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BARBARA WEITZ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTER

PARTNER CAPACITY BUILDING REPORT

ABOUT THE REPORT

THE AUTHORS OF THIS REPORT ARE KELLY PRANGE AND DR. JOSEPH ALLEN. QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS REPORT SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO KELLY PRANGE AT KPRANGE@UNOMAHA.EDU OR DR. JOSEPH ALLEN AT JOSEPHALLEN@UNOMAHA.EDU.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH CENTER (CERC)

The Community Engagement Research Center (CERC) is a research lab devoted to the study of community outreach and engagement, including volunteerism, service learning, collective impact, emotion management, and community involvement. The purpose of the research is to investigate organizations and employees' roles in solving social issues. Through experiments and surveys, we hope to impact communities by identifying root causes of problems and developing practical solutions to stimulate change. Students in this lab will be focused on developing research ideas, conducting studies, data collection, data analysis, writing papers for publication, and submitting research to local, regional, and national conferences. Students involved in this lab must have a drive to produce quality outcomes, have the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively in a team setting, and be passionate about learning and developing as a student.

CITATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Using a structured interview protocol, Kelly Prange interviewed 19 partners housed in the Weitz CEC. These interviews were completed in February and March of 2017. Interviewees were primarily at the director level and had been housed in the Weitz CEC for 3 months to 3 years. Interviews were conducted either in-person or over-the-phone. A few UNO organizations participate in addition to community partners. The protocol was divided into three sections as follows:

1. Capacity Building

> Describe the organization's short- and long-term goals

> Illustrate what the organization needs in order to reach those goals

2. Weitz CEC Offerings

> Describe what opportunities in the Weitz CEC help build capacity

> Explain what Weitz CEC programming events are most useful and why

> Brainstorm what the Weitz CEC could do differently to help the organization achieve its goals

3. Values - Continuous Improvement

> Describe which values align closely with your organizational goals

> Illustrate how the value of Continuous Improvement has impacted the organization

> Depict what changes have been made in the organization since coming into the Weitz CEC

The report is organized into the same three sections. A Recommendations section can be found at the end of the report.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The current Weitz CEC partners have a lot of diverse goals that they want to achieve in order to grow and improve. All partners realize that it is up to them to take advantage of what the Weitz CEC has to offer, and some of them realize that they can increase their involvement to better capitalize on the opportunities the building provides.

There are a few main themes that persisted across partners and across the sections of the interview.

1. They appreciate the Weitz CEC staff very much. Although there are bumps in the road, staff are always responsive to their needs and listen to their concerns.

2. Some people are unsure how to engage with UNO. They would like to have more information about how academia works, how to identify and reach out to faculty members, and how to get exposure to UNO leadership/administrators (see Recommendations)

3. Partners want to meet new organizations and collaborate, but there are a few barriers that get in the way (see Recommendations):

- Some people have a difficult time getting outside of their office area
- Some new partners are not aware of the expectation to collaborate or are not committed to collaborating
- Partners are unsure how to begin making connections in the UNO community

