Community Readiness to Improve the Well-Being of Anchorage Youth Using a Shared Protective Factors Approach

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Report of Community Readiness Assessment

Introduction

In December 2019, Center for Safe Alaskans contracted with the Goldstream Group, a consulting firm located in Fairbanks, Alaska that is dedicated to helping non-profit community organizations including school districts, tribes, universities, and health and social service providers improve the lives of Alaskans, to assist in assessment and evaluation activities related to its Anchorage Youth Development Coalition (AYDC) Wellness Initiative, funded through a Comprehensive Behavioral Health Prevention and Early Intervention (CBHPEI) Services grant from the State of Alaska Division of Behavioral Health.

As part of the assessment and evaluation activities, a community readiness assessment was conducted to better understand the knowledge, efforts, attitudes, and resources of community members and Anchorage leadership related to improving the well-being of Anchorage youth using a shared youth protective factors approach. This information, which describes the community's level of readiness to engage in this approach to prevention, will be used together with other data collected to inform the planning and implementation of AYDC's activities in the coming years.

Methodology

The community readiness assessment was conducted using the Community Readiness Model developed by the Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research at Colorado State University[1]. This model engages key informants representing a variety of community sectors (i.e. municipality leadership, education, health and social service providers, law enforcement, business community, etc.) and uses an established scoring rubric to measure knowledge, attitudes, efforts, and resources of community members and the community's leadership to assess the community's readiness to engage in prevention. The model includes nine stages of community readiness, with each stage corresponding to recommended prevention and capacity-building activities that are intended to build on the community's existing level of readiness. The model is based on the premise that if a prevention strategy or activity does not match the community's current level of readiness, prevention efforts are more likely to be met with low levels of enthusiasm in the community, resistance by community members and/or leadership, lack of action by community leaders, and/or a lack

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[1] Community Readiness for Community Change: Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Handbook. Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research, Colorado State University. Retrieved from http://www.triethniccenter.colostate.edu/community-readiness-2/.

of resources and overall ineffectiveness. The model's nine stages of community readiness and corresponding example actions are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Stages of Community Readiness and Example Actions to Raise Community Readiness[1]

Level of Readiness		Example Actions (*Example actions for each stage also assume continuation of actions from previous stages*)
1	No Awareness	One-to-one outreach with community members and leaders, outreach to small groups, outreach to individuals in social networks, collection of local stories
2	Denial and/or Resistance	Provide information in newsletters and bulletins, publish media articles, strategic communication with community influencers and leaders
3	Vague Awareness	Present information at local events and community groups, post flyers and posters, initiate engaging and fun informational events, publish newspaper articles with local data and information
4	Preplanning	Conduct focus groups, review existing prevention efforts in the community, increase media exposure and presentations
5	Preparation	Hold public forums, encourage community leaders to speak out, sponsor community events to kick-off new efforts or revitalize existing efforts
6	Initiation	Conduct training for professionals, publicity efforts for new activities, provide updates at meetings, identify service gaps, begin seeking additional resources and funding, begin evaluation efforts
7	Stabilization	Hold community events to maintain support, provide training for community members, hold regular meetings to review progress and modify strategies, hold recognition events for supporters and volunteers, publish media articles detailing progress, evaluation efforts and future plans, networking among community providers and systems
8	Confirmation and Expansion	Formalize networking with MOAs or MOUs, initiate relevant policy changes, conduct media outreach on data trends, utilize evaluation data to modify efforts, publish a local program services directory, develop list of local speakers
9	High Level of Community Ownership	Solicit financial support from local businesses and organizations, diversify funding sources, provide advanced training to professionals, re-assess the issue as progress is made, utilize evaluation and feedback for program modification, track outcomes data, continue to provide progress reports to community leaders and local sponsors

The guiding question used for the community readiness assessment was, *"How ready is the community to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth using a shared youth protective factors approach?"*

To answer this question, the Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Model's process for conducting a brief assessment was used. Two focus groups were held remotely in June 2020 using Zoom videoconferencing (https://zoom.us/). A total of 11 key informants identified by Center for Safe Alaskans staff participated in the focus groups and represented the

following community sectors: Healthcare, Law Enforcement, Division of Juvenile Justice/Office of Children's Services (Anchorage-based), Parents, Youth, Businesses, Spiritual/Religious Community, Behavioral Health Providers, Alaska Native Organizations/Tribes, and the Municipality of Anchorage. Five participants attended a focus group held on June 9, 2020 and six participants attended a focus group held on June 11, 2020.

