



United Community Services of Johnson County

Evaluation of the Racial Equity in Communities Program
Final Report

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Executive Summary

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) implemented the Racial Equity in Communities (REIC) program across two cohorts (2021-2022, 2023-2024) with the goal of advancing culturally-responsive systems change in Johnson County, KS. The program engaged residents, staff, and elected officials in a series of workshops and technical assistance, aiming to 1) increase participants' knowledge, 2) build applicable skills, and 3) drive systemic change in their jurisdictions.

The purpose of this impact report is to evaluate progress toward these three desired and sequential outcomes of the REIC program and to understand why some outcomes were achieved while others were not. Using quantitative and qualitative data, this study identifies where and under what conditions impact has been made and offers program recommendations to enhance existing impact and more effectively move towards impact where it has yet to be realized.

This evaluation finds that REIC was highly effective at increasing individual knowledge—particularly around race, racism, and adaptive leadership—where sessions' personal relevance and emotional resonance led to lasting insight. Interactive, discussion-based formats and practical tools such as storytelling and reflective exercises had the greatest impact. Participants felt most confident in understanding race and racism, with less confidence in abstract systems change concepts. Similarly, individual skill-building was strongest in areas requiring self-awareness and analysis, while skills related to action and accountability were harder to apply, often due to unclear institutional authority and lack of structural support.

Despite knowledge and skill gains, translating these into sustainable systems change proved challenging. While most jurisdictions adopted plans targeting employee engagement, communications, and hiring practices, full implementation stalled in many areas, especially in the absence of strong leadership buy-in and organizational readiness. Success was most evident in jurisdictions where leaders were actively engaged and DEI language and frameworks were embedded in operations. Conversely, efforts stalled where leadership support, role clarity, and dedicated capacity were lacking.

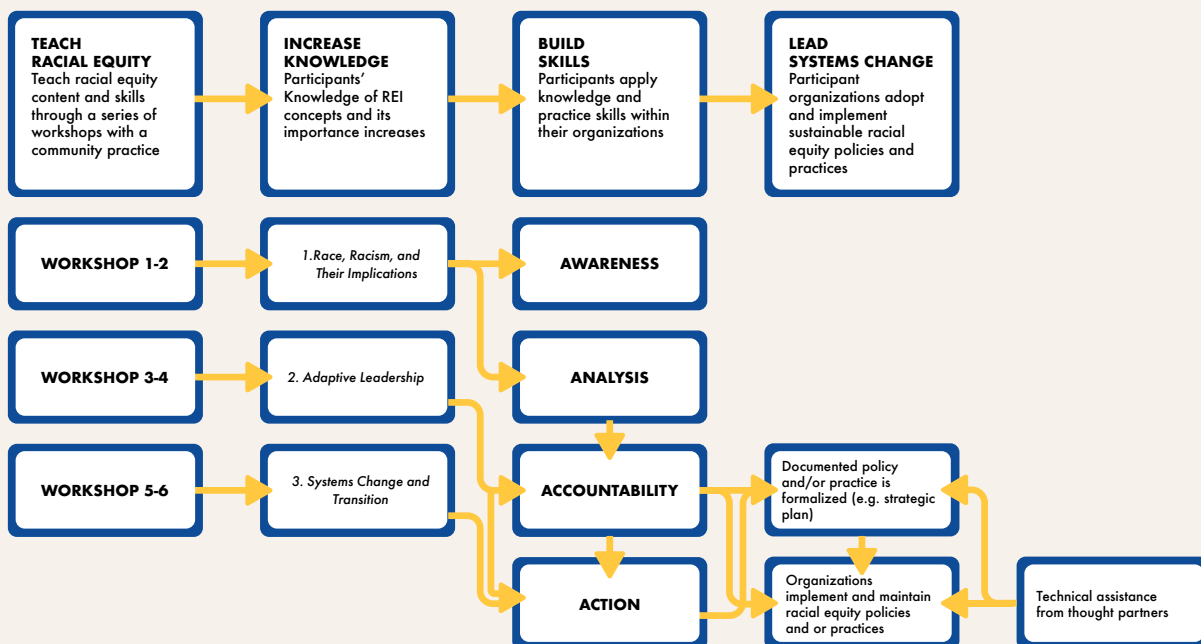
The report recommends securing leadership commitment before program launch, increasing practical support for systems change implementation, clarifying technical assistance roles, and building continuity through future cohorts. Overall, REIC effectively fostered individual growth, but meaningful and lasting organizational transformation requires stronger leadership engagement, procedural clarity, and ongoing structural support.

LOGIC MODEL & DESIRED OUTCOMES

A logic model was created to identify all desired outcomes of the REIC program and the causal pathway by which those outcomes are believed to be achieved. The logic model serves, therefore, as the theoretical framework by which change due to the REIC program should occur, and it provides the guide for a systematic evaluation of the program's desired outcomes.

As shown in the logic model below, the ultimate long-term goal of the REIC program is **racial equity systems change** within jurisdictions. To reach this ultimate outcome, Thought Partners (i.e. expert instructors and facilitators) offer a series of workshops that are expected to **increase participant knowledge** of racial equity concepts, then participants learn how to translate that knowledge into **applicable skills** that are then used to lead, create, and maintain racial equity systems change. In the last step, **technical assistance** is also offered by Thought Partners to help support customized system change plans within each jurisdiction.

FIGURE 1. LOGIC MODEL



Thus, to evaluate progress toward each subsequent outcome of the REIC program, we further define and specify knowledge concepts, actionable skills, and system changes. These are outlined below.

IMMEDIATE OUTCOME

INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING

Through the expertise of local Thought Partners, session content was created that can be categorized into three distinct learning areas:

1. **Race, Racism, and Their Implications**
2. **Adaptive Leadership**
3. **Systems Change & Transition**

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME

INDIVIDUAL SKILL-BUILDING

Using Dr. Barbara Love's [Liberatory Consciousness Framework](#), we identify four skill areas believed necessary to lead, create, and sustain systems change.