4. Partners are growing and collaborating, but perhaps not in the ways that they, or others, expected.
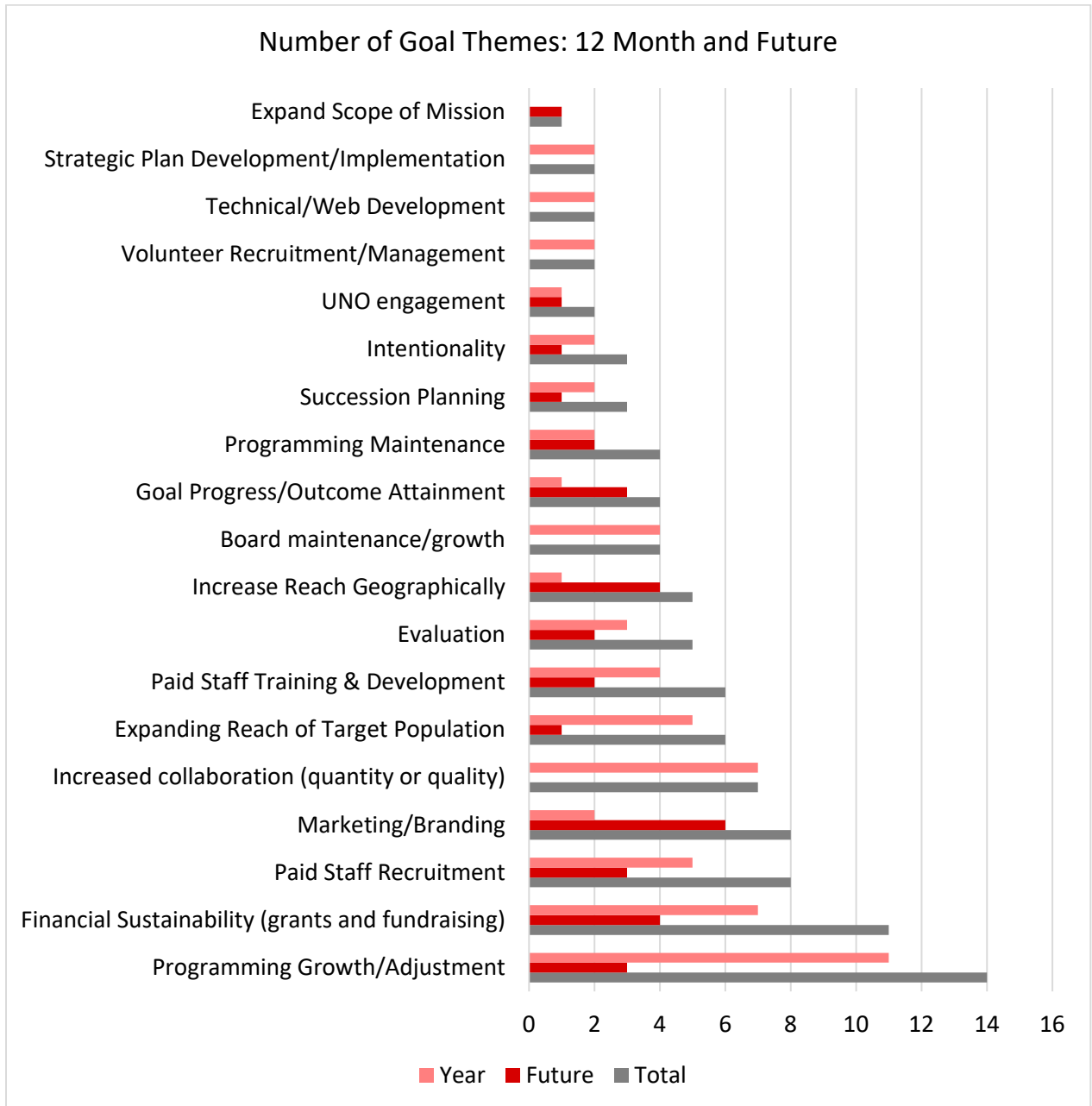
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CAPACITY BUILDING

GOALS

The following data describe the themes that emerged when partners listed the kinds of goals the organization would like to achieve short-term (12 months) and long-term (in the future, under ideal circumstances).

Number of Goal Themes: 12 Month and Future

Goal Theme	Year	Future	Total
Expand Scope of Mission		1	1
Strategic Plan Development/Implementation	2		2
Technical/Web Development	2		2
Volunteer Recruitment/Management	2		2
UNO engagement		1	2
Intentionality	2	1	3
Succession Planning	2	1	3
Programming Maintenance		2	4
Goal Progress/Outcome Attainment	1	3	4
Board maintenance/growth	4		4
Increase Reach Geographically	1	4	5
Evaluation	3	2	5
Paid Staff Training & Development	4	2	6
Expanding Reach of Target Population	5	1	6
Increased collaboration (quantity or quality)	7		7
Marketing/Branding	2	6	8
Paid Staff Recruitment	5	3	8
Financial Sustainability (grants and fundraising)	7	4	11
Programming Growth/Adjustment	11	3	14

Legend: Year, Future, Total

Some goals were mentioned by more partners than others. However, all goals are considered important, and a goal that is mentioned once is considered a significant finding. The list of goal themes could be used to inform Weitz CEC programming.