Both focus groups were recorded and transcribed with verbal permission provided by all participants. Prior to each focus group, participants were provided with an agenda, a copy of a short PowerPoint presentation (See Appendix), and a copy of the scoring rubric or anchored rating scales. Participants were instructed to have the anchored rating scales available either in print or electronic format during the focus group. All participants were invited to join the Zoom meeting up to 15 minutes early to familiarize themselves with Zoom and/or address any technical issues as needed. Participants were asked to keep their video cameras turned on for the full length of the focus group to facilitate discussion unless they experienced bandwidth issues which prevented them from doing so.

At the beginning of each focus group, the facilitator reviewed the PowerPoint presentation, providing an overview of 1) shared youth protective factors, 2) community readiness assessment, and 3) the process for the remainder of the meeting time. Staff from Center for Safe Alaskans were present during both focus groups to provide additional context to the concept of shared youth protective factors and the work of AYDC.

Key informants discussed the five dimensions of community readiness provided in the Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Model. These five dimensions are: 1) community knowledge of the issue, 2) community knowledge of prevention efforts, 3) leadership, 4) community climate, and 5) resources. These dimensions are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Dimensions of Community Readiness[1]

Dimension	Description
Community Knowledge of the Issue	How much does the community know about the issue?
Community Knowledge of Efforts	How much does the community know about the current programs and activities?
Leadership	What is leadership's attitude toward addressing the issue?
Community Climate	What is the community's attitude towards addressing the issue?
Resources	What are the resources that are being used or could be used to address the issue?

Discussion and scoring for each of the five dimensions followed a process that was collaboratively pre-determined by Goldstream Group and Center for Safe Alaskans staff. The process that was followed for each dimension is outlined below:

1. The facilitator shared a screen summarizing that dimension of community readiness and key questions to consider in scoring that dimension.

2. Participants were given instructions in applying the anchored rating scale for that dimension of community readiness in determining their score. Participants were reminded that there are no right or wrong answers and that their score should be based on their own knowledge and perceptions of the community.

3. Participants were given one minute to review the anchored rating scale and identify their own score for that dimension.

4. The facilitator called on each participant and asked them to share their score and key reasons that factored into their decision with the group. The facilitator typed out each person's score and key reasons on the screen so that participants could visualize the combined input and knowledge of the entire group.

5. The facilitator called on each individual a second time to see if they would like to change their score based on what others in the group had discussed. Any changes made by participants to their original scores were noted on the screen.

6. The facilitator asked the full group again whether any individuals would like to make any final changes to their score. Any final changes made by participants to their scores were noted on the screen.

7. Steps 1-6 were repeated for each of the remaining dimensions of readiness.

After completion of both focus groups, the final scores of each of the 11 participants were averaged to arrive at a group score for each dimension of readiness.[2] These five scores were then averaged to arrive at an overall community readiness score.

