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Improving Family Resource Collective Programs: A Comparative Analysis Project

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Abstract

Community Bridges Nonprofit serves thousands of Santa Cruz County residents through its ten programs across the life course. One of these is the Family Resource Collective (FRC), in which four centers deliver a variety of services aimed at meeting the basic needs of local families. The rising national cost of living and barriers to public benefit support are causing families across the United States to struggle to meet their families' basic needs. Locally, many families are facing threats of displacement and need greater access to social support services. This project involved a comparative analysis of the four FRC programs between 2021-2022 survey years, closure of the survey feedback loop with participants using the Listen4Good approach, and creation of an updated services chart to increase awareness of available programs offered at each site. Next steps include the implementation of participant feedback within the FRC and the distribution of the 2023 survey.

Keywords: basic needs, Santa Cruz County, low-income families, comparative analysis, survey

Agency & Communities Served

Community Bridges has over 44 years of experience providing essential resources, services, and programs to meet the needs of the residents of Santa Cruz County. This mission is realized through 10 vital programs across 20 sites throughout the county, serving local children, individuals, families, and seniors. All programs are grounded in evidence-based practices and include a rigorous evaluation of effectiveness (Community Bridges, 2022).

Community Bridges serves over 17,000 children, families, and seniors annually across locations in Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties through diverse programs that provide essential services for individuals' abilities to grow and thrive. The Community Bridges family of programs include the Early Education Division, Child & Adult Care Food Program, Elderday Adult Day Health Care, Lift Line, Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County, Women, Infants & Children (WIC), La Manzana Community Resources (LMCR), Live Oak Community Resources (LOCR), Mountain Community Resources (MCR), and Nueva Vista Community Resources (NVCR). LMCR, LOCR, MCR, and NVCR make up the Family Resource Collective (FRC)- four programs that work with families in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley to meet their basic needs through education, resources, and advocacy. A variety of services are offered, including food distribution, mental health counseling, parent education, assistance with public benefit enrollments, translation services, youth tutoring, and more (Community Bridges, 2022). In 2022, the FRC saw a 500% increase in requests for personal assistance and provided 6,500 hours of advocacy services to program participants (Community Bridges, 2022).

While those in all different life stages are served through the programs Community Bridges offers, the 2020 annual report stated that 89% of the families served through the FRC make less than \$26,400 annually for a family of four, 63% of program participants identify as

female, and 69% of program participants are Spanish speakers (Community Bridges, 2020). All publications from Community Bridges are offered in both English and Spanish as many of the program participants are primarily Spanish speakers.

Problem Model Background and Literature Review

Problem Statement

Low-income families in Santa Cruz County face a challenging environment, where meeting basic needs such as housing, food, healthcare, and education becomes a daily struggle. The cost of living in Santa Cruz County is higher than in surrounding regions and adjusted state income shows that those making under \$80,000/year in Santa Cruz County are living in poverty (DHCD, 2023). The majority of the families served through the FRC make under \$26,400/year (Community Bridges, 2022). Addressing the issue of families struggling to meet their basic needs often requires a multifaceted approach that involves government policies, community organizations, and economic development efforts aimed at reducing income inequality and providing support for low-income families. Social safety nets, affordable housing initiatives, job training programs, and accessible healthcare services are some of the potential solutions to mitigate this social problem (Masten et al, 2021). It is essential for nonprofits like Community Bridges to consider the unique circumstances and challenges faced by families in Santa Cruz County and tailor interventions accordingly.

Contributing Factors

One of the primary reasons families in Santa Cruz County struggle to meet their basic needs is the high cost of living. This includes expenses related to housing, transportation, healthcare, and childcare. In areas with a high cost of living like Santa Cruz County, housing costs can be particularly burdensome, leading to a significant portion of income being allocated

to rent or mortgages (USDHUD, 2019). In regions with high housing costs like Santa Cruz County, housing insecurity is a common issue (Kathan, 2021). Families also struggle to find affordable and stable housing, leading to the risk of homelessness or frequent moves.