LIST OF THEMES:

EXPAND SCOPE OF MISSION

An organization mentioned that a future goal includes changing their mission as they grow, such that they will be able to increase their target population and the issues that they hope to resolve in the community.

STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT/IMPLEMENTATION

Organizations who do not have strategic plans in place are making that a priority, and those who have them know that their plan is critical to the future of the organization.

TECHNICAL/WEB DEVELOPMENT

Developing new capabilities through website and technology is a priority for some organizations.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT/MANAGEMENT

Some organizations listed volunteer management and growing their volunteer program as a top goal.

"Engage that next group of volunteers – because then they become staff. We want more students to become volunteers."

UNO ENGAGEMENT

Having increased interaction with UNO students, faculty, and administrators is on top of some organizations' list in terms of goals for the organization.

"We want to strengthen partnerships with Creighton and UNO, having them become more integral in our programming. Our goal is to engage 10,000 students…"

INTENTIONALITY

Organizations realize that making purposeful decisions is a good step towards achieving their long-term goals.

"Be more intentional about how we are providing benefits for our target population"

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Organizations mentioned wanting to groom staff members to move up within the company structure in order to plan for the future.

"Building succession plans for the organization training younger staff members to move up"

PROGRAMMING MAINTENANCE

Some organizations reported that one of their primary goals is to maintain the programs they have currently. This theme emerged separately from program growth.

"We need to stay abreast of updates and current changes in the fields so that we can make sure we are serving our target population effectively"

GOAL PROGRESS/OUTCOME ATTAINMENT

Another theme that emerged included that organizations have already set objectives and now they want to be focused on attaining major outcomes in the next year or into the future.

"Achieving our mission – focus on increasing positive outcomes for target population"

BOARD MAINTENANCE/GROWTH

Organizations that mentioned this theme expressed that they want to achieve greater board engagement, recruit highly skilled board members, and increase the effectiveness of the board through more transparency and connecting with stakeholders.

"Bring younger people on the board. We also want to increase the transparency of our board"

INCREASE REACH GEOGRAPHICALLY

Some organizations are poised to expand their outreach by spreading across the state, region, or nationally to serve a greater subset of their target population.

"in terms of our strategic plan, we are making plans to have more reach throughout the state"

EVALUATION

This theme encompasses the idea that organizations want to improve how they measure outcomes. Doing so may help attain funding, inform their programming, and help them achieve their mission.

"We want to use data to continuously get better and track progress toward goals"

PAID STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Some organizations reported that in order to grow, the development of their employees is essential. Ensuring that the organization has competent staff and managers will lead to positive outcomes.

"We are working on leadership development"

EXPANDING REACH OF TARGET POPULATION

Some organizations reported that they need to focus on outreach efforts to increase and maintain membership or the number of people served.

"They [funders] want to see the increase in outreach to target population"

INCREASED COLLABORATION (QUANTITY OR QUALITY)

Organizations mentioned that they want to focus on increasing either the number of or quality of partnerships in the future. Part of this theme included making the most of the organization's time at the Weitz CEC.

"Another plan is working with many organizations in the community. We want them to be able to embed our programming into their own organization"

MARKETING/BRANDING

The theme of improving their marketing efforts and establishing their brand emerged. This theme includes mention of increasing social media presence and wanting to be recognizable in the community.

"marketing – branding and increased name recognition within the community"

PAID STAFF RECRUITMENT

The goal of increasing the number of staff emerged as a theme. Many instances of this theme included a quality component – the organization was looking for someone who was a good fit and had a specific skillset.

