UPLC

Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative

UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE LESSONS LEARNED REPORT

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project and report would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication from the partnership forged in this work:

- Cortney Calixte
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- Anndelynn "Andi" Martin
- Kristina Vadas
- Kristi VanAudenhove

When this project began it started with a group of staff from the partnering agencies. People that were involved but have transition to other positions or agencies:

- Angela Blount
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- Kat Monusky
- Alyssa Murray
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INTRODUCTION

The Office of Family Violence at the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Victim Services Division at the Department of Criminal Justice Services, and the state coalition, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance came together to create a project that had hopes of transformative change. The vision, mission, goals, objectives, and structure were created through numerous hours of planning, processing, and practicing building connections to each other and in our partnership. Through this time well spent, the Undeserved Populations Learning Collaborative was born. Over the span of 5 years, this group challenged themselves and 40 of Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies to create change, stronger connections in their communities, trauma-informed practices, and culturally relevant services.

THE PARTNERSHIP

As a partnership, each agency had their official roles and responsibilities. VDSS[1] and DCJS[2] provided funding for this project and the VSDVAA[3] was tasked with providing coaching, technical assistance, and training to the participating community SDVAs[4].

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[1] Virginia Department of Social Services
[2] Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
[3] Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance
[4] Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies

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VISION

Mission

To support local domestic violence programs and sexual assault centers to become strong allies to underserved populations and to promote access to culturally responsive, comprehensive services.

Goals

REFLECTION ON INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BARRIERS

1. SDVAs will begin a continuous and evolving process of using internal reflection to inform organizational change aimed at reducing the internal and external barriers that block survivors from underserved populations from accessing services.
2. SDVAs will use the tools provided for immediate use and continued growth beyond the 18th month learning collaborative.
3. SDVAs will conduct reflection and change at all organizational and community levels.

ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

4. Domestic violence programs and sexual assault centers will integrate changes at all levels of the agency and will shift the organizational approach toward serving all survivors

   Examples:

   - Comprehend necessary changes
   - Mission
   - Hiring strategies
   - Input/voices of underserved populations

5. Domestic violence programs and sexual assault centers will integrate culturally responsive, trauma-informed practices into all programs and services

### ENGAGING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES/ STRATEGY BUILDING

6. Underserved populations are at the center, informing agency strategies.
7. Partnerships with underserved communities are an integral part of the process of reflection, transformation, and engagement.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the UPLC, learners will be able to:

1. Examine how layers of oppression and privilege impact survivors and agency staff
2. Examine how layers of oppression and privilege impact people's experience with violence and access to system-based remedies
3. Analyze how agency policies and practices may create barriers to services
4. Evaluate the extent to which agencies meet the needs of underserved populations
5. Apply agency decision-making processes that take into account the impact on underserved populations.
6. Build relationships with underserved populations and culturally specific organizations
7. Identify and allocate resources (people, time, funding, etc.) to support, and be in community with, underserved populations
8. Identify or develop effective strategies and services to meet the needs of underserved populations
9. Conduct periodic community needs assessments to gain an understanding of who is being underserved and the service gaps that exist in the community

Structure
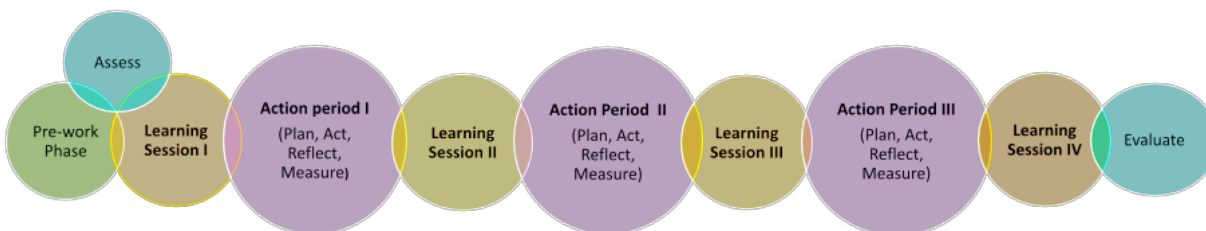
Pre-Work

The pre-work phase was an opportunity for teams to spend time working through a body of grounding materials (Appendix A) that set the foundational lessons to come throughout the project.

Pre-Assessment

The pre-assessment phase was an opportunity for agencies to use the assessment tool (Appendix B) created by the partnership to gauge where they fell on a spectrum of understanding, training, and focus pertaining to working with underserved populations. Completion of this assessment was followed up by a site-visit from the coaches where they

would discuss the results of the assessment with agency teams. These conversations included summary of the information and connecting follow-up questions related to the assessment.

LEARNING SESSIONS

The project was structured to provide opportunities for the cohort to gather in regional and statewide groups to learn topics that would deepen their understanding of internal, organizational, and community change. All gatherings were facilitated by the project coaches, local and or national subject area experts depending on better serving underserved populations (Appendix C).

ACTION PERIOD

Action periods lasted approximately 6-months and were a chance for agencies to try out suggested changes in internal, organizational, or community that would better serve their identified population focus. This period also included site visits, regional gatherings, and statewide learning sessions. Coaches would go on site visits with each agency to discuss their progress and to provide technical assistance. During the regional gatherings agencies would get a chance to dive into topics connected to their communities or broader issues connected to the project. They could also take this time to do their own learning across the agency. This could include sharing information with their whole staff or having discussions about how to bring lasting changes to their agencies.

EVALUATION

At the end of each cohort, the Action Alliance connected with an independent contractor to conduct an evaluation to measure learning, outcomes, experience, and the overall success of the collaborative (Appendix D-E).

REFLECTIONS

The following reflections are the result of a conversation between the remaining partnership members that structured and implemented the UPLC. As a three-agency partnership between VDSS, DCJS, and VSDVAA, we experienced this project as a collaborative group of individuals working together to create an experience that would build connection, be meaningful for local SDVAs across Virginia, and have a lasting positive impact for underserved survivors. This section includes the challenges, lessons learned, and celebrations from creating a cohort based 24-month project.

Main Challenges

COHORT 1

Turnover

The first cohort took place from July 2018-June 2020. Filled with possibility, the workgroup found themselves following each learning objective and goal meticulously. Color coded charts were created, meetings were set to cross-reference observations, and participating agencies were carefully tended to. As the workgroup and the coaches moved through each step of the planned upon structure the process was not without challenges.

The project format required two coaches to provide intensive technical assistance to the participating agency teams. Within the first six months of the project, we were down to one coach. Fortunately, we found that while the strain of sustaining the project with one full-time coach was short-lived, we were able to contract with a temporary coach. Eventually, we were able to hire a second full-time coach. Seemingly, turnover was noticeably a theme for this project. Over the remaining 18-months participating agency teams also experienced turnover. This created a challenge for the workgroup because we knew that the best results would require a stable and cohesive team to create change and move the work forward in agencies.

COHORT 2

Covid-19

As the first cohort closed out, we were in the beginning of a global pandemic. This was an event that the partnership could have never imagined. The final statewide gathering of cohort 1 was combined with the first statewide gathering for cohort 2. Every gathering up until this point was held in person. The first cohort had the pleasure of being in rooms where creativity and deep thinking took place. Agency teams were able to be fueled by the energy during the regional and statewide gatherings that always filled the room when they were able to come together. Cohort 2 did not have that same opportunity. Throughout the entirety of cohort 2 we met virtually for all gatherings and site visits. To be as diligent as we were in the first cohort, we attempted to do full day gatherings over Zoom and quickly realized and

received feedback that this was not the time to focus on what worked in the past. This moment provided a chance for the cohort to practice flexibility by shortening the gathering time and acknowledging the needs of the collective.

Turnover

Similarly, to cohort 1, this cohort experienced an unusual amount of turnover. The pandemic brought on a different type of burnout that would impact advocates in ways that we have not seen before. Many site visits would provide new information about team members that were no longer at the agency or news of current staff members getting brought on to their agency UPLC team. While we were happy to hear that agencies were invested in meeting the number requirements for participation, there was always the concern of ongoing information loss. The staff that started at the beginning of the cohort learned so much from the resources and gatherings they were able to attend. When they left, so did the collective knowledge that was shared within their 2–4-person agency team. This was just another challenge that the partnership made exceptions for because turnover was a widespread issue.

SHARED CHALLENGES

Political and economic environment

The summer of 2020 we found ourselves in middle of a global pandemic and the murder of George Floyd was another boiling point in this nation's history. Both events were politically charged and created an impact on the project. A large component of this project centered around racial justice and collective change. The events of the time influenced the types of conversations agency teams had and the speed in which teams reached deeper conclusions about the importance of community care and racial justice.

Economically, the pandemic put a strain on agencies. Both cohorts found themselves having to deal with the possibility of reduced funding. In some cases, the possibility was a reality. There were agencies that experienced state and federal funding cuts, while in some cases local fundraising dried up because of the stand they took against racial injustice. There was some relief when the federal government offered forgivable paycheck protection program loans and personal protective equipment funds, but those funds were for specific purposes and did not solve the turnover and exhaustion that was caused when battling a pandemic while trying to sustain staff wellbeing.

Lessons Learned

- It is hard to evaluate so many moving pieces and capture the nuances that were in between the formal and informal parts of the project.
- It was a challenge to decipher what impacted the cohorts the most. During 2020 especially, there were racial reckonings challenging the consciousness of many and UPLC content. These were moments of parallel learning, and it was hard to tell if teams leaned in and learned more because of the political environment or the intensity of the project.
- In hindsight, smaller cohorts of 10 instead of 20 agencies may have been more manageable for the two coaches. They were spread thin at times.
- Pausing during the height of the pandemic could have been more effective than relaxing some of the planned structural parts of the project.
- The original structure of the project called for 18-months but it was extended to provide additional support to agencies with implementing community changes. This extension may not have been needed and could have created too much spaciousness. Alternatively for cohort 2, the duration may have added extra strain on agencies due to the mental and emotional impact of the pandemic.
- It is disappointing that there is no funding available to continue to support agencies through intensive training and TA. The great work agencies are doing in their workspaces and communities need a pathway to sustaining this important work.
- Making deeper relationships in communities, changing organizational structures and practices, also changing agency names and agency missions were just a few of the huge actions agencies made because of this project. That commitment should be acknowledged and celebrated.
- The coalition was changed in this process as well. This project engaged SDVA leadership in a more inclusive and intentional way. It shifted conversations towards focusing more on underserved communities and the importance of making that a sustainable focus.
- Be mindful of the emotional and mental energy social justice focused projects takes on staff with marginalized identities. Challenging ideologies that do not see the value in a person's identity can weigh heavily on those doing this work. Make space for rest and support.

State Agency Focus

- Adding state agencies to the second cohort did not create a cohesive learning environment. Compared to local agencies choosing specific underserved populations to focus on in their communities, state agencies did not have that same flexibility. While there was some crossover in themes and pathways to change, most of the training and TA opportunities were focused on the types of changes that were more feasible when working directly with individuals vs. vendors or full departments.

- The size of state governmental agencies is also a barrier to widespread change. Although incremental change is possible within departments, the types of changes this project was hoping for would have needed more support and a multi-department approach.

Keeping the Energy

- The excitement of a new project created a wonderful environment to foster an ambitious meeting schedule. Having all partners stay fully engaged was a lofty goal, especially when a project of this size was only a percentage of the members of the partnership's individual workloads.
- We tried to be realistic about the capacity for steering. Meaningful check-ins can be informative and spacious. This can look like creating agendas that allow for both maintaining connections and decision-making.
- It is important to acknowledge that sometimes connection, catching-up, and relationship building are just as valuable to partnership as the decisions that move the project forward.
- Valuing the strengths that each partner has is key. Yes, each partner is connected to an agency and resources but the input that everyone contributes from their lived experience is the glue and energy that keeps a project like this going. Make space for that.

Offerings to the Field

- Let people know what you are doing, who you are working with, and how you are making changes. Change that is inclusive and meaningful is infectious. We need more of this.
- Have difficult conversations. Understand why they are important to have.
- "Asking agencies to do work differently requires more than funding for just one person working on it." Collaborate with other funders to support projects like this.
- This work is not "extra" it is a "core part of the work". This takes dedicated resources to make this work and stick.
- These types of projects take a lot of energy. Expect for energy and focus to fluctuate and plan for flexibility.

Celebrations

Cohorts 1 and 2

Outside of our usual funder/agency relationship we were able to form a closer understanding of how partnerships like this can work. We mostly made decisions as a group; even when the group got smaller, or the work was moving on auto-pilot. We spent so much

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time creating, thinking, processing, and working together that at times the money that often creates awkward power dynamics that shut down momentum was hard to find. It felt like a partnership and all three of our agencies brought equal perspectives.

Major challenges aside, this was a success! Agencies (and the partnership) learned a lot through this process. Overall, the project met its outcomes. Agencies made meaningful changes to their programs, identified service barriers, and challenged practices that existed for many years. Because of this project, all entities involved have been changed and built another lens to see the work through.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Find ways for state coalitions and funders to meaningfully partner on projects that build capacity of the sexual and intimate partner violence field to better serve underserved communities.
2. Fund projects that incorporate ongoing support for SDVAs to do this work.
3. Evaluate both qualitative and quantitative aspects of your projects.
4. It is okay to slow down and pivot. Changing direction when the environment calls for it is so important to project sustainability.
5. Always take turnover into consideration and think about what needs to take place if there is information loss because of staff attrition. This is common in non-profit work. When thinking about creating a project that requires buy-in from staff, make sure you are thinking about "what happens if staff leaves" and "where should this information stay".
6. Keep track of the resources you share. You never know when they will come in handy for other projects or technical assistance (Appendix F)
7. Weave trauma informed, social justice, and culturally sensitive work into the fabric of your organization and planning. Ask yourself who is going to benefit, are they involved in the process, and will it be safe.

APPENDICES

Pre-work/Groundwork- **Appendix A**

Pre-Assessment- **Appendix B**

Presenter List and Presentations- **Appendix C**

Cohort 1 Evaluation- **Appendix D**

Cohort 2 Evaluation- **Appendix E**

Resource Document Google Folder Link- **Appendix F**

UPLC Groundwork

Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative:
Enhancing Virginia's Sexual and Domestic Violence Programming

The Purpose of Groundwork

Agencies participating in the Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative (UPLC) will utilize the Groundwork time to become acquainted with the Change Package and prepare to achieve the goals of the project. Agencies will also complete the Organizational Assessment to be best prepared for the first Statewide Gathering.

