Milwaukee County Credible Messengers Evaluation

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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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CM Partners

Background

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	Program Logic Synthesis Partner Feedback Results
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

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Summary of Findings

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- Community stakeholders understand the Credible Messenger effort to be more than a program but a diverse stakeholder with a common agenda and mutually aligned activities greater—a collective impact effort.
- The collaboration and coordination amongst the 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 achieve CM expectations

Summary of Findings

- The Credible Messenger mentors are saving the lives of Milwaukee most vulnerable youth by means that are not accounted for.
- The lived experience of the mentor gives them the ability to positively impact youth in ways that many with the responsibility cannot.
- They pull the heart strings of youth, remove killing bounties, better parent-child relationships, inspire academic success, and more.
- Youth feel Credible Messenger mentors as often the only reliable person they have.
- Youth mentors boost their confidence, shift their mentality to be more positive and responsible.
- Having Credible Messenger mentor is a positive reinforcement that fosters productivity, mental and physical well-being.

Recommendations

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- Develop and implement an awareness effort though expand resources and youth sand family engagement.

- Focus strategies and goals to increase the visibility and awareness of the Credible Messenger effort.

- Clearly refined the effort by defining measurable goals.

- Strengthen relationship amongst CM partners and stakeholders.

- Ensure stakeholders are clear on the objectives of the CM efforts and are involved in the redesign and co-create indicators to be measured.

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Recommendations

- Maximize incentivized agreements to enhance and expand the most useful and valuable partnership aspects driving the success of the effort.

- Expand community capacity by ensuring Milwaukee youth-serving agencies have organizational capabilities to advance CM goals.

- Invest in technical resources to build staff capacities and streamline data collection processes.

- Involve community stakeholders and promote commitment to generate action for aligned strategy, effective policy, efficient processes, and valuable resources.

Results

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)

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

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

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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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.

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"Helped with my anger"

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

"My mentor changed my whole mindset on life."

. "Helped with my anger"

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

"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."

"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."

"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."

"I have a job now."

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

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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.

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.
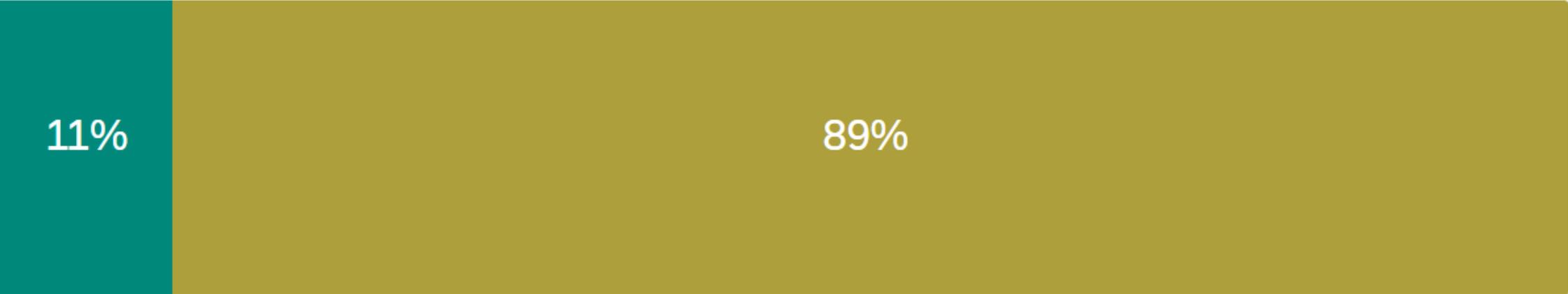
"Our team can't do what 414Life does—but I know I can call because we are in this together." — System Partner Agency Leader

