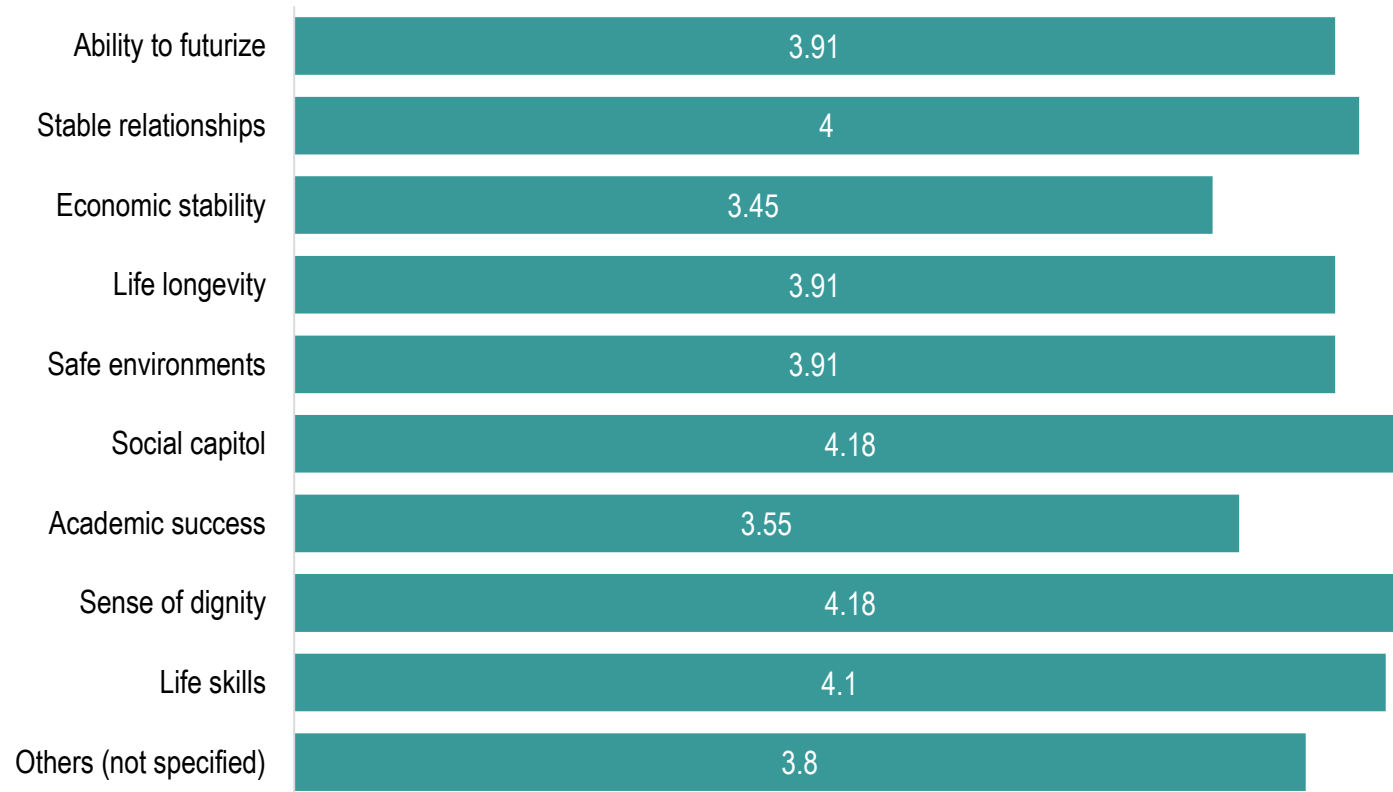- Youth Advocacy: (civic engagement, system navigation)

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"A Credible Messenger is a community valid person who is trusted by the community who is not a system partner but can work on behalf of the community members to get them what they need, when they need with without individuals having to go deeper within the criminal/legal system."—System Partner Agency Leader

CM mentors are achieving outcomes beyond what was intentionally intended.

Figure E: Average accuracy scores of how Credible Messenger mentors impact youth. *(1=low, 5=high)*

Category	Score
Ability to futurize	3.91
Stable relationships	4
Economic stability	3.45
Life longevity	3.91
Safe environments	3.91
Social capitol	4.18
Academic success	3.55
Sense of dignity	4.18
Life skills	4.1
Others (not specified)	3.8

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The Credible Messenger effort has an immeasurable impact on its intended target audience—youth, as well as families, and community.