Note: Groundwork including implicit bias tests, readings, videos and storyboard are to be completed by UPLC team members. The Organizational Assessment, however, is to be completed by all SDVA staff. Further information about the Organizational Assessment will be provided in the upcoming days.

Instructions

The UPLC includes topics of discussion that some may find difficult to process. Considering this, we encourage your team to individually take the implicit bias tests & reflect on the readings and videos below and then come together as a team to meet, discuss and answer the discussion questions.

Approximate amount of time it will take to do Groundwork

- The Groundwork implicit bias tests, readings, videos and discussion questions take approximately 7 hours to complete.
- The Organizational Assessment should be completed by each staff member at your agency. Expect the Survey Monkey link with further instructions in the upcoming days.
- The Groundwork Storyboard Activity may take 1-2 hours. Don't be afraid to be creative!

Implicit Bias Tests

- **https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html**
- choose 2-3 tests

Were any of your results surprising? If so, why?
What event(s) in your life do you think influenced your responses?

Readings

Note: the UPLC does not necessarily endorse the content of these readings and videos but we do consider this selection useful for reflection and preparation.
Note: Readings & Videos are in alphabetical order - not in order of importance.

- Ableism: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rachel-cohenrottenberg/doing-social-justice-thou_b_5476271.html
- Change Package: Review, keep, and reference Change Package throughout the project. (separate document)
- Cultural Humility: http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2013/08/cultural-humility.aspx
- How Much Discrimination do Muslims Face in America?: https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/07/american-muslims-trump/534879/
- Language Discrimination: https://makingnoiseandhearingthings.com/2016/04/18/what-is-linguistic-discrimination/
- LGBTQ reading: https://www.apatraumadivision.org/files/56.pdf
- Management Resource: Engaging in Culturally Responsive Leadership via WCSAP http://www.wcsap.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resources_publications/Culturally_Responsive_Leadership_03_2017.pdf
- McIntosh's Invisible Knapsack: http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf
- Young People and Dating Abuse Statistics: http://www.breakthecycle.org/sites/default/files/Dating%20Statistics%20Fact%20Sheet_National_updated%2012.4.2017.pdf

Videos

- Crossroads Definition of Racism: *(Approx. 6 minutes)* https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=_P4tct7SYKQ

- Epigenetics: *(Approx. 10 minutes)*
  https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=epigenetics&&view=detail&mid=189839F1877694DB8452189839F1877694DB8452&&FORM=VRDGAR
- Implicit Bias Ted talk: *(Approx. 18 minutes)*
- https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them
- MTV Documentary "White People": *(Approx. 41 minutes)*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zjj1PmJcRM
- Refugee Mental Health Matters: *(Approx. 20 minutes)*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wib9SFFsZvc
- Should all Native American Mascots be banned: *(Approx. 5 minutes)*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jfjp-a_RX24&feature=youtu.be
- The Danger of a Single Story: *(Approx. 19 minutes)*
  https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story
- The Urgency of Intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw: *(Approx. 19 minutes)*
  https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality

Guided Discussion Questions

Please work through each resource above. Within your UPLC team, please discuss the videos and readings. The questions below can help guide the discussion, however, feel free to allow the conversations to evolve organically.

1) How do you think the readings and videos will connect to your work to identify underserved populations?

2) Were there concepts in the readings and videos that challenged you? If so, which concepts? How were you challenged?

3) Were there concepts in the readings and videos that you disagreed with? If so, which concepts and what did you disagree with?

4) How do words impact culture/environment in ways that allow and/or disallow oppression and violence?

5) What kind of barriers are in place in your community to Underserved Populations? Spoken and unspoken?

Virtual Introductions via Google Slides

Due to the impact of COVID-19, Cohort 2 has not had the opportunity to meet each other in person yet. We would like to create a virtual space where we can begin to learn more about each other! This project will allow each UPLC team to showcase a bit about their agency and each team member.

Creating Your Team Name and Motto	Designing Your Virtual Introductions
Building your Core Team is critical to the success of this work. We think that developing a team name and a short team motto will help you discuss and define your team and goals in a creative, fun and (hopefully) light-hearted way. It will also help you communicate your identity to the UPLC faculty and to other teams. Keep in mind that these names and mottos will be throughout the Collaborative**!**	Recommended Outline: A) There should be a maximum of five (5) slides for your team. One slide to introduce your agency, and one slide for each of your team members. B) On the first slide, please include your: official agency name, city, UPLC team name, and team motto. C) On your individual slides, please include: your name, a photo, your position at the agency, and one fun/interesting fact about yourself. If you are not comfortable sharing a photo of yourself, please use one of something that brings you joy! C) Help us know your team and your strengths! Be creative! What qualities and characteristics of your team and members make you unique?

Our Agency Uses a Social Justice Framework in the development, delivery and evaluation of services and programs to ensure culturally-responsive and trauma-informed services and programs to our community.

Staff receive ongoing training and support to understand equity and social justice principles in their work. Training and discussions include the topics of privilege, power, culture and oppression.

1	2	3	4	5
We have offered most staff the opportunity to receive training on culturally competent service delivery.		We ensure that all staff receive training on power, privilege, culture and oppression as part of their orientation/basic training.		We consistently ensure that all staff receive annual training on equity and social justice principles. Power, privilege, cultural humility and oppression are regular topics of discussion.

Formal Agency Leaders (Executive Director + Board of Directors in stand-alone non-profits, Program Director + Unit Supervisor or Director in umbrella agencies) receive ongoing training and support to understand equity and social justice principles in their work. Training and discussions include the topics of privilege, power, culture and oppression.

1	2	3	4	5
Formal Leaders have received basic training on applying a social justice framework to ending sdv.		We ensure that all Leaders receive training on power, privilege, culture and oppression as part of their orientation/basic training.		Leaders receive annual training on equity and social justice principles. Power, privilege, cultural humility and oppression are regular topics of discussion.

The agency mission and values reflect a social justice approach to addressing sexual and/or domestic violence.

1	2	3	4	5
Our mission and values focus on working with individual survivors as well as with systems and with the community.		Our mission and values describe the ways in which we seek to address root causes of sexual and domestic violence in our programs and services.		Our mission and values make it clear that sexual/domestic violence is a social problem that requires social justice solutions.

Our agency commitment to Social Justice is reflected within key policy documents (e.g. job descriptions, strategic plan) and practice protocols (e.g. community education, project evaluations).

1	2	3	4	5
We have clear commitments to anti-discrimination in employment and services policy. Our practices include framing sexual/domestic violence as a social problem.		Our job descriptions, strategic plan and other policy documents include specific activities that promote social justice. Our practices have begun to articulate how we promote gender justice, racial justice, and other forms of social justice in our community.		We have adopted guidelines (or checklists, ethical screens etc.) that help us to draft key policy documents and practice protocols which advance gender justice, racial justice and other forms of social justice and reduce the potential for unintended harm to underserved populations.

Our Agency has identified 3-tier populations and understands what it means to be an underserved community in our region.

Staff uses formal and informal techniques to identify 3-tier populations and understand what it means to be underserved in their area.

1	2	3	4	5
We regularly compare census data to our services and program participant data to determine which demographic groups may be underserved by our agency.		In addition to analyzing census, services and program demographic data, we conduct regular services and program evaluations to determine how well we are meeting diverse needs.		We engage in periodic community needs assessments that include interactive techniques (e.g. focus groups, interviews) with community members as well as reviews of demographic, survey and evaluation data, to gain a meaningful understanding of 3-tier populations and needs in our community.

How has our agency identified those populations that are currently unserved, underserved and/or inadequately served? Which populations have you identified?

Staff understands what it means to be a part of a 3-tier population in their service area and has identified the specific needs of these communities.

1	2	3	4	5
We have explored how we can reduce barriers to our services and programs and reach out to the populations that we have identified as underserved.		For the populations that we have identified as 3-Tier in our community, we have begun to develop an appreciation for strengths and assets within the communities as well as barriers to services across our community.		We are engaging with 3-Tier populations in our community to build on their community strengths and assets as tools for removing (or going around) barriers to justice and equity in our shared community.

Our Agency engages in ongoing reflection about our policies and practices in order to assess the impact of our programs and services on underserved populations in our community.

We have identified diverse external stakeholder representing underserved communities as partners in our work.

1	2	3	4	5
We can identify at least one key contact person for each of the primary underserved populations in our community.		We can identify multiple individuals, organizations and/or resources connected to 3-Tier		In addition to being aware of a wide array of partners and resources, we have a number of strong relationships with

		populations in our community.		individuals and organizations connected to 3-Tier populations in our communities.

We seek out and listen to the voices of people representing underserved populations in our community.

1	2	3	4	5
We have conducted a survey or completed a needs assessment that included input from representatives of underserved communities.		We regularly consult with allied organizations representing underserved communities about community needs and our services and programs.		We include listening sessions or focus groups within underserved communities in the process for developing and evaluating our services and programs.

We review our practices and decisions about daily delivery of services and programs to achieve positive, culturally responsive and trauma-informed outcomes for all people.

1	2	3	4	5
We meet at least monthly to reflect on how our daily work has been benefiting or harming survivors from 3-Tier populations.		Prior to making significant decisions about the direction of services or programs, we come together to consider how we can best achieve positive, culturally responsive and trauma-informed outcomes for survivors from 3-Tier populations.		We have incorporated practices that require daily consideration of the impact of decisions on 3-Tier populations and strive to make consistent decisions that achieve positive, culturally responsive and trauma-informed outcomes for all people.

Describe how you determine necessary changes to daily practices that you believe are having an adverse impact on a 3-Tier community?

Our Agency is consistently building and maintaining relationships with community based organizations that serve identified 3-Tier Populations.

We nurture mutually beneficial relationships with 3-Tier communities.

1	2	3	4	5
We have identified community-based organizations with whom we would like to build stronger relationships.		We collaborate with community-based organizations serving 3-Tier populations within our community (e.g. cross training of staff, shared participation in projects).		We work in partnership with formal and informal organizations within 3-Tier communities to ensure strong community relationships and to be a part of achieving social justice with those communities.

Staff, board members, and volunteers are representative of the 3-Tier populations living in our community.

1	2	3	4	5
Our criteria for recruiting staff, board members, and		We have established a priority for our staff, board		Our staff, board members, and volunteers are

volunteers does not currently include seeking representation from 3-Tier populations in our community.		members and volunteers to be reflective of the community we serve and we are actively seeking to incorporate additional community representatives to reach that goal.		reflective of 3-tier populations and we constantly examine changes to area demographics to remain inclusive and reflective of our service area.

Our Agency prioritizes the provision of culturally-relevant services and outreach to underserved populations in our community.

Staff are trained and supported to engage in the consistent delivery of trauma-informed services to survivors, adapting each of the 6 elements to the unique identity and needs of survivors. (The 6 elements: 1-safety, 2-trustworthiness and transparency, 3-peer support, 4-collaboration and mutuality, 5-empowerment + voice + choice, 6-cultural and historical issues of power and privilege)

1	2	3	4	5
All staff and volunteers receive basic training on trauma-informed advocacy.		Our staff can describe the application of each of the 6 elements of trauma-informed advocacy.		Our staff can describe the application of each of the 6 elements of trauma-informed advocacy, are under the supervision of a manager with extensive training and experience with the delivery of trauma-informed services, and work in an

				environment that promotes health and wellness.

Our agency provides services and programs that are physically and psychologically accessible to people of color, LGBTQI people, low-income people, people of all ages, and people with disabilities.

1	2	3	4	5
We have taken identifiable steps to create a welcoming office and/or shelter environment.		We have worked with diverse community members and survivors to make our space, services and programs more accessible to diverse survivors. We have made some of our resources available in at least one language other than English		The office(s) and shelter have been clearly designed to be trauma informed and welcoming to diverse people; staff routinely provide services in locations other than the office/shelter, and are flexible about offering evening and weekend hours; services are available and regularly delivered in languages other than English; and agency materials are available in multiple languages, written in basic language that is easy to understand, and encourages survivors to ask for what they need.

We develop, deliver and evaluate services and programs in collaboration with diverse community members and survivors who represent many cultural beliefs, practices and community norms.

1	2	3	4	5
Services and programs are developed with input from the diverse staff and volunteers in our agency.		Services and programs are developed and delivered with input from diverse staff, volunteers and community partner organizations.		Services and programs are developed and delivered—and evaluated—with meaningful input from diverse community members who represent those who will be impacted by the services and programs.

We reach out and let survivors know that our agency is committed to working with diverse communities.

1	2	3	4	5
We engage in outreach that includes media, agency publications, and booths at community events.		We conduct outreach in diverse communities and take steps to make media and print materials available for specific populations (for example, low literacy survivors, Spanish-speaking survivors).		We work with diverse communities to plan and conduct effective outreach in multiple formats and languages. We tailor our messaging about services and programs to specific communities.

Agency staff and volunteers recognize culture as a strength and a resource for survivors, are trained to identify and understand culture as an intersectional and fluid part of a survivor's identity, and are encouraged to maintain an awareness of their own cultural biases.

1	2	3	4	5
Our staff and volunteers receive basic training on cultural competency.		Our staff and volunteers have a solid understanding of cultural identity and intersectionality and how that impacts the experiences of survivors.		Our agency is engaged in ongoing and transparent discussions about power and privilege, racism and other forms of oppression and marginalization, intersectionality, and the application of these concepts to effective, trauma-informed and strengths-based services.

APPENDIX C- UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE PRESENTERS AND POWERPOINTS

Cohort 1

- Statewide 1: David Campt, Tracy Wright
- Regional 1: Tiffany Turner-Allen
- Statewide 2: Nan Stoops, Alexis Flanagan
- Regional 2: Brooke Taylor & Katie Moffitt
- Statewide 3: Flor Lopez Trejo, Paola Henriquez, LaTanya Wall, Rebecca (Ro) Keel
- Statewide Capstone

Cohort 2

- Regional 1: Staff
- Statewide 2: Ebony Walden, Matthew Freeman
- Regional 2: Staff
- Statewide 3: Tracy Wright, Rebecca (Ro) Keel
- Regionals 3: Staff
- Statewide 4: Jackie R. Brock, Rise for Youth
- Regional 4: Staff
- Statewide Capstone

EVALUATION REPORT: COHORT 1 2018-2020

UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE:

ENHANCING VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMMING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would especially like to thank the members of Learning Collaborative teams from this first cohort. Together, we are building a community of practice to explore access and equity in the movement to end sexual and intimate partner violence across Virginia. We applaud your willingness to learn with us and we look forward to seeing the impacts of your growth.