1. **Awareness** - requires that you recognize that we live in an oppressive society
2. **Analysis** - requires that you develop explanations about why oppression is happening
3. **Action** - requires you to take action to promote equity and justice
4. **Accountability & Allyship** - requires you to collaborate with others to address what is contributing to an oppressive society

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

RACIAL EQUITY SYSTEMS CHANGE

Drawing on measures, values, and topic areas presented in [Building a Race Equity Culture](#) from the organization Equity in the Center, we categorize *Systems Change* into 8 measurable and observable policy/practice areas:

1. **External and/or Internal Communications**
2. **Employee Engagement**
3. **Hiring & Promotion Practices**
4. **Organizational Culture, Norms, and/or Policies/Practices**
5. **Community Relations**
6. **DEI Education & Training**
7. **Budget, Expenditures, and/or Investment**
8. **Internal Evaluation & Continuous Improvement**

Within these 8 categories, jurisdictional participants formulate specific policies and/or practices in a plan to bring back to their organizations to put into action. The policies and/or practices that are created may look very different from one jurisdiction to another, and we do not specify exactly what that change must look like. We do, however, distinguish between plans that were "adopted" versus plans that were "implemented." In other words, it is possible for organizations to adopt certain policies and/or practices in writing - for example, in a strategic plan - but never formally implement the policy and/or practice within the entire community of practice. Thus, adoption of and sustainable implementation of the plan are distinct long-term outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

There were two primary methods used to collect data and evaluate progress toward all outcomes.

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

A survey was emailed to all participants across all jurisdictions and cohorts to gather their perceived increase in knowledge and skill-building from the REIC program.

Knowledge-Building

The survey asked respondents to self-report the degree to which they agree that they have increased knowledge across the three knowledge-building categories: 1) *Race, Racism, and Their Implications* 2) *Adaptive Leadership* and 3) *Systems Change & Transition*. There were 19 questions that covered 19 different content areas within the three categories that were taught to participants throughout the duration of the program.

Skill-Building

The survey asked respondents to self-report how often they have carried out a particular action at their workplace. There were nine questions that aligned to one of the 4 skill areas.

Systems Change

The survey also asked participants to select which of the 8 system area(s) their own jurisdiction targeted in their plan and to assess to what degree progress toward their plan has been made.

FOCUS GROUPS

We conducted focus groups separately with each jurisdiction, although we had to combine two jurisdictions (Prairie Village and Roeland Park) due to low participation. The emphasis of the focus groups was to understand in what ways they have been successful at implementing their plan and what barriers they have encountered that have prevented them from fully implementing their plan. Focus groups were held in-person at UCS and were 90 minutes long. Je T'aime Taylor facilitated the focus groups.

THOUGHT PARTNER INTERVIEWS

We also conducted 1:1 interviews with Thought Partners to gain their insight into how they feel the program contributed to successful outcomes and into ways they feel the program may not have been as successful. To both ends, we focused on gaining their insight into which implementation protocols to maintain and which to change.

SAMPLE

Table 1 presents the sample used in the evaluation. There were a total of 63 individuals that participated in the REIC program across 7 jurisdictions. On average, the response rate for survey completion and focus group participation among all the jurisdictions was 41% and 35%, respectively. Within each jurisdiction, a handful of past participants have since left their jobs, but surveys were still emailed to their personal addresses. Only two of these participants no longer at their jurisdictional jobs completed the survey - including the one respondent from Mission - thereby contributing to a lower response rate overall.

Johnson County had the largest percentage (64%) of survey respondents followed closely by Leawood (60%) while Mission and Prairie Village had the smallest percentage of survey respondents. Johnson County, Leawood, Lenexa, and Overland Park all had 50% (or close to it) of their total participants attend the focus group. It is important to note that the two participants from Prairie Village and Roeland Park were former councilman and a citizen, respectively, so their knowledge about systems change within their jurisdictions was limited.

There were four thought partners that contributed to REIC programming across the two cohorts. The three thought partners that participated in a 1:1 interview represent Kansas Leadership Center, University of Kansas' Public Management Center, and the Meriweather Group. Representatives from the Critical Social Change Project could not be reached.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS FROM EACH JURISDICTION, PER DATA COLLECTION METHOD

	Total that participated in the REIC cohort	Total that completed the survey	Total that participated in the focus group
Johnson County	11	7 (64%)	5 (45%)
Leawood	10	6 (60%)	5 (50%)
Lenexa	12	4 (33%)	5 (42%)
Mission	8	1 (13%)	0
Overland Park	10	4 (40%)	5 (50%)
Prairie Village	8	2 (25%)	1 (13%)
Roeland Park	4	2 (50%)	1 (25%)
Total	63	26 (41%)	22 (35%)
Thought Partners	4	N/A	3 (75%)

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from the survey and focus groups for each of the three main goals of the REIC program: *Individual Knowledge-Building*, *Individual Skill-Building*, and *Systems Change*. Within each goal section, the results from the survey are presented first to identify trends and then focus group data is used to identify patterns that explain the trends. Data from Thought Partner interviews are incorporated into the qualitative, focus group findings.