"to grow staff capacity by adding a staff position and have it sustainably funded. Doing so would allow us to be totally compliant with federal mandates. It will allow us to better serve…"

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY (GRANTS AND FUNDRAISING)

In order to maintain and grow, many organizations need to continue seeking funding and may be changing the way they do so. For example, some organizations want to identify larger grants or expand their fundraising efforts.

"We want to maintain the inflow of money to support our programs. We are self sustaining"

PROGRAMMING GROWTH/ADJUSTMENT

Organizations reported wanting to change their programming (e.g., combining programs) and expand their programming (e.g., adding new programs) to reach a greater portion of the target population.

NEEDS

The following data describe the number of organizations that mentioned needing each type of resource in order to achieve the goals mentioned previously. These needs are general needs that are not necessarily geared towards the Weitz CEC. The themes reflect areas in which organizations may need or want assistance with or need to make a priority.

Number of Organizational Resources Mentioned

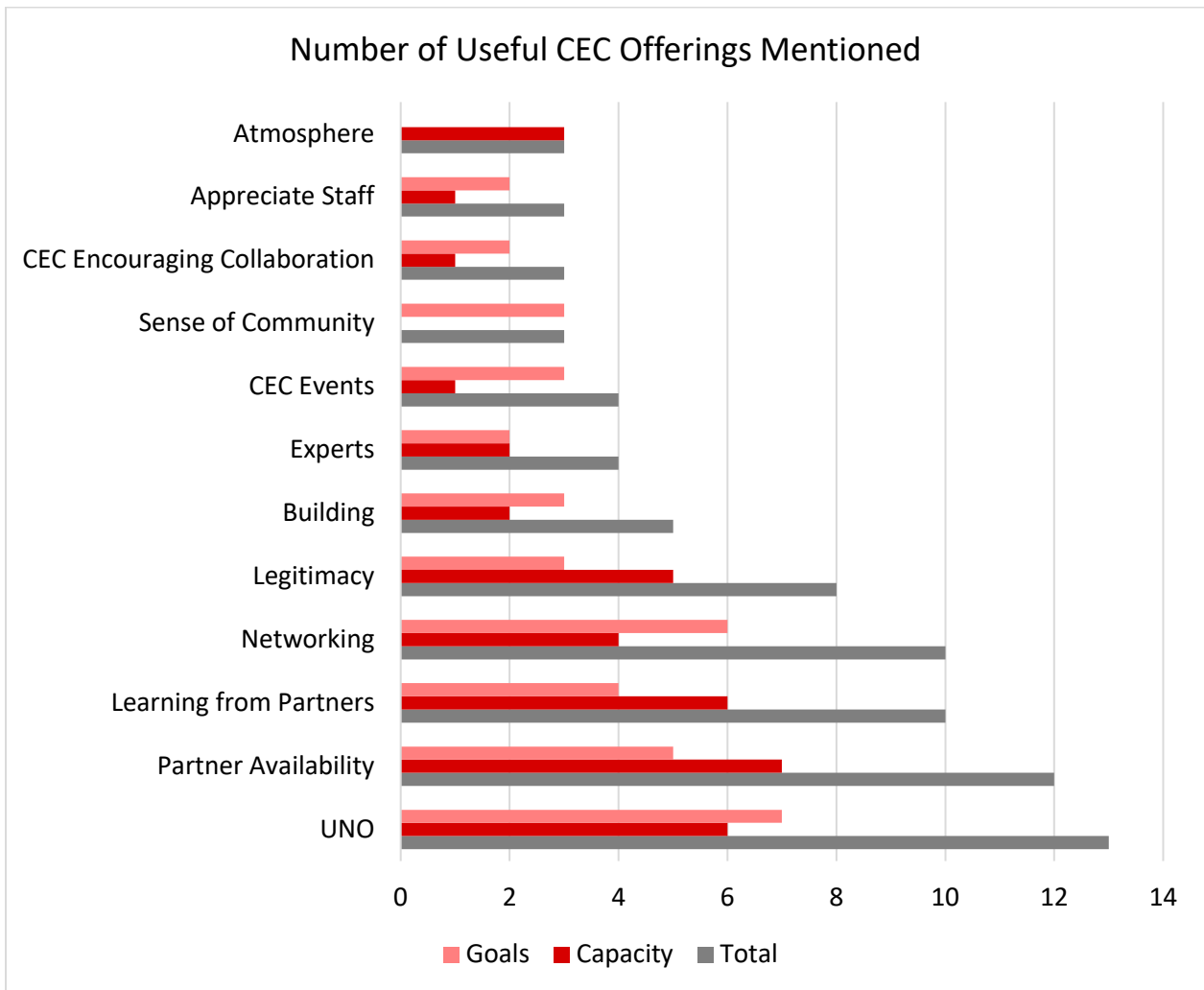| Category	Value
Organizational Culture	1
Budget	1
Volunteer Recruitment/Selection	2
Strategic Plan	2
Space	2
Evaluation	2
Engage Community	3
Organizational/personnel Development	4
Marketing	4
Funder Outreach and Engagement	4
Connections to UNO	4
Board	4
New Org. Relationships	5
Employee Recruitment/Selection	13