Income inequality can exacerbate the problem of families struggling to meet basic needs. While some residents in Santa Cruz County may have high-paying jobs, many others work in low-wage sectors, such as service or agriculture. This disparity in income levels can lead to a lack of access to essential resources and services for lower-income families.

Availability and accessibility of social services and support programs, such as food assistance, childcare subsidies, and mental health services, can significantly impact families' ability to meet their basic needs. Limited access to these resources can leave families more vulnerable to their basic needs going unmet.

Families facing language barriers may also have difficulty accessing vital information about available services, resources, and opportunities. They may struggle to understand government forms, educational materials, or healthcare instructions, making it challenging to access the support they need. Additionally, accessing social services like food assistance, housing support, or childcare subsidies can be challenging for families with limited English proficiency. Understanding application procedures and eligibility requirements can be complicated and language barriers/literacy gaps increase difficulty in completing necessary forms. Additionally, there is a paradox in California in which 25% of low-income immigrant individuals avoided public benefit programs (Babey et al, 2021).

Consequences

Unmet basic needs and low income may result in delayed or inadequate healthcare, worsening health conditions over time. Unmet healthcare needs can result in untreated chronic conditions,

which can lead to long-term health problems and higher healthcare costs. Lack of access to nutritious food can lead to hunger and malnutrition, affecting physical and cognitive development, especially in children.

Inability to pay rent or mortgages can result in eviction, where families may end up without stable housing and face either homelessness or forced relocation. One of the most visible and immediate consequences of families struggling to make ends meet is the increase in homelessness. When families cannot afford stable housing, they may end up living in overcrowded, substandard conditions, or even on the streets. Homelessness is associated with numerous health risks, including exposure to harsh weather, violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues. Families, especially children, experiencing homelessness are more vulnerable to physical and emotional health problems.

Families struggling to meet basic needs may be forced to relocate to more affordable areas, often far from their jobs, support networks, and schools. This displacement can disrupt stability in their lives. Children may have to change schools frequently due to forced relocations, leading to disruptions in their education. Relocation can also disrupt social and community ties, making it difficult for families to access support systems and find new opportunities in new places.

Low-income families may struggle to afford nutritious food, leading to malnutrition and poor dietary habits. Malnutrition can have serious health consequences, particularly for children's physical and cognitive development. Long-term exposure to poor living conditions and inadequate healthcare due to financial constraints can result in persistent chronic health conditions. Malnutrition can hinder children's ability to learn, potentially leading to lower educational attainment and reduced future earning potential. Additionally, chronic health issues can limit adults' ability to work and support their families.

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Rising cost of living	Too many low-income	Homelessness
Lack of knowledge of available public benefits	families in Santa Cruz County struggle to meet their families' basic needs (food,	Forced relocation
Language barriers & literacy gaps	water, shelter, clothing).	Malnutrition/ long-term health effects

Project Description

Project Description

Throughout this 1.5-year internship, the implementation of agency-wide participant surveys utilizing the Listen4Good approach across Community Bridges' ten individual programs has been the central focus. Listen4Good feedback loops are a system of gathering program feedback in which a five-step process is followed for continuous, sustainable feedback (Twersky & Reichheld, 2019). This ongoing process of surveying focused on improvement follows the steps of (1) design, (2) collect, (3) interpret, (4) respond, and (5) close the loop before beginning again with the design step (Listen4Good, 2022). After the design, distribution, and collection of surveys through Survey Monkey, a comparative analysis between survey years was completed for each program (see Appendix B). These analyses are then used to develop action plans for improving programs based on participant feedback. Lastly, a Listen4Good feedback loop

document (see Appendix C) is generated to distribute to program participants in an effort to close the feedback loop and communicate to clients "what we heard" and "what we will do about it." This capstone project focuses on the comparative analysis of the four Family Resource Collective programs between 2021-2022 survey years, the development of a Listen4Good feedback loop document to distribute to program participants, and the creation of an updated services chart (see Appendix D) for each center to increase awareness of available programs offered at each site.