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June 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative (UPLC) is a multi-year initiative offered by the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, the Virginia Department of Social Services, and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Through extensive training and technical assistance (TA) to a cohort of self-selected sexual and domestic violence agencies (SDVAs), UPLC supports organizations in their work to become strong allies to underserved populations and promote access to culturally-responsive, comprehensive services. The program has three overarching goals:

> **Goal 1: Reflection on internal and external barriers to SV/DV services for underserved populations;**
> **Goal 2: Organizational transformation to incorporate culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed practices; and**
> **Goal 3: Engagement with underserved communities in developing strategies for change**.

While these goals guided the evaluation of pertinent change within the first cohort of participating SDVAs, this evaluation also sought to **assess the statewide impact** of the UPLC as well as **endorse changes** to the program.

Three methods were used to develop a multi-modal, comprehensive assessment. Evaluators implemented two surveys, one for staff participating in the UPLC cohort and one for the UPLC steering committee. They also conducted semi-structured interviews with executive directors participating in the cohort, non-director cohort participants, and Action Alliance staff who work directly with the program. The resultant data revealed both programmatic successes and areas of improvement related to the goals above.

Across metrics, the UPLC appears to be effective in satisfying its first and third goals, Mixed results were found regarding the second goal of organizational transformation; while survey participants validated substantial organizational change, interviewees did not. Despite this inconsistency, results remain promising. Additionally, findings suggest a marginal statewide impact as a result of the UPLC; however, these findings should be taken with caution, as only the first cohort of this program was assessed. Future evaluations should aim to examine these metrics when more data has been collected.

Lastly, participants suggested several pertinent changes to the UPLC related to stakeholder involvement and program organization. In line with these suggestions, evaluators offer the following recommendations to improve the experience for future cohorts:

- **Continue offering trainings focused on knowledge, skills, and attitudes, with the addition of nuanced technical assistance on navigating community contexts.**
- **Increase involvement of executive directors and board members in the UPLC cohort to support organizational change.**
- **Cultivate relationships between cohort members and culturally-specific organizations by increasing the scope of training opportunities.**

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A joint project between the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), and the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Action Alliance), the UPLC creates a framework for a community of practice focused on supporting marginalized populations through ongoing learning, reflection, and implementing evidence-based approaches. This collaborative model focuses on creating collective knowledge among coaches, participants, and subject matter experts, and centers engagement with underserved populations as critical to shifting organizational culture.

At the beginning of the program period, the Action Alliance invited SDVAs to apply to join the cohort. Prospective SDVAs were asked to create a UPLC team of two to four people who would consistently participate in program activities. Per instructions in the request for applications, the team had to include the executive director (or director of SV/DV services in an umbrella agency), and it was encouraged that the team include staff with diverse backgrounds who have demonstrated leadership in some way. Each active agency received a quarterly stipend to support participation and travel throughout the program period. While the UPLC steering committee approved 20 agencies to participate in the inaugural cohort in the summer of 2018, 16 agencies participated for the full program period, including the extension. Their names and the localities they work with are represented below:

- Bristol Crisis Center
- Clinch Valley Community Action
- Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- First Step: A Response to Domestic Violence
- Franklin County Family Resource Center
- Hanover Safe Place
- Haven of the Dan River Region
- Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington
- Project Hope at Thrive Virginia
- Project Horizon
- Rappahannock Council Against Sexual Assault
- Sexual Assault Resource Agency
- The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors
- Total Action for Progress - Domestic Violence Services
- Transitions Family Violence Services
- YWCA of Central Virginia

SERVICE AREA OF INAUGURAL COHORT OF UPLC
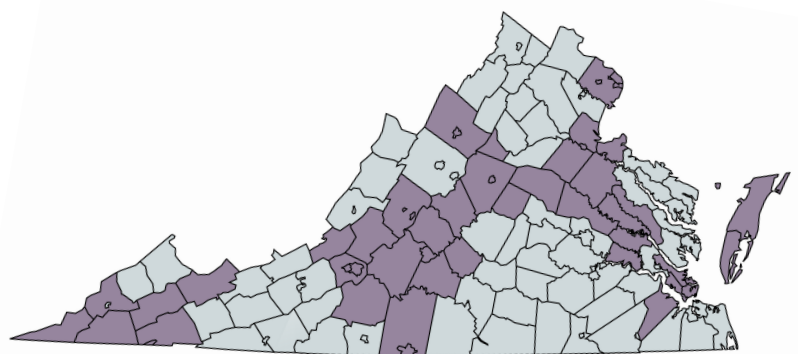
■ locality served by SDVAs in cohort

Program activities included an initial assessment of organizational readiness to identify a target underserved population, and determine agencies' capacities to implement evidence-based practices related to advocacy to this community. Three two-day learning sessions were held throughout each year to provide UPLC agencies with dedicated time to process key changes to better serve target underserved populations, discuss methods for overcoming obstacles to change, and learn from fellow agencies in the cohort.

FORMAT FOR THE LEARNING COLLABORATIVE:

Assess

Pre-work Phase

Learning Session I

Action period I (Plan, Act, Reflect, Measure)

Learning Session II

Action Period II (Plan, Act, Reflect, Measure)

Learning Session III

Action Period III (Plan, Act, Reflect, Measure)

Evaluate
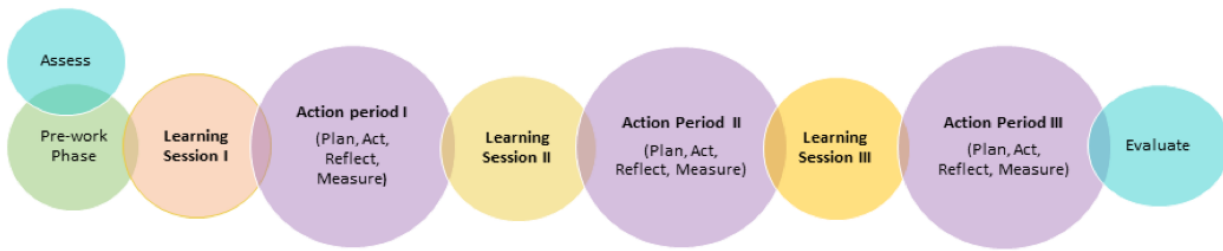
18 - 24 Months

Following each learning session, participants took part in mandatory regional gatherings, in which agencies discussed successes and challenges using a tool called "Plan, Act, Reflect, and Measure" (PARM). This tool allowed participants to quickly process ideas and facilitated fruitful discussions among cohort agencies. In addition, UPLC coaches provided on-site and virtual technical assistance to cohort agencies. During TA sessions, coaches conducted organizational assessments to track progress. Importantly, participants were encouraged to ask for as much assistance as they needed to make changes in their organizations. Throughout the completion of these activities, the UPLC was evaluated using organizational metrics to quantify progress. This report serves as the final, most extensive evaluation of the program efficacy.

PROGRAM GOALS

Three main goals guide program activities:

1. REFLECTION ON BARRIERS TO SERVICE

This first goal relates to agencies' abilities to use internal reflection to inform organizational change related to barriers (i.e., internal and external) of clients seeking services.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The second goal details agencies' ability to incorporate culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed practices into all programs and services. This includes integrated changes at all levels of the agency.

3. ENGAGING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN STRATEGY BUILDING

This third goal relates to agencies' ability to center underserved populations in their community outreach, primarily through the development and cultivation of partnerships with targeted underserved communities.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation uses the previously mentioned goals and accompanying evaluation questions (i.e.,EQ1 – EQ3) as its basis for analysis. Additionally, two supplemental questions were crafted to examine the statewide impact of the UPLC (i.e., SQ1) and document suggested changes by participants (i.e., SQ2). While not explicit goals of the program, both statewide impact and changes for future cohorts are instrumental for the development of this program. The evaluation sought to answer the following primary and supplemental questions:

EQ1 Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies increased reflection on the internal and external barriers influencing underserved clients' ability to seek services at their organizations?
(Goal 1: Reflection on Internal and External Barriers)

EQ2 Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies incorporated more culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed organizational practices?
(Goal 2: Organizational Transformation)

EQ3 Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies developed and nurtured partnerships with underserved communities as an integral part of their process of reflection, transformation, and engagement?
(Goal 3: Engaging Underserved Communities/Strategic Building)

SQ1 What has been the statewide impact of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative?
(Supplemental Goal 1)

SQ2 What changes would you make to the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative?
(Supplemental Goal 2)

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Three main methods were used to provide a multi-modal, comprehensive assessment of change: a survey of SDVA staff participating in the first cohort, a survey of UPLC steering committee members, and semi-structured interviews with a variety of respondents. Details are available on the next page.

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

All members of UPLC teams at participating SDVAs completed a 32-item pre-test assessment, which asked questions about participant demographics, training needs, and alignment of organizational policies and practices with social justice principles. Questions also assessed comfort providing services to, and advocating on behalf of, underserved populations.

A conceptual replication of the initial UPLC assessment was developed by the evaluators in order to more deeply and intentionally examine each research question. The survey included more open-ended, qualitative questions to allow for more nuance in responses. All items were approved by UPLC staff at the Action Alliance prior to distribution. This survey was administered online via Qualtrics at the end of the UPLC program. Demographic results show that respondents were 35 sexual and domestic violence advocates who represented 17 different agencies. The majority of participants were members of the UPLC team at their organization (n = 34, 97.1%), were full-time employees (n = 35, 100%), and had been in the SDV field for 4-10 (37.1%) or 11 or more years (28.6%). Participants' work mainly focused on community engagement, advocacy, and crisis intervention.

SURVEY: UPLC STEERING COMMITTEE

An 8-item mixed-method survey was administered online via Qualtrics. Participants were steering committee members, consisting of of representatives from the Action Alliance, VDSS, and DCJS who were instrumental in the creation and implementation of the UPLC. To examine EQ1, EQ2, and EQ3, participants were asked to respond to both single-item quantitative and qualitative questions. In using two methods, a broader, deeper perspective of responses were gathered. Additionally, qualitative responses were collected to examine the UPLC program's statewide impact (i.e., SQ1) and gather any suggestions for changes in the future (i.e., SQ2).

INTERVIEWS: COHORT DIRECTORS, COHORT STAFF, ACTION ALLIANCE UPLC STAFF

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 1) cohort agencies' executive directors, 2) other UPLC cohort members, and 3) Action Alliance UPLC staff. It was essential to the current evaluation that a variety of voices be present. These interviews were conducted via Zoom and lasted approximately 40-minutes. A script developed by evaluators included questions regarding EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, and SQ2. These interviews were audio-recorded and detailed notes were taken by evaluators. To maintain confidentiality, pertinent themes were extrapolated from all interview data, as opposed to separating data by participant role. Demographic results revealed that participants were four executive directors, four non-director, UPLC cohort members, and two Action Alliance UPLC staff members.

RESULTS: REFLECTION ON BARRIERS TO SERVICE

[EQ1] Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies increased reflection of the internal and external barriers influencing underserved clients' ability to seek services at their organizations?

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

Results revealed that **89.7% of respondents reported a change in efforts to address internal (i.e., organizational) barriers of underserved clients as a result of the UPLC.** Tactics and strategies used to address internal barriers include: increasing availability of improved training opportunities for staff; having organizational conversations about social justice topics, such as privilege, power, and oppression; and increasing reflection of biases and privileges.

Additionally, **qualitative responses alluded to the importance of training and discussions as a mechanism for an increase in acknowledgment of internal barriers for underserved clients.** When assessing the efficacy of training, results suggest that the majority of respondents believed that all staff at cohort agencies had received moderately more training (30.3%) or considerably more training (33.3%) as a result of the program. Of these training opportunities, almost all participants (97.1%) reported that instruction centered on social justice principles, such as privilege, power, culture, and oppression. To examine a potential change in knowledge of social justice principles—power, privilege oppression, cultural humility, safety planning, and empowerment—participants retroactively reported their knowledge levels both before and after participating in the program. **Findings suggest that for each topic, more respondents reported feeling knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable about social justice principles after participation in the UPLC.** In fact, only one participant reported not feeling knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable about these topics at the end of the program.

This shift was not limited to internal barriers. Results suggest that **81.5% of participants reported a change in efforts to address external (i.e., community-and societal-level) barriers to service for underserved clients as a result of the program.** Respondents stated that they addressed barriers through more intentional collaboration with new and existing community partners; attending more culturally-specific outreach events (e.g.,LGBTQ+ Pride or Latinx Heritage Month celebrations); expansion of services for language access needs (e.g., employing Spanish-English interpreters); and targeted outreach to underserved populations (e.g., translated brochures).

Surveys were also collected from steering committee members to examine perceived changes in reflection associated with barriers to underserved clients seeking service. Results revealed that **all participants (n=4) believed the UPLC program to be very effective in facilitating a positive change in the reflection of barriers for underserved populations.** Additionally, respondents commented that the program has "planted seeds of change" in the participating agencies, which stem from the UPLC programming and its capacity to lead agencies to think critically about the work they do with underserved populations. Another participant reported that this increase in reflection, among other UPLC activities, "has the ability to transform the response to violence within [Virginia's] communities."

**INTERVIEWS:
COHORT
DIRECTORS,
COHORT STAFF,
ACTION ALLIANCE
UPLC STAFF**

Interview data yielded one main theme: challenging biases. This theme detailed the ways in which the UPLC has caused participants to personally "look inward" and think more deeply about barriers to services of underserved clients. Notably, every interviewee (n = 8) reported that their agency had increased their reflection of underserved client barriers. However, they attributed this reflection to the program's ability to "force cohort members to combat their biases." In particular, **respondents expressed that training opportunities and technical assistance on topics such as racism, cultural humility, and power led them to share their new knowledge with fellow staff members. This, in turn, helped their broader agency think more critically about client barriers.** One participant stated:

> [The UPLC program] brings to light some of the issues that people do not want to think about. I was honestly defensive when we first started. I didn't think I had any biases or was racist. This program forced me to look at where we are lacking inside our agency and how we can better help in the community. […] Because of this program, I have a better idea of where both I, and we, as an organization, need to put the work to reach [their target population].