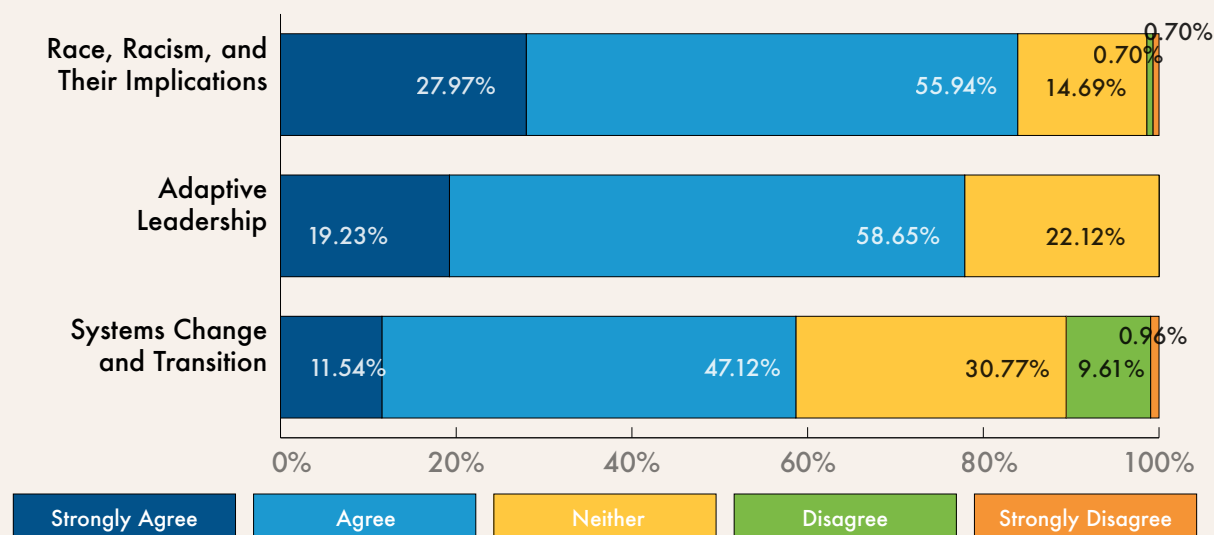
A. INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING

Figure 2 compares the distribution of participant survey responses across the three knowledge-building topics: *Race and Racism*, *Adaptive Leadership*, and *Systems Change and Transition*. **Overall, while all three topics were viewed positively, the data suggests that participants felt most confident in their learning related to race and racism concepts, and comparatively less so in systems change and transition concepts¹.**

Among the three topics, *Race, Racism, and Their Implications* received the highest levels of agreement, with a notably larger proportion of respondents selecting “Strongly Agree” compared to the other topics. *Adaptive Leadership* also received a strong positive response, though slightly less emphatic than the first topic. In contrast, *Systems Change & Transition* had the fewest “Strongly Agree” responses and the highest proportion of “Disagree” responses, suggesting participants felt less confident or experienced less impact in this area.

FIGURE 2. KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

My experience in the REIC program enabled me to better understand concepts related to...



Next, we present survey findings that explore specific concepts within each knowledge area in more depth.

1. When the top two response options reach 75%, the goal/metric is considered achieved. This applies to all survey results in this report.

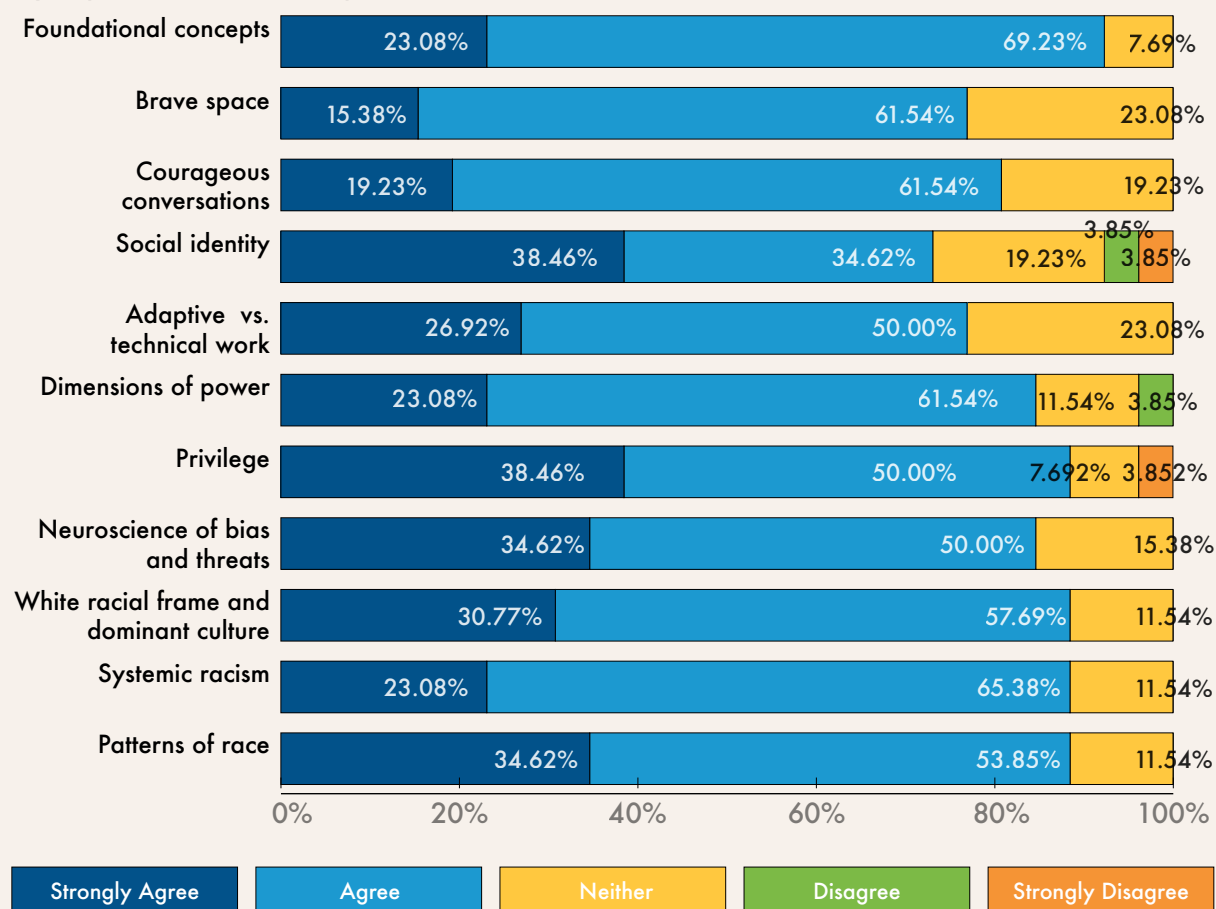
1. RACE, RACISM, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Figure 3 compares the distribution of participant survey responses to questions on how well the REIC program improved their understanding of specific concepts related to *Race, Racism and Their Implications*. **Overall, while positive agreement is the norm, Foundational concepts stands out with the highest percent of positive responses, whereas Brave space, Courageous conversations and Adaptive vs. technical work are outliers with more neutral feedback.**

Across nearly all topics, the majority of respondents selected “Agree” (light blue), indicating a general consensus that the program was beneficial for knowledge-building on all concepts. However, outliers emerge in several areas: for *Social Identity* and *Privilege*, a notably higher percentage of respondents chose “Strongly Agree” (dark blue), yet they also saw the higher rates of neutral and negative responses, suggesting possibly more uncertainty in these domains.