Project Justification

Conducting a comparative analysis of the program data from 2021-2022 allows for a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of the Family Resource Collective programs during this period. This analysis can identify what worked well and what areas require improvement, enabling the organization to enhance its services based on real data and participant feedback. This project directly responds to contributing factors of the lack of knowledge of available public benefits and addresses language barriers to obtaining services.

Creating a feedback loop document using the Listen4Good method (Listen4Good, 2023) facilitates open communication with program participants. By actively seeking and valuing participant feedback, the organization demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs and expectations of those it serves. This can lead to increased participant satisfaction and engagement with the programs.

An updated services chart for each center provides clear and transparent information about the available programs and services. This can help build trust within the community and hold the organization accountable for delivering on its promises. A services chart can serve as a valuable resource for both program participants and the broader community. It can increase

awareness of the range of services offered by the Family Resource Collective, ensuring that those in need are fully informed about the support available to them.

Implementing this project demonstrates a commitment to a culture of continuous improvement within the Family Resource Collective. By analyzing data, collecting feedback, and updating service charts, the organization can adapt and evolve its programs to better serve the changing needs of the community. Ultimately, this project can lead to more effective and responsive programs, which will have a positive impact on the well-being of families and individuals in the community. By optimizing services and engagement, the Family Resource Collective can contribute to improved health outcomes for its participants.

Benefits

This project is essential for fostering program improvement, enhancing participant satisfaction, increasing transparency, and ensuring that the Family Resource Collective's services align with the evolving needs of the communities they serve. It supports the organization's mission of providing vital support to families and individuals, ultimately leading to a stronger, more resilient community.

Implementation Process

This project began with a comparative analysis of survey results between 2021-2022 from participants at the four FRC centers- LMCR, LOCR, MCR, and NVCR. This analysis compares center specific responses to the previous year in addition to a comparative analysis across all four centers as a collective. Comparative analysis was conducted using survey monkey data downloaded to both excel and google sheets. After completing the five comparative analysis spreadsheets, presentations for key agency leadership were designed using Canva to share the findings from the survey and analysis. After each presentation was completed, they would be

sent to each program lead 24 hours before scheduled meetings. The student intern lead two scheduled presentation meetings with FRC leadership to discuss the survey findings and plan for possible changes to be implemented based on participant feedback. In these meetings, a discussion about the feedback loop document preparation occurred, where program leads provided detailed explanations for participant feedback and collaboratively brainstormed creative, SMART goals for the feedback loop documents. After designing the feedback loop documents in English and Spanish, they were distributed via email to program administrators to print and post at each center in addition to uploading them to the Community Bridges website. The same distribution tactic was used for the updated FRC Services Chart (See Appendix A for full implementation chart with timeline).

Assessment Plan & Expected Outcomes

To assess the effectiveness of the surveys, comparative data was used to measure the differences in responses between 2021-2022 survey years. One desire of this project was an increase in responses in 2022. Another desired outcome was qualitative suggestions that the FRC would be able to implement this year to improve programs to better serve their program participants. This was measured through qualitative analysis and development of an implementation plan to better meet the needs of program participants. A goal of this project is that the agency accepts research and evaluation report and continues to implement changes to programs based on research and evaluation findings.

The success of this project was also measured by conducting interviews with key agency personnel to assess the project's impact on the agency's ability to better serve the community.

Questions asked to three Community Bridges personnel included: (1) "How is this work going to be used?" (2) "What worked best about this project?" and (3) "Will this project impact the

agency in the future?"

To aid in the success of this project for years to come, recording the digital survey in the shared Community Bridges Survey Monkey account made it possible for the agency to easily add and remove questions and adapt future surveys in response to emerging needs without significant future time investment. Saving all created feedback loop documents and comparative analysis spreadsheets in shared agency folders makes review and use of data easy among agency leadership. Long term effectiveness of this agency-wide project can be continually measured by survey response rates and the implementation of program changes based on participant feedback.