Mentions of needing financial support were removed from the data because all organizations mentioned needing monetary resources. The Weitz CEC may be able to provide some of these needs, especially concerning Connections to

UNO, New Organizational Relationships, and Space. Some of the needs directly echo the goal themes. The need that seems to be paramount to goal attainment is new, skilled staff members.

WEITZ CEC OFFERINGS

REACHING GOALS AND BUILDING CAPACITY

The following graph indicates partners' responses to the question, "What are the main opportunities made possible by the Weitz CEC that assist with the capacity building of your organization?" AND, "What are the offerings made available by the Weitz CEC that assist with your goals?". Because the two questions had many overlapping themes, they are included in one graph to compare.

Number of Useful CEC Offerings Mentioned

Theme	Goals	Capacity	Total
Atmosphere	0	3	3
Appreciate Staff	2	1	3
CEC Encouraging Collaboration	2	1	3
Sense of Community	3	0	3
CEC Events	3	1	4
Experts	0	2	4
Building	3	2	5
Legitimacy	3	5	8
Networking	6	4	10
Learning from Partners	4	6	10
Partner Availability	5	7	12
UNO	7	6	13

Legend: Goals, Capacity, Total

Interestingly, programming is mentioned very seldom in response to these two questions. The following themes describe what partners view as the most beneficial assets the Weitz CEC can offer. Of course, the most mentioned themes include different ways partners connect with one another (i.e., Networking, Learning from Partners, and Partner Availability) and utilizing UNO as a partner. Knowledge of these themes will be useful for Weitz CEC staff to help organizations build their capacity and reach their goals.

LIST OF THEMES:

ATMOSPHERE

The amenities included in the Weitz CEC create an environment for users that exudes professionalism and helps to ensure that people have good experiences in the space.

"the fact that we use the Weitz CEC for that [programming], it's always a guarantee that it's a good experience here"

APPRECIATE STAFF

The Weitz CEC staff are capable, friendly, and very responsive to partners' needs.

"the staff here are so friendly and competent and engaged"

ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION

Partner organizations appreciate the expectation to collaborate and the social events that push them and allow them to find new collaborations.

"I think the Weitz CEC does a good job of encouraging collaboration. It reminds us that we are in the building together and there is an expectation of collaboration"

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The upbeat, positive environment among the partners fosters creativity. People feel uplifted and energized.

"The energy – not being isolated. In the beginning, it was huge"

WEITZ CEC EVENTS

Partners describe the programming that the Weitz CEC provides (e.g., workshops) as helpful and valuable for individuals and organizations.

"The programming piece of the Weitz CEC is good. it always feels like there's never enough time to do it all, but those are good"

EXPERTS

Being able to have individual meetings with experts who have been in the industry and in academia is extremely valuable.