Another participant shared,

> I realize I can never understand everything, but this program has helped me to better understand what clients go through. I mean, I knew before, but [long pause] I guess I didn't really know before

Similarly, several respondents reported that the UPLC program aided them in learning how to have "more honest," difficult conversations within their staff about internal and external barriers to services for clients. An interviewee commented that "it's hard to have these conversations, but in addressing our biases, we can better help break down all those barriers for our clients. It's all worth it in the end."

RESULTS: ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

[EQ2] Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies incorporated more culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed organizational practices?

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

When examining data connected to EQ2, results revealed that **61.8% of participants worked at an agency that had amended key policy documents or practice protocols since the beginning of the UPLC .** Examples of amended policy documents included mission statements, visions, strategic plans, and agency logos, while updated practice protocols included diversity/inclusion policies, shelter and non-shelter intake documents, educational materials, and agency brochures. Of these respondents, **the majority reported that their organizations had incorporated either gender justice (n = 18) or racial justice (n = 15) components into their policy documents and practice protocols.** Among those who reported that their agency's organizational documents had not been amended since the beginning of the UPLC program, participants most often attributed this to a lack of buy-in from key stakeholders.

The survey also assessed perceived changes in another key practice: advocacy services. The majority of respondents (86.2%) reported that their organizations had built the capacity to advocate for underserved populations as a result of the UPLC. For those who did not report a change, they attributed the lack thereof to an absence of buy-in from key stakeholders and high turnover in their organizations. Further, respondents were also asked about their level of comfort regarding providing advocacy services to specific populations (e.g., those with limited English proficiency, people living in rural communities, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, low-income individuals, older adults, and youth) before and since participating in the UPLC. Findings suggest that for each topic, more participants reported feeling comfortable or extremely comfortable working with these communities after participation in the program.

SURVEY: UPLC STEERING COMMITTEE

Results revealed that participants (n = 4) believed the UPLC program to be either moderately effective (50%) or very effective (50%) in helping agencies change their organizational practices. Respondents also commented that while the UPLC program has "started new conversations about services to underserved populations," this change has not yet translated to large organizational transformations within participating agencies. However, **respondents commented that the UPLC program has begun to increase "collective awareness of the need to do this type of work," which leads to organizational change in the future.**

INTERVIEWS:
COHORT
DIRECTORS,
COHORT STAFF,
ACTION ALLIANCE
UPLC STAFF

Interview responses regarding organizational transformation yielded one main theme—little to no quantifiable organizational change. **Findings were mixed regarding organizational changes as a result of participation in the UPLC.** Some responses mentioned substantial changes related to power dynamics, such as "fully changing [organizational] structure to be more flat;" however, the majority of participants mentioned no changes to practices or protocols as a result of the program. One participant commented,

> Thus far, we have not changed any practices or changed our mission or vision or anything like that. The main thing this program has done for us is made us set aside time to have these conversations, make us examine what is going on in our agency, and make us be more intentional. It has made [engaging with underserved populations] a priority, so it's not just another line on our strategic plan.

Similarly, another respondent shared,

> The only change I have seen is with our staff. The trainings have been so helpful, because once you affect how someone thinks about something, it affects their actions. That's where you see the most growth, so that is what we have taken from this program. This has caused our staff to rethink our actions.

When probed about the cause of this lack of change, two primary explanations were provided. The first was related to the program timeline. **Respondents voiced a desire to change their mission statements, conduct strategic planning initiatives, and implement new advocacy protocols, but they mentioned that doing so was "not feasible" in the limited duration of the UPLC.** One participant stated:

> I never thought we would make grand changes since cultural change takes a long time. Nor did we feel pressure to change everything about our agency. A year is just not enough time to transform an agency.

Another explanation was a perceived disconnect between the role of biases in changing internal organizational practices within agencies. According to some respondents, their **agencies learned a great deal about social justice principles, but had difficulties making a connection between personal bias and how they influence the creation of more equitable organizational policies and practices.** One participant mentioned that this might allude to a need for "a deeper dive into power structures and decision making" in future cohorts.

RESULTS: ENGAGING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN STRATEGY BUILDING

[EQ3] Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies developed and nurtured partnerships with underserved communities as an integral part of their process of reflection, transformation, and engagement?

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

Participants were asked about ways in which their organizations developed new, or nurtured existing, partnerships to better serve underserved communities. Results suggest that **81.5% of participants increased community outreach to new or existing organizations.** Qualitative responses indicated that some agencies nurtured pre-existing relationships with organizations, such as social services, legal resources, and community response teams, while others forged new relationships with underserved population-specific agencies (e.g., LGBTQ+ organizations or culturally-specific churches). In cultivating strong relationships with other social justice organizations, whether new or old, participants commented that this allowed them to critically "reflect on their biases" and further "make a concerted effort to meet clients where they were." **For some agencies, partnership creation even translated into more culturally informed advocacy services.** In one instance, a respondent reported that "we now have Spanish speaking interpreters willing to assist our clients," while another commented that their organization had hired a dedicated outreach staff member.

SURVEY: UPLC STEERING COMMITTEE

Results revealed that the majority of participants believed the UPLC to be moderately effective (50%) in helping agencies foster engagement with underserved populations. **Respondents commented that a major strength of the program is that it allows "agencies to made connections with one another and share ideas and solutions that may not have otherwise been made."** Participants felt as though the connection with fellow UPLC agencies was a particularly valuable asset to the program. Consistent with this finding, other steering committee members responded that they believed, if these relationships are sustained, this program "could last and grow through creating a stronger network of service providers across the state."

INTERVIEWS:
COHORT
DIRECTORS,
COHORT STAFF,
ACTION ALLIANCE
UPLC STAFF

Two themes emerged from EQ3 interview responses:
1) underserved population-specific partnerships and 2) fellow UPLC agency partnerships. Overall, all interviewees expressed that their organizations had increased or strengthened partnerships, which allowed them better access to their target underserved population. However, the type of organization mentioned differed between participants.

Half of our participants mentioned fostering successful relationships with culturally-specific agencies, including connections with church groups, LGBTQ+-specific resources, and community organizers. An interviewee mentioned,

> This program has helped us identify the right people to talk to. Because of it, we have made valuable connections with our target population in a way I don't think we could have, had we not participated.

The other half of our participants spoke about the benefit of creating relationships with fellow agencies in the UPLC cohort. One respondent stated,

> This program connected us with other programs around the state to be able to have conversations and really work together to see what other programs are doing and how they were changing. That alone was so helpful!

Similarly, other participants talked about the creation of these cohort relationships as a strength of the UPLC program. One participant reported,

> I was hoping we would have some large overarching change from this program, but that just is not what happened. What we really got was the ability to talk with other organizations like ours, who are just trying to do better for clients, exactly like us.

RESULTS: STATEWIDE IMPACT & PROGRAM CHANGES

[SQ1] What has been the statewide impact of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative?

SURVEY: UPLC STEERING COMMITTEE

As previously mentioned, statewide impact was only assessed in the UPLC Steering Committee Survey. **Results revealed that most participants believed the UPLC program to have had an impact on the state of Virginia.** One participant mentioned that the program has created "a more concerted effort to reach and serve underserved populations across the state." Similar responses demonstrated attitudes that the program "goes beyond the concept that some programs have—that they 'served everyone.'" Importantly, **while all responses were positive, some participants believed it would take more time (i.e., future cohorts) to truly examine statewide impact.** One respondent mentioned, "I think it has started a new conversation about services to underserved populations. The UPLC has great goals, and I've heard about some great work within certain agencies, but I don't have any insight as to the actualized statewide impact as of now."

[SQ2] What changes would you make to the UPLC program?

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

SURVEY: UPLC STEERING COMMITTEE

INTERVIEWS: COHORT DIRECTORS, COHORT STAFF, ACTION ALLIANCE UPLC STAFF

While this question was assessed using all mentioned methods (i.e., UPLC staff survey, UPLC steering committee survey, and interviews), few responses were obtained, so all data was analyzed together. Overall, data from 26 participants was analyzed. **Results revealed two themes related to endorsed changes: 1) involvement from leadership and 2) organization of the project.**

The first theme centered on a need for involvement of key stakeholders for the UPLC to be optimally effective. In particular, the majority of respondents commented that executive director involvement is a necessity for meaningful, sustained change. Many participants spoke about the need for their executive directors to be present, not only at UPLC trainings, but for them to be a "constant team member involved in all UPLC activities." One participant stated:

> I think that the UPLC program was extremely impactful, but I absolutely don't think programs should be allowed to participate if their executive directors are not present. […] Without [the executive director] present, we were unable to make really impactful, agency-wide changes. Instead, it felt like we were fighting against our ED to make real change happen.

SURVEY:
SDVA STAFF IN
UPLC COHORT

SURVEY:
UPLC
STEERING
COMMITTEE

INTERVIEWS:
COHORT
DIRECTORS,
COHORT STAFF,
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UPLC STAFF
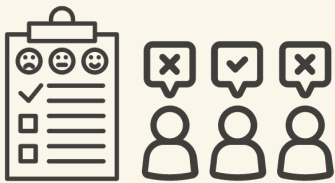
Other participants suggested board members be present in the UPLC process. They reported that, by doing so,"agencies could really fulfill their obligations to underserved populations."

The second emerging theme related to an endorsed need for organizational changes to the structure of the UPLC program. The most highly endorsed organizational change was in regards to UPLC coaches. While the majority of respondents commented that "the UPLC coaches could not have been more helpful," a number mentioned that their agencies may have more positively benefited from the program if [staffing of] the coaches had been consistent throughout the duration of the program. Similarly, there were mixed attitudes regarding coaches individually, but consensus revealed that "the combination of both coaches is perfect."

Additionally, participants asked for more oversight from the UPLC coaches. A small number of participants voiced a desire for more extensive site visits, including more guidance around how to spend allocated money and a need for desk audits. One participant suggested that "a monitoring visit would be helpful, where you not only talk about the program, but also look at record-keeping, make sure there is no supplanting occurring." Lastly, some participants discussed a need for more training opportunities and technical assistance around the intersections of multiple marginalized identities. For example, one respondent commented that while the ideology within the program was helpful, "it lacked nuance for particular communities." Further, they discussed, "if we took a more idealistic approach, our community would never talk to us again, so we had to straddle a fine line."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of surveys administered to the cohort participants and UPLC steering committee, along with data from interviews, lead to several recommendations for the next cohort.

To begin, this data suggests consistent, positive changes over the course of the program across the first goal of the UPLC (i.e., reflection of internal and external barriers) to service. This initial success can potentially be attributed to training and technical assistance provided by UPLC coaches. Across methods, participants reported that opportunities to learn and discuss social justice topics (e.g., power, privilege, and cultural humility) better prepared them to address biases within themselves, and even have fruitful discussions about client barriers with staff members. Consequently, we recommend that both small- and large-scale training opportunities continue with their current offerings while also adding specific suggestions from participants.

It would be beneficial to offer training and TA that 1) offers a deeper dive on specific issues, identities, and communities, and the intersections of multiple marginalized identities, and 2) supports participants in navigating potential mismatches in organizational values and standard services, or maintaining relationships with those who do not share those values. An example may include discussing with agencies how to advocate on behalf of LGBTQ+ individuals in their localities without damaging the necessary and unique relationship they have with a conservative school system. Similarly, some participants expressed interest in having more oversight regarding site visits and technical assistance.

Mixed results emerged when assessing organizational transformation. Interestingly, survey responses suggested that over half of the respondents worked at organizations that had changed organizational practices and protocols as a result of the UPLC, yet this was not supported in the data from interviews. Instead, interviewees commented that, largely due to a lack of executive director involvement, organizational change had not occurred. An explanation for this may be that participants with a lack of executive director buy-in were over-represented in our interview sample; this would lead to a skewed perspective on organizational transformation. Despite this explanation, data from a variety of assessed sources suggest a need for more consistent involvement from executive directors. We encourage looking at ways for executive directors be more involved in future cohorts. This could include outlining more stringent guidelines for acceptance to, or participation in, UPLC. Other options include requiring commitments to participate in the UPLC Directors' Practice Group or similar virtual sessions, and requiring directors to check in with UPLC coaches once per month to discuss their organization's goals and outcomes. Additionally, future cohorts should aim to engage with agency board members as potential people in leadership to join their agency's UPLC team.

Some participants mentioned that the program length prevented them from planning and implementing large-scale changes in their organizations. Subsequently, the evaluators would be interested in following up with UPLC regional leads after a few months--these are SDVAs from the inaugural cohort that are staying connected to the project and providing some support to other participating organizations close to their locality.

Relationship-building was named as a central benefit of the program and we want to take advantage of this momentum. However, this may prove to be challenging because of access and accessibility issues. We support the exploration of ways to nurture participants' interest in building relationships (e.g., with other cohort members or with community organizations) as we continue to offer training and TA online. Our suggestions include creating regularly-scheduled virtual check-ins or webinars; using a communication hub like Teams or Slack; or encouraging the inaugural cohort to facilitate discussions among the second cohort, and we support the exploration of ways to nurture participants' interest in building relationships (e.g., with other cohort members or with community organizations) as we continue to offer training and TA online; and exposing UPLC cohort participants to a larger number of population-specific local, state, and national experts and/or resources.

LIMITATIONS TO EVALUATION METHODS

There were limitations that should be taken into account regarding this evaluation in connection to COVID-19. All data was collected during a global pandemic in May 2020. This greatly influenced the evaluation, and these circumstances should be considered when examining the findings.

First, evaluators had difficulty sampling participants. In fact, after an initial email was sent to potential participants, only six individuals had completed evaluation measures by the end of the first week. To gather more data, deadlines were extended twice, and several follow-up emails were sent. Despite these efforts, the response rate of the current evaluation was below 30%. Additionally, participants' responses may not have been indicative of their organizational capacity outside of the emergency measures taken during a pandemic. That is, participating agencies may have addressed more barriers to serving marginalized communities, implemented greater measures towards organizational transformation, or created more partnerships had their work not been so substantially hindered by office closures and pandemic-related stress.

