SURVEY BRIEF

The following brief summarizes key findings from a survey conducted in December 2016 by Spark Policy Institute on behalf of Bright Beginnings. The survey was designed by Spark in collaboration with the Bright Beginnings Evaluation Subcommittee to assess where the initiative is in implementing strategies within the key focus areas outlined in the Bright Beginnings Theory of Action. The Bright Beginnings Theory of Action illustrates the collective impact path the initiative is taking in order to see improvements for early childhood development in Monterey County.

Sixty-one CAT facilitators, CAT members, Backbone members, and MCCC members received the survey; a total of 28 people responded, including 13 CAT facilitators/members and 15 Backbone and/or MCCC members. The table below shows key priorities for 2017 identified by survey participants. Following the table, this brief provides deeper insights into successes and opportunities for improvement across the key elements of the Bright Beginnings initiative based on survey responses.

Initiative Element	Priorities for 2017	CATs	Leadership
Common Vision	• Bright Beginnings involves diverse people from the community in planning for the work, including community members personally impacted by early childhood issues	✓	
	• People and organizations in the community prioritize and contribute to moving the work forward		✓
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	• Bright Beginnings' partners coordinate activities & resources to align with the action plan	✓	✓
	• Bright Beginnings works with partners to develop strategies aligned with the action plan	✓	✓
Shared Measurement	• People and organizations involved with Bright Beginnings understand the value of a shared measurement system	✓	
	• People and organizations involved with Bright Beginnings have signed data sharing agreements		✓
Continuous Communication	• Bright Beginnings regularly communicates progress updates within the initiative	✓	
	• Bright Beginnings regularly communicates progress updates to the broader community		✓
	• CATs regularly communicate their needs to the Backbone and MCCC-Steering Committee	✓	✓
Backbone Infrastructure & Support	• Bright Beginnings clearly defines and communicates roles and responsibilities of the Backbone and the MCCC-Steering Committee	✓	
	• The Backbone and MCCC-Steering Committee connect to and build relationships with policymakers		✓
Learning Culture	• Bright Beginnings fosters a culture of respect and humility that allows for people of different cultures and backgrounds to feel respected and heard	✓	✓
	• Those involved in Bright Beginnings ask community members and organizations for feedback and act on the information collected	✓	✓
	• Those involved with Bright Beginnings use shared learning to make informed decisions	✓	✓
Collective Impact Capacity	• Bright Beginnings develops influencers and champions that are respected and can bring others to the table	✓	✓
	• Bright Beginnings contributed to increasing the skills and capacities of people and organizations involved in the initiative	✓	✓

Common Vision

Bright Beginnings has made significant progress in creating a common vision among members. While still engaging in necessary activities characteristic of the Exploring and Developing phases of Bright Beginnings' Theory of Action, such as including diverse perspectives,

Figure 1: Bright Beginnings participants share a common vision and are making progress on diversifying participation
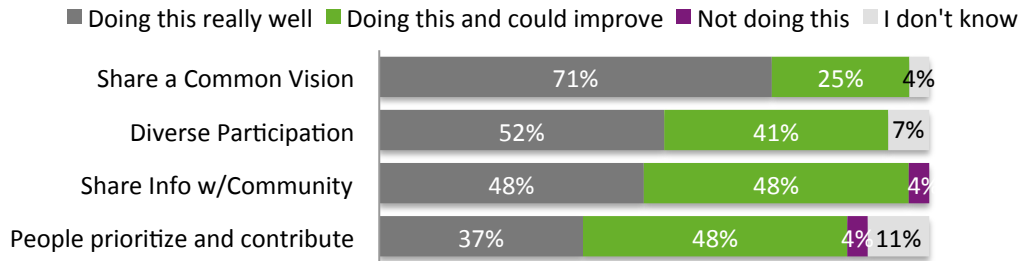

recruiting nontraditional partners, and sharing information with stakeholders, the initiative is moving into the Fostering phase with activities that work towards informing and mobilizing community members. The majority of survey respondents (71%) believe the people involved in the initiative share a common vision for early childhood in Monterey County (Figure 1). This is especially true for leadership; however, some CAT members believe there is room for improvement (see data findings in Appendix A).

> "[Our CAT] is diverse with various agencies in the community. Together they plan and participate with the parent meetings and now the parents are more involved with their children and their community to assist in making positive changes. One example is reading level."
> – CAT Representative

The initiative has also made progress including more diverse voices and sharing information about the initiative with others in the community, with nearly half of respondents indicating Bright Beginnings does these two things very well (Figure 1). Many CAT participants shared examples of diversity within their CATs, including a variety of service providers and agencies, as well as parent leaders and indigenous Mixteco mothers. However, while CATs are generally seeing strong support from people working in early childhood development, some CATs have had less success engaging parents and informal child care providers. One CAT has specifically focused on outreach to parents to address this issue. CAT respondents also noted the need to develop relationships with nontraditional leadership groups and local community leadership development organizations, as well as to outreach to the faith and business communities. Leadership respondents were much more likely to identify the business sector as missing from the table, though one respondent promoted the "child friendly business" concept through the Chamber of Commerce and suggested Bright Beginnings could use the new website as a resource to encourage businesses to support the initiative through its employment practices. Overall, CATs are more likely than leadership to believe the initiative needs to focus first on expanding participation to more diverse people and organizations, including those most impacted by early childhood issues (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Common Vision Priorities for 2017
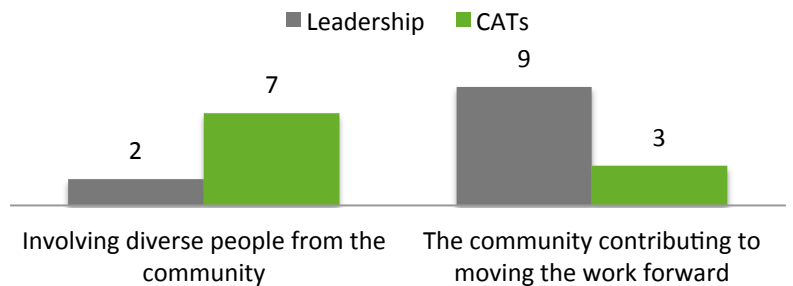
Though the initiative has made progress in expanding outreach and engagement, it still has room to improve in terms of mobilizing community members to action. Participants shared some progress in this area, such as parent leaders telling providers about their family's needs or one CAT developing a parent advocacy group around early childhood. While a majority of respondents agree people and organizations in the community are prioritizing and contributing to moving the work forward, just 37% said this work was being done well (Figure 1). In fact, leadership overwhelmingly identified this as a key priority for the initiative to focus on in the next year (Figure 2).