Youth Voice

"I am not always in the house anymore so I more talkative and have positive to do"

"I used to have a musty attitude…She made me feel lovable."

"help get me out of trouble"

"I have someone I can rely on."

"I gained confidence, speaking skills—I am more social and make responsible decisions"

"he told me I would have to do the work at some point, might as well do it now so I don't have to do it and be working at the same time. Yeah...that motivated me to start going back to school."

"Helped with my anger"

"He saved me life. I would still be on here in these streets doing the same thing, probably still stealing cars"

"they talk with my mom to help her understand me."

"he brought me a bag full of name brand clothes…I was like man, nobody has ever did nothing like this for me"

"My mentor changed my whole mindset on life."

"I have a job now."

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The collaboration occurring amongst the partner agencies has system and community level implications which is an indication of the value of the Credible Messenger effort.

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The value of the partnership involves the following aspects.

- Specialize expertise (violence interruption, mental health, street outreach, legalities)
- Community relationships (employers, health providers, education supports, etc.)
- Family connections (parent/guardian relationships, peer outreach, etc.)
- Information sharing (frequent meetings, sensitive intel, access to sources)
- Resource coordination (e.g., filling gaps to meet youth needs)
- Policy advocacy (e.g., elevating needs to system agencies)
- Capacity Building (support to do to the work better)

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The CM partner agencies have specific capabilities and areas of expertise that address the various needs of youth served.
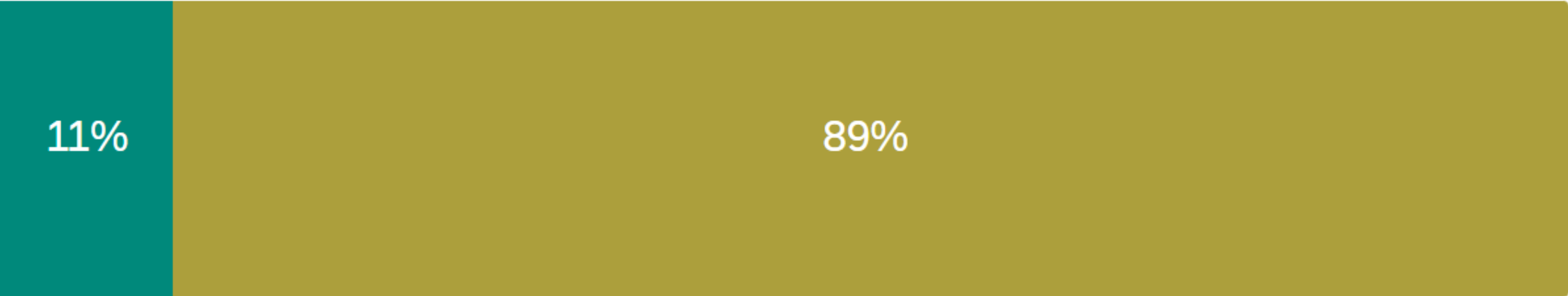
"Our team can't do what 414Life does—but I know I can call because we are in this together." – System Partner Agency Leader

"We work within the school—so we don't have the street relationships. But that's how we work together." —CM mentor C

