

Key Learnings

THE CIVIC CANOPY

JULY 2024-JUNE 2025

Overview

Each year, The Civic Canopy evaluates our work to understand impact and improve our practice. This summary covers three key insights gathered over the past year and the evidence to support these insights. These insights are based on data from a survey to evaluate long-term projects (Long Survey), a survey to evaluate one-time workshops/events (Short Survey), and a survey that evaluates the effectiveness of coalitions based on the Community Learning Model (CLM). Future insights will be gathered from interviews with partners 3-6 months after completing a project with the Canopy. We designed the evaluation tools to answer three Key Evaluation Questions (appendix 1) based on our Theory of Change (appendix 2). The evaluated data includes:

Long survey: 5 Long Survey responses from 3 projects

- 249 Short Survey responses from 30 events
- 21 CLM post-surveys from 2 projects
- 3 CLM pre-surveys from 2 projects

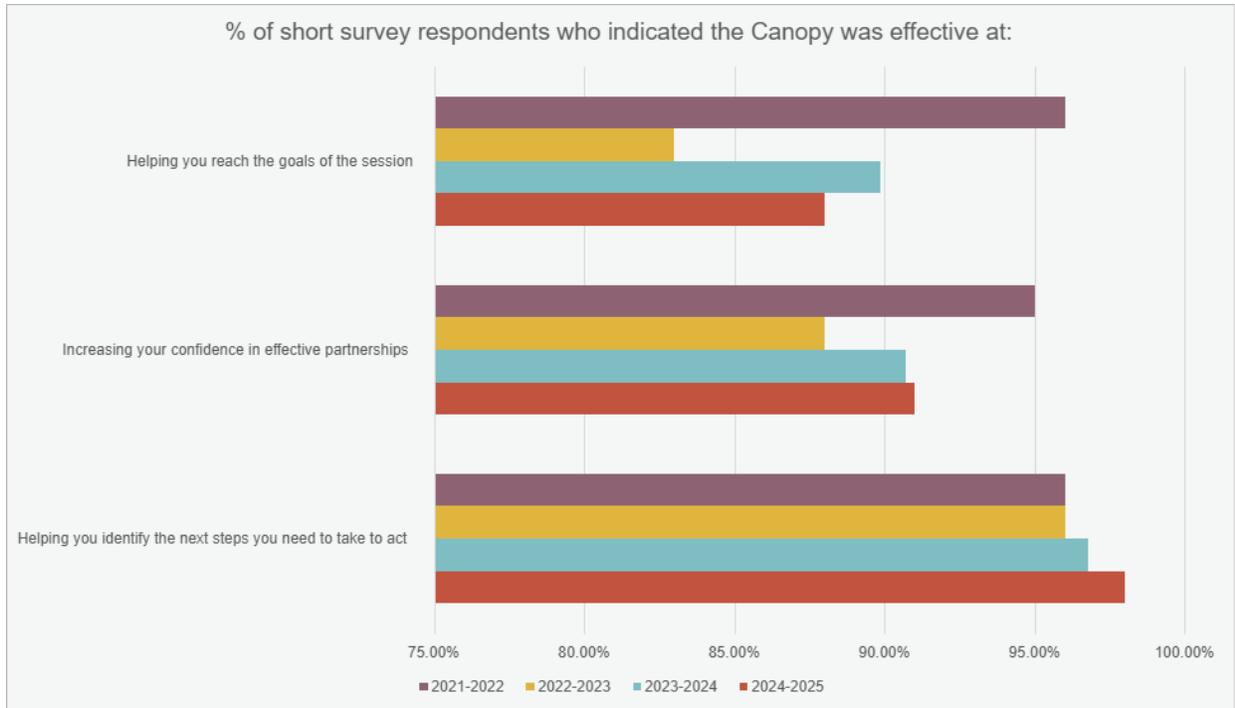
Learnings

Key Insight

The Canopy's key programs highly meet the needs of its partners but there is room for growth, especially in training and coalition building.

BY THE NUMBERS

- On average, partners reported **increasing their knowledge by 11%** after working with the Civic Canopy.
- The Civic Canopy is at least **83% effective** in reaching the goals of the session, increasing confidence in effective partnerships, and helping partners identify the next steps to take action.