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[2] The Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Model recommends that when conducting an assessment in a group setting, consensus is reached on the score for each dimension of community readiness. (https://tec.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CR_Handbook_8-3-15.pdf). However, given the necessity of conducting the assessment remotely due to COVID-19 and the associated time limitations, if, after two opportunities for each participant to change their score consensus was not reached, it was determined that the final scores from each participant would be averaged to arrive at a group score for that dimension of readiness.
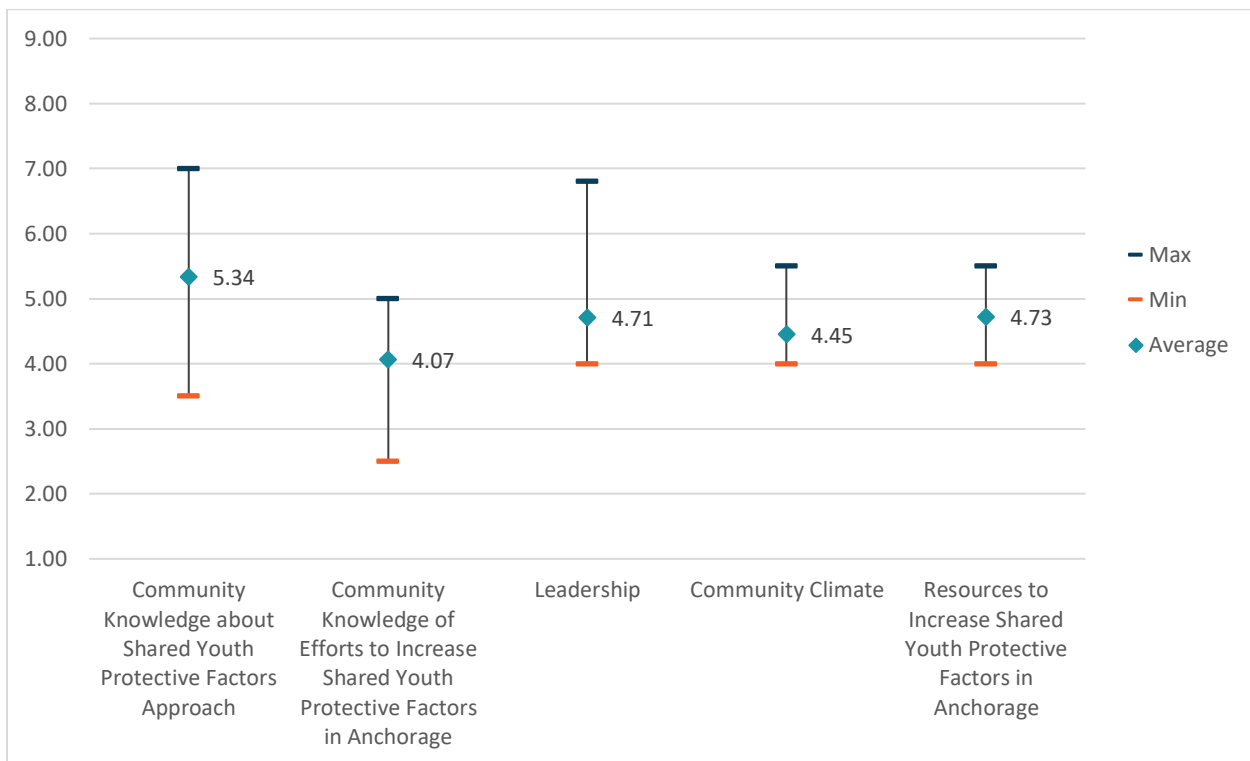
Community Readiness Scores

A summary of average scores as well as both the low and high score for each dimension of community readiness that were given by participants is shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3: Summary of Community Readiness Scores (Scale of 1-9)

Dimension of Readiness	Low Score	High Score	Average Score
Community Knowledge about Shared Youth Protective Factors Approach	3.50	7.00	5.34
Community Knowledge of Efforts to Increase Shared Youth Protective Factors in Anchorage	2.50	5.00	4.07
Leadership	4.00	6.80	4.71
Community Climate	4.00	5.50	4.45
Resources to Increase Shared Youth Protective Factors in Anchorage	4.00	5.50	4.73
Overall Score			**4.66**

Figure 4: Summary of Community Readiness Scores

Interpretation of Community Readiness Scores

The average overall community readiness score of 4.66 is higher than the Tri-Ethnic Model's Stage 4 of community readiness "Preplanning," yet slightly lower than Stage 5 "Preparation." At this level of readiness, the Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Model suggests actions such as holding public forums, encouraging key community leaders to speak out, and sponsoring community events to kick-off new efforts or revitalize existing efforts in order to raise community readiness. Other strategies that are recommended may include increasing media exposure, conducting focus groups, distributing information about shared youth protective factors through flyers or posters, collecting stories of local people who have been impacted by shared youth protective factors or the work of AYDC, giving presentations to established and unrelated groups about shared youth protective factors, or conducting one-on-one visits with community leaders about shared youth protective factors.

- ✓ ***Community Knowledge about Shared Youth Protective Factors Approach (Average Score = 5.34)*** At least some community members know some about shared youth protective factors, including what they are and how they positively impact youth; and at least some community members are aware of ways to build shared youth protective factors.

- ✓ ***Community Knowledge of Efforts to Increase Shared Youth Protective Factors (Average Score = 4.07)*** At least some community members have heard of local efforts to increase shared youth protective factors and are familiar with the purpose of these efforts.