Second, our sample size was pared back. While evaluators gather data from a variety of participants (i.e., executive directors, UPLC cohort members, steering committee members, and Action Alliance staff), it would have also been helpful to gather data from non-UPLC SDVA staff members. This was the original intention of the evaluation team, but due to logistical difficulties exacerbated by the pandemic, it was decided to only sample individuals with greater familiarity with the program. Future evaluations should aim to gather data from staff members at cohort organizations who are not on the UPLC team, so as to further increase the diversity of responses and richness of data.

EVALUATION REPORT: COHORT 2 2020-2022

UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE:

ENHANCING VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMMING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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September 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cohort 2 of The Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative (UPLC) occurred between March 2020 - June 2022 as part of a collaboration between the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, the Virginia Department of Social Services, and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, The program aimed to provide extensive training and technical assistance (TA) to 21 self-selected sexual and domestic violence agencies (SDVAs) and, for the first time, statewide staff from each collaborating agency. Cohort 2 of the UPLC occurred during several major events, including COVID-19, racial tensions, and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in Virginia. Due to these COVID-19, the program had to be implemented virtually for the first time. The program had three overarching goals:

> <u>Goal 1:</u> **Reflection on internal and external barriers to SV/DV services for underserved populations;**
> <u>Goal 2:</u> **Organizational transformation to incorporate culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed practices; and**
> <u>Goal 3:</u> **Engagement with underserved communities in developing strategies for change**.

While these goals guided the evaluation of pertinent change within the second cohort of participating SDVAs, this evaluation also sought to **assess the UPLC's process** and **the program's statewide impact.**

<u>Three methods were used to develop a multi-modal, comprehensive assessment.</u> The evaluator administered two surveys, one for staff participating in the UPLC cohort and one for Executive/Program Directors. They also conducted semi-structured interviews with SDVA participants, UPLC Staff members, and key DSS, DCJS, and Action Alliance staff. The resultant data revealed programmatic successes and improvement areas related to the goals above.

<u>Across metrics, the second Cohort of the UPLC demonstrates positive change related to all evaluation questions.</u> Respondents consistently reported a greater capacity to reflect on client barriers to seeking services, making organizational changes to policies and practices, and fostering new culturally-informed relationships (i.e., local agencies) or strengthening existing relationships (i.e., statewide agencies). Regarding the process, results suggest a number of successes of the UPLC program, while data also suggests a smaller impact on statewide agencies than local ones. Despite their role, respondents reported seeing a change in Virginia due to the UPLC and the historical context surrounding the program.

However, COVID-19 profoundly influenced every aspect of Cohort 2. While the pandemic increased personal connections and allowed agencies to reflect more deeply on their practices for some, the overwhelming effect was negative. This included the UPLC's shift from an in-person program to an entirely virtual one, which led agencies to "get less" from the program than anticipated. That is, agencies had less energy to engage in UPLC work, and were less likely to make tangible, organizational changes, intra-cohort relationships, and enjoy key aspects and events of the UPLC due to Zoom fatigue and COVID-related challenges.

In line with these results, the evaluator offers the following recommendations:
- **Continuation of UPLC-Informed Work**
  - For the Action Alliance to include lessons learned and gathered materials into training and TA.
  - Hosting a meeting between VDSS, DCJS, and the Action Alliance to debrief and discuss the next steps to continue this work.
  - Mining current data from Cohorts 1 and 2 for more focused insights (e.g., a deeper report on statewide impact or how to modify the UPLC framework for other states)
  - Presenting the findings of this work to fellow coalitions.
- **For Future Programs**
  - If similar programs are created, they should likely focus on local agencies or provide different tracks for local vs. statewide agencies.
  - They should take greater care to address challenges related to external stimuli.
  - There should be more effective methods of communication between funders and program staff, program staff and participants, and amongst participants that consider barriers to communication (e.g., COVID-19 or Zoom fatigue).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A joint project between the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), and the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Action Alliance), the UPLC's aim was to create a framework for a community of practice focused on supporting marginalized populations through ongoing learning, reflection, and implementing evidence-based approaches. This collaborative model focused on creating collective knowledge among coaches, participants, and subject matter experts, and centered engagement with underserved populations as critical to shifting organizational culture. To date, there have been two cohorts of the UPLC, one that was held in-person, and the second which had to be shifted to entirely virtual as a result of COVID-19. This evaluation focuses on the latter.

The second cohort occurred from March 2020 - June 2022. At the beginning of Cohort 2, the Action Alliance invited sexual and domestic violence agencies (i.e., SDVAs) to apply to join the cohort. Prospective SDVAs were asked to create a UPLC team of two to four people who would consistently participate in program activities. Per instructions in the request for applications, the team had to include the executive director (or director of SV/DV services in an umbrella agency), and it was encouraged that the teams included staff with diverse backgrounds who have demonstrated leadership in some way. Each active agency received a quarterly stipend to support participation and travel throughout the program period. Overall, twenty-one agencies were approved to participate, four of which participated in both Cohorts 1 and 2 (i.e., Transitions, Eastern Shore, and Clinch Valley). The role of these agencies was to act as cohort leads and to provide an opportunity to both mentor and deepen their own organizational changes. All participating agencies are represented below:

- Abuse Alternatives
- Avalon Center
- Clinch Valley Community Action
- Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Ethiopian Community Development Council
- Fairfax County Domestic and Sexual Assault Services
- Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center
- New Directions Center, Inc.
- Partners for Strong Communities
- Phoenix Project
- Samaritan House
- Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA)
- The Haven Shelter and Services
- Transitions Family Violence Services
- Waynesboro Victim Witness Program
- Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley
- Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
- Virginia Department of Social Services
- Virginia Anti-Violence Project
- Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Program activities included:

SITE VISITS	**+**	STATEWIDE GATHERINGS	**+**	REGIONAL GATHERINGS	**+**	REGIONAL CONVERSATIONS	**+**	LEADERSHIP PRACTICE GROUP

Site Visits:
To begin, UPLC staff conducted three rounds of site visits with approved agencies. In the first, staff introduced themselves to Cohort 2 teams and had a focused discussion of where agencies' strengths and areas of improvement were regarding underserved communities. These meetings also included conversations about which underserved communities cohort members were interested in focusing on for the duration of the cohort. In the second round, UPLC staff assessed agencies' ideas about how to work with their chosen populations. Lastly, in the third round, more concrete discussions focused on the steps agencies' could or would take to work with their populations.

Additionally, over the course of the project, cohort members participated in a number of gatherings to further advance the work they conducted in their agencies.

Regional Gatherings:
The first, regional gatherings, were facilitated by UPLC staff and focused on current events occurring in each region, providing time for groups to discuss progress, collaborate with fellow agencies, and have conversations about specific topics. Topics of regional gatherings included self-care, cultural humility, and implicit bias. Over the course of the second cohort, three regional gatherings per Virginia region (i.e., Tidewater, Southwest, Northern, Central/Valley, and Statewide) were held in February 2021, September 2021, and February 2022.

Statewide Gatherings:
Next, statewide gatherings brought together the entire cohort and included presentations from many state and national speakers about population-specific or broad social justice topics. Discussed topics included conflict and change, racial equity, and organizational reflections. UPLC cohort members participated in three statewide gatherings occurring in November 2020, May 2021, and June 2022.

Regional Conversations:
Regional conversations, a new addition to the UPLC in Cohort 2, also occurred. In these agency-led sessions, cohort members would discuss a topic of their choosing with the hope of providing each other with additional support in doing the work of creating more trauma-informed agencies. Notably, UPLC staff only attended one session in Cohort 2.

Leadership Practice Group:
The Executive/ Program Directors' Leadership Practice Group sought to provide quarterly technical assistance that provided Directors with an opportunity to dive deeper into their roles as leaders on their teams and in their agencies. These meetings were hosted by Action Alliance staff and included a variety of both formal topics and those requested by participants.

Technical Assistance
In addition, UPLC coaches provided virtual technical assistance to cohort agencies. Importantly, participants were encouraged to ask for as much assistance as they needed to make changes in their organizations.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Notably, the UPLC's second cohort occurred during several significant events in the state, nation, and world. First, the cohort happened amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to the deaths of over one-million Americans since 2020. During the summer of 2020, worldwide demonstrations and protests occurred to voice concerns over the unjust murders of Black Americans, including George Floyd and Breanna Taylor. The cohort also saw over two-thousand rioters occupying the U.S Capitol during the January 6th, 2021, insurrection in Washington. Additionally, the participants and UPLC staff witnessed the exit of former president Donald Trump, along with the entrance of current president Joe Biden. Lastly, former governor of Virginia, Ralph Northam, unveiled ONE Virginia, a first-in-the-nation statewide strategic plan to advance visible diversity, equity, and inclusion across state government. This history is important to highlight in the context of this evaluation's program goals and analysis.

PROGRAM GOALS

Three main goals guide program activities:

1. REFLECTION ON BARRIERS TO SERVICE

This first goal relates to agencies' abilities to use internal reflection to inform organizational change related to barriers (i.e., internal and external) of clients seeking services.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The second goal details agencies' ability to incorporate culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed practices into all programs and services. This includes integrated changes at all levels of the agency.

3. ENGAGING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN STRATEGY BUILDING

This third goal relates to agencies' ability to center underserved populations in their community outreach, primarily through the development and cultivation of partnerships with targeted underserved communities.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation uses the previously mentioned goals and accompanying evaluation questions (i.e., EQ1 – EQ3) as its basis for analysis. Additionally, two supplemental questions were crafted to examine the UPLC's process (i.e., SQ1) and its statewide impact (i.e., SQ2). The evaluation sought to answer the following primary and supplemental questions:

EQ1
Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative's Cohort 2, have participating agencies reflected on the internal and external barriers influencing underserved clients' ability to seek services at their organizations?
(Goal 1: Reflection on Internal and External Barriers)

EQ2
Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies incorporated more culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed organizational practices?
(Goal 2: Organizational Transformation)

EQ3
Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies developed and nurtured partnerships with underserved communities as an integral part of their process of reflection, transformation, and engagement?
(Goal 3: Engaging Underserved Communities in Strategy Building)

SQ1
Was the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative's process successful in giving agencies what they needed?
(Supplemental Goal 1)

SQ2
What is the overall statewide impact of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative?
(Supplemental Goal 2)

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Three main methods were used to provide a multi-modal, comprehensive assessment of change: a survey of SDVA staff participating in the second cohort, a survey of SDVA Executive/Program Directors, and semi-structured interviews with a variety of respondents. Details are available on the next page.

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

All members of UPLC teams at participating SDVAs completed a 40-item pre-test assessment, which asked questions about participant demographics, training needs, and alignment of organizational policies and practices with social justice principles. Questions also assessed comfort in providing services to, and advocating on behalf of, underserved populations.

The evaluators developed a conceptual replication of the initial UPLC assessment in order to more deeply and intentionally examine each research question (Appendix A). The survey included more open-ended, qualitative questions to allow for more nuance in responses. All items were approved by UPLC staff at the Action Alliance prior to distribution. This survey was administered online via Qualtrics at the end of the UPLC program.

Demographic results show that respondents were 53 advocates who represented all participating UPLC organizations (n= 21). All respondents were full were full-time employees (n = 53, 100%), and most had been in the SDV field for over four years, n =36, 67.9%. However, respondents reported either working at their current agencies for 0-3 years (n = 24, 45.2%) or 4 or more years (n = 29, 54.7%).

SURVEY: EXECUTIVE/ PROGRAM DIRECTORS

An 11-item survey was administered online via Qualtrics to examine EQ1, EQ2, and EQ3. Participants were asked to respond to both single-item quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions. In using two methods, a broader, deeper perspective of responses was gathered. Additionally, qualitative responses were collected to examine the UPLC program's statewide impact (i.e., SQ1) and gather any suggestions for process changes (i.e., SQ2). In total, responses were gathered from 14 Executive/Program Directors.

The majority of respondents had been at their agencies for four or more years (n = 9, 63.3%) and in the field for the same amount of time (n = 8, 61.7%)

INTERVIEWS: UPLC MEMBERS, UPLC STAFF, STATEWIDE STAFF

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 1) UPLC participants, 2) Action Alliance UPLC staff, and 3) DCJS, VDSS, and Action Alliance staff. It was essential to the current evaluation that a variety of voices be present. These interviews were conducted via Google Meet and lasted approximately 51-minutes. A script developed by the evaluator included questions regarding all evaluation questions. These interviews were audio-recorded and detailed notes were taken by evaluators. To maintain confidentiality, pertinent themes were extrapolated from all interview data, as opposed to separating data by participant role. Demographic results revealed that participants were eight UPLC participants, three UPLC staff members, and seven DCJS, VDSS, and Action Alliance staff members.

RESULTS: REFLECTION ON BARRIERS TO SERVICE

[EQ1] Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies reflected on the internal and external barriers influencing underserved clients' ability to seek services at their organizations?

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

Results revealed that:
- **97.7% of respondents** (n = 42) reported reflecting on organizational internal barriers.
- **100% of respondents** (n = 42) reported reflecting on the external barriers of underserved clients due to the UPLC.

Internal Barriers:
Theme 1: Staff/Organizational Capacity
Results revealed that **95.2% of respondents** (n = 41) made an effort to address internal barriers related to staff/organizational capacity.
- Almost all respondents reported limited staff capacity, primarily due to COVID-19, as the most impactful barrier during Cohort 2. This included an inability to fully attend to clients, train current employees, and hire new, qualified staff members. Most commented that this barrier was exacerbated by increased demand for advocacy during the pandemic:

> [During COVID], it is very difficult to find qualified advocates and counselors to fill open positions. We need higher salaries and better benefits. Even finding the money to provide quality training/education for our existing staff has been hard.

External Barriers:
Theme 2: Lack of Resources
Results revealed that **83.3% of respondents** (n = 35) made efforts to address external barriers related to a lack of resources for underserved communities. These resources vary, but three subthemes were identified:
- **Services (n = 22)**: most respondents discussed a lack of financial services to complete work, while others mentioned a lack of mental, substance abuse, housing, financial, and culturally specific services, specifically due to COVID-19.
- **Transportation (n = 16)**: advocates, specifically those serving rural areas, commented that a lack of transportation for survivors posed a large barrier to clients seeking services.
- **Knowledge (n = 14):** respondents also mentioned knowledge as a barrier. This subtheme primarily included a lack of understanding of agency services by communities, both due to COVID-19 and as a larger issue in the SDVA field.