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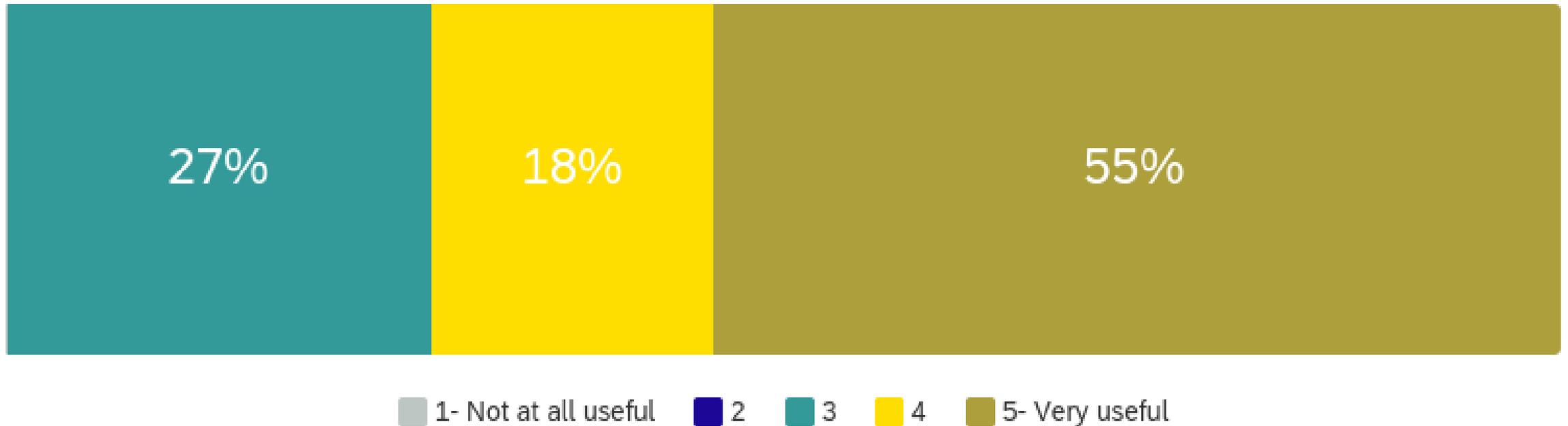
A key piece to the partnership's success is related to incentivized partner agreements.

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.
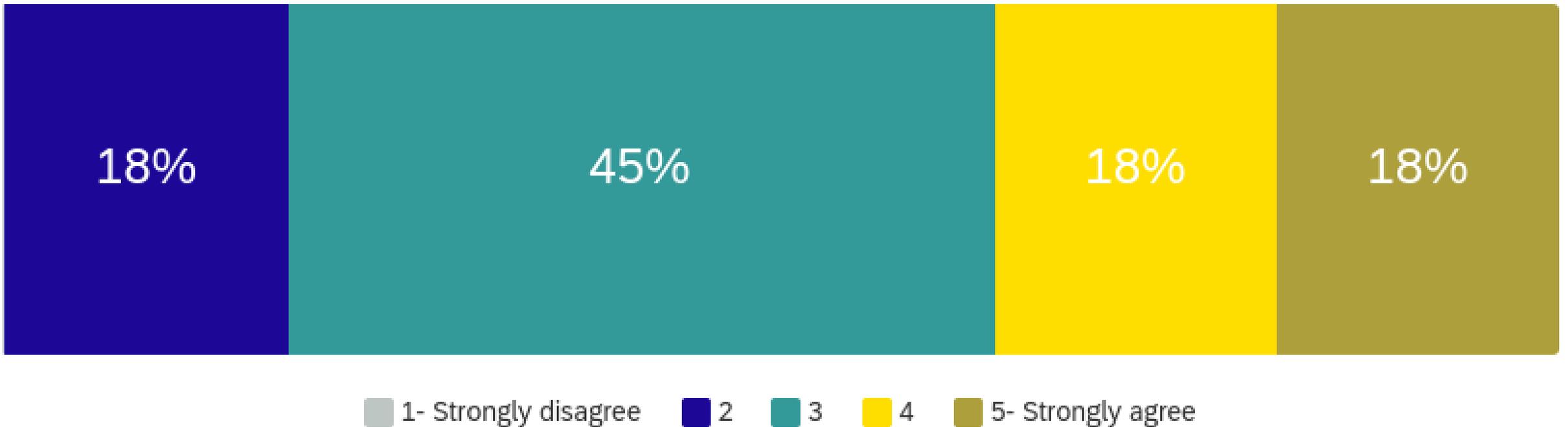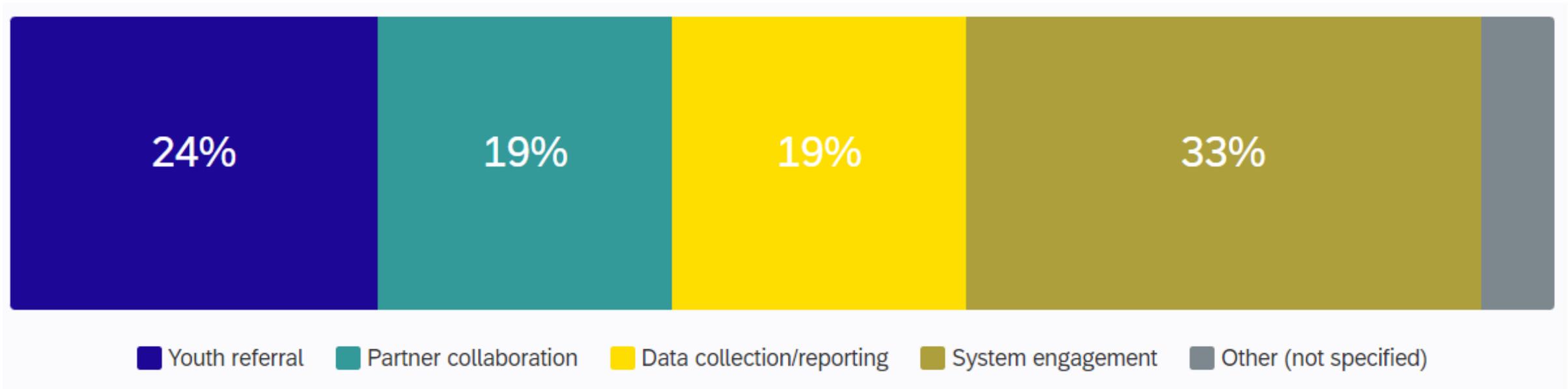
18% 45% 18% 18%