Project Results

The goal of this ongoing participant survey and Listen4Good feedback loop process is to involve participants in the continual improvement of the FRC programs. One desired outcome was an increase in responses between the 2021-2022 survey years. The 2021 FRC survey had 153 responses and 2022 had 364 responses, a 2.3x increase in respondents between 2021-2022. Each individual center also had an increase in survey respondents.

Another desired outcome was qualitative suggestions that the FRC would be able to implement this year to improve programs to better serve their program participants. One action step already taken as a result of participant suggestions was the development of a chart showing all services offered at each center. Another desired service among all four centers were more computer, literacy, and English classes. A new grant this year will allow the FRC to develop literacy classes and English classes at some of the centers. Additionally, hygiene services are now being offered at multiple centers. There are also plans for this year to send a program lead from each center to become a certified notary as a result of qualitative responses seeking this service. Additional future projects as a result of this survey include expanding pop-up

community health services, increasing community events, and developing social meet-up groups for parents.

The Listen4Good model hinges on the completion of a feedback loop, in which participants are told what the result of their feedback has done. This project involved the creation of one FRC feedback loop document as a whole and four center-specific feedback loop documents to be distributed to participants. Each center has posted the feedback loop document in a visible place and has copies available for program participants to take. Additionally, these documents have been uploaded to the Community Bridges website. All documents have been translated into Spanish to improve the accessibility of the Listen4Good feedback loop closure.

The success of this project was also measured by conducting interviews with key agency personnel to assess the project's impact on the agency's ability to better serve the community. Questions asked to three Community Bridges personnel included: (1) "How is this work going to be used?" (2) "What worked best about this project?" (3) "Will this project impact the agency in the future?" One agency lead said that the results from this project will be used to present to key stakeholders and donors to demonstrate continued need and "hopefully receive more funding for our programs." All three agency leads noted that the thing that works best about this project is that they are able to trust that it is getting done without their direct involvement until the point of generating new ideas and solutions to meet the needs of their program participants. One noted that "the short answer questions give us more clarity on what our clients actually need." Another mentioned that over time, this project has "continued to show what our community wants and needs" and that they have been able to use this ongoing project to enact change within the program. They each expressed hope that this project would continue for years to come, so the organization can continually improve based on the needs of the communities they serve.

Conclusion & Recommendations

In order to address the lack of knowledge of available public benefits offered at each FRC site, a services chart was created and distributed on the Community Bridges website and at each center. To address language barriers, each document created was translated into Spanish in addition to English, and translation services are provided at each FRC center to assist participants in understanding important documents or forms. My ongoing participation in this project has helped improve ten programs over the course of the three-semester internship. I recommend continuing this project in future years to further improve programs and continue relationships between Community Bridges staff and participants. An improvement I would suggest would be a faster turn-around between surveying, analysis, and feedback loop distribution. This could be achieved by outsourcing this project to a research team or dividing the work between multiple future interns. I believe this work is vital in optimizing services and engagement, and continuing this surveying for the Family Resource Collective can contribute to improved health outcomes for its participants.

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Appendix A

Task	Timeline	Parties Involved	Materials/ Services Needed	Deliverables
Collect survey data from 2022 FRC survey and organize data	August 1st-30th	Mentor, Student	Computer, google sheets, excel, survey monkey	Organized, downloaded spreadsheets with labeled questions ready for analysis
Collect survey data from 2022 FRC survey and organize data	August 30th	Mentor, Student	Computer, google sheets, excel, survey monkey	Organized, downloaded spreadsheets with labeled questions ready for analysis
Conduct Comparative Analysis Between 2021 & 2022 FRC Survey	September 4th	Mentor, Student	Computer, google sheets, excel, survey monkey data	Meeting minutes, Task assignments, completed comparative analysis spreadsheet
Conduct Comparative Analysis Between 2021 & 2022 Surveys for each center individually	September 8th	Mentor, Student	Computer, google sheets, excel, survey monkey data	Meeting minutes, Task assignments, completed 4 comparative analysis spreadsheets
Create graphs and figures from comparative data	September 8th	Mentor, Student	Computer, google sheets, excel, canva	Graphs added to comparative analysis spreadsheets