REFLECTIONS FROM PARTNERS

What was most valuable about working with the civic canopy?

- “Thinking through higher-level questions.”
- “Being able to see how they implemented the project--its hard to find groups that can be trusted, I look forward to working with Civic Canopy again in the future.”
- “Having support developing and understanding how to execute various methods for participant engagement in meetings - especially in a virtual setting.”

IMPROVEMENTS

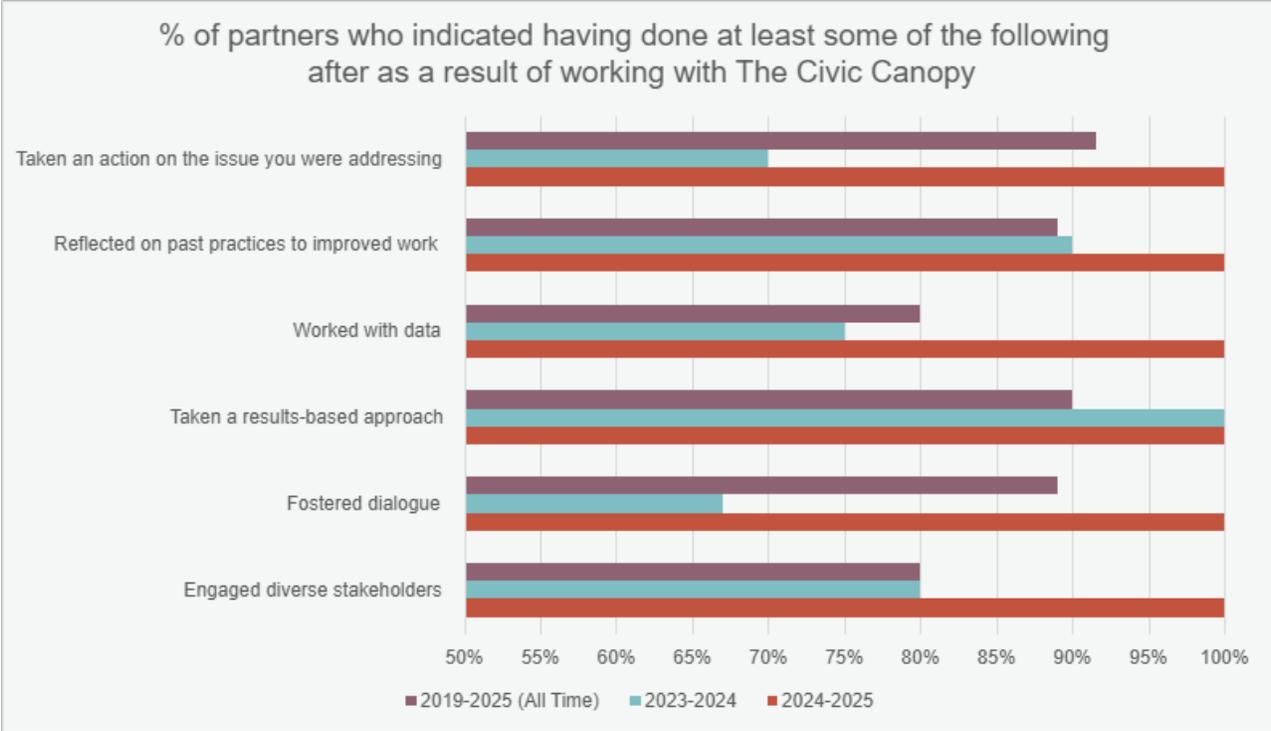
- More time for sessions and clearer goals for sessions
- More practical tools and hands-on activities
- Provide opportunities for ongoing learning

Key Insight

Partners continue to increase their knowledge and then take action in every part of the CLM. Coalition scores on their performance in each area of the CLM decrease after working with the Canopy.