FIGURE 3. RACE, RACISM, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

My experience in the REIC program enabled me to better understand...



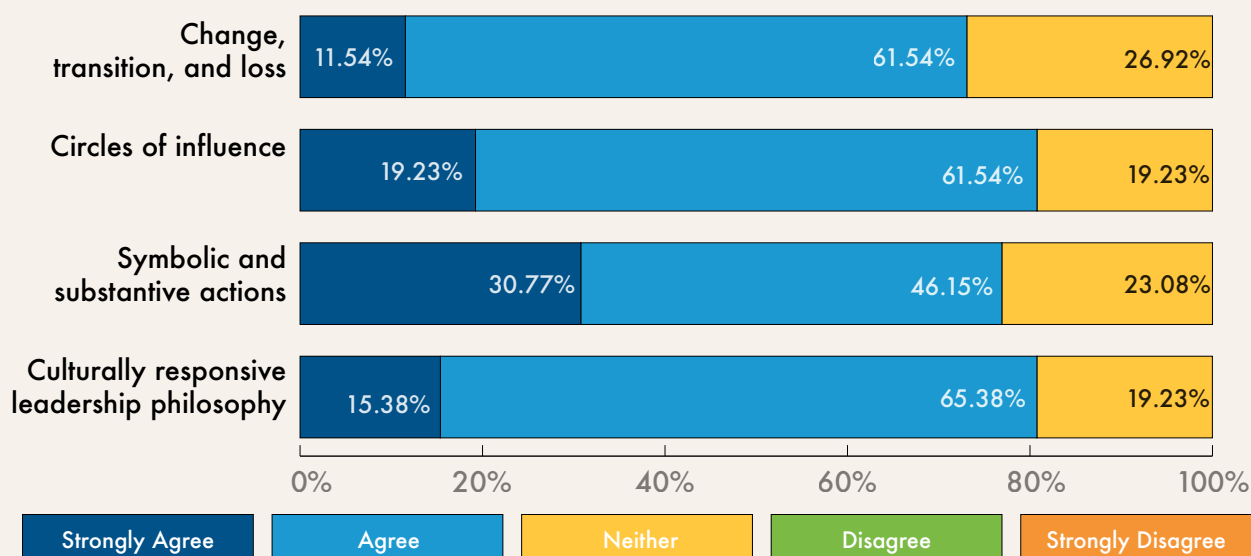
2. ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

In Figure 4 on *Adaptive Leadership*, the distribution of participant survey responses across four leadership knowledge topics are compared. **Across all topics, disagreement is virtually absent, reinforcing the generally positive reception, but the relatively high neutral response for *Change, transition and loss* marks it as the most mixed or uncertain topic compared to the others.**

Most participants indicated that the REIC program helped them better understand all four leadership topics, with “Agree” responses (light blue) dominating each category. *Culturally Responsive Leadership Philosophy* stands out as the topic with the highest “Agree” percentage (65.38%), closely followed by *Change, transition and loss* and *Circles of influence* (both at 61.54%). However, *Symbolic and substantive actions* is an outlier, with the highest proportion of “Strongly Agree” responses (30.77%), indicating a stronger positive impact in this area compared to others. On the other hand, *Change, transition and loss* had the lowest “Strongly Agree” percentage (11.54%) and the highest rate of neutrality (“Neither Agree nor Disagree” at 26.92%), suggesting more mixed feelings or uncertainty among participants.

FIGURE 4. ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

My experience in the REIC program enabled me to better understand concepts related to...



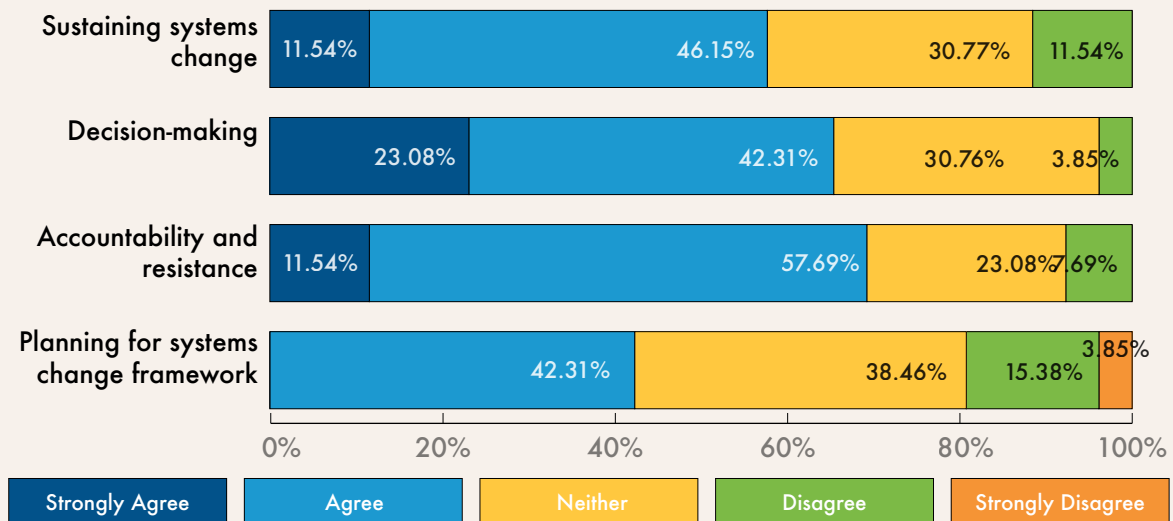
3. SYSTEMS CHANGE & TRANSITION

In Figure 5 on *Systems Change & Transition*, the distribution of participant survey responses for four system change knowledge areas are compared. **Overall, while agreement was prevalent, the 75% threshold (a measure indicating success) was not met for any of the four areas. Accountability and resistance stood out for consensus, whereas Planning for systems change framework was an outlier for its greater uncertainty and dissent, reflecting further results highlighting the difficulty of implementing systems change.**