Though there were no differences between individual CATs on any of the indicator rankings, respondents recognize each region approaches the work differently and has different experiences. As a peer-learning opportunity, CAT respondents shared the following lessons learned about how to engage diverse stakeholders in initiative activities and facilitate community members contributing to the work:

- Implementing small action projects (e.g. Kinder Round-up Festival) directly benefitting local children and families and support the District focus can develop additional partner capital.
- Creating an artistic and supportive process for parents to come together allows them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, as well as share hopes and challenges in a dignified and creative way.
- Providing childcare at parent meetings helps parents fully relax, engage, and become creative when reflecting and sharing with others.
- Taking time to intentionally develop a sense of community during regular CAT meetings can strengthen relationships between providers.
- Providing clear expectations on how participants can engage in initiative activities can facilitate participation.
- Creating the space for participants to dialogue about what they are seeing and taking time to build understanding of who individuals are and where they are currently struggling can increase meaningful engagement.

These insights from participants can be used to inform next steps toward identified priorities and is an example of how shared learning can inform decision making processes. The prioritization of community mobilization in particular shows the initiative is ready to transition to the Fostering phase outlined in the Theory of Action. While participants will always need to revisit engagement strategies to weave diverse perspectives into the initiative's vision, an increased focus on sharing information, building a common understanding among the broader community, and mobilizing participants to take action toward that vision are important next steps for Bright Beginnings.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Bright Beginnings has made progress establishing mutually reinforcing activities within the initiative, as well as with external partners. Survey data shows the initiative has successfully laid the groundwork for the Exploring phase of

Figure 3: Bright Beginnings uses defined values to guide the work; the next step is increasing collective action with partners

■ Doing this really well ■ Doing this and could improve ■ Not doing this ■ I don't know

Defined Values Guide the Work	67%	26%	7%
Partners Align Strategies w/BB Action Plan	37%	59%	4%
Partners Coordinate Activities & Resources w/ BB Action Plan	26%	48%	7% 19%

the Theory of Action and is working toward the Developing and Fostering phases of the work with increased focus
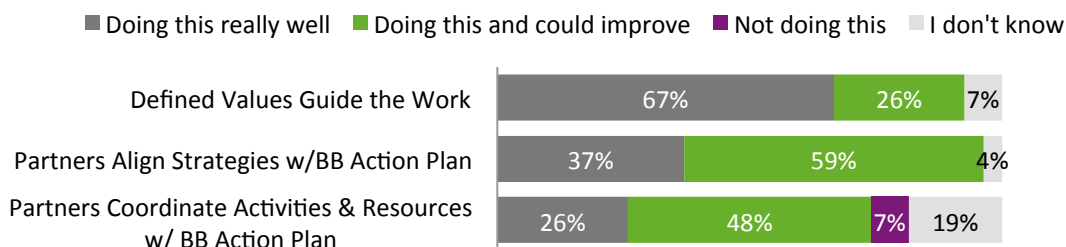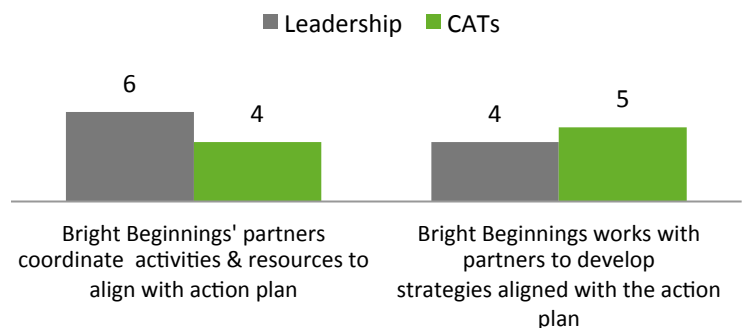
on refining action plans and aligning activities with partners. The majority of respondents (67%) believe Bright Beginnings uses defined values to guide the initiative's work (Figure 3), though this was more common among leadership than CAT members (Appendix A). One CAT respondent shared that diverse agencies plan and participate in meetings alongside parents to improve access to education for all children in their community and that this has allowed parents to be recognized and valued in assisting with their children's education and well-being. At the initiative level, Bright Beginnings is successfully sharing information with stakeholders to facilitate alignment and is partnering on small countywide action projects. For example, they worked with the Literacy Campaign to develop the Porque Me Amas media campaign, which helped to align early literacy advocacy and marketing with other messaging. Additionally, Bright Beginnings provides monthly updates to the Monterey Children's Council and other county and community partners regarding strategy development, activity coordination, and available resources to help them align with the Bright Beginnings action plan. Participants identified two priority areas where they see the most room for improvement in the mutually reinforcing activities space:

- Working with partners to develop strategies that align with Bright Beginning's action plan; and
- Partners coordinating their activities and resources to align with Bright Beginning's action plan (Figure 4).

More specifically, some participants noted that, while the iterative grassroots approach is responsive to local needs, it sometimes falls short in communicating refined approaches and materials to the broader initiative. This can create a feeling of isolation and impede initiative members from taking informed and nimble action. One CAT participant appreciated that CAT leaders, participating agencies, and local parents are free to design local work, but sees an opportunity for them to be more involved in leading the larger county effort. As part of the process for increasing mutually reinforcing

Figure 4: Mututally Reinforcing Activities Priorities for 2017

■ Leadership   ■ CATs

Bright Beginnings' partners coordinate activities & resources to align with action plan

Bright Beginnings works with partners to develop strategies aligned with the action plan

activities is building relationships at the local and county levels, CAT and leadership respondents noted individuals, groups, or organizations they feel are important to partner with in order to accomplish their work as part of Bright Beginnings:

- **Data and Evaluation:** Data and evaluation analysts and data visualization experts to help pull together local demographic data, support outcome assessments, and build evaluation capacity, as well as organizations with county-wide networks, such as First Five and United Way, that can provide data to support early childhood initiatives in showing how early childhood correlates with future success in school and work;
- **Financial Support**: Investors to support expanding reach and deepening the impact of promising approaches, strategies, and interventions, as well as the Board of Supervisors to provide financial and political support;
- **The Business Sector:** Local businesses to help increase the focus on the relationship between economic development and early learning, champions to help develop financial support, and large agricultural businesses to implement free, licensed daycare for all employees;
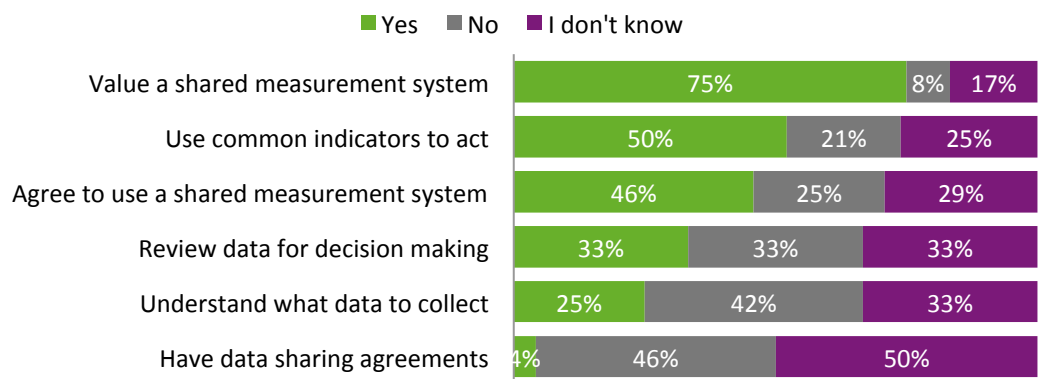
- **Caregivers:** Parents, by listening to their needs and creating a space for them to grow and share, and preschool teachers and day care providers to help identify delays in the children they serve and work with parents to help them understand the importance of addressing delays proactively;
- **Other Community Partners:** School administration, pediatricians, local churches, libraries, Child Abuse Prevention Council, Monterey County Head Start, Migrant Head Start, Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance (PVPSA) F5MC Program, Monterey County Behavioral Health and Social Services, the health department, local health clinics, resource centers and nonprofit service providers.

These suggested partnerships reveal concrete action steps that can meet current needs of the initiative. In fact, Bright Beginnings is already working with data and evaluation experts to build capacity in these areas and several CATs have worked hard to increase parent participation. There are additional opportunities to build relationships with other sectors by leveraging common ground and reframing issues to facilitate unified action (e.g. focusing on the relationship between economic development and early learning to engage local businesses). Both CAT and leadership respondents see value in working more closely with partners to develop strategies and coordinate activities and resources that align with the Bright Beginnings action plan, and have identified them as key priorities for the next year.

Shared Measurement

Overall, the initiative has seen some positive movement in creating shared measurement systems. In terms of the Theory of Action, Bright Beginnings has made progress on key aspects of the Exploring phase, including initiative members understanding the value of a shared measurement system, understanding the strengths and challenges

Figure 5: Bright Beginnings participants understand the value of shared measurement and would like to work toward implementing a shared measurement system

Legend: Yes | No | I don't know

	Yes	No	I don't know
Value a shared measurement system	75%	8%	17%
Use common indicators to act	50%	21%	25%
Agree to use a shared measurement system	46%	25%	29%
Review data for decision making	33%	33%	33%
Understand what data to collect	25%	42%	33%
Have data sharing agreements	4%	46%	50%

of their communities, conducting asset mapping in communities, and prioritizing common core indicators. The initiative is in the process of transitioning to activities outlined in the Developing phase. These activities include members having a common understanding of data and terms and signing shared data agreements. The majority of respondents (75%) believe Bright Beginnings members understand the value of using a shared measurement system (Figure 5). However, respondents, especially CAT members, also identified this as a key priority area moving forward indicating that those working on the ground with frequently changing participation may benefit from revisiting how a shared measurement system may benefit their work. About half of respondents indicated the initiative uses common indicators to shape action and that initiative members have agreed to use shared measurement systems. Responses to open-ended survey questions showed some CATs have collected data through creative methods with parent attendees during CAT meetings to help guide the work and build understanding. Other CATs are just beginning to gain clarity on indicators and determine what to track. While there is interest among the CATs to design a collaborative process around data, several respondents mentioned that limited resources, skills, and capacity inhibit their ability.

**Figure 6: Shared Measurement Priorities for 2017**
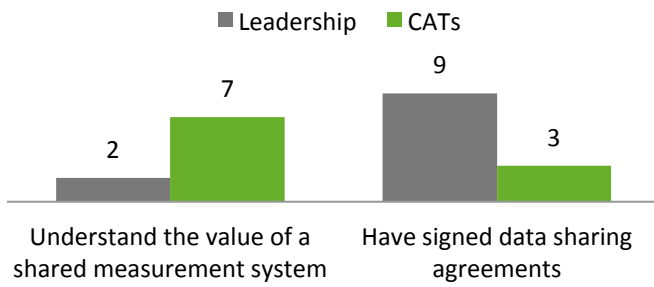
The largest areas for improvement include continually reviewing data and using feedback loops for decision making, having a common understanding of what data to collect, and having signed data sharing agreements (Figure 5). In addition to ensuring participants understand the value of a shared measurement system, respondents – especially leadership – noted having signed data sharing agreements should be a top priority for 2017 (Figure 6). Overall, it seems the notion of shared data is understood differently between initiative members. For example, when discussing the concept of a shared measurement system, initiative members referred to data collected at CAT meetings to guide the work, data to measure progress toward common indicators at the local level, and data collected to measure the actual six common indicators themselves. Bright Beginnings is working with a consultant and a First Five Monterey evaluation staff member to help CATs determine the difference between process and outcome indicators, as well as determine what they should be tracking to measure their work. Continuing these trainings and providing on-going technical assistance support in this area will help build community capacity to take on this work.