> The ongoing challenges related to the pandemic include survivors reluctant to leave home due to fears about the pandemic and financial constraints, large areas of rural populations without reliable internet access, transportation, mental health services, and and a lack of knowledge about our agency.

Theme 3: Unsupportive Systems
Additionally, **40.6% of respondents** (n = 17) mentioned unsupportive systems as a barrier to clients seeking services during Cohort 2.
- Respondents primarily discussed difficulties related to stigma against survivors from community members, religious institutions, courts, and law enforcement:

> We often have to rely on systems that are set up with oppression and inequity in mind. [There is] a lack of sympathy towards survivors from community stakeholders -- homophobia, racism, and ableism. It is difficult to help and empower while acknowledging the survivors' experiences in navigating it all.

SURVEY: EXECUTIVE/ PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Surveys were collected from Executive/Program Directors to examine perceived organizational changes related to barriers to underserved clients seeking services.

Results revealed that **92.9% of respondents** (n = 13) agreed that the UPLC program effectively facilitated a positive change in their reflection of barriers for underserved populations.

Open-ended responses pointed to two primary themes related to barriers:

Internal Barriers: respondents commented that internal barriers were identified and addressed during the program period. These barriers included: staff biases, a lack of knowledge regarding their chosen populations, and "outdated" internal documents, policies, and practices.

External Barriers: respondents also discussed their abilities to identify and address challenging external barriers, such as laws, funding methods, and a fear of what survivors may think if they change their services.

One respondent mentioned:

> Whenever a difficult decision has to be made or when we need to review a policy, we are now much more aware of the need to make sure that the outcome also accomplishes the dual objectives of overcoming any internal barriers and mitigating any external ones.

INTERVIEWS: UPLC MEMBERS, UPLC STAFF, STATEWIDE STAFF

Interview responses yielded one central theme—**extensive internal work toward change.**

Across all 17 interviews, regardless of role, respondents consistently mentioned the UPLC's ability to get participants to reflect on both internal and external barriers to providing services to clients.

Respondents attributed these reflections to the "vast learning opportunities" available, including new resources, invited speakers, and training on fundamental concepts, such as bias. One participant stated:

> The biggest change I saw was [statewide staff] actually being a part of doing that work -- reading all of the articles, learning all the things, having all of the conversations, and really being a part of that internal reflection piece that I think a lot of other leaders and funders may not do.

Even among three participants who mentioned already discussing barriers at length with their staffs, all reported feeling thankful for the UPLC's ability to provide space to discuss these topics in their agencies. One respondent said:

> All of the self-reflection, you know, the bias awareness, what is your internal structure, the books that we got at the beginning -- it kind of helped set the foundation for talking about things like white supremacy, and intersections of identities. And things like that. It set the tone for being able to talk within the organization.

Additionally, most respondents commented that COVID-19 negatively influenced their abilities to "fully engage" in this internal work. A respondent reported:

> We still had to be out there engaging with the public. You didn't know if people were going to be okay. It was just a lot, on top of doing all the work for UPLC. I couldn't fully engage.

Conversely, over one-third of respondents suggested that COVID-19 allowed for deeper internal reflection, even compared to Cohort 1.

> "[In cohort 1], teams had projects and did things on behalf of particular underserved communities, but that's still how they were viewing it at the end of year two. Compared to this group, which translated materials into Spanish, [...] created five-year plans and looked at all the different ethnicities and languages that are spoken in their community. These agencies were motivated by the fact that they were oblivious to what the needs were and also by the fact that they tried stuff, and it didn't go great. [...] And they were not afraid to make mistakes. They committed to continuing to doing the work."

RESULTS: ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

[EQ2] Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies incorporated more culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed organizational practices?

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

Results revealed that **64.7% of respondents** (n = 33) reported amended key policy documents or practice protocols since the UPLC's second cohort began.

Examples of amended documents included:
- Intake Forms (n = 19)
- Strategic Plans (n = 17)
- Nondiscrimination/DEI documents (n = 13)
- Mission Statements (n = 9)

Racial justice (n = 28) and gender justice (n = 21) components were the most incorporated forms of justice in UPLC agencies' documents.

Among those who did not report amended policy or practices documents, participants most often attributed this to:
- already having trauma-informed documents (n = 4)
- being in the process of making document changes (n = 2)

The survey also assessed perceived changes in another key practice: **advocacy services**.

Results suggest that **94.1% of respondents** (n = 48) felt comfortable or extremely comfortable providing services to underserved populations due to the UPLC.

Further, respondents answered questions about their **comfort level in providing advocacy services to specific populations** (e.g., those with limited English proficiency, people living in rural communities, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, low-income individuals, older adults, and youth).
- Respondents reported feeling **comfortable or extremely advocating** for these groups after participating in the UPLC, with percentages ranging from **70.6% - 100%**
- Respondents felt **least comfortable** advocating for individuals with **limited English proficiency** (70.6%) and **those with disabilities** (82.4%)

SURVEY: EXECUTIVE/ PROGRAM DIRECTORS

When examining data related to EQ2, results revealed that **100% of respondents** (n = 7) reported that their agencies had engaged in organizational transformation during Cohort 2 of the UPLC.

Examples of organizational transformation primarily centered on agencies' abilities to internally discuss difficult topics:

> **We have staff members of different races, ethnicities, cultures, and even ages, so we have interesting and illuminating conversations about things that are happening around us, whether they're happening in our backyards or half a world away.**

Others mentioned becoming more connected to their local communities:

> **Rendering services to so many has allowed for staff to see/experience much more by actually becoming a more active part of the community and region.**

Interview responses regarding organizational transformation yielded one central theme—**consistent organizational change.**

Findings suggest that **all 17 respondents witnessed organizational change** during Cohort 2 of the UPLC. Among local agencies, these changes included hiring more diverse staff, having more internal discussions about bias, and making changes to policy and practice documents, such as strategic plans and intake forms. One respondent reported:

> We did a lot of work around like our intake, language documents, and made sure that was all very inclusive. We have done training, not just with staff, but also with board members and volunteers. I mean, we have whole parts of our volunteer training that are around language and expectation and inclusiveness and belonging, and making sure that everyone who works for our agency is aware that this is one of our goals. Like, 'this is who we are and what we represent.' So if you're representing our agency, you can't give another message.

For statewide agencies, respondents mentioned changes to grant processes, along with more trauma-informed training and staff discussions. For instance, a statewide staff member commented:

> So there's a number of process improvements that we've made beyond just, you know, prioritizing underserved populations in grant submissions. We also shifted to make the grant application evaluation much less about how the grant was written but really about the content and its impact. Some agencies may not write a good grant, but that doesn't mean that their work is not good. So, now, we put much more weight on the concept and the work that is proposed rather than the grammar. I will say that larger changes are hard for us though.

Additionally, a few respondents who participated in both Cohort 1 and 2 discussed their agencies' organizational change in both cohorts. One participant said:

> You know, like in Cohort 1, I think we did the thought process, and really, you know, what do we do and get some momentum going. In Cohort 2, I think we really did the long-lasting changes. We actually make tangible change and progress you could see.

Despite the overwhelming positive change expressed by interviewees, some respondents commented that not all agencies made tangible organizational changes in Cohort 2:

> Substantial change to me means changing a policy, interviewing process, intake forms -- something tangible has been done. So, concrete changes have happened or are planned to happen in a way that is concrete through strategic planning or something like that. I would say around 50% of agencies got to that point.

All of these respondents mentioned COVID-19 as the main hindrance to organizational transformation in Cohort 2:

> No one can blame them [agencies] for a lack of tangible products. This cohort has seen people with a lot of personal things happening. We've had quite a few members experience family deaths and close community partners who were like family. In the virtual space, I have learned some very personal things about people that didn't that weren't a part of our conversations in Cohort 1.

RESULTS: ENGAGING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN STRATEGY BUILDING

[EQ3] Since the start of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative, have participating agencies developed and nurtured partnerships with underserved communities as an integral part of their process of reflection, transformation, and engagement?

SURVEY: SDVA STAFF IN UPLC COHORT

Respondents also answered questions about how their organizations developed new, or nurtured existing partnerships to serve underserved communities better.

Findings suggest that **97.7% of respondents** (n = 42) reported developing partnerships due to the UPLC.

Qualitative responses indicated that:
- Partnerships were diverse, including local colleges, legal organizations, culturally-specific agencies, and many more,
- UPLC agencies often developed partnerships with culturally-specific UPLC agencies, and
- Partnerships made in service of agencies' chosen underserved populations resulted in connections to additional underserved populations

One respondent mentioned:

> We have taken the approach of collaborating with local [UPLC] LGBTQ agencies, language justice organizations, older adult groups, and housing centers. This work is rooted in intersectionality --we are trying to help everybody.

Another added:

> We are working with area leaders in the Muslim faith. Our efforts to increase awareness and provide appropriate services has, in turn, created additional supports to individuals with limited English proficiency. We learned that these communities are connected in more ways than one.

SURVEY: EXECUTIVE/ PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Results revealed that **50% of respondents** (n = 7) agreed that the UPLC led their agencies to better engage with partners and underserved populations, while half did not provide a response.

Executive/Program Directors mentioned that, over the course of Cohort 2, organizational changes were made to their outreach approaches. For instance, one respondent said:

> We have adjusted some of our approaches to how we engage with our underserved communities, mainly when creating and implementing outreach strategies. We've already identified the "who" -- now we need to improve on the "what, where, and how."

Others discussed changes in the tools they used for community engagement, such as "using community surveys, community trainings, and partnering with community groups." A respondent also mentioned:

> We sought feedback on grantmaking processes and prioritized funding for projects that served un-/underserved communities.

One theme emerged from EQ3 interview responses:
1) local agency partnerships and 2) statewide agency partnerships.

Theme 1: Local Agency Partnerships
All respondents from local agencies expressed that their organizations had fostered new relationships. These partnerships were primarily created with culturally-specific agencies, including language justice, LGBTQ+-specific, and race-specific groups. One respondent reported better-referring clients to these types of agencies.

> We've been able to better refer our clients to culturally-informed agencies for the first time. It was hard, but we had to realize that we can't do it all. We are not equipped to service them in the same ways.

Importantly, every respondent mentioned a lack of connection to fellow UPLC agencies due to COVID-19, which affected their abilities to create strong cohort partnerships.

> [In the Statewide Meetings], I was in groups with people all over the state I'd never met before. It was so difficult for me to connect names to agencies because there were so many people, and I feel like we all lost that personal and professional connection that I really enjoy--that networking.

Theme 2: Statewide Agency Partnerships
Unlike local agency cohort members, statewide staff discussed partnership in a different way. Almost all responses centered on the partnership between DSS, DCJS, and the Action Alliance responsible for creating the UPLC in 2019.

> This was such a good example of our three state organizations coming together and us all agreeing that this was something that was super important. Like, we're going to dedicate resources, which means money, and it ended up being pretty successful. We don't always agree on everything, and we butt heads sometimes, but when it comes down to it, something that's so important as improving services for underserved communities--that is something we definitely all agree on and can collaborate on.

Another respondent commented:

> [The UPLC] was something that was developed together, something different. There was a lot of interest, a lot of passion, and a lot of energy around having this be something that was different. Something that was seen by other agencies as being something that was being co-led and co-developed by this trifecta of state entities, and that made a difference.

Due to this successful partnership, respondents reported directly impacting how local agencies engage with underserved populations.

> This program is unique in that it has had a ripple effect to, you know, 40 organizations roughly and their associated communities. Like, we've [VDSS, DCJS, and the Action Alliance] had other collaborative projects, but nothing quite like this, nothing that has had this kind of impact on these [underserved] communities.

RESULTS: UPLC PROCESS

[SQ1] Was the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative's process successful in giving agencies what they needed to better serve their clients?

SURVEY: EXECUTIVE/ PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Generally, results revealed that **92.9% of respondents** (n = 13) would recommend the UPLC to another Executive/Program Director, while **7.1% of respondents** did not provide an answer.

Despite these results, three respondents all suggested:
1) that culturally-specific agencies may have needed a different approach to learning than SDVA's,
2) The scope of the program was unclear for agencies, depending on how long they had been doing work with underserved communities, and
3) Cohort 2 may have benefited from a "pause during the pandemic."

Data were also collected about Directors' experiences in the Leadership Practice Group, a key component of the UPLC.

Results revealed two themes: **1) successes and 2) areas of improvement.**

Theme 1: Successes
The first theme centered on respondents' appreciation for having the time and space to discuss leadership topics and be in community with other directors. The majority of participants viewed the group positively, as a result of these aspects. One respondent reported:

> **It is always helpful to hear the perspective of other agency leaders. Even after nearly 20 years as a Director, I continue to learn from other leaders regardless of how long they have been Directors.**

Another commented:

> **It's always helpful and inspiring to hear from other Program Directors about their challenges and successes.**

Theme 2: Areas of Improvement
Despite the overall positive feedback about this group, respondents also pointed out two main areas of improvement: a lack of attendance and shifting priorities. Over half of the respondents mentioned these topics as hindrances to the success of the Leadership Group.

Regarding attendance, one respondent mentioned:

> **There was a lack of participation to the point where many people missed lots of the sessions. It seems like the same few of us made it a priority each time.**

Others discussed a shift in the purpose of the group, due to COVID-19:

> **[From a planning standpoint] it took us too long to figure out that we needed to sort of abandon structure and just turn the group into more of a critical inquiry process and help people with exactly what they were dealing with, and trust that we were going to have what we needed in our toolbox.**

Additionally, findings were mixed regarding whether the group changed respondents' thoughts on leadership, with a little over half suggesting the group did (n = 7).

To assess the UPLC's process, respondents were first asked about the extent to which they agreed they had learned something new from 1) Statewide Gatherings, 2) Regional Gatherings, and 3) Regional Conversations.