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Figure F: Distribution of scores for how valuable the CM partnership is to ability to advance the CM goal.
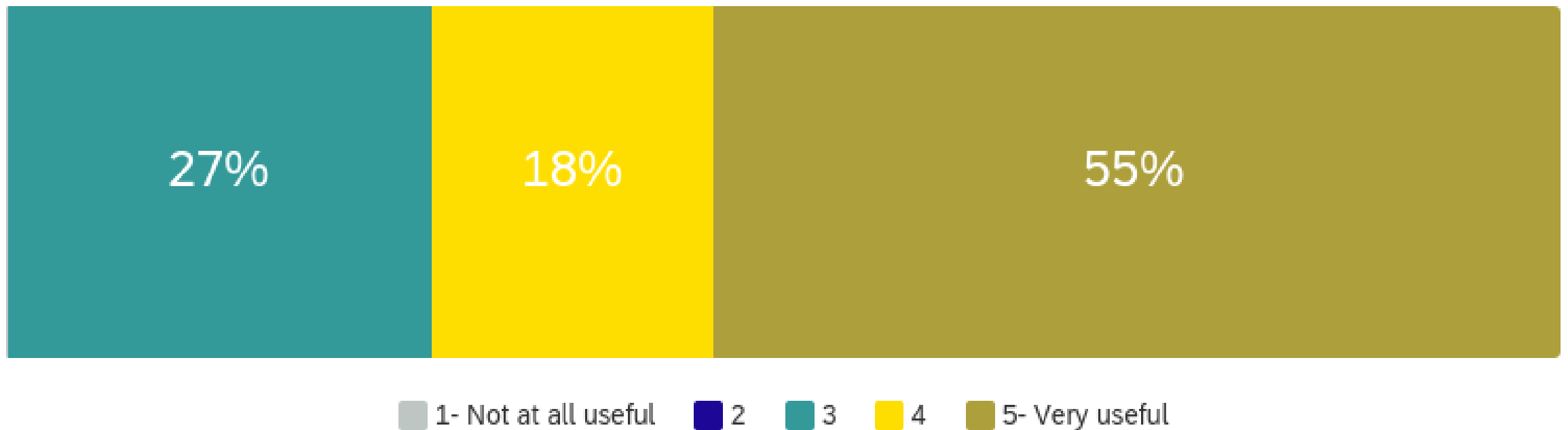
11%

89%

1- Not at all valuable   2   3   4   5- Very valuable

A key piece to the partnership's success is related to incentivized partner agreements.

Figure H. Distribution of scores for how useful incentivized agreements are to the ability to partner.

27%   18%   55%

1- Not at all useful   2   3   4   5- Very useful

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Areas of improvements highlight system engagement as greatest