Continuous Communication

Bright Beginnings has worked to improve continuous communication over the past year. More specifically, the initiative has worked to engage external stakeholders in regular meetings, integrate their feedback into the

Figure 7: Bright Beginnings successfully communicates progress updates internally; internal feedback loops and external communication can be improved
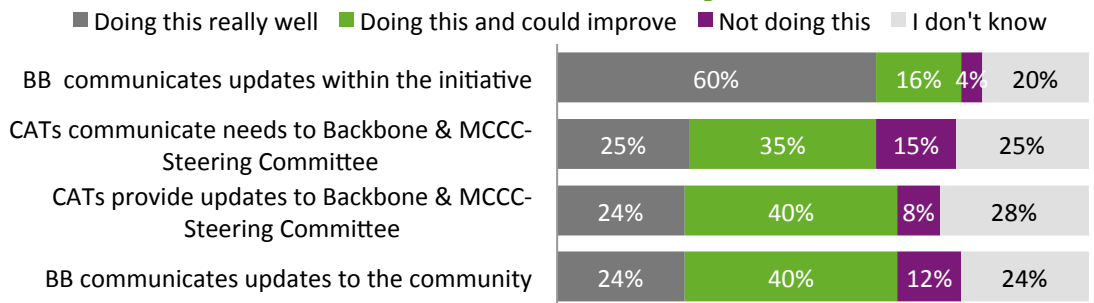

overall strategy, create talking points for a variety of different audiences, and create a variety of different outreach methods, which are all hallmark activities of the Exploring and Developing phases of the Theory of Action. The initiative is now transitioning to the Fostering phase, which focuses more on developing external communication plans to communicate the impact of the initiative to the larger community. The majority of survey respondents (60%) believe Bright Beginnings communicates progress updates within the initiative really well. This belief was stronger among leadership than CATs (Appendix A). For example, many leadership respondents recognize and appreciate the updates they receive from the Project Manager during MCCC meetings. In addition to launching a new website and disseminating monthly newsletters, the Backbone has hired a communications consultant to help with internal and external communication strategies with the intention to improve communication flow throughout the initiative.

Even with these efforts, respondents indicated some areas for improvement with regard to, including CATs better communicating their needs to leadership and Bright Beginnings communicating progress updates internally and to

the broader community. Notably, between 20-25% of respondents did not know whether Bright Beginnings was engaging in these activities.

In the survey, the continuous communication element of the initiative had the most diverse opinions regarding prioritization of communication strategies in 2017. As Figure 8 shows, CATs were more likely to recommend the initiative focus on communicating progress updates within the initiative, while leadership was more likely to recommend a focus on communicating to the broader community. Both CATs and leadership, however, agree a key

**Figure 8: Continuous Communication Priorities for 2017**
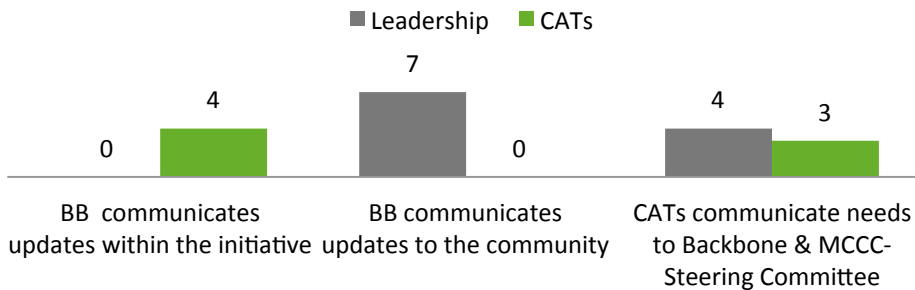
priority for the initiative is for CATs to communicate needs to leadership. In open-ended responses, several respondents noted a disconnect between members working on the ground and initiative leaders, mostly because of how information flows from communities to facilitators to the project manager to leadership, and vice versa, without a platform for direct communication between community-level and county-level efforts. Respondents believe the initiative would benefit from communication channels that allow members of the Backbone and the MCCC to be more responsive in addressing the interests and needs CATs bring forward; opportunities for CATs to communicate their unique needs to leadership; and convenings that create space for informal interaction among and between CATs, Backbone, and MCCC members. These findings show CATs feel less informed than leadership about initiative progress and that leadership recognizes the initiative can improve in getting information out to the broader community. Though separate requests, strategies to address these priorities may be complimentary. For instance, developing a communication strategy where CATs are kept informed about the broader initiative happenings and are subsequently empowered to spread the word through grassroots channels may address both priority areas at once.

Backbone Infrastructure & Support

The majority of participants who felt they knew enough to respond indicated leadership is excelling in certain areas. The initiative has implemented key aspects of the Exploring and Developing phases of the Theory of Action, such as establishing a Backbone and Steering Committee,
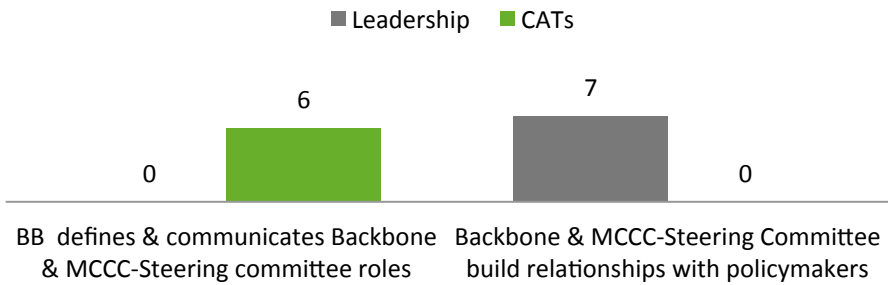

Figure 9: Bright Beginnings leadership provides strategic guidance; next steps are to improve data-informed decision-making and outreach
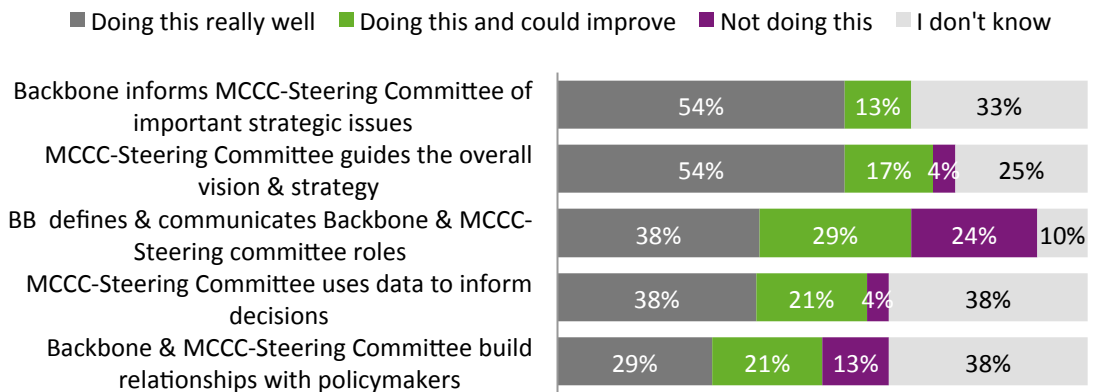
including diverse perspectives from multiple sectors, the Steering Committee guiding vision and strategy, and the

Figure 10: Backbone Support Priorities for 2017

■ Leadership ■ CATs

| | 6 | | 7 | |
| 0 | | | | 0 |

BB defines & communicates Backbone & MCCC-Steering committee roles

Backbone & MCCC-Steering Committee build relationships with policymakers

Backbone effectively informing Steering Committee members of strategic issues. The initiative is continuing to work on aspects of the Developing phase, such as leadership reaching out to policymakers and CATs identifying local, state, and national policies to work on. It is also transitioning to the Fostering phase, which is characterized by the Backbone providing project management support, leadership disseminating achievements, and regularly reviewing data to inform decision making. Specifically, as Figure 9 shows, respondents believe the Backbone informs the MCCC-Executive Committee of important strategic issues and the MCCC-Executive Committee guides the overall vision and strategy.

