

## Community Based Organization's Perceptions on Evaluation

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### Summary

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the number of private and public organizations aiming to address loneliness and social isolation. However, there are variations in how organizations present outcomes and our understanding of how and if organizations decide to evaluate their programs is limited. Thus, in this session, we will discuss the results of a small, national survey evaluating the feelings and perceptions of community-based organizations (CBOs) surrounding evaluation and data collection. We will use these results to discuss how we can encourage the use of standard measurements and evaluation tools to better understand how organizations are addressing loneliness and social isolation.

### Background

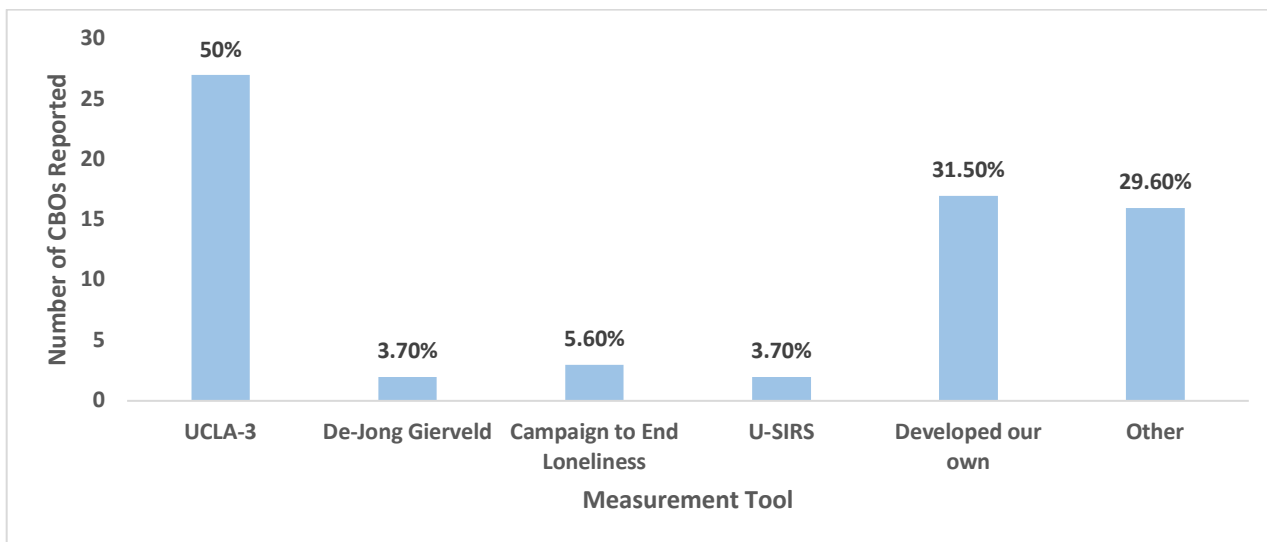
There are many CBOs that seem designed to target social isolation and loneliness (SIL), but many programs do not have evidence on these measurements or use tools to collect data on program efficacy. The Coalition for Older Adults' Social Connectedness, NorCal (COASC-NC) sought to understand the current state of CBO evaluation of programs. The results serve to reveal gaps in evidence and practice standards so that we may better support CBOs in organizations targeting SIL.

### Design/Methods

- In collaboration with CESIL, members of the COASC-NC from both the University of California, San Francisco and Front Porch designed a (10-15 min) comprehensive survey for CBOs to assess their services and their evaluation practices
- Surveys were distributed via mailing lists, word-of-mouth, newsletter postings
- Collection ranged from December 2021 through February 2022