Participants most frequently selected “Agree” (light blue) across all four topics, but the level of agreement and neutrality varied noticeably. *Accountability & Resistance* had the highest “Agree” rate (57.69%) and *Decision-making* had the highest “Strongly Agree” (dark blue) response at 23.08%, marking them as standouts for relatively positive impact. *Planning for systems change framework* emerged as an outlier with the highest percentages for both “Neither Agree nor Disagree” (38.46%) and “Disagree” (15.38%), along with the only appearance of “Strongly Disagree” (3.85%), indicating more mixed or skeptical views.

FIGURE 5. SYSTEMS CHANGE & TRANSITION

My experience in the REIC program enabled me to better understand concepts related to...



KEY PATTERNS EXPLAINING KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING TRENDS: FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Below we describe two patterns that explain why participants reported more growth in knowledge of *Race and Racism* and *Adaptive Leadership* and less knowledge growth in *Systems Change & Transition*.

PATTERN #1 – PERSONAL RELEVANCE AND EMOTIONAL RESONANCE

Participants retained more from *Race & Racism* sessions than *Systems Change* due to strong personal relevance and emotional resonance.

The emotional intensity of exploring social identity, privilege, and lived experiences made these sessions particularly memorable. These topics offered participants immediate insight into their own identities and relationships, leading to lasting impact. Participants repeatedly noted how the structure of the sessions prioritized discussion over lecture, allowing open dialogue across differences. Sessions often began with grounding prompts or storytelling, and facilitators encouraged deep listening. Participants spoke of “hearing each other speak in shared space,” which helped build emotional trust and challenged assumptions.

The brave spaces fostered in the cohort allowed participants to speak vulnerably about their own stories and reflect on others’ experiences. These dialogues (sometimes uncomfortable) created lasting insight into personal identity and power. Emotional resonance came not only from the content but from hearing colleagues name truths aloud that are rarely discussed in professional settings.

- “It made me think about...am I perpetuating white dominant culture?”
- “Have you ever left the country and were afraid that you wouldn’t be let back in?”
- “It touched something deep in me. I hadn’t talked about this stuff before.”
- “There was a personal resonance...it caused me to think about my place in the world.”

PATTERN #2 – DISCUSSION-BASED LEARNING AND TANGIBLE TOOLS DEEPENED UNDERSTANDING

Concepts related to privilege, bias, and personal identity were more memorable and transformative than abstract frameworks.

Concrete, embodied activities - like the privilege bracelet bead exercise - left a visceral impact. These were referenced by nearly every cohort as tools that “stuck” emotionally and intellectually. Sessions that combined reflection, group dialogue, and storytelling were consistently rated as more engaging than those focused on abstract system concepts or theoretical models.

By contrast, participants shared that *Systems Change* sessions felt too conceptual without enough time to apply frameworks to their specific city structures. They expressed a need for more example scenarios, case studies, and discussion-based application of systems change. Theoretical models around adaptive leadership or systems mapping often felt disconnected from daily work.

- “Privilege...that bracelet and the little beads...highlighted how much or how little certain populations have...”
- “I still think about the stories shared in the room, it made the theory real.”
- “The emotional weight was heavy—but it stuck with me. I remember that more than the frameworks.” (Thought Partner)

KEY TAKEAWAY INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

Participants across cities demonstrated greater knowledge-building in personal, interpersonal, and identity-centered content (*Race & Racism*) than in abstract or structural content (*Systems Change*). Participants reported that *Systems Change* sessions lacked time for practical application, leaving them less confident in this area. This suggests a need to deepen support around applying systems change theory to municipal structures. There were no systematic differences in these patterns across cohorts.