- ✓ ***Leadership (Average Score = 4.71)*** At least some of the leadership is participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage, possibly by being a member of a group that is working towards these efforts or being supportive of allocating resources to these efforts.

- ✓ ***Community Climate (Average Score = 4.45)*** Some community members believe that increasing shared youth protective factors is a concern in Anchorage and that some type of effort is needed to address it; and at least a few community members are participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage.

- ✓ ***Resources to Increase Shared Youth Protective Factors in Anchorage (Average Score = 4.73)*** There are some resources identified that could be used for further efforts to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage; and some community members or leaders are actively working to secure these resources to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage.

Context Provided by Key Informants during Focus Group Discussions

To provide further context to the community readiness scores, a summary of key discussion topics from focus groups for each dimension of community readiness is included below.

Community Knowledge about Shared Youth Protective Factors

Individual scores for community knowledge about shared youth protective factors had a wide range, with a low score of 3.50 and a high score of 7.00. The average score given was 5.34. Focus group participants all noted that the level of knowledge about shared youth protective factors is good among professionals and organizations who work with youth. However, several participants noted that even among professionals not everyone shares the same language or level of knowledge. Participants also discussed that while the knowledge among professionals who work with youth is generally high, the level of knowledge is much lower among community members at large. To illustrate, participants in both focus groups used the example that their neighbors would not necessarily know about shared youth protective factors, or that they would not know the language of shared protective factors. One participant noted that not all community members may share the same perspective on what creates a positive and safe environment for youth. Participants in both focus groups also discussed that there are misperceptions among some people in the community that a shared youth protective factors approach is "feel-good stuff". Illustrative comments from focus group discussions are provided below.

> *"...the people who are in these kind of meetings and work with youth organizations will know what youth protective factors are and have detailed knowledge of that, but I would say even people who are in youth-facing jobs like teachers or teacher assistants, I don't think they would necessarily have the same language, and so they might be aware [that] an afterschool program is good, but not have that detailed knowledge about it. I also feel like the community at large doesn't really know about shared youth protective factors. I think of, if I was to talk to an adult in the coffee shop or on the street, I think that they wouldn't be super aware of the conversation. It would make sense, but they don't have the language." (Focus Group Participant 6)*

> *"I agree with what a lot of other [participants] said about for folks who work in the field, I think there is a lot of knowledge, maybe not specifically about the term, but generally an understanding of these protective factors and how important they are. But in the community at large, I think that there are likely a lot of misconceptions about youth protective factors, and why they are important. I think largely it centers around this idea of sort of personal responsibility [...] Also, of this idea that a lot of this is simply sort of feel-good kind of stuff." (Focus Group Participant 11)*

> *"...I am always surprised by the level of misperception that is out there, and I think that there are a lot of people who have heard the phrase protective factor, but when it*

actually comes to talking about what those protective factors are and how to create safe and welcoming prosocial environments, that starts to sort of downgrade the conversation really quickly. […] I know that there are people that are doing really great work right now, but that misconception around why it's important to collectively understand protective factors is what did it for me." (Focus Group Participant 9)

"…So I know that there are those youth-serving organizations that know a lot about it, but […] I was trying to think of my neighbors, and if I had a discussion with them, […] I think if you started talking to neighbors about it, they'd be like, 'Yeah. I know afterschool programming is really great for youth.' […] I know some community members are aware of it, but I think if you're talking to your average parent, they probably wouldn't know to the extent that we know as youth-serving providers." (Focus Group Participant 10)

"…I think in education and in health care, there's really very good understanding about how kids can turn out well, and that some of these things we've been talking about could help them turn out well in multiple areas. So, I definitely think that's true. I think fewer people are aware of how to do that. You know, they may say it's important to have a good teacher, but then people who talk about what makes a good teacher maybe would disagree. Even though I think there is evidence about how to do these things, I think that maybe isn't as well dispersed, that knowledge. And I can see people kind of devolve to the negative side of, you know, we're just gonna – they're not talking about prevention anymore, they're talking about stopping some behavior…" (Focus Group Participant 2)

Community Knowledge of Efforts to Increase Shared Youth Protective Factors in Anchorage