Results revealed that:
- Statewide Gatherings
  61.7% (n = 29) strongly agreed
- Regional Meetings
  53.2% (n = 25) strongly agreed
- Regional Conversations
  43.0% (n = 20) strongly agreed

Open-ended responses provided mixed results regarding the effectiveness of these key UPLC components/events. For instance, one respondent commented:

> **I really enjoyed the breakout groups that we were a part of the meetings. It was so helpful to talk to other agencies, some of whom we don't get to work with on a regular basis and learn about the obstacles that they are facing.**

While another said:

> **We were experiencing Zoom fatigue, and all-day sessions were limited to Zoom breakout spaces that limited sharing because of abbreviated time. No sooner than a conversation took life, we were being called back into the larger Zoom space.**

When asked more generally about respondents' feedback about the UPLC process, the majority of open-ended responses pointed to positive aspects of the UPLC.

> **This has been one of the most valuable programs I have ever participated in, changing not only the way I will provide services but also who I am as a person.**

Of those few who provided negative feedback, comments centered on the effects of COVID-19 on the implementation of the program.

> **I feel I would've learned more and better connections to other agencies if we had any in-person meetings. It's difficult to form bonds virtually, and the trainings are very structured for time management.**

Interviews provided a great deal of information regarding attitudes toward the UPLC's components and process. Data can most succinctly be summarized in two themes: 1) successes and 2) areas of improvement.

Theme 1: Successes
Every respondent had something positive to say about the UPLC's Cohort 2. In fact, all 16 respondents felt as though the program was successful. Examples of success varied, but included having the space to discuss complex issues safely, extensive, foundational learning in Statewide and Regional meetings, and deep connections to others.

Almost all respondents discussed learnings at the Statewide and Regional meetings as a success.

> **I think the different speakers from different agencies [in Statewide and Regional meeting] showed us our work isn't isolated. The work that we do, it's not just us. We need to get other people involved because victims don't come to us just with domestic violence or sexual   assault issues but a plethora of other issues. I think it equipped us with knowledge to treat   victims and survivors holistically.**

Most respondents also discussed the UPLC's ability to encourage organizational change in their agencies.

> One of the biggest strengths that came out of this is that, you know, it opened the door for programs to make some change, and to really seek to improve their services, improve their reach, even if it was just incremental. It's something that wouldn't have otherwise happened.

Almost all respondents also mentioned an ability to see fellow cohort members in a "new light" due to the UPLC program and COVID-19.

> I think we all got to see our humanity and what was happening to us daily as people, aside from our work. So like prior to the pandemic [...] we were business collaborators, and then the pandemic happened and our cohort -- we would find ourselves in our virtual meetings, and in our breakouts, and everyone was struggling with something. And so, we spent a lot of time seeing each other in a way that might not have happened without the pandemic.

Theme 2: Areas of Improvement

All 16 respondents mentioned COVID-19 as the primary area of improvement for Cohort 2. Data suggests that COVID-19 negatively influenced almost every aspect of the UPLC. Aspects included planning, cohort members' connections to each other and UPLC staff, a lack of site visits, turnover, burnout, and heightened stress levels of respondents, UPLC Staff, and Statewide Staff members.

Some respondents discussed having to make changes to the planning of Cohort 2 due to COVID-19. One commented:

> We initially started out just doing the same flow that we did in the first cohort. [In Cohort 2] new needs arose, though. There was more of a focus on how to do your work safely in this pandemic and what you would like to hold on to and carry forward after the pandemic, which was a big shift.

Many respondents also commented on a "lack of energy" in Cohort 2. One respondent, who had also participated in Cohort 1, reported:

> I feel like we didn't have the same energy that we did in the first cohort, We were in a pandemic, and everything was --you didn't know from day to day what was going on, and because we were just limited on the in-person interactions. And, of course, in 2020, when it started, we were not as comfortable as we probably are now, you know, virtually meeting.

Some even believed the impacts of COVID were so significant that Cohort 2 needed a "do-over."

> In my heart of hearts, I believe Cohort 2 deserves a do-over because we did learn a lot from Cohort Two. It may not have been the way we wanted to learn something. We may have learned something different than what we thought we were gonna learn, but I do think Cohort 2 deserves the space and opportunity to have really robust conversation.

Another endorsed area of improvement was statewide teams' (i.e., VDSS, DCJS, and the Action Alliance) inclusion in Cohort 2. Almost all respondents from these groups suggested that the UPLC's approach was ineffective for their agencies.

For instance, many commented about the program's applicability to their agencies.

> If we did UPLC again, I would not recommend having DCJS or DSS program involved because the program really did not do a good job of making it applicable to what we do. I think the successes were helpful, like the trainings were helpful for us to process, but it really was hard to make it applicable.

Others mentioned a need for more concrete instruction from the program.

> I imagined that we would actually do a bit more beyond learning together. Like, I thought we would talk about building the capacity to inform changes that we wanted to see in our huge statewide agency.

A few respondents even suggested how the program could have better served statewide agencies.

> It felt like there needed to have been a different purpose or a different track for the statewide organizations. It should never have been a one-size-fits-all.

RESULTS: IMPACT OF UPLC

[SQ2] What is the overall, statewide impact of the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative?

**INTERVIEWS:
UPLC MEMBERS,
UPLC STAFF,
STATEWIDE STAFF**

As previously reported, respondents consistently mentioned the positive impact of the UPLC on their agencies. Similarly, respondents reported a positive impact on the state of Virginia. For instance, some respondents pointed to observable changes in SDVA's who had participated in either Cohort 1 or 2. One commented:

> I do think people are starting to connect the dots to what we've been saying all along, even if they don't know how to talk about it, even if they're still not willing to be vulnerable, you know, at work and at home. I do think the veil has been lifted. I do think people can see. I think people understand even if they don't know what to do with this newfound understanding.

Another commented on UPLC agencies' trauma-informed approach to their work when compared to non-UPLC agencies:

> Two new staff members are in charge of evaluating the first set of applicants for [a new accreditation process for SDVA's], which was about 14 or 15 applicants. They have not been with our agency very long and weren't involved with UPLC previously, but they've come back and said that there's a marked difference between the agencies that participated in UPLC and the ones that didn't. [They have] a very different focus on inclusion and equity in trying to reach all survivors in their community than those not involved in the UPLC.

A few respondents discussed more nuanced conversations at statewide meetings, as a result of the UPLC program. They said:

> They'd gotten comfortable talking about the connections between racial justice in the world and things like the murder of George Floyd and the repercussions and the ridiculous behaviors of law enforcement in their community in response. People were making connections easily and with some passion around it and could talk about. [...] It felt like the old days.

Despite these positive results, respondents were careful to explain the connection between these changes and the historical context. One explained, "I think it's impossible to separate the impact of UPLC from the impact of everything else." Another reported:

> All of [this change] couldn't have happened 10 years ago because we as a society weren't ready to commit to that change. We also benefited from some stupid political [things] that happened. [...] I guess what I'm saying is this project happened at a really special time.

However, the larger legacy of the UPLC remains unknown to respondents. One commented:

> We have not replaced the energy that we put into the UPLC with something else. That's where we -- that's the work that still has to happen. And I hope that we find space for that conversation, because if we don't have it, then we just settle back in and leaves blow over everything that we've done. And if we're not careful, all of the steps forward that we've made cease to exist.

One respondent provided a forecast of future UPLC-informed work. They reported:

> So, I think some of this work will continue. I mean, certainly, how training and technical assistance are done, overall, has changed during these four years, and that will continue. I think more group-based technical assistance and more intensive technical assistance will continue, [...] along with mentoring and coaching in a group setting around leadership development. The state agencies have turned the corner on understanding what it means to support services for underserved populations. Now, the challenge ahead of us is that federal funding is going to be going down dramatically, and then they're going to have to start making really tough decisions.

DISCUSSION

The results of surveys administered to the UPLC cohort members and Executive/Program Directors', along with data from interviews, demonstrated positive change across all evaluation outcomes, regardless of respondents' job titles. However, results demonstrate that Cohort 2 was most impactful for local agencies when compared to statewide agencies. The latter group reported feeling as though the program was not as applicable to them. Despite these comments, most respondents reported seeing a tangible statewide impact from agencies participating in the UPLC. Importantly, all of this success should be taken cautiously, as data overwhelmingly suggests that COVID-19 heavily affected every aspect of Cohort 2. That is, the pandemic and all of its accompanying barriers significantly hindered the full success of Cohort 2 of the UPLC. More specific results by evaluation questions are below:

To begin, data suggests consistent, positive changes over the course of the program related to its first goal of the UPLC, a reflection of internal and external barriers to services. Across methods and roles, respondents discussed the ability to think deeper about personal, organizational, and systemic barriers to clients seeking services. In fact, respondents mentioned time and space to reflect on barriers as one of the biggest successes of Cohort 2. This success was attributed to educational Statewide and Regional meetings and the UPLC's ability to provide a space for participants to think about underserved populations. A number of respondents also mentioned that COVID-19 gave them time to work deeply on internal personal and organizational barriers to serving clients. However, COVID-19 was also cited as a barrier to "fully engage" in the UPLC's work.

Similar to goal one, findings were also positive when examining goal two, organizational transformation. Across methods, more than half of the respondents reported making tangible policy and practice changes. These included changes to policy documents, strategic plans, grant review processes, and many more. However, results differed between local agencies and statewide agencies. Respondents reported making more "substantial" policy changes in local agencies, while statewide agencies made fewer. This was attributed to the more bureaucratic nature of statewide agencies. Additionally, results also revealed that approximately half of the cohort agencies may not have made tangible organizational transformations over the course of the program period, which may be attributable to stress caused by COVID-19.

There were mixed findings regarding goal three, engaging with emerging underserved communities in strategy building. While many local agencies were able to create new partnerships with various agencies, it is essential to note that very few made intra-cohort connections. However, for those who did, new relationships were fostered with culturally-specific UPLC organizations. This lack of inter-group partnerships was attributed to COVID-19. That is, most respondents mentioned that the cohort lacked personal connection, primarily due to the virtual nature of the program. While UPLC staff tried to remedy this issue by creating more collaborative spaces (i.e., Regional Conversations), this persisted and influenced agencies' ability to connect with one another. Conversely, statewide respondents mentioned creating stronger connections with fellow statewide agencies through the creation and maintenance of the UPLC, but not with local agencies, likely due to their existing relationships as grant funders.

DISCUSSION/ RECOMMENDATIONS

The UPLC's implementation process was also assessed, specifically as it related to programmatic meetings and sessions. Results revealed positive attitudes overall, with respondents highly endorsing the Executive/ Program Director's Leadership Practice Group and the impact of training materials and speakers at Statewide and Regional meetings. The Regional Conversations were found to be the least helpful aspect of the UPLC. Additionally, COVID-19 heavily influenced the implementation of Cohort 2 (i.e., from planning to program conclusion) to the point where some respondents believed the cohort needed a "do-over." Lastly, statewide agencies were included for the first in Cohort 2 to see how they would benefit from the program. Statewide respondents reported that their inclusion in the cohort was ineffective. While all mentioned that they got something from their participation, the majority suggested that the program best fit the needs of local agencies and was not equipped to help address the nuances of making changes in a statewide organization.

Lastly, despite their role, respondents reported seeing a positive statewide impact after the second UPLC cohort. Statewide impact took many forms, including respondents noticing more trauma-informed advocates, better, more full grant applications, and deeper statewide discussions about diversity, inclusion, and equity topics. Some respondents also mentioned the role of historical context on the impact of the UPLC. They mentioned protests for Black lives, statewide initiatives, and the political landscape of America as key contributors to the success of this program. However, the larger, more long-lasting impact of this program remains to be seen. All respondents believed the work of the UPLC should continue in some form, whether that be in more technical assistance for advocates or a similar program. One fact that is clear, however, is that many fear that without a replacement or continuation of this work, all the progress that UPLC has made may be lost.

These findings point to the following recommendations for future work:
- Continuation of UPLC-Informed Work
  - For the Action Alliance to include lessons learned and gathered materials into training and TA.
  - Continuing technical assistance after the program by creating a continuously updated resource list and/or hosting an in-person retreat or "do-over" for this cohort.
  - Hosting a meeting between VDSS, DCJS, and the Action Alliance to debrief and discuss the next steps to continue this work.
  - Mining current data from Cohorts 1 and 2 for more focused insights (e.g., a deeper report on statewide impact or how to modify the UPLC framework for other states)
  - Presenting the findings of this work to fellow coalitions.
- For Future Programs
  - If similar programs are created, they should likely focus on local agencies or provide different tracks for local vs. statewide agencies.
  - They should take greater care to address challenges related to external stimuli.
    - This can include evaluating the ideal time for this type of program, considering COVID-19 rates, pertinent historical context, etc.
  - There should be more effective methods of communication between funders and program staff, program staff and participants, and amongst participants that consider barriers to communication (e.g., COVID-19 or Zoom fatigue).

LIMITATIONS

There were limitations that should be taken into account regarding this evaluation in connection to COVID-19. All data was collected during a global pandemic in May 2020 - present. This greatly influenced the evaluation, and these circumstances should be considered when examining the findings.

First, evaluators had difficulty sampling participants. In fact, after an initial email was sent to potential participants, only thirteen individuals had completed evaluation measures by the end of the first week. To gather more data, deadlines were extended five more times, in which both UPLC staff and the evaluator used follow-up emails and targeted asks. In line with these efforts, fewer responses were collected than anticipated. Additionally, participants' responses may not have been indicative of their organizational capacity outside of the emergency measures taken during a pandemic. That is, participating agencies may have addressed more barriers to serving underserved communities, implemented greater measures towards organizational transformation, or created more partnerships had their work not been so substantially hindered by COVID-related stress.

Second, the current evaluation data were not adequate for more complex statistical analyses. Due to differences in the pre-and-post-UPLC evaluation surveys, change scores, and multivariate analyses were not possible. To address this concern, the evaluator created a new, retroactive UPLC member survey to assess change from the beginning of the UPLC to the present. However, future work should aim to gather consistent quantitative and qualitative data from staff members over the course of the program.

APPENDIX A: STUDY MATERIALS

Participant Interview Guide

Overall Impressions
1. What are your overall impressions of the UPLC program?
2. What were the strengths of the UPLC program?
3. What could have been improved?
4. Did this program have an impact on your organization? You?
   a. If yes, please explain.
5. Did COVID-19 influence your experience with/in this program?