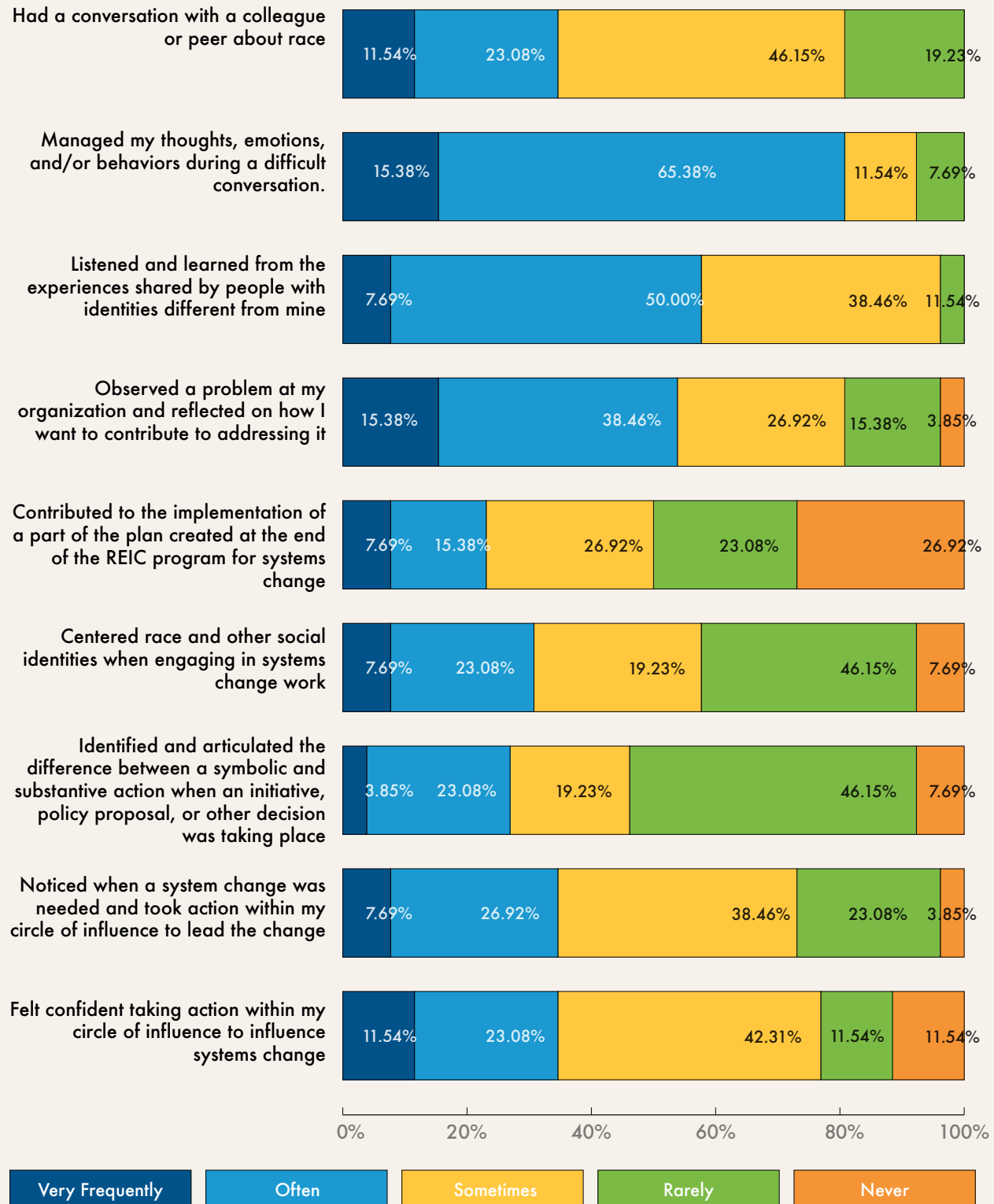
B. INDIVIDUAL SKILL-BUILDING

In Figure 6 on Skill-Building, responses show a range of engagement frequencies in skill-related actions over the last six months. **Overall, while moderate engagement (“Sometimes”) is the norm, the skills for Awareness and Analysis were significantly more than those skills for Accountability and Action.**

Most actions are performed “Sometimes” (yellow), indicating moderate, occasional practice across the board. The most frequent engagement is seen in “managing thoughts, emotions, and behaviors during difficult conversations,” with “Often” (65.38%) standing out as the highest single percentage for that frequency, making it an outlier for regularity. In contrast, the least frequent engagement is for “contributing to the implementation of a plan created at the end of the REIC program,” where “Never” and “Rarely” responses (26.92% each) are highest, identifying it as the main outlier for infrequent action.

FIGURE 6. SKILL BUILDING

In the last six months, how often have you engaged in the following actions?



KEY PATTERNS EXPLAINING SKILL-BUILDING TRENDS: FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Below we present three patterns that explain why participants reported practicing skills more often in *Awareness and Analysis* than in *Accountability and Action*.

PATTERN #1 – PERSONAL AND REFLECTIVE TOOLS SUPPORTED INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL GROWTH

Participants reported frequent application of *Awareness and Analysis* skills due to the program's personal and reflective nature.

Participants reported lasting self-awareness and analytical capacity stemming from reflective tools and emotional exercises. Tools such as storytelling, shared vocabulary, the privilege bracelet activity, the circle of influence, and identity mapping were particularly effective. These skills were easier to practice because they required individual effort—not structural permission. In context, individual permission refers to the participant's personal choice and agency to reflect or change their own behavior, while structural permission would involve authority, resources, or policies that enable systematic or collective changes within an organization.

- "It made me see how privileged I am...I never saw myself as that."
- "Circle of influence...I rely on that quite a bit since REIC."
- "That model changed the way I see issues in my neighborhood. I keep thinking, where's my influence?"
- "It gave me language. I can now explain bias in ways that I couldn't before."

PATTERN #2 – LIMITED INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY CREATED BARRIERS TO ACCOUNTABILITY

Participants struggled with *Action and Accountability* due to unclear implementation pathways and limited institutional authority.

While participants often reported strong peer accountability and mutual support within the REIC cohort itself, these group-based norms did not always extend into the broader organizational contexts. Many described feeling unclear on how to hold others accountable outside the group setting or how to escalate concerns through formal channels. This uncertainty was especially pronounced in city governments where hierarchy and bureaucracy complicated direct intervention or follow-up, such as in Overland Park.

Additionally, many cities lacked "policy support" - the formal inclusion of equity principles, protocols, or decision-making structures. In the absence of written guidance or organizational expectations, participants were unsure how to advocate, intervene, or create lasting change.

- "We created a DEIB committee...but we reached a crossroads and it's not active now."
- "I had to overcome anxiety...to call people on things like 'that was a dog whistle.'"
- "We didn't have a plan for what to do when someone caused harm...that was a gap."
- "When it came time for accountability...they said the right things but didn't want to take on the discomfort of naming harm." (Thought Partner)

PATTERN #3 – SYMBOLIC ACTIONS LACKED INTEGRATION INTO ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS

Participants struggled to move from understanding and analysis to action and accountability.

While many described feeling energized or ready after the REIC sessions, that readiness didn't always translate to effective change. The ability to apply skills was deeply shaped by participants' roles, with elected officials or leadership staff more able to push change than community volunteers or advisory board members.

Efforts to act often stalled at symbolic gestures, like commemorative events or isolated trainings, without being embedded into ongoing structures, workflows, or policies. Participants wanted to move beyond statements and performative actions but lacked the infrastructure, time, or positional power to carry momentum forward.