Create word clouds utilizing qualitative research questions	September 11th	Mentor, Student	Computer, google sheets, excel, wordart	Word clouds added to FRC analysis presentations
Design analysis presentations for agency leadership	September 11th & September 18th	Mentor, Student	Computer, Canva software, completed analysis spreadsheets and graphs	Presentation materials prepared and sent to meeting attendees 24 hrs before meetings
Lead meetings to present and discuss results and plan for future agency changes	September 12th & September 19th	Mentor, Student, Program Leads	Zoom link setup, Task list, Meeting agenda, completed presentation	Task assignments, editing notes for final analysis document and L4G document
Design Feedback loop documents based on participant feedback & program lead meeting	September 15th - October 5th (weekly check ins about progress)	Mentor, Student	Computer, Zoom link setup, Task list, Canva software, google sheets, excel, survey monkey data	5 FRC feedback loop documents: One for each center (4) and one for the FRC as a whole
Translate each document into preliminary Spanish translation	By October 13th	Mentor, Student	Computer, canva software, google translation	5 FRC feedback loop documents translated into Spanish for review by program leads
Send final feedback loop documents to program leads	By October 13th	Mentor, Student, Family Resource Center administrators	Computer, email	PDF sent to program leads for final review
Post feedback loops at FRC centers	By October 18th	Mentor, Student, Family Resource Center administrators	Computer, email, printer	Physical copies of documents posted
Upload feedback	By October 18th	Mentor, Student,	Computer,	Digital copies

loops to Community Bridges Website		Family Resource Center administrators	email, printer, website link setup	uploaded to website
Adjust and distribute updated FRC services chart	By October 18th	Mentor, Student, Family Resource Center administrators	Computer, email, printer, website link setup	Physical copies of documents posted & digital copies uploaded to website

Appendix B







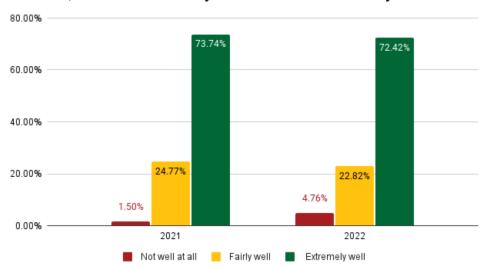


Community Bridges 2022 Listen4Good Survey Comparative Analysis Family Resource Collective

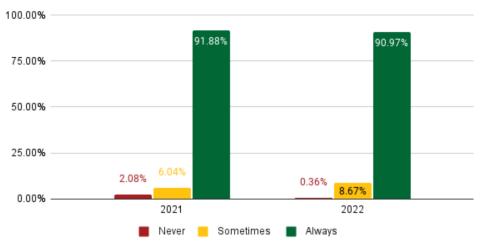
2021: 153 Total Responses 2022: 364 Total Responses



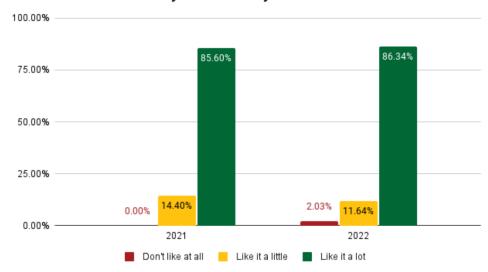
Overall, how well has Family Resource Collective met your needs?