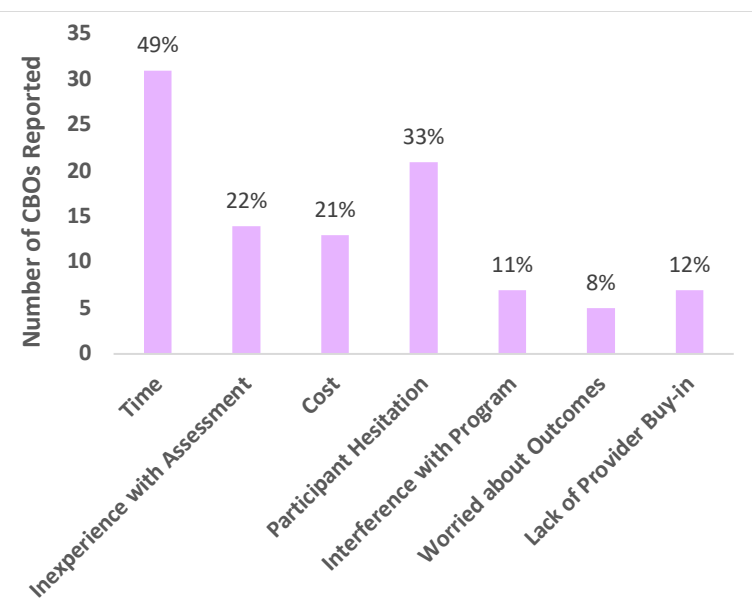
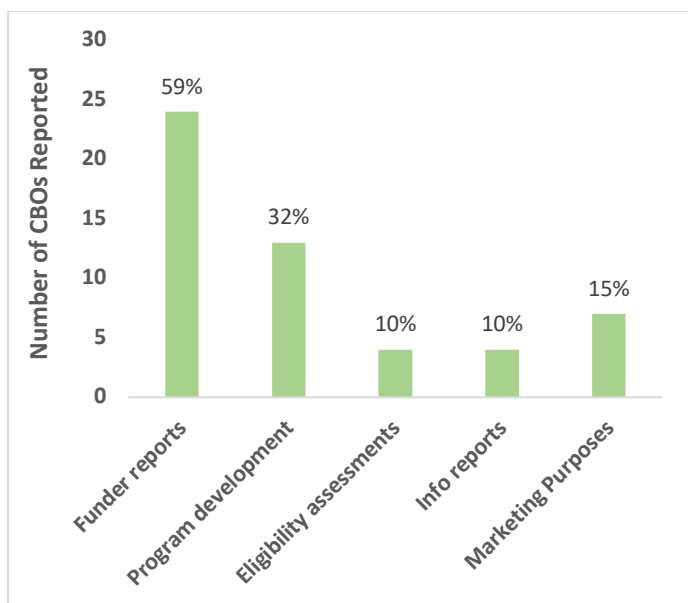
### Results

- Responses from a total of 70 different CBOs
  - 93.9% of orgs were nonprofits
  - Wide variety of organization types including direct service, senior centers, multipurpose social services, government, healthcare orgs, and others
- 1/7 organizations reported they were not currently using any form of evaluation
- Among the types of measurement tools used, the UCLA-3 was the most common at 50% (Figure 1)
- 30% of organizations selected other methods of assessment, mostly commonly qualitative feedback, such as stories and quotes, or just tracking utilization data



**Figure 1: Measurement tools that CBOS use to evaluate effectiveness of addressing SIL.**

- Annual collection was the most commonly reported frequency of evaluation (29% of CBOs)
- 59% of organizations used the collected data for funder reports (Figure 2)
- Figure 3 shows the percentage of CBOs who reported these barriers as either the largest barrier or a significant barrier
- Time was reported to be the largest barrier or a significant barrier to evaluation in 49% of responses (Figure 3)



**Figure 2: CBOs Report how they Utilize their Data After it is Collected**

**Figure 3: Greatest Barriers to implementation of evaluation in CBOs**

**Key Takeaways**

1. Because some CBOs are still not collecting this evidence, this presents great opportunity for partnerships with academic organizations to give support in evaluation. There is still space for change to make evaluation the expectation.
2. While annual may be the most feasible cadence for data collection (a possible the minimum required by funders), more frequent assessments could find smaller changes in effectiveness and allow programs to make adjustments sooner to meet needs of the clientele.
3. Funder priorities was an ongoing theme for motivation of evaluation and data collection. This may be a possible avenue for future studies to learn more about the expectations and requirements funders have when deciding which programs to fund.

**Future Directions for Showing Evidence**

- Making changes and expanding wider use of evaluation among CBOs will likely include reducing barriers and educating organization on the necessity and benefits of collecting data.
- As mentioned above, studying funder priorities is a potential next step to better understand how evaluation can BOTH influence funder decisions and collect reliable, reportable scientific data to contribute to the literature.