Other areas left room for improvement, including defining and communicating leadership roles, the MCCC-Steering Committee's use of data to inform decisions, and leadership building relationships with policymakers. As expected, CATs were generally more likely to select "I don't know" for indicators related to leadership activities. Open-ended responses confirmed a lack of understanding, with CAT respondents stating that they are not clear how this aspect of the initiative works, including responsibilities of the Backbone or MCCC-Steering Committee, and that their only interface is with the project manager. One member from leadership was also unsure about who is on the Backbone and where they can go to find that information. However, another member of leadership shared an instance when the Backbone presented a specific funding issue to the Steering Committee, who then discussed the issue and made a decision, which was then shared with the CATs. This is a concrete example of the Steering Committee making important decisions based on information provided by the Backbone.

Key priority areas were highly dependent on respondents' perspectives: CATs indicated defining and communicating Backbone and MCCC-Steering Committee roles should be a top priority, while leadership indicated Backbone and MCCC-Steering Committee members building relationships with policymakers should be a top priority (Figure 10). In fact, one respondent from leadership felt that their organization could be better used to help build public will and advance policy. Overall, survey results show a lack of knowledge around leadership structure and processes, especially among CAT members, and reveal an opportunity for increased transparency around decision-making processes and leadership-level discussions.

Direct Support

Bright Beginnings has offered many types of support to help members move their work forward, including a variety of trainings, convenings, outreach and marketing materials, a Policy Advocacy Network, and a marketing campaign, among others. Figure 11 shows how respondents ranked the different supports. Trainings were the most highly valued, followed by the Policy Advocacy Network and convenings. There were some differences between CATs and leadership across a few support types (Appendix A). In many cases, respondents either have not used supports yet or did not know they existed, suggesting an opportunity for Bright Beginnings to make sure members and partners are aware of the supports available and how and when to use them.

CATs also shared examples of how supports have helped facilitate their work. Specifically, donated items and services such as books, refreshments, gift cards, childcare, and age-appropriate activities/toys for children helped increase attendance at CAT meetings and events. One respondent added that gift cards provided to parents can be considered an equity component of

Figure 11: Several supports are working well; many initiative members do not know supports available to them

■ We use this & it's working well   ■ We use this & it could be improved
■ We tried this & it didn't work for us   ■ We haven't used this yet
□ I didn't know this existed

| Support	Working well	Could be improved	Didn't work	Haven't used	Didn't know
Trainings (i.e. Google Drive, Spokesperson, Strive Together with Terri O'Brien, etc.)	57%	10%		29%	5%
Policy Advocacy Network	38%	14%		24%	24%
Convenings	38%	24%	5%	19%	14%
Website	30%	10%	10%	40%	10%
Marketing campaign: Porque Me Amas	29%	10%		38%	24%
Newsletter	27%	14%		41%	18%
New marketing materials (i.e. postcards, handouts, etc.)	25%	10%		45%	20%
Talking points for the business and faith communities	5%			55%	40%

the initiative, as it allows individuals with fewer resources to participate and shows the initiative respects and values the time they are taking out of their lives. Participants also highly value the facilitation services, the clear processes that help guide them toward their goals and improve stakeholder engagement, trainings on tracking data and evaluating activities (e.g. Terri O'Brien), and convenings that facilitate peer-to-peer learning and provide networking opportunities.

CAT participants also gave insight into how support can be improved to help them better meet their goals. Recommendations fell into the three categories:

- Leadership, including: joint clarification of goals and direction; periodic leadership attendance at CAT meetings; increased emphasis on parent leadership-driven meetings, recognizing parents are key to creating real community change; and leadership assistance in obtaining funding to support promising approaches and strategies.

- Data and Evaluation, including: resetting indicators; providing additional data and evaluation support to local communities; and using more creative data collection tools that fit the reality of families.

- Meetings and Convenings, including: providing high-quality Spanish language childcare with appropriate accommodations such as carpet space and age-appropriate toys; holding convenings with increased focus on CATs and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and support development; and having increased options for meeting spaces to convene with families.