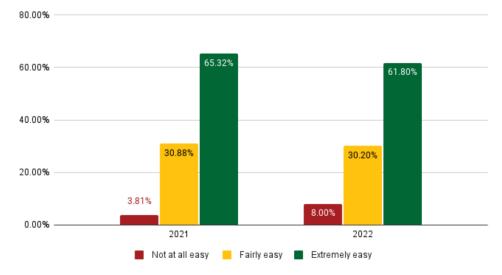
How often do staff at Family Resource Collective treat you with respect?



How much do you like Family Resource Collective?



How easy is it for you to get services at Family Resource Collective?



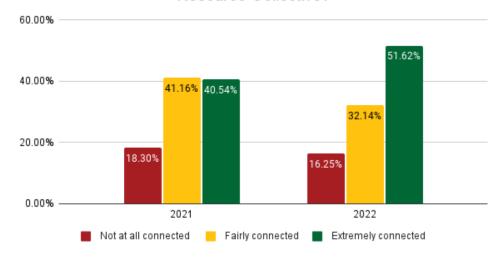
What is the Family Resource Collective good at?



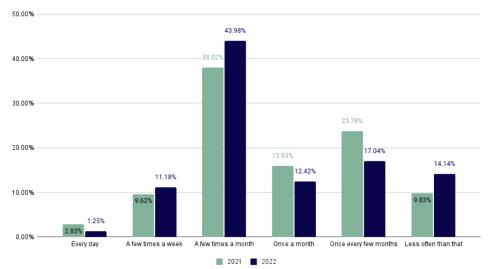
What could the Family Resource Collective do better?

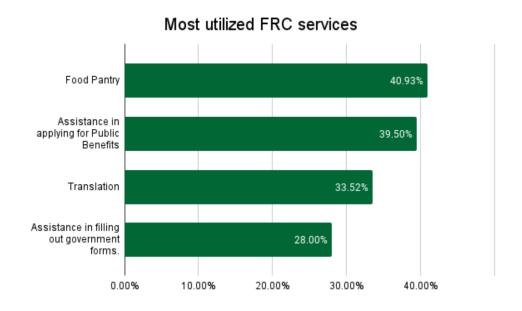


How connected do you feel to other participants at Family Resource Collective?



How often do you interact with Family Resource Collective?

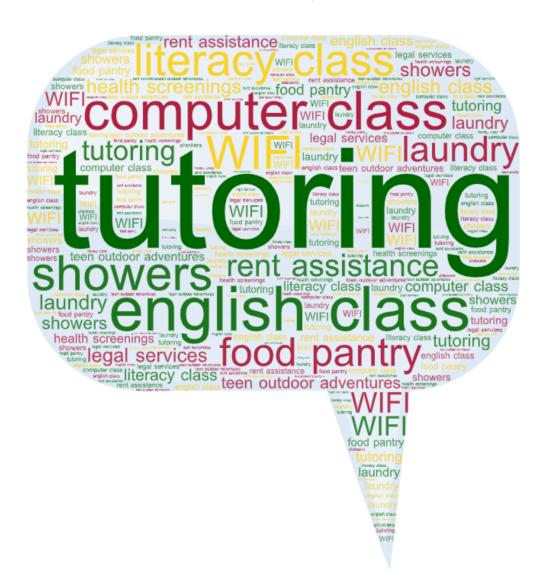




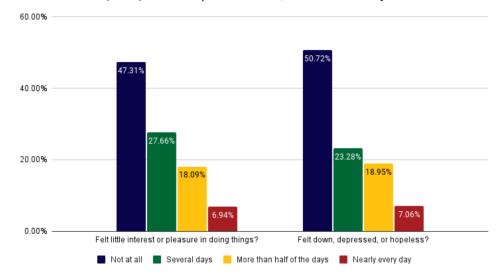
If available, which would you be most interested in?