Individual scores for community knowledge about efforts to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage ranged from a low of 2.50 to a high of 5.00, with an average score given of 4.07. Participants in focus group discussions felt that there are varying degrees of knowledge in the community about efforts to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage. In addition to a higher level of knowledge among youth-serving professionals and organizations than among community members at large, several reasons for these disparate levels of knowledge were discussed. These included that people may have heard of efforts but don't understand the purpose of these efforts or how they work, that information and messaging may be inconsistent or unclear and that there is a need for organizations to work better together in coordinating messaging, that even within agencies there is a constant desire for "shiny new things" which impacts the ability to stick with efforts long-term, that there are racial and socioeconomic disparities which impact the ability of those who need the resources to know about them, and that while agencies may be supportive of these efforts the support may be more passive than active. Illustrative comments from focus group discussions are provided below.

"I think even with my own organization, there can be a lack of communication efforts related to shared youth protective factors. So I imagine even with the people that we work closely with in our small cohorts, if there's a lack of communication, I imagine there's a lack of communication with the broader community. Unless you're doing some kind of mass media campaign or something on TV, I really don't know that the average person in the community is going to know what efforts are being made…" (Focus Group Participant 10)

"…yes, the professionals in the community, they know what this is, and they know what efforts they're putting in to try to improve the youth protective factors […] and they're putting a lot of effort into it. But I think the general population at large doesn't have a clue. If you're using those words, they don't know what that means. They don't know what other people are doing, and don't know some of the resources are available to them just like [other participant] said." (Focus Group Participant 3)

"I do think probably a lot of people have heard of efforts. I don't think it's that the efforts aren't well publicized, but I think after there, it starts to drop off. Knowing what the purpose of the efforts are […] they may know the efforts are to help children, but understanding how they work, […] I don't really think a lot of people understand how strongly they work or how much difference it makes if you have some of these factors." (Focus Group Participant 2)

"I think that this is actually an area that I have struggled with as a professional, and I can see other professionals struggle in this area. I think there are so many entities, from organizations and agencies and nonprofits and subgroups that are really interested in this topic and they really want to do their part, but it feels really disconnected from one another. And I also find that even within agencies, there's this constant desire for the new shiny thing, and so, I think we undercut ourselves a lot and we have a really hard time sticking with efforts. And so – I think that that really impacts our ability to actually do the work." (Focus Group Participant 5)

"…I do resonate with what [other participant] was saying around kind of chasing shiny things and sort of my experience of the cycle of, there's the flavor of the month or sort of topic of the – there are things that take precedence at different periods of time, and some of that follows funding. So, grantors always want the new, shiny thing, but different topics keep rising to the top and become kind of the thing, the issue of the moment, and I think that does then make it hard to have a consistent message about how all of those factors and all of those things are important moving forward, because it tends to kind of drive the ship when those new things arrive or it becomes kind of the lead thought at the moment." (Focus Group Participant 8)

Individual scores for leadership ranged from a low of 4.00 to a high of 6.80, with an average score given of 4.71. Overall, participants felt that the leadership of Anchorage recognizes the importance of protective factors and has good intention. However, many participants discussed that the competing priorities of elected leaders tend to make youth issues a lower priority, or that the messaging from elected leaders may be inconsistent. At the same time, participants noted that the concept of protective factors appears to be gaining momentum and that there are some clear leaders, specifically pointing out that the mayor's office is receptive to helping youth, that the school district superintendent is on board, and that many agencies have sent staff to AYDC events to receive training. Participants also noted that at the leadership level the way to address protective factors tends to be to hand out money but that it then becomes the job of nonprofit organizations to do the work, and that there needs to be a greater focus on contributing time such as by mentoring or by participating in meetings. Two participants in one focus group highlighted West High School as an example of strong leadership, where the principal is not only involved in efforts, but empowers youth to take on leadership roles in these efforts. Illustrative comments from focus group participants are provided below.