A few participants from leadership added insight, including one who would like to see more specific goal-setting and tracking along a continuum and another who would like to be more informed about the direction of the Policy Advocacy Network, since it is an area they believe their organization can support. They added that they feel their organization is underused in the public will building and policy advancement spaces. However, one member of leadership noted the Policy Advocacy Network has helped to inform the County's legislative program with an early childhood-specific platform statement. Another member of leadership noted the development of the Child Friendly Business Website is a good tool for the MPCC Education Committee in looking for links between business and education, which supports local economic vitality.
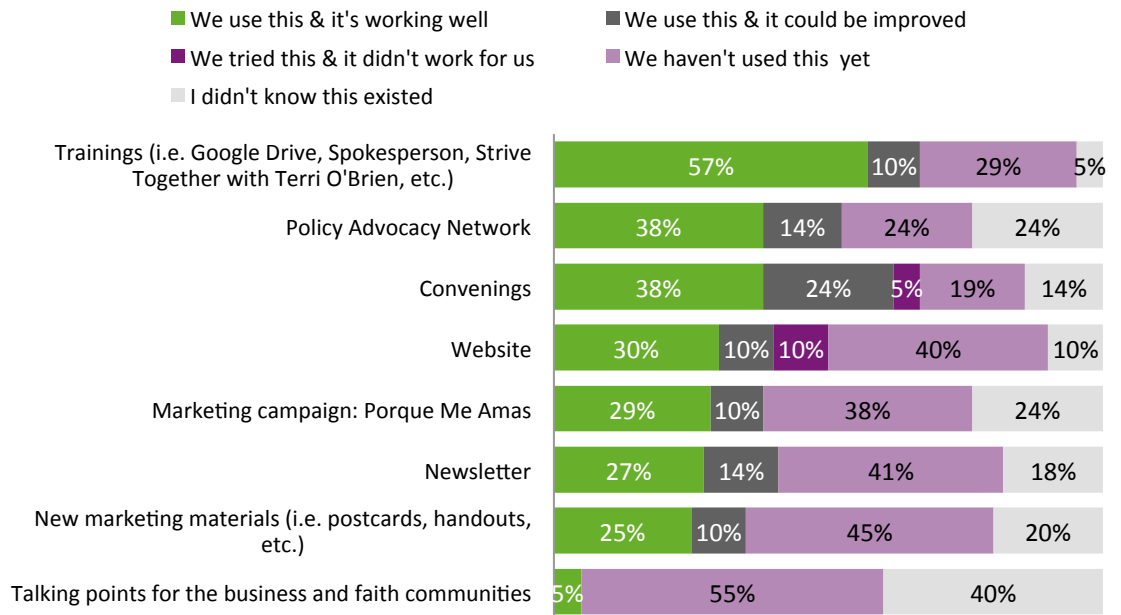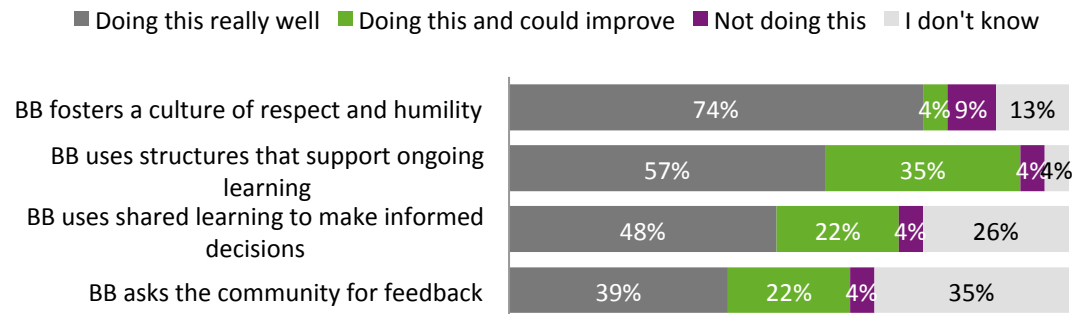
Overall, initiative members appreciate the supports Bright Beginnings provides. However, there is an opportunity to increase communication about supports available and how to use them, since many initiative members are still unaware of certain supports or have not yet taken advantage of them. There is also an opportunity to check in with people and organizations involved about how their organizational strengths can be leveraged toward the initiative's goals.

Learning Culture

Bright Beginnings has made some progress in developing a learning culture. More specifically, the initiative has implemented key aspects of the Exploring and Developing phases of the Theory of Action, including establishing structures and processes to support ongoing

Figure 12: Bright Beginnings fosters a culture of respect and on-going learning; the next step is to improve decision-making processes and feedback loops

■ Doing this really well ■ Doing this and could improve ■ Not doing this □ I don't know

learning and establishing a culture of trust, respect and humility among partners. They are now transitioning to the Fostering phase, which includes using systems and established structures to make data-informed decisions and soliciting and acting on feedback from community members and external partners. The majority of respondents feel Bright Beginnings fosters a culture of respect and humility (74%). In open-ended responses, a few respondents expressed appreciation that the project manager and CAT meetings are open and responsive to diverse perspectives and people. Over half of respondents indicated Bright Beginnings uses structures that support ongoing learning (57%); and many respondents feel Bright Beginnings uses shared learning to make informed decisions moving forward (48%), (Figure 12). Several learning structures were called out as particularly valuable in open-ended responses, including convenings, the facilitator learning community, and the Strive Together training. And two respondents gave examples of how Bright Beginnings uses structures and processes to support ongoing learning, including cross learning between Bright Beginnings and Bright Futures, and an instance where a presentation on Bright Beginnings facilitated a discussion among the Education Committee about how they could support the initiative's communication needs.

Figure 13: Learning Culture Priorities

■ Leadership ■ CATs

Some respondents believe that, while the initiative is doing these activities, there is room for improvement (Figure 12). Still others were not sure whether certain activities are happening or not. There were no differences between CATs and Leadership or between individual CATs. Respondents identified three key priority areas to help develop a learning culture in 2017: continuing to foster a culture of respect and humility, asking the community for feedback, and using shared
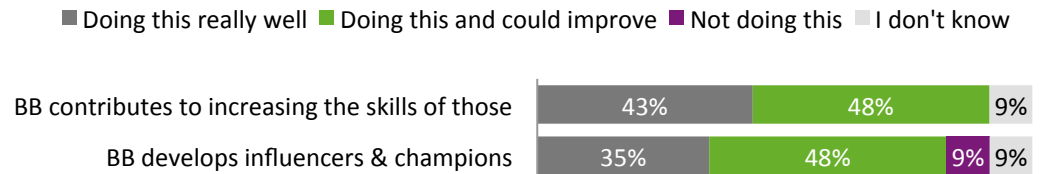
learning to make decisions (Figure 13). One respondent emphasized the importance of involving parents in evaluation and learning processes to avoid planning processes that overemphasize professionals' opinions and do not fully address the reality on the ground. Bright Beginnings has laid the groundwork for a robust learning culture by emphasizing the value of diverse opinions and working to improve processes to make those voices heard. The initiative would benefit from further developing processes and structures that leverage community member input and the learning that is happening at the local and county levels for decision making.
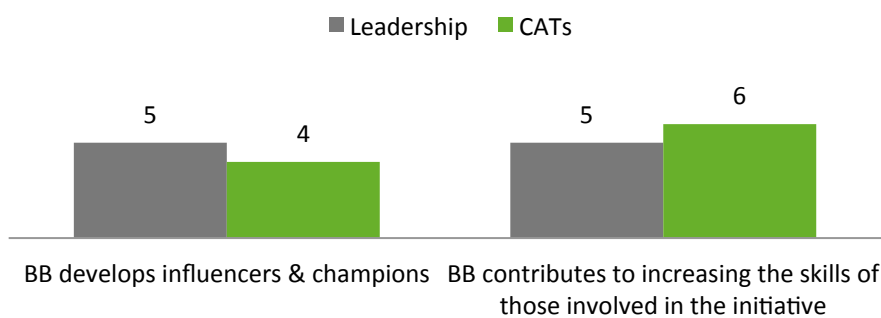
CI Capacity