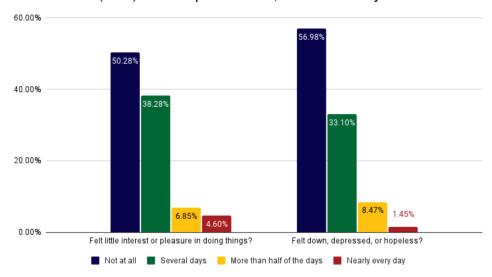
If you could select one new service for us to provide, what would it be? (open ended)

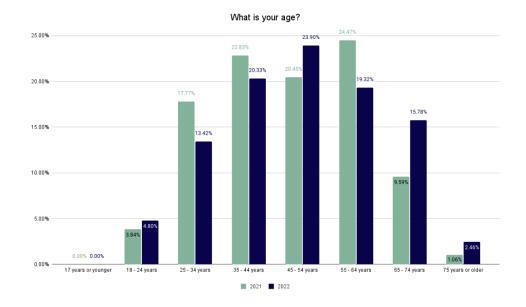


(2021) Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you:

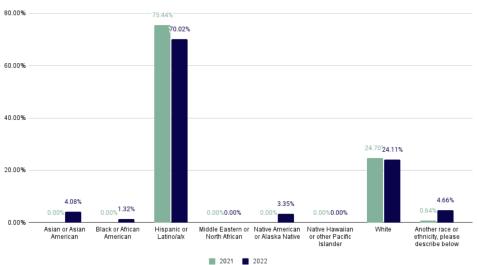


(2022) Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you:

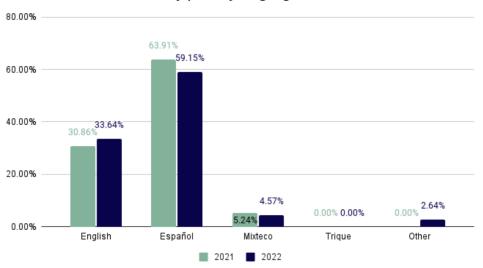




Race/Ethnicity: How do you identify? (Check all that apply)



My primary language is:



Gender: How do you identify?



Appendix C



WHAT WE HEARD







WHAT WE WILL DO ABOUT IT

Thank you for participating in the 2022 Listen for Good survey. You told us there are a few things you would like to see changed. Family Resource Collective heard you, and we want to make your experience at our program better. We are excited to start making improvements.

	"Offer more computer, English, and literacy classes."	Although we are unable to offer classes at all four centers, we do have English classes at LOCR. We also received a grant to help us launch new computer classes-Stay tuned for more info!
?	"We don't know what services are available."	We have updated <u>our FRC services char</u> t on our website and we have hard copies at our service sites.
1 Sold Mary	"Increase staff so it's easier to get services quickly."	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our staffing has been limited. We are fully staffed now and are working to shorten our processing times.
TIN	"Host more community events."	This year, we plan to offer more in person events. Please contact individual centers for upcoming events!
(3)	"Expand center hours into the evening."	We will be adding a question to this year's survey about additional hours that would work for you at the center you use.









Gracias por participar en la 2022 encuesta Listen for Good. Nos mencionaste que hay algunas cosas que les gustaría ver cambiadas. Family Resource Collective a escuchado y deseamos mejorar su experiencia con nuestro programa. Estamos entusiasmados de comenzar las mejoras.

WHAT WE HEARD

WHAT WE WILL DO ABOUT IT

	"Ofrecer más clases de informática, inglés y alfabetización."	Aunque no podemos ofrecer clases en los cuatro centros, sí tenemos clases de inglés en LOCR. También recibimos una subvención para ayudarnos a lanzar nuevas clases de informática. ¡Estén atentos para obtener más información!		
?	"No sabemos qué servicios están disponibles."	Hemos actualizado nuestra tabla de servicios de <u>FRC en nuestro sitio web</u> y tenemos copias impresas en nuestros sitios de servicio.		
1 Sold Sold Sold Sold Sold Sold Sold Sold	"Aumentar el personal para que sea más fácil obtener servicios."	Debido a la pandemia de COVID-19, nuestra dotación de personal ha sido limitada. Ahora contamos con todo el personal y estamos trabajando para acortar nuestros tiempos de procesamiento.		
TIK	"Organizar más eventos comunitarios."	Este año, planeamos ofrecer más eventos presenciales. ¡Comuníquese con los centros individuales para conocer los próximos eventos!		
(3)	"Expand center hours into the evening."	We will be adding a question to this year's survey about additional hours that would work for you at the center you use.		