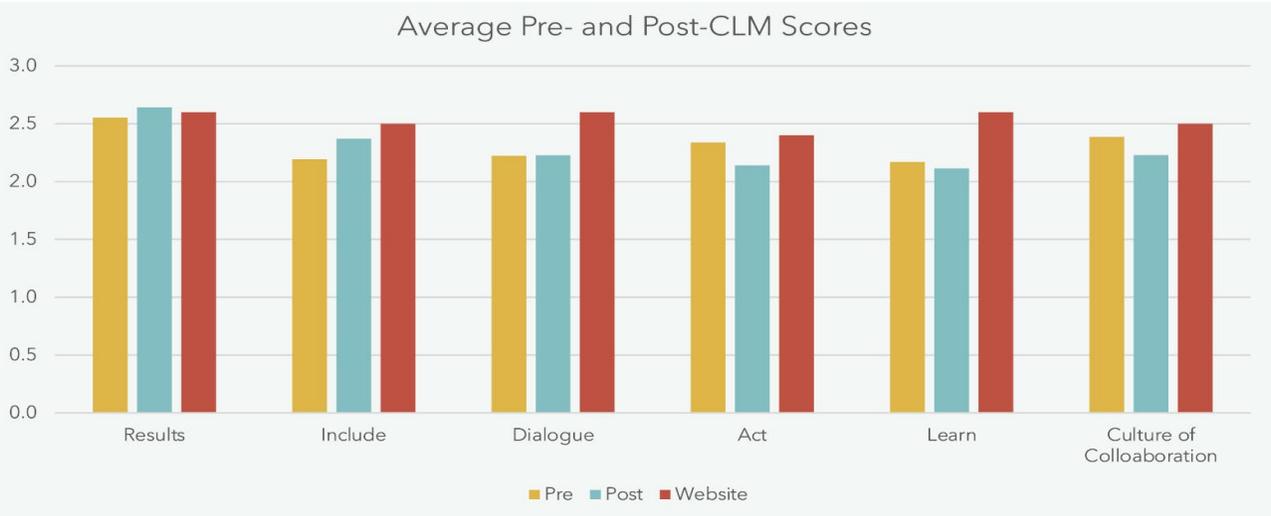
BY THE NUMBERS

At least 80% of partners took action in each area of the Community Learning Model (CLM) for years 2019-2025.



In the past two years, the Canopy has gathered enough data on CLM scores to look at pre and post scores. While gains are shown in Results and Include, overall scores tend to decrease after working with the Civic Canopy. Further investigation into decreasing coalition scores in each area of the CLM is needed. The decrease may result from member turnover within coalitions, different people taking the pre- and post- surveys, and/or increased learning on what makes an effective coalition.

Additionally, the Canopy made the Community Learning Model available on our website for anyone to conduct a self-assessment for free. Individuals self-assessing on the website tend to score themselves higher than our project partners.



TAKEAWAYS FROM SESSIONS

Facilitation & Communication Skills

- Many participants gained confidence and insight into how to ask better questions (especially “what” and “how”).
- The importance of active listening, managing group dynamics, and fostering inclusive, respectful dialogue was emphasized.
- Learning how to hold space, avoid groupthink, and use facilitation tools (like POPRA, polarity mapping, and brave/safe spaces) was impactful.

Collaboration & Relationship Building

- Strong emphasis on the value of collaboration across organizations, coalitions, and communities.
- Participants recognized the need to rebuild trust, clarify roles, and maintain clear communication—especially between boards, teams, and departments.
- Creating opportunities for informal interactions, shared planning, and understanding each other’s roles helped strengthen team cohesion.

Strategic Planning & Organizational Clarity

- Several respondents appreciated tools and frameworks for strategic planning, decision-making, and organizational alignment (e.g., theory of change, RACI, results statements).
- Clarifying mission, goals, and collective direction was seen as vital for moving forward effectively.
- Visual tools and written frameworks were seen as helpful aids for continued development.

Equity, Inclusion & Systems Thinking

- Concepts like equity, targeted universalism, and systems thinking were key learnings for many.
- The Culture of Collaboration framework (Include, Dialogue, Act, Learn) resonated, helping participants reflect on how to transform systems replicating harm.
- Several noted the importance of including community voices, asking who programs serve, and examining underlying structural issues.