Part of creating change on a broad scale is developing champions in the community and building the capacity of initiative members and partners. The initiative is in the Exploring and Developing phases of the Theory of Action,

Figure 14: Bright Beginnings is ready to move forward on increasing skills and developing champions in the community

■ Doing this really well ■ Doing this and could improve ■ Not doing this ▢ I don't know

	Doing this really well	Doing this and could improve	Not doing this	I don't know
BB contributes to increasing the skills of those	43%	48%		9%
BB develops influencers & champions	35%	48%	9%	9%

focusing on developing champions and influencers, having representatives from multiple sectors involved at the leadership level, having anchor agencies that help facilitate the CAT process, and CATs identifying necessary resources to move the initiative forward. Many respondents believe Bright Beginnings is doing this really well; however, many also believe there is room for improvement in these areas (Figure 14). Leadership was more likely to believe Bright Beginnings was building skills and capacities of people involved in the initiative than were CATs (Appendix A). Both leadership and CAT respondents gave examples of certain elements of champion capacity-building and development, including convenings, the Strive Together and other trainings, the facilitator learning community, facilitator coaching, and CAT facilitation services. One CAT respondent shared that a core group of committed members come regularly to their CAT meetings and contribute to increasing skills and capacities of the people and organizations that attend.

Figure 15: Collective Impact Capacity Priorities

■ Leadership ■ CATs

	BB develops influencers & champions	BB contributes to increasing the skills of those involved in the initiative
Leadership	5	5
CATs	4	6

However, both leadership and CATs believe both of these areas should be priorities for the initiative in the next year (Figure 15). One respondent suggested that increased connections between Steering Committee members and CAT members, as well as increased follow-up from trainings and convenings, would help build local capacity. They further suggested Steering Committee and/or Policy Advocacy Network member representation on CATs would help extend these connections. Another respondent suggested that some communities may be better served by transitioning from facilitators to staff. Collectively, key aspects of the five core elements of collective impact help to build a learning culture and overall collective impact capacity. By focusing on the priority areas identified in survey results, the initiative can work toward improving these two more systemic elements.

Building Collaboration between All Monterey County Initiatives

Participants were asked how greater collaboration between County initiatives could facilitate progress toward improving the early childhood system in Monterey County and how the initiatives could work together to address gaps and avoid duplication. The following themes emerged through their responses.

Increasing Collaboration and Community Participation. CAT respondents suggested increasing collaboration with school districts, private childcare providers, and business would help improve the early childhood system as a whole. Specifically, respondents emphasized the importance of including CAT leaders and allowing parents and others with lived experience to help guide planning and innovation. The main reason for using this approach is to avoid functioning in a status quo environment where leaders make decisions that do not resonate with the communities affected by the problem.

Aligning Decision-Making Structures. Both leadership and CAT respondents suggested aligning decision-making structures across initiatives to help streamline efforts. For example, respondents suggested operating as one comprehensive cradle-to-career initiative with one backbone, one steering committee, and multiple subgroups (i.e. Bright Futures could be the education-focused impact area and Bright Beginnings could be the early childhood branch under the Impact Monterey County Network umbrella). Another respondent suggested that, even if decision-making structures were not aligned, staff work should be better aligned so people's time is maximized. This restructuring could reduce strain on busy leaders who are often tapped for multiple initiatives and could help pool resources and leverage funding opportunities.

Aligning Goals, Outcomes, and Indicators. Several respondents suggested county initiatives could increase collaboration by aligning goals, outcomes and indicators and creating a shared data system. These efforts could include a shared strategy map, an accessible common database, an indicator dashboard, and aligned working groups. If all initiatives agreed on a few goals to work towards, there is higher likelihood they would be able to show significant improvement on those goals. At the very least, the early childhood system would benefit from outlining clearly-defined roles and plans between all initiatives.

Aligning Communication and Outreach. Respondents saw opportunities and value in collaborating on external communication efforts. For example, since each initiative may involve slightly different stakeholder groups, as well as have some overlap, using shared language, measurements, and approaches would create powerful cumulative value as messages would reach a wider audience and reinforce one another. Additionally, having one shared vision and common brand would help raise visibility and reduce confusion. One respondent suggested holding a joint annual summit to highlight the work and another emphasized the importance of mutually supporting each other by advocating for one another. Respondents also believed that improving internal communication would greatly improve the collective work by reducing duplication. Examples include communicating opportunities for sharing resources, data, and talent, as well as conferring with other initiative stakeholders before engaging in new activities, possibly by providing frequent updates to each other or holding regular meetings to discuss how initiatives can align and support one another.

Implementation Ideas. A couple respondents suggested ideas for implementation, including implementing more technology-based methods for teaching in the classroom and learning in the home environment (e.g. the free language app called DuoLingo) and providing bilingual and bicultural education for parents.

Summary/Conclusion

According to survey respondents involved in the initiative, Bright Beginnings has made significant progress over the past year in terms of increasing collaboration and action towards improving the early childhood system in Monterey County. Bright Beginnings has facilitated the development of a common vision among county leadership and the communities with which it works. The initiative is still working to expand participation among diverse people, organizations and sectors and has increased outreach and communication to the broader community. The majority of respondents believe the initiative has built a culture of respect and humility, signaling a strong foundation for a culture that supports on-going learning. Though many of the key collective impact elements have moved into the Fostering phase of the Theory of Action, some areas are still mainly in the Exploring and Developing phases. The greatest opportunities for improvement in 2017 include increasing mutually reinforcing activities among county partners, building collective impact capacity in communities and among leadership, and creating and implementing a shared measurement system.
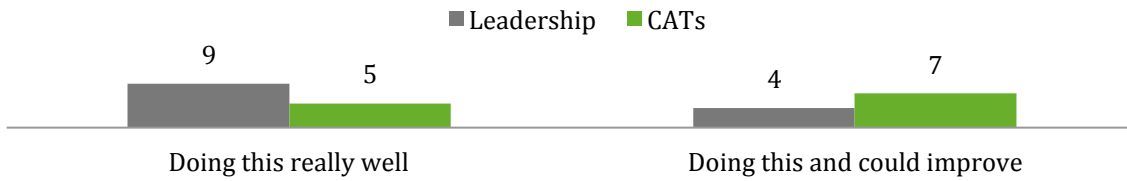
APPENDIX A: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CATS & LEADERSHIP ACROSS CI ELEMENTS