Family Resource Services / Servicios de recursos











Disaster Assistance Claims	Solicitudes de reclamos de asistencia por desastre		>
Disaster Case Management	Administrar de casos de desastree		
Emergency Preparednesss	Preparación para emergencia		~
Translation	Traducción		⊘
Housing Navigation Suppor	Navegación de rt vivienda		~
Laundry & Hygiene	Lavandería e higiene		
Enrollments & Referrals	Inscripciones y referencias		~
Food & Clothing Distribution	n Distribución de alimentos y ropa		⊘
Legal Services	Servicios jurídicos		>
Mental Health Counseling	Servicios de consejería		⊘
Natural Health Clinic	Clínica de salud natural		
Parenting Classes	Clases para padres		~
Homework Tutoring	Club de tareas		~
Computer Lab	Uso de computadora		~
Phone-Fax-Copy	Uso del Teléfono-Fax-Copia		>
Summer Lunch	Almuerzo de verano		>

Contact us / Contáctenos

I	(831) 724-2997	Live Oak 1740 17th Ave (831) 476-7284	(831) 335-6600	
I	info@cbridges.org	info@cbridges.org	info@cbridges.org	info@cbridges.org

Your family may also be eligible for the following Community Bridges' services

Su familia también pueden ser elegibles para los siguientes servicios de Puentes de la Comunidad



CACFP is a nutrition assistance program that reimburses food for licensed caregivers, providing healthy meals to support both children and adults in our community.

CACFP es un programa de asistencia nutricional que reembolsa los alimentos a los cuidadores con licencia, comidas saludables para apoyar a los niños y adultos en nuestra comunidad.



Elderday Adult Day Health empower elders to live with greater independence and dignity. Here, adults in our community benefit from health care services, respite and companionship.

Elderday Adult Day Health les permite a las personas de edad vivir con mayor independencia y dignidad. Aquí, los adultos de nuestra comunidad se benefician de los servicios de atención médica, el respiro y el compañerismo.



The **Child Development Division** know how critical the first five years of a child's life are to their health and success. Our six centers provide nurturing and affordable early education.

La **División de Desarrollo Infantil** sabe cuán críticos son los primeros cinco años de la vida de un niño para su salud y éxito. Nuestros seis centros ofrecen educación asequible.



Lift Line provides 80,000 door-to-door rides a year to seniors and people with disabilities; allowing these Central Coast residents to remain active and social.

Lift Line ofrece 80,000 viajes de puerta a puerta cada año para personas mayores y personas con discapacidades; permitiendo que estos residentes de la costa central permanezcan activos y sociales.



Women, Infants & Children (WIC) is a safe place for families to receive a sense of hope, comfort and security that empowers women, infants and children to thrive.

Women, Infants & Children (WIC) es un lugar seguro para que las familias reciban un sentido de esperanza, comodidad y seguridad que les permita a las mujeres, bebés y niños prosperar.



Meals on Wheels is enhancing lives through healthy meals and friendly human contact. Nurturing elders and people with disabilities at one of five dining sites, or meals delivered to the home.

Meals on Wheels está mejorando vidas a través de comidas saludables y un contacto humano amigable. Alimentar personas de tecer edad y personas con discapacidades en uno de los cinco sitios de comida, o comidas entregadas en el hogar.

Please ask a Family Resource Collective representative to connect you to any of these programs. *Pídale a un representante de Family Resource Collective que lo conecte con cualquiera de estos programas.*