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.

24% — Youth referral
19% — Partner collaboration
19% — Data collection/reporting
33% — System engagement
Other (not specified)

Although unique attributes exist amongst partner agencies, they are not effectively incorporated in the youth referral process.

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

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Gaps within the youth referral process causes inefficiencies amongst collaboration opportunities and do 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.
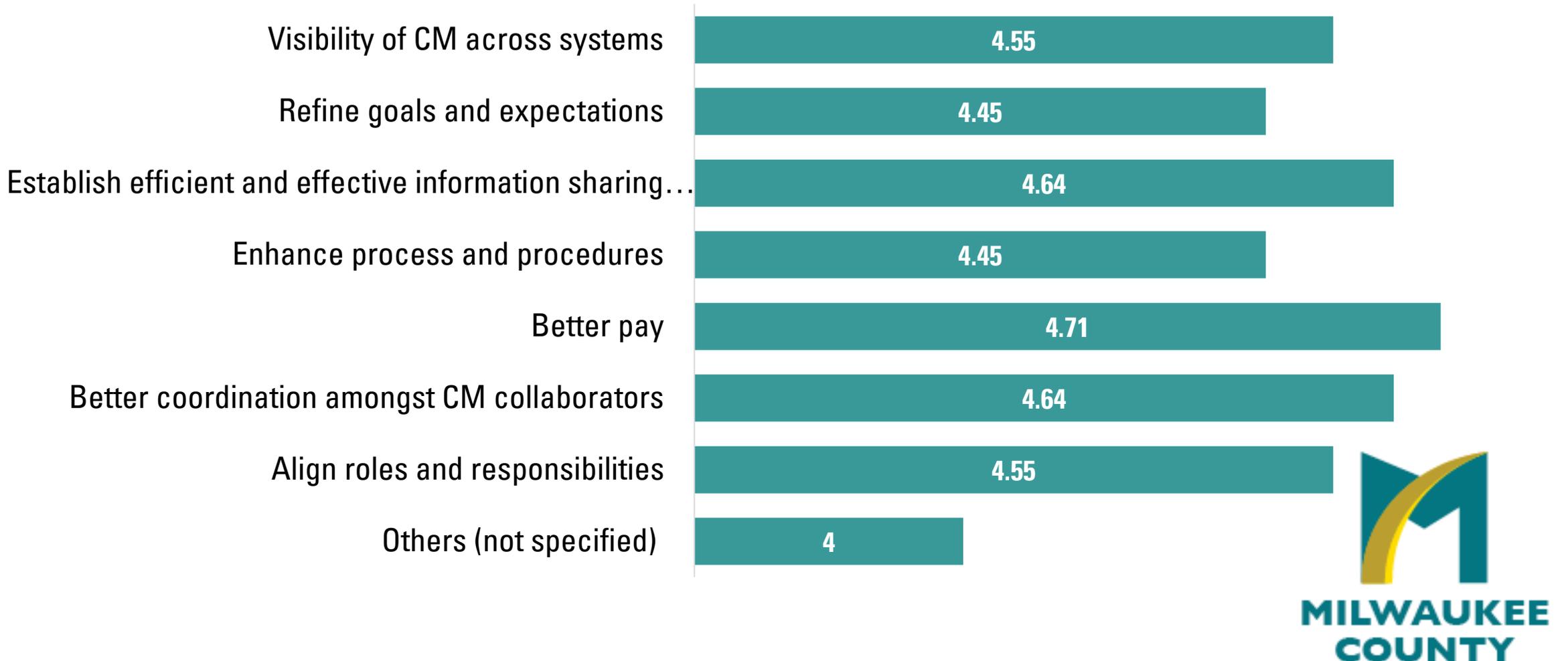
Aspect	Score
Visibility of CM across systems	4.55
Refine goals and expectations	4.45
Establish efficient and effective information sharing…	4.64
Enhance process and procedures	4.45
Better pay	4.71
Better coordination amongst CM collaborators	4.64
Align roles and responsibilities	4.55
Others (not specified)	4

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

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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