Program Objectives
Now, I'm going to ask you about the specific outcomes of the UPLC program.
1. Can you tell me about your organization's ability to identify client barriers to seeking services before and during the UPLC program?
2. Please tell me about your organizational practices (e.g., hiring, addressing power, dynamics, etc.) before and during the UPLC program.
3. Can you tell me how you provided services before and after the UPLC program?
4. Please tell me about your organization's ability to serve your target underserved population before and during the UPLC program.
   a. In which ways do those from marginalized communities inform your agency strategies?

Modality Experience
Now, I'm going to ask you a few questions about participating in a virtual UPLC program.
1. What was your experience participating in this program virtually?
2. What aspect of participating virtually worked well? What could be improved?
3. Was your agency also a part of Cohort 1?
   a. If yes:
      i. What are the differences between Cohort 1 and 2?
      ii. What has been the same?

Impact Questions
1. Which aspect of the UPLC program was most impactful for your organization? Yourself?
2. Which aspect of the UPLC program was least impactful for your organization? Yourself?
3. After completing this program, what additional information or assistance may you need to be a comfortable, competent advocate for underserved populations?
4. In your opinion, was the UPLC program successful in giving you what you needed to better serve clients from underserved communities?

Wrap-Up Question
1. Is there any other information you would like to provide about the UPLC program?

APPENDIX A: STUDY MATERIALS

UPLC Staff Interview Guide

Overall Impressions
1. What are your overall impressions of the success of the second cohort of the UPLC program? Improvements?
2. Do these impressions differ from the first cohort?
   a. If so, how?
3. Did COVID-19 influence the execution of this experience with/in this program?
   a. If so, how?

Program Objectives
Now, I'm going to ask you about the specific outcomes of the UPLC program.
1. Can you tell me a little about participating agencies' abilities to identify client barriers to seeking services before and during the UPLC Program?
   a. Please give an example.
2. Please tell me about any observed changes in agencies' organizational practices (e.g., hiring, addressing power, dynamics, etc.) before and during the UPLC.
   a. Please give an example.
3. Can you tell me about any changes in how agencies provided services before and during the UPLC Program?
   a. Please give an example.
4. Please tell me about agencies' abilities to serve their target underserved populations before and during the UPLC Program.
   a. Please give an example.

Process Questions
Now, I would love to ask you a few questions about the process of implementing this program.
1. What were the steps to implementing this program?
2. Would you change anything about its implementation?
3. What are your thoughts about the statewide sessions? The presenters?
   a. How were the topics selected?
4. Can you tell me about your experience with site visits?
   a. What did a successful site visit look like?
5. What are your impressions of the regional meetings?

Impact Questions
1. Which aspect of the UPLC program was most impactful for participating organizations? Yourself?
2. Which aspect of the UPLC program was least impactful for participating organizations?
3. What were the assets of implementing this program? The barriers?
4. In your opinion, was the UPLC Program successfully in giving participating agencies what they needed to better serve underserved groups?

Wrap-Up Question
1. Is there any other information you would like to provide about the UPLC Program?

APPENDIX A: STUDY MATERIALS

DCJS/DSS/VSDVAA Staff Interview Guide

Participation Questions
1. What are your overall impressions of the UPLC program?
2. What were the strengths of the UPLC program?
3. What could have been improved?
4. What has been your experience as a member of Cohort 2?
5. Do these impressions differ from the first cohort?
    a. If so, how?
6. What has been done well? What could be improved?
7. Did COVID-19 influence your participation in this program?
    a. If so, how?

Partnership Group Questions
Now, I would love to ask you a few questions about the Partnership Group.
1. What has been your experience with the Partnership Group?
2. Do you feel it has accomplished what it set out to accomplish?
3. What are your thoughts on the diversity of Partnership Group members?
    a. Did group members challenge your way of thinking?

Impact Questions
Now, I would love to ask you a few questions about the impact of this program.
1. Has your participation in the UPLC Program influenced your work?
    a. If yes, how so?
2. Tell me about any organizational process changes that have begun as a result of this program.
3. Has this program influenced the grant submission, review, and allocation processes of your agency?
    a. Have you seen any changes in grant processes for small, medium, or large agencies?
4. More broadly, have you seen any changes in Virginia due to this program?
    a. If yes, what do these changes look like?
        i. What about changes in cultural-specific advocacy or grant submission?
5. Have you seen any changes in advocates in Virginia due to this program?
    a. If yes, what do these changes look like?

Wrap-Up Question
1. In your opinion, has the UPLC Vision Statement been fulfilled?

"It is the vision of the Virginia Underserved Population Advisory Committee that all services are culturally specific, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and accessible to all survivors. The voices and experiences of people who have been historically marginalized will be at the center, informing our work."

2. Is there any other information you would like to provide?

APPENDIX A: STUDY MATERIALS

ED/Program Directors' Survey

Leadership Practice Group
1. Did you participate in the Leadership Practice Groups?
   a. If yes, what did you find most valuable about this group? Least valuable?
2. How do you feel about the content covered in these meetings?
3. Would you add or take anything out?

Overall Impressions
1. What are your overall impressions of the UPLC program?
2. What are the program's strengths? Areas of improvement?
3. What is the biggest change in practice you have made during Cohort 2 of the UPLC?
4. The UPLC program caused me to reflect on internal and external barriers. (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
   a. If you agree or strongly agree, please give an example that speaks to this objective.
5. The UPLC program caused my agency to engage in organizational transformation. (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
   a. If you agree or strongly agree, please give an example that speaks to this objective.
6. The UPLC program caused my agency to better engage with underserved communities and strategy building. (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
   a. If you agree or strongly agree, please give an example that speaks to this objective.
7. Did the UPLC program change your thoughts on leadership?
   a. If yes, how so?
8. Would you recommend this program to other EDs, Program Directors, or agencies?

UPLC Participant Survey

Introduction

Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative Cohort 2 Post Assessment

Hi everyone! Thank you so much for your continued participation in Cohort 2 of the Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative. As part of the program, we would like you to complete the following 30-minute survey to help us gather a snapshot of all the work you have been doing over the past two years. This survey will include questions about specific organizational activities and practices, along with open-ended prompts inviting you to reflect on your experience in the field. Please know there are no right or wrong answers. We simply want to hear your candid feedback.

We also want to acknowledge the stress and uncertainty of this time in Virginia, the work, and your personal lives. We have tried to make this survey as user-friendly as possible, to allow you to efficiently complete it.

Your answers will remain confidential, and we will not report the results of specific individuals. An independent evaluator will compile results, and only composite scores will be presented in a final evaluation report.

We ask that you complete the survey by XXX at XXX p.m.

hallcj444@gmail.com. Thank you for being part of the second cohort of the UPLC
Program!

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Background Information

The following questions are about your position.

Please select your organization from the drop-down menu below.

Your answer will only be used for classification purposes.

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How would you classify your position?

○ Part time (less than 32 hours/week)
○ Full time (more than 32 hours/week)

How long have you worked at your current agency?

○ Less than 1 year

○ 1 - 3 years
○ 4 - 10 years
○ 11 or more years

How long have you worked in the field of sexual and intimate partner violence (SV/IPV)?

○ Less than 1 year
○ 1 - 3 years
○ 4 - 10 years
○ 11 or more years

What is the focus of your current work? Check all that apply.

☐ Crisis services
☐ Advocacy
☐ Counseling
☐ Legal services
☐ Community Engagement
☐ Prevention
☐ Management
☐ Development
☐ Administrative support
☐ [_____] Other (please specify)

Training

The following questions assess organizational training practices.

Since participating in Cohort 2 of the UPLC program, have you received training and support to understand equity and social justice principles in your work, such as privilege, power, culture and oppression?

Yes   No   Unsure
O   O   O

If no, please specify why?

[text box]

Tell us about training and support you've received on equity and social justice principles since participating in Cohort 2 of the UPLC program.

We're not looking for your list of trainings -- instead, tell us about the general topics, or even the big takeaways from these learning opportunities.

Please rate your level of knowledge around the current topics.

	Not at all knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely knowledgeable
Power, privilege, and oppression	○	○	○	○
Cultural humility	○	○	○	○
Safety planning	○	○	○	○
Empowerment	○	○	○	○

Policies & practices

The following questions ask about agency policy documents and practice protocols.

Since participating in Cohort 2 of the UPLC program, has your agency amended key policy documents (e.g. mission statement, strategic plan) and practice protocols (e.g. intake documents, community education, project evaluations) to be more in line with social justice principles including privilege, power, culture, and oppression?

Yes   No   Unsure
○   ○   ○

If no, please specify why?

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Please give examples of **policy documents** (e.g., mission statement, strategic plan) that have been updated to reflect social justice principles since participating in Cohort 2 of the UPLC program?

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Please give examples of **practice protocols** (e.g., intake documents, community education, project evaluations) that have been updated to reflect social justice principles as a result of Cohort 2 of the UPLC program?

[   ]

Which social justice topics would you be interested in incorporating into your policies and practices? Please select all that apply.

☐ Gender Justice

☐ Racial Justice

☐ Economic Justice

☐ Reproductive Justice

☐ [   ] Other (please specify)

Since participating in Cohort 2 of the UPLC program, which social justice topics have been incorporated into your policies and practices? Please select all that apply.

☐ Gender Justice

☐ Racial Justice

☐ Economic Justice

☐ Reproductive Justice

☐ [   ] Other (please specify)

Are there specific policies or protocols that you are interested in analyzing and updating after Cohort 2's conclusion? Please tell us what you'd like to change, and

why.

[ ]

Capacity

The following questions ask about your agency's capacity to serve clients from underserved populations.

Since participating in Cohort 2 of the UPLC, please rate how comfortable you feel in your ability to provide services to unserved, underserved, or inadequately served individuals.

Not at all comfortable
○

Slightly comfortable
○

Comfortable
○

Extremely comfortable
○

Please rate your level of comfort providing services to the following groups:

	Not at all comfortable	Slightly comfortable	Comfortable	Extremely comfortable
Black, Indigenous, & other people of color	○	○	○	○
LGBTQ+ individuals	○	○	○	○
Low-income individuals	○	○	○	○
Older adults	○	○	○	○
Children and youth	○	○	○	○
People with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Individuals with limited English proficiency	○	○	○	○
People living in rural communities	○	○	○	○

Please describe any collaborations, since the beginning of Cohort 2, between your agency and community leaders to improve services for any of the following groups:

- Black, indigenous, & other people of color;
- LGBTQ+ individuals;
- Low-income individuals;
- Older adults;
- Children and youth;
- People with disabilities;
- Individuals with limited English proficiency; or
- People living in rural communities.

You can provide as much or as little detail as you'd like.

[ ]

Planning

The following questions assess organizational planning initiatives.

Since participating in Cohort 2 of the UPLC program, how is your agency identifying populations that are unserved, underserved, or inadequately served in your community?

[ ]

Has your organization conducted a formal needs assessment to gain knowledge of client and/or community needs since the beginning of Cohort 2?

Yes   No   Unsure
○   ○   ○

When was the last time your organization conducted a formal needs assessment to gain knowledge of client and/or community needs?

Never
○

Within the past 2 years
○

3 - 5 years ago
○

6 or more years ago
○

Unsure
○

What did your organization change as a result of this needs assessment?

┌───┐
│   │
│   │
│   │
│   │
│   │
│   │
└───┘

Has your organization undergone organizational strategic planning since the beginning of Cohort 2?

Yes   No   Unsure
O   O   O

When was the last time your organization underwent organizational strategic planning?

Never

O

Within the past 2 years

O

3 - 5 years ago

O

6 or more years ago

O

Unsure

O

What did your organization change as a result of this strategic planning process?

[ ]

Barriers

One of the learning objectives of this program is to analyze how agency policies and practices may create barriers to service, while another is to evaluate barriers to meeting the needs of underserved populations. Please take time to reflect on your experience working in the field of sexual and intimate partner violence and your experience working at your agency as you answer these questions.

What barriers have you observed **in your community** that make it harder for survivors to access services?

[ ]

What barriers have you observed **in your organization** that make it harder for survivors to access services?

Meetings

The following questions assess knowledge gathered from UPLC events and meetings.

The **Regional Meetings** helped me gain new knowledge to better serve my clients?

Strongly disagree

○

Somewhat
disagree

○

Neither agree nor
disagree

○

Somewhat agree

○

Strongly agree

○

The **Statewide Gatherings** helped me gain new knowledge to better serve my clients?

Strongly disagree

○

Somewhat disagree

○

Neither agree nor disagree

○

Somewhat agree

○

Strongly agree

○

The **Regional Conversations,** held by agencies, helped me gain new knowledge to better serve my clients?

Strongly disagree

○

Somewhat
disagree

○

Neither agree nor
disagree

○

Somewhat agree

○

Strongly agree

○

Closing

Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

If you have any additional perspective on underserved populations in your service region, thoughts on previous experiences with anti-oppression initiatives, or have any other comments, please use the space below.

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1: Years at Agency

Years	Count	Percentage
Less than 1 year	4	7.5%
1 - 3 years	20	37.7%
4 - 10 years	20	37.7
11 or more years	9	17.1%
Total	**53**	**100%**

Table 2: Years in the Field

Years	Count	Percentage
Less than 1 year	3	6.0%
1 - 3 years	14	26.5%
4 - 10 years	14	26.5%
11 or more years	22	41.0%
Total	**53**	**100%**

Table 3: Employment Classification

Classification	Count	Percentage
Full- time	53	100%
Total	**53**	**100%**

Table 4: Agencies in Sample

Agencies with 1 or more survey responses	Agencies in Cohort 2	Percentage
21	21	**100%**

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 3: Years at Agency

Years	Count	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1	7.7%
1 - 3 years	4	29.0%
4 - 10 years	5	34.3%
11 or more years	4	29.0%
Total	**14**	**100%**

Table 4: Years in the Field

Years	Count	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1	7.7%
1 - 3 years	3	30.6%
4 - 10 years	1	7.7%
11 or more years	7	54.0%
Total	**14**	**100%**

**INTERVIEWS:
UPLC MEMBERS,
UPLC STAFF,
STATEWIDE STAFF**

Table 5: Interviewee Roles

Role	Count	Percentage
Statewide Staff	7	7.7%
UPLC Participants	8	29.0%
UPLC Staff	3	34.3%
Total	**17**	**100%**

RESOURCES

The folder that is linked below is a compilation of the resources shared throughout the two UPLC Cohorts.

- Resource Document Google Folder Link