"The environment of having access to professionals who have gone before us and done that before"

BUILDING

This theme includes mentions of space, affordable rent, and event space.

"We try to make our programs very accessible to people financially, and having a free building helps make our costs to members very reasonable"

LEGITIMACY

Being in the Weitz CEC has given organizations credibility in the community (e.g., with funders) and has given organizations recognition in the community.

"being at the Weitz CEC lends legitimacy to our organization, just by getting to be there. Allowing us to be a part of the Weitz CEC vetted us out for the community. I also felt like the community partners had been vetted for me"

"sometimes I feel like there is some power behind my email with my signature mentioning the Weitz CEC. I felt a little bolder in reaching out to professors. being able to say I'm here on campus with you – makes it easier to reach out to people"

NETWORKING

Creating a web of acquaintances in the nonprofit industry is incredibly valuable because it allows staff to find information and become connected with important people in the community (e.g., funders).

"the multiple partners within here that we tap into and collaborate with – we generate ideas. You might not work directly with them, but that opportunity for learning and connectivity, the networking piece.. they know someone I need to know - those kind of things"

LEARNING FROM PARTNERS

Being able to see how other nonprofits operate and grow is a major benefit of being in the Weitz CEC. Partners reported an increased ability to ask questions and discuss important issues with other organizations, which promotes learning and improvement.

"main thing is having a cubicle in a room with other nonprofits. It allows the day-to-day interaction with others. if there is a question, there are plenty of opportunities to ask it. I get on-the-job training by talking with others. I learn about resources I'm not aware of, basic policies, requesting donations from certain places. I talk to people about funding sources…"

PARTNER AVAILABILTIY

Partners reported that being in proximity with other organizations has changed how they operate in a positive way. It has lead to collaboration and an increased awareness of the other organizations/resources that exist in the community.

"Partnering with nonprofits I've never heard of before. Hearing about the organization is great! But if I wasn't aware that they existed, it would have never been possible"

UNO

Partners understand that connections in the University will be valuable to the growth of their organization and utilizing students, faculty, and administrative connections will help them reach their goals.

"Being close to academics and academic practitioners. It means that they have easy access to our organization"

"One that's beneficial is being in close proximity to SLA"
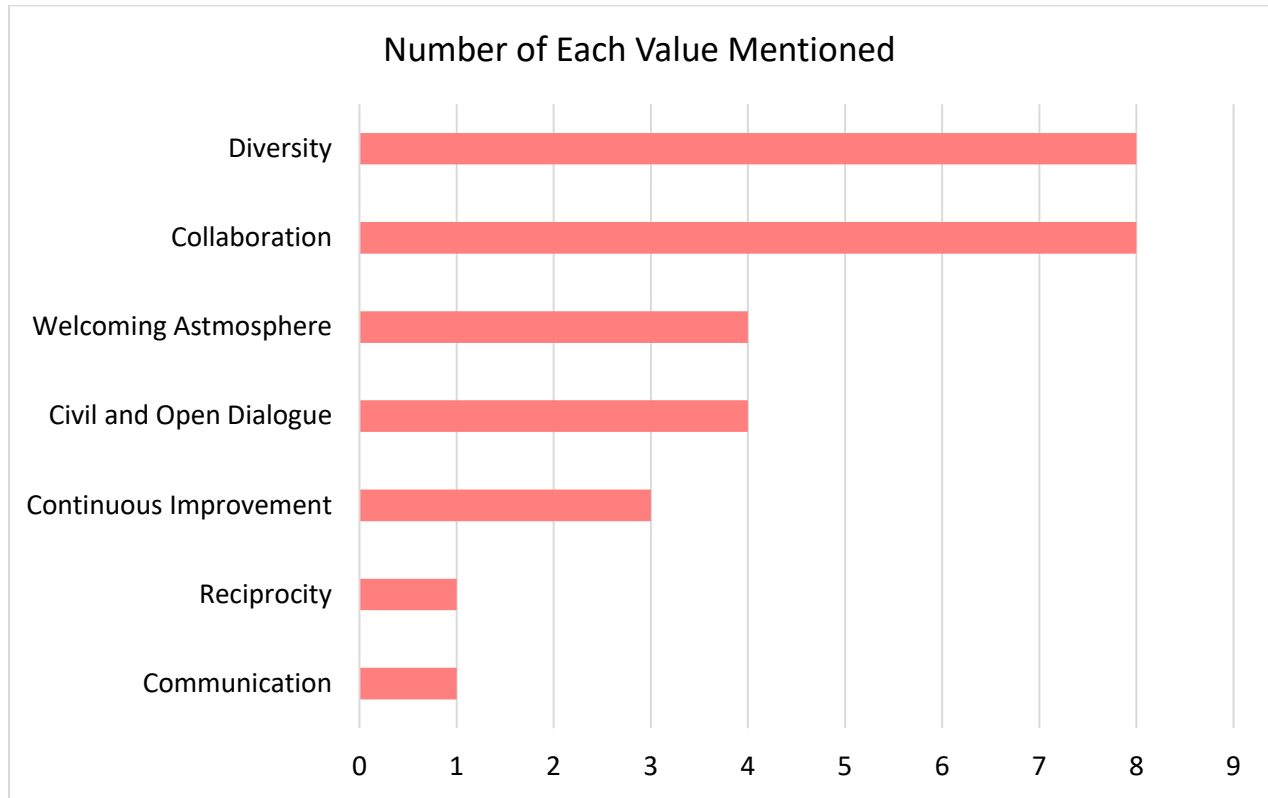
TYPES OF WEITZ CEC PROGRAMMING