opportunity—indicates the opportunity to better engage government agencies, academic institutions, and healthcare agencies as partners.

Figure I. Distribution of scores for how current processes and procedure support their ability to advance the Credible Messenger effort.

18%	45%	18%	18%

1- Strongly disagree ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5- Strongly agree
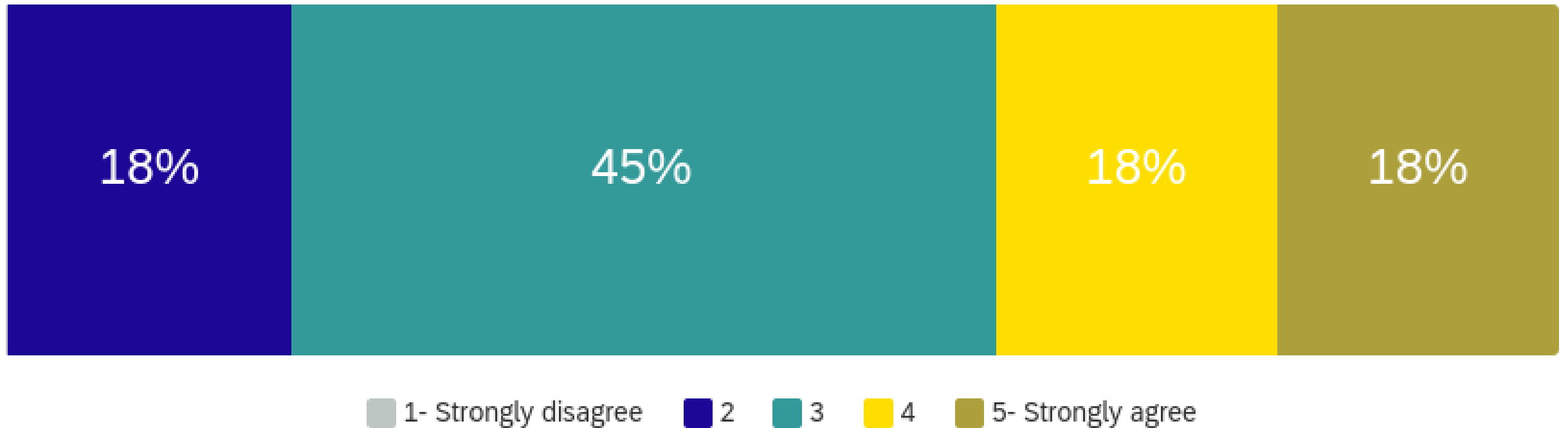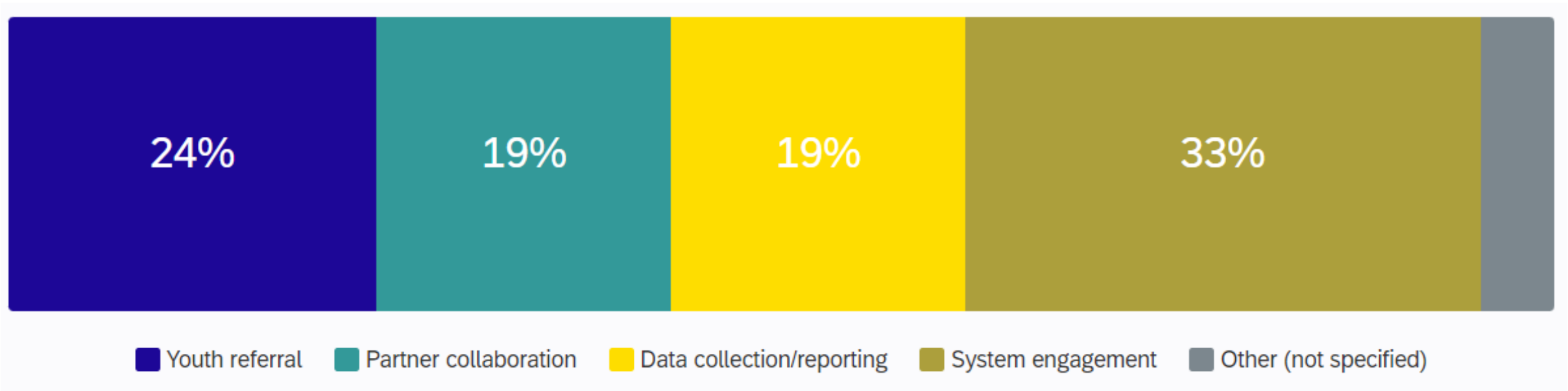
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Figure J: Distribution of scores for areas of improvement to enhancing and sustaining the Credible Messenger effort.