Community Engagement & Resource Sharing

- Participants valued hearing how others approach challenges and grow community-based programs.
- Resource sharing—especially for funding, youth services, and transportation—emerged as a powerful strategy.
- There was a renewed appreciation for grassroots leadership and engaging local voices in planning and advocacy.

Empowerment & Perspective Shifts

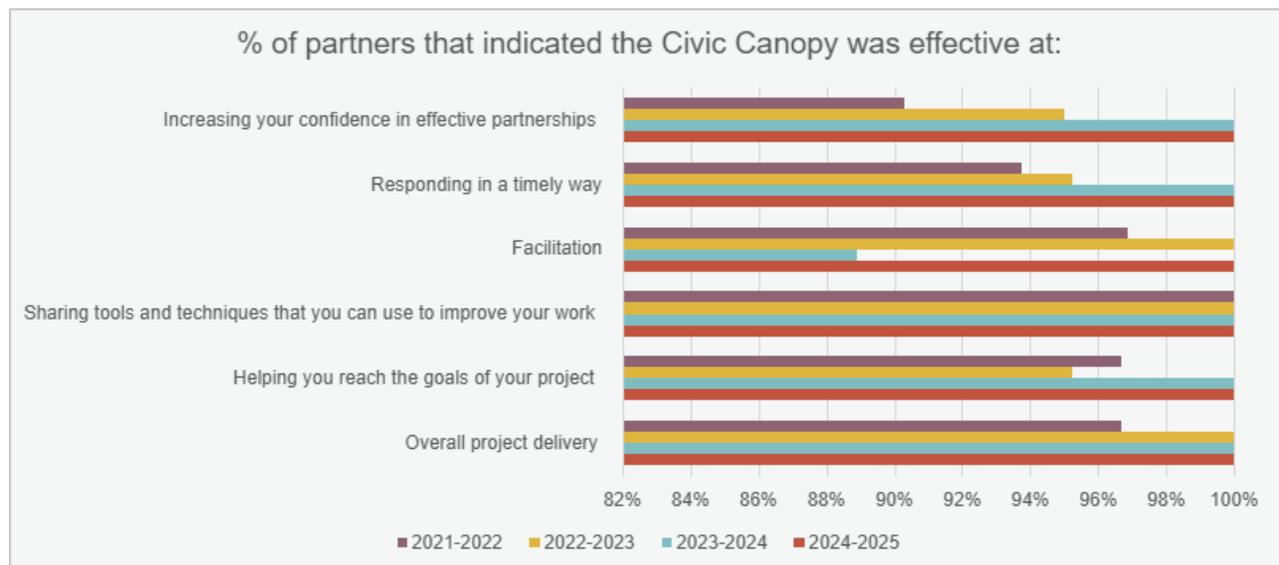
- Many individuals felt empowered to take action, speak up, and engage more fully in their work.
- Hearing diverse perspectives helped shift thinking and reduce isolation or echo chambers.
- The reminder that “we are all people” and that many shared goals exist across differences helped participants feel more unified and motivated.

Key Insight

Partners trust the Canopy to bring new skills and perspectives to their ongoing work.

BY THE NUMBERS

- On long-term projects, our partners ranked their likelihood to TRUST us with a future project at 9.75 on average while short-term project partners ranked their likelihood at 9 on average. These are consistent with all-time trends, with average rankings of 9.1 and 8.5 respectively.
- On average, partners this year ranked their likelihood to RECOMMEND us at 9.75 out of 10. This is an increase from our overall average of 9.1 out of 10.
- Over the past five years, we consistently score at least 88% effective in the following areas of project partnership:



Appendix

APPENDIX 1 – KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent are The Civic Canopy’s key programming elements the right type to achieve their goals?
 - a. Are the methods or training or technical assistance provided effective?
2. To what extent are partners, clients, and communities better off, after applying the Knowledge, Skills, and Ability (KSA) taught by The Civic Canopy to increase their capacity and support to collaborate?
 - a. To what extent do partners, clients, and communities apply the KSAs?
 - b. Towards what end are clients applying KSA’s from The Civic Canopy?
3. To what extent does The Civic Canopy effectively work with their partners?
 - a. What are partner perceptions of The Civic Canopy?

APPENDIX 2



Theory of Change