The following table summarizes partners' responses when asked about the Weitz CEC programming. Some of the new organizations were not able to respond because they had not attended certain programming (e.g., All Hands).

WHAT KINDS OF WEITZ CEC PROGRAMMING ARE MOST USEFUL?		
New partner meeting	Successful	The partners who mentioned the new partner meeting reported a great turnout and a productive use of their time.
Social events	All useful	Overall, partners thought that the social events were the most useful. They give partners an excuse to get out of the office spaces and new connections are always made.
All hands meeting	Mixed feedback	Some people think that the All Hands meeting is too long or should be structured differently – perhaps have introductions at the end. A majority of people thought of them as beneficial.
Website	Much improved	Those who mentioned the new website praised its usefulness and easy navigation.
Lunch and learns	Could be more useful	Many people thought that lunch and learns should include intentional back-and-forth discussion rather than presentation format. Utilize lunch time as intentional, guided collaboration rather than expecting collaboration to happen organically.
Weekly email	Could be more useful	Although a few reported loving the email, most people reported that it is either sparsely read or should include more helpful information (e.g., inform about events well in advance)
Workshops	Not as useful	Many people reported that the workshops are a good idea, but the topics are not necessary useful and there are formats for learning that would be more useful.

VALUES: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

VALUES THAT ALIGN WITH MISSION

Consistent with findings from the Values Study, partners identified with Diversity and Collaboration the most. Some interviewees reported *personally* identifying with a Weitz CEC value as well. The personal values were also included in the data reported in the graph.

Number of Each Value Mentioned

Value	Count
Diversity	8
Collaboration	8
Welcoming Astmosphere	4
Civil and Open Dialogue	4
Continuous Improvement	3
Reciprocity	1
Communication	1

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

From partners' responses to the questions included in the table on the right, it is clear that organizations are changing and improving in many ways. Many of them believe that they will carry those skills, knowledge, and efficiencies with them when they leave the Weitz CEC. This is evidence that the Weitz CEC is achieving one of its goals – helping the community by supporting nonprofit growth.