The unique attributes existing amongst partner agencies are not effectively incorporated in the youth referral process.

"Sometimes we get youth who's needs are beyond what we can give" —CM mentor

Gaps within the youth referral process causes inefficiencies amongst collaboration opportunities and don't always serve youth effectively.

"Community referrals are often vague, and families do understand how they were referred to said programming. This often results in non-engagement." —Youth interventionist

"Community Referrals (especially from MPD) can pose a challenge as they lack sufficient information." ." —Youth interventionist

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To better enhance the effort and sustain partnerships, the following essential aspects for the enhancement and sustainability of the Credible Messenger effort.
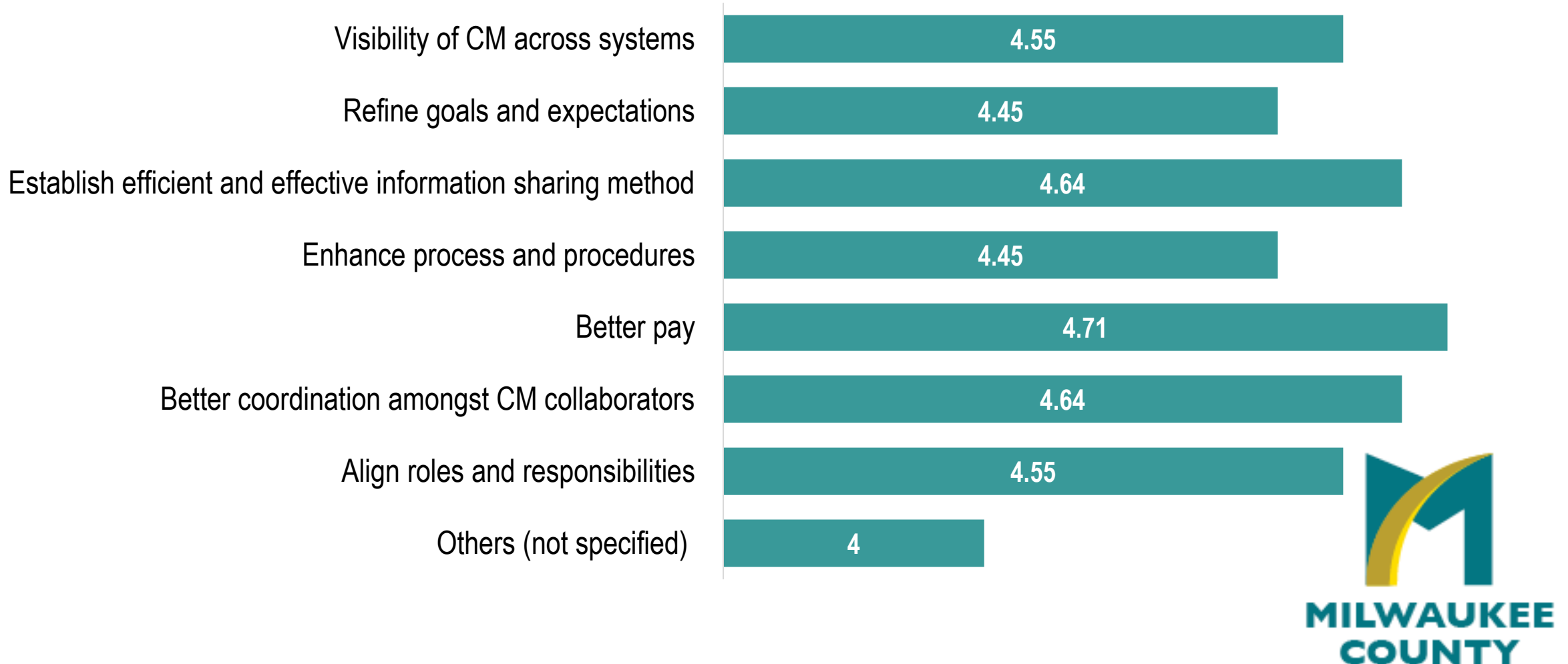
Aspect	Score
Visibility of CM across systems	4.55
Refine goals and expectations	4.45
Establish efficient and effective information sharing method	4.64
Enhance process and procedures	4.45
Better pay	4.71
Better coordination amongst CM collaborators	4.64
Align roles and responsibilities	4.55
Others (not specified)	4

Figure K: Average scores for aspects necessary for enhancing or sustaining the Credible Messenger effort. *(1=low, 5=high)*

Beneficiaries and staff of partnering agencies have varying understandings of the Credible Messengers efforts as a program, collective impact effort and beyond.

Figure B: Distribution of how the Credible Messengers effort is serving the Milwaukee community.

44%

56%

■ A project (e.g., a single focused endeavor)   ■ A program (e.g., collection of projects to achieve a common goal)

■ A collective impact effort (e.g., diverse stakeholders with a common agenda and mutually aligned activities)

"It doesn't feel like a program." -Youth 2

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Summary of Findings

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Summary of Findings

- Community stakeholders understand the Credible Messenger effort to be more than a program but a diverse stakeholder group with a common agenda and mutually aligned activities greater—a collective impact effort.

- The collaboration and coordination amongst CM partner agencies result in many unintended outcomes including community capacity building and information sharing.

- The collaboration has resulted in community-level violence prevention.

- System engagement is a key factor to addressing the lack of visibility and awareness that limits effective processes and communication for achieving CM expectations

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Summary of Findings

- Credible Messenger mentors are saving lives of Milwaukee's most vulnerable youth by means that are not accounted for.
- The lived experience of the mentors gives them the ability to positively impact youth in ways that many with the responsibility cannot.
- They pull the heart strings of youth, eliminate bounty killings, better parent-child relationships, inspire academic success, and more.
- Youth feel Credible Messenger mentors are often the only reliable persons in their lives.
- Youth mentors boost their confidence, shift their mentality to be more positive and responsible.
- Credible Messenger mentor are positive reinforcements that fosters productivity, mental and physical well-being of youth.

Conclusion

- The results of the Milwaukee County Credible Messenger effort are well beyond what is expected and supported to impact the lives of youth.
- The greatest value of the effort is mentors' ability to transform youth and community capacity building and partnerships.
- Youth are healthier and safer because of this effort.
- Partner agencies are committed to collaboration and have demonstrated the positive effect incentivized agreements have on the ability to drive collective impact work.
- To sustain outcomes and enhance impact, more planning and resources are needed. Developing clearer goals and expectations will address many process inefficiencies, support a sustainable partnership, and increase visibility and awareness.
- Greater investments to this effort supports the ability to drive the goal and ensures quality outcomes are achieved.

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