- "We support Juneteenth and MLK...but they're more symbolic."

- “We had events and lunch-and-learns...but not a clear next step.”
- “I felt ready, but then I hit a wall when I tried to apply it in council meetings.”
- “It felt good in the moment, but we need to move beyond workshops.”

KEY TAKEAWAY INDIVIDUAL SKILL BUILDING

Skill-Building outcomes were strongest in domains requiring only individual reflection or insight (awareness and analysis). However, moving into action and accountability required structural support, role clarity, and permission to disrupt norms—factors many participants did not have. Without institutional buy-in, policy alignment, or designated pathways for implementation, equity work risked stalling at the symbolic level. There were no systematic differences in these patterns across cohorts.

C. SYSTEMS-CHANGE

Table 2 shows which categories of systems change were part of each jurisdiction's plan and the progress made toward each. The data comes from self-reported results in the survey and from focus group discussions. It is important to note that most folks were not entirely aware of what categories were part of their final plan or the progress that has or hasn't been made, as they are not in positions directly privy to decision-makers. Thus, the table below reflects the average perceived progress for each jurisdiction and does reflect "best estimates" from those not close to decision-makers. This fact speaks to an overall theme - that not all roles are equal and for those not in the inner circle with decision-makers, many challenges for creating systems change emerge.

The overall trend that emerges from the table is that not one plan has been fully implemented and that most plans remain stalled in process. Johnson County and Leawood have seen the most success in terms of moving some aspects of their plan into implementation, while Overland Park has seen the least progress. Employee Engagement was the most frequently targeted area for systems change and also experienced the least progress. Hiring and Promotion Practices saw the most progress toward full implementation. Organizational Culture, Norms, and/or Practices as well as Budget, Expenditures, and/or Investment were rarely, if at all, targeted in plans.

Because only a council member from Prairie Village and a community member from Roeland Park - both external to the City's administrative department - were available for focus groups and completed the survey, we have limited insight into the actual plan and its progress at these two jurisdictions.

Table 2: System Change Target Areas & Progress within Each Jurisdiction

Thinking about the plan you created at the end of the REIC program, which of the following system change categories did your organization target? To what extent have those system changes from your plan been carried out within your organization so far?

	JoCo	Leawood	Lenexa	Overland Park	Prairie Village	Roeland Park
External and/or Internal Communications	Partially Implemented	In process		No progress		?
Employee Engagement	In process	In process	In process	No progress	?	
Hiring & Promotion Practices	Partially Implemented	Partially Implemented	In process		?	
Organizational Culture, Norms, and/or Practices	In process					?
Community Relations	In process	Partially Implemented		In process		
DEI Education & Training	Partially Implemented	In process	In process		?	?
Budget, Expenditures, and/or Investment						?
Internal Evaluation & Continuous Improvement	In process	No progress				?

KEY PATTERNS EXPLAINING SYSTEM CHANGE TRENDS: FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Next, focus group data is used to explain the trends revealed in Table 2. The purpose is to explain why some jurisdictions were relatively more successful than others at achieving their plan goals and to identify clear conditions for successful plan implementation.

PATTERN #1 – SHARED LANGUAGE AND ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS BUILD FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

Jurisdictions with shared DEI language, norms, and frameworks to those introduced through REIC demonstrated more continuity and communication around equity efforts.

Tools like the REIC glossary, brave space norms, and common discussion structures helped internal teams adopt a shared equity vocabulary. These tools became embedded in onboarding, team agreements, and trainings across some municipalities, like Johnson County. In places where this foundation was missing or inconsistently reinforced, like Lenexa, equity efforts were more fragmented.

- “Now we call them brave spaces...it became the framework.”
- “Glossary was very much like REIC’s...we still use that.”
- “We reference that REIC language when onboarding or training new hires.”
- “Brave space norms show up in our team agreements now.”

PATTERN #2 – LEADERSHIP BUY-IN DETERMINED DEPTH AND LONGEVITY OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

Progress across cities varied significantly based on the level of leadership commitment.

Where city administrators or senior officials were visibly engaged from the beginning, teams had more support to apply REIC principles to actual policies and planning. Conversely, in jurisdictions where leaders were indifferent, skeptical, or unaware, the work remained siloed, with participants unsure how far they could go. Without leadership modeling and institutional backing, equity efforts often stalled after the program’s end.

- “The city administrator took it seriously...he developed an equity rubric for capital improvement projects.”
- “It has to be in the water...not one-off things. If equity isn’t systematized, people forget or wait it out.”
- “Our team was excited—but the leadership didn’t really follow through.”
- “Some cities were ready...others were just trying to get through the program.”

PATTERN #3 – TRANSLATING POLICY INTO PRACTICE REQUIRED CLEAR LEVERS AND DEDICATED CAPACITY

Systems change was more successful when tied to concrete administrative levers, such as hiring protocols, job descriptions, budgeting, or capital project planning.

These were domains where equity rubrics or criteria could be formally integrated and tracked. By contrast, more relational systems, such as employee engagement, internal culture, or ongoing DEI committee work faced significant inertia. These areas required sustained facilitation, trust-building, and accountability mechanisms, which many cities had not yet built.

- “Changes have been made to job descriptions...in terms of qualifications.”
- “Still struggle with staffing the DEI committee...great ideas but not always momentum.”
- “We applied a racial equity lens to our capital project process.”
- “It’s hard to shift culture when you’re still operating under the same politics and power dynamics.”

KEY TAKEAWAY SYSTEMS CHANGE

Systems Change was most achievable in areas with defined authority, procedural clarity, and administrative tools such as HR, planning, and budgeting. In contrast, deeper cultural shifts (like employee engagement or organizational norms) required more time, trust, and cross-functional leadership than most jurisdictions were prepared for. Leadership alignment and readiness proved critical to translating REIC learning into sustainable change. Jurisdictional differences did emerge, but generally followed a pattern based on pre-existing infrastructure and leadership buy-in—not on geographic location alone.

DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

Returning to the theoretical logic model and its desired outcomes, we can now say which outcomes and causal pathways were achieved by the REIC program and which ones remain a challenge.

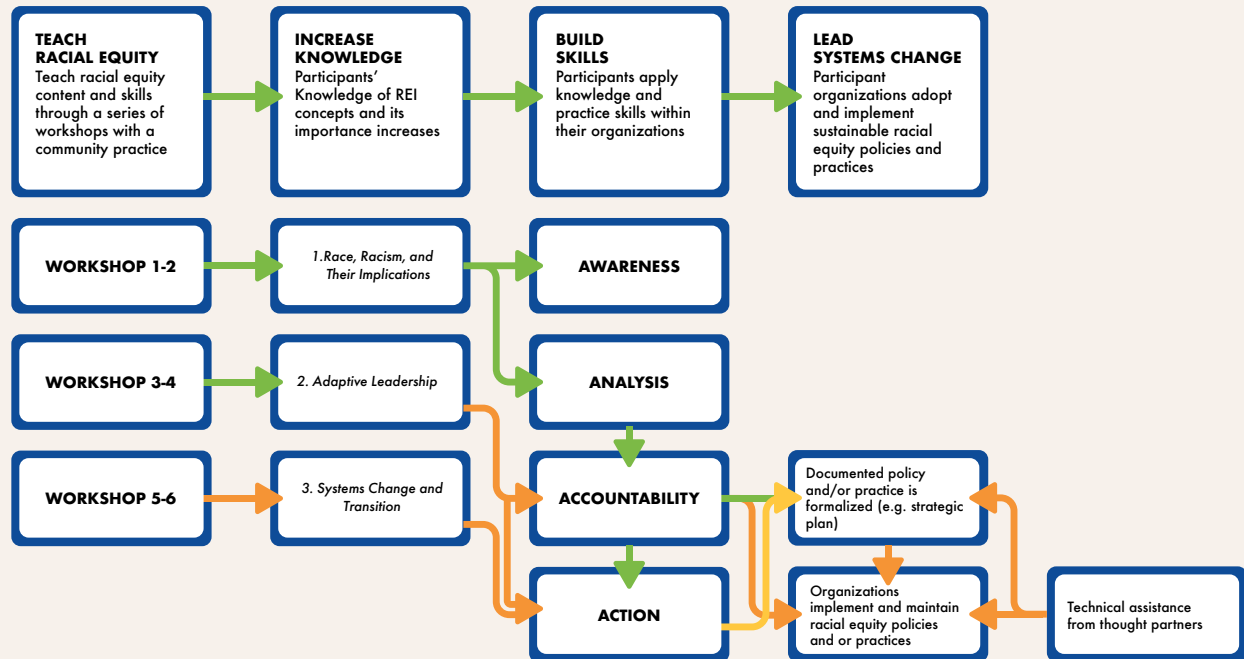
In the revised model below, “green lines” represent parts of the pathway where participants reported success. These were strongest between the workshops and the growth in individual knowledge, especially around personal identity, privilege, and understanding racism. There was also a successful subsequent connection (green line) between knowledge gained and increased individual self-awareness and analysis skills, as participants frequently reflected on and discussed these topics both during and after the program.

However, “orange lines” indicate where the pathway broke down. The transition from knowledge and skill-building to actual, sustained organizational or systems change was the weakest link. Many participants did not feel empowered or positioned to translate their learning into concrete policy or organizational transformation. Barriers included lack of leadership support, insufficient authority, and unclear implementation processes. As a result, while plans were sometimes formally or informally adopted (the yellow line connecting “Action” to “Documented Policy”), implementation was inconsistent, and many efforts stalled at symbolic gestures rather than leading to substantive, sustainable change. This breakdown was especially pronounced in areas requiring institutional authority, cross-departmental buy-in, or ongoing accountability mechanisms.

IN SUMMARY:

- **Outcomes Achieved** (green lines): Workshops > Knowledge-building on Race & Racism and Adaptive Leadership > Personal Awareness and Analysis skills
- **Outcomes Not Achieved** (orange lines): Systems Change & Transition Knowledge > Accountability and Action Skills > Policy implementation leading to sustained systems change

This shows that while the program effectively increased individual knowledge and reflection, translating that growth into meaningful, lasting organizational change remains a key challenge—especially without strong leadership and structural support.

FIGURE 7. LOGIC MODEL - REVISED

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECRUITMENT PHASE

1. Generate leadership buy-in before the program begins.
 - **Required:** Set clear expectations with leadership that a plan will be devised by program participants and it is expected that leadership will take time to consider the plan and help move it through channels.
 - **Encouraged:** Consider mandating that at least one member from executive leadership participates in the cohort.

WORKSHOP IMPLEMENTATION

2. Spend more time on group discussions and story sharing and less time on abstract lectures to encourage personal reflection.
3. Spend significantly more time on how to do systems planning and implementation at the organizational level.
 - Specific areas that need more attention include: feasible plan creation, navigation of organizational structures and systems, negotiation strategies, and procedural protocols for policy adoption and implementation
4. Thought Partners desired a replicable curriculum for technical concepts and frameworks, but wanted to be able to be adaptable to the knowledge and skill levels of each cohort.

THOUGHT PARTNER ROLES & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

5. Provide significantly more technical assistance alongside program participants as they make efforts to advocate for and push their plan into action. Deepen the role of thought partners in the plan implementation post-workshops, especially in navigating organizational structures and in following-up with implementation after formal adoption.
6. Thought Partners need clarification on what the extent of their role is. They were often unsure when they could intervene to manage conflict in the classroom, how much they could help with the plan creation itself, and what level of technical assistance they were able to provide.

COHORT CONTINUITY

7. Jurisdictional participants and thought partners agreed that there should be subsequent cohorts from each jurisdiction in order to build continuity and strengthen execution of the plans over time.
 - However, there is some concern about the cost of the program over multiple cohorts.