What Changes have partners made? What have they gained?
Increased Social Skills
Increased Knowledge of Nonprofits
Increased Staff Positions
Increased Programming
Ideation
Unique Collaborations
Organization
Lasting Collaborations
Will change how we operate in the Future
Learned the "Spirit of Togetherness"
Increased Reach of Target Population
Visibility
Access to UNO
Increased Events
Influenced Best Practices
New Strategic Plan
Increased Knowledge of Community Resources
Increased Student Involvement
Exchange of Information
Staff Re-structure
Increased Fundraising
Improved Budget

WEITZ CEC-INDUCED GROWTH

Mirroring the results from the Weitz CEC programming section, the question on the right prompted organizations to reflect on their time in the Weitz CEC so far. The responses indicate that there are many benefits of such a shared space, and that each organization utilizes the space in different ways.

What characteristics of the Weitz CEC has helped them grow?

Learn from the example of other organizations
Better at using data to improve
The ideals of the building remind us that we need to improve
Using technology to help us grow
Good fit with continuous improvement
Once goal is accomplished, this is a good place to find next steps, keep looking to the next thing
Mutual partnerships allow for growth of all involved
Information and feedback from people allows me to grow
Expectations of fully utilizing this space helped us grow
Connect with new organizations rather than old ones
New skill of being able to outreach to other nonprofits
The culture of excellence helps us improve
Being in the building with organizations in different stages of growth
The Weitz CEC has created awareness of our potential
Having someone there to help you at all times creates an environment for success
Having continuity and stability helped us to grow
Service learning helped us grow
Being in the Weitz CEC helped us socially know more people who are in the field and know how we fit into that picture
The networking available to us helped us grow in quality and being cutting edge. That was an unexpected value-add
We are getting awards, which help our visibility and get us out of our comfort zone
We grow by watching the others around us operate
Teaches us to be more minimalist - we have improved in efficiency in our organization
The relationships I have built here help us share knowledge about resources that are available

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were generated by partners in response to the question, "What can the Weitz CEC do differently to help?" The recommendations were originally in the Capacity Building section, but are provided here because the solutions the partners provided may be useful to address issues that emerged in this report.

Before and after implementing changes, the partners should be asked for feedback and informed of the changes being made.

What can the Weitz CEC do differently to help?
Workshop topics: *Board training* *Grants workshops* *Seminar on strategic plan* *Social media workshop* *What do nonprofits use for financial resources? What vendors do they use? What lessons have they learned:?* *How do you grow a nonprofit from bare beginnings to a fully thriving nonprofit (governance, structure). How do you grow and manage a nonprofit?* *Knowledge/importance of marketing*
Possible alternative to workshops: One-on-one mentors for people within the building as a form of collaboration
Landing site/Intranet/Forum for Partners *A way to come together OR learn more about organizations in the building.* *All hands meeting is so much information - difficult to digest* *Forum - way to reach out to all partners and ask a question. To help people network (internal portal?)* *A landing site for events and materials*
Encourage organizations to move to a different part of the building *To promote new collaborations, mix it up*

Change Lunch and Learns

Make lunch and learns more meaningful/substantive. Open it up for opportunities for collaboration. Facilitate collaboration discussions

Change All Hands

Go through nuts and bolts first, then introductions and social encouragement

Have social events AT THE WEITZ CEC rather than off-campus, easy transition from the meeting to connecting with people

Help people connect with UNO!

People don't know how to reach UNO department heads, promote their events to students, and find collaboration opportunities for teaching and research

Market the Weitz CEC better to professors who can utilize Weitz CEC events and partners to supplement their classes

New competitions

Competitions may make the goals of the Weitz CEC and expectations more clear to partners and motivate people to get out of their comfort zones

Make partner expectations more clear to new partners

New partners don't have the same passion/vision for being in the Weitz CEC. Weitz CEC needs to be responsible in making people aware of the space and all it has to offer

Partners who don't collaborate are missed opportunities for current partners

This issue may prompt some organizations to leave and not stay as long because their goals cannot be fully realized.

Name recognition

Having individual nametags so that people know who works in the Weitz CEC and who is just passing through

Make organizational name plates larger or more recognizable to reduce confusion and increase visibility