COMMON VISION

People involved in Bright Beginnings share a common vision for early childhood in Monterey County
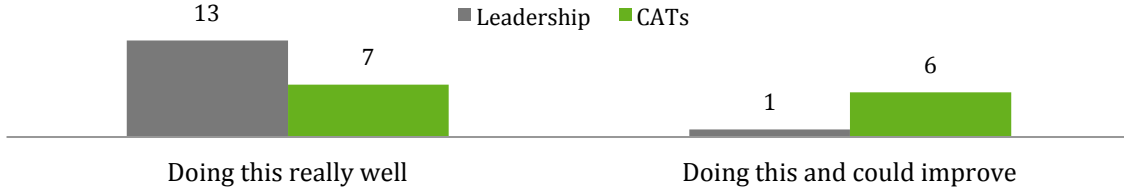
■ Leadership ■ CATs

13 · 7 · 1 · 6

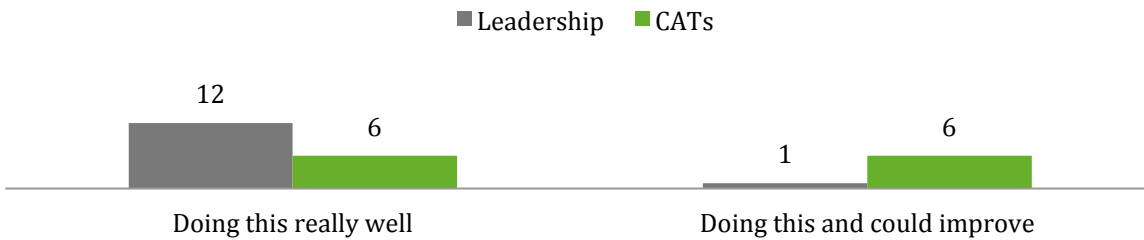Doing this really well   Doing this and could improve

Bright Beginnings involves diverse people from the community in planning for the work, including community members personally impacted by early childhood issues
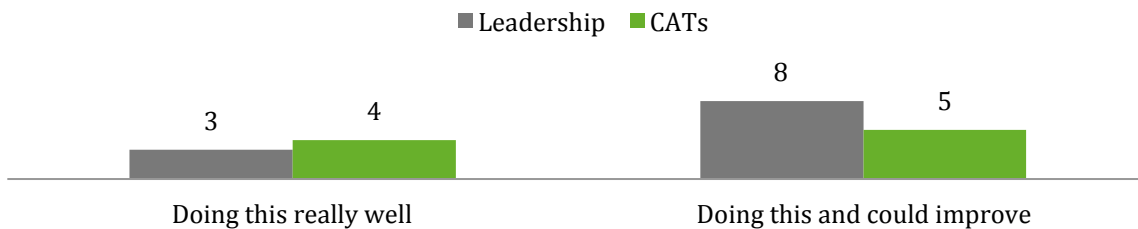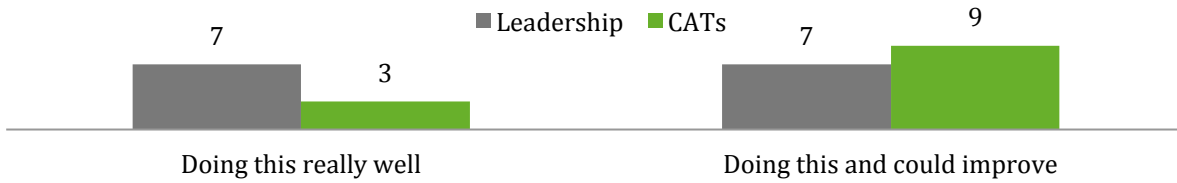
■ Leadership ■ CATs

9 · 5 · 4 · 7

Doing this really well   Doing this and could improve

MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

Bright Beginnings uses defined values to guide the initiative's work

■ Leadership ■ CATs

12 · 6 · 1 · 6

Doing this really well   Doing this and could improve

Partners associated with Bright Beginnings coordinate their activities and resources to align with Bright Beginning's action plan
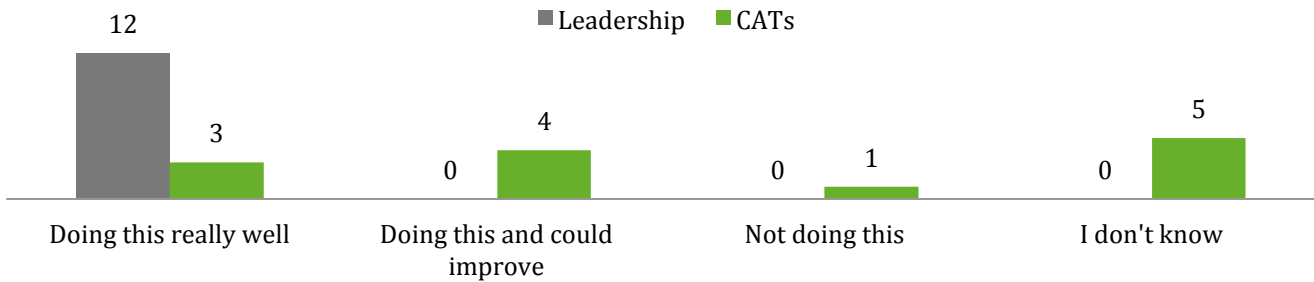
■ Leadership ■ CATs

3 · 4 · 8 · 5

Doing this really well   Doing this and could improve

Bright Beginnings works with partners to develop strategies that align with Bright Beginning's action plan

Legend: ■ Leadership ■ CATs

	Doing this really well	Doing this and could improve
Leadership	7	7
CATs	3	9

CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

Bright Beginnings regularly communicates progress updates within the initiative

Legend: ■ Leadership ■ CATs

	Doing this really well	Doing this and could improve	Not doing this	I don't know
Leadership	12	0	0	0
CATs	3	4	1	5

BACKBONE INFRASTRUCTURE & SUPPORT

Bright Beginnings clearly defines and communicates roles and responsibilities of the Backbone and the MCCC-Steering committee

Legend: ■ Leadership ■ CATs

	Doing this really well	Doing this and could improve	Not doing this	I don't know
Leadership	6	6	0	0
CATs	2	0	5	2

COLLECTIVE IMPACT CAPACITY

Bright Beginnings contributes to increasing the skills and capacities of people and organizations involved in the initiative

Legend: ■ Leadership ■ CATs

	Doing this really well	Doing this and could improve
Leadership	7	3
CATs	3	8