> "I think there are definitely people who are leading in really positive and really strong ways, and then there's other leaders where I'm not sure that it's on their radar or it's getting very much attention at all. So, I do think there are examples where it's really well done and they're really pushing for things and allocating resources and making it happen, and then there are other leaders – so, I guess it all depends on how you define a leader, but there are other leaders for whom it does not seem like much of a priority where they may say, 'Oh, yeah, it's a really great thing,' but they're not putting a lot of time or energy into it. (Focus Group Participant 8)

> "You know, I am factoring in COVID, I'm factoring in the racism we're dealing with, I'm factoring in a lot of things – not even just in the last few months. […] But I do not see - there are so many other issues going on that I'm not seeing a lot of motivation or maybe motivation to act anytime soon because there are other things going on." (Focus Group Participant 4)

> "…And while I think there are a lot of efforts, I think political leaders know who is listening and if you change the audience, that messaging changes sometimes. And so, I've had some experiences where, you know, the messaging has changed, and the advocacy efforts have differed depending on who was in the room. And I thought that was really interesting and so it makes me wonder sometimes if the messaging is to appease rather than to actually make change." (Focus Group Participant 5)

> "I think our elected leaders, they have a lot of priorities they have to focus on. I think the youth are on the back burners. The youth don't vote as often. Their main base is not trying to focus on the youth at all. It's more focused on the other [community

members] at large. But I also know that there are a bunch of different organizations that do focus on the youth, that help with scholarships, and anything in those lines to try to help bring kids who might not have the resources to help them get to a school, or other programs. So there are other things out there that are more focused for the youth, but I think leadership at large just don't set the youth as a priority..." (Focus Group Participant 3)

"...but the way I see it is that elected officials, they may recognize the need for shared protective factors, but their way of handling it is just to dole out monies to nonprofits and then once they allocate the funds, then it's no longer their problem. It becomes the nonprofit's job to take care of this issue. So [...] a few are highly involved. Like I go to AYDC coalition meetings and there are a lot of nonprofits there and we're into it. We want to help out. We want to do all what we can. [Organization name], we're in 110 percent, but where else is the community involvement? It's just us, and we receive funding, but you know, that's all I see." (Focus Group Participant 7)

"...I think there are lots of discussions. And I think there is a level of awareness of the need to focus on our youth. [...] When I think of allocating resources, I don't just think of monetary resources. As [other participants] mentioned yes, there are monies given to certain organizations, but it's not just the money [that we need]. We need people to be able to dedicate time towards that. So it's the people, and it's the time, and it's, 'Okay, we have this, and you people all should be on this committee, but who's going to lead the committee? How's this work going to go forward?' [...] I mean I think even myself of, 'Yes, I want to be on this committee, but I don't want to lead it because I don't have time to lead it.' [...] Lots of discussions and lots of great intent, but if we don't have all those resources lined up to make the work go forward, it's just going to stagnate." (Focus Group Participant 1)

Individual scores for community climate ranged from a low of 4.00 to a high of 5.50, with an average score given of 4.45. Overall, focus group participants felt that while community support is there, it is predominantly passive, discussing that people like the idea of investing in youth and the community, but when it comes to taking action the level of interest drops off dramatically. This drop in interest could be related to busy personal and work schedules, financial concerns or lack of financial means to participate, quickly shifting attention from one concern or topic to another, a sense that this is someone else's problem to address, or simply that people don't know what to do. Participants also cited economic concerns at the state level as a possible reason for lack of interest. However, participants did note that some community members are quite active, including by speaking up publicly or demanding accountability. One participant also noted that a lot of work on shared youth protective factors is not necessarily new work, but it is new language and people can get hung up on this new language forgetting that they already know how to do the work. Language and cultural barriers were also noted in soliciting community support. One participant specifically noted a need to create stronger links so that community members know what they can do to support efforts. Illustrative comments from focus group participants are provided below.

> *"…You know, I think people get bored really quickly. […] I think in a lot of human services and social work fields, there's just such a mass amount of burnout and turnaround that, you know, not only are people looking for the new fancy thing, but you're just constantly having to start from the ground up. And so, I think real change is really difficult, because we're constantly having to re-train everybody and have the conversation again and everyone has to come to the epiphany of what is actually needed and then maybe that person has gotten burnt out or found a new passion in life." (Focus Group Participant 5)*

> *"…what a soothing space AYDC is when you step into a space where folks are really connected, taking responsibility, feeling not just like it is our best chance at really healing our community to do this kind of work, but feeling like we have to look for that space with people who are not even having this on the radar. […] and I think that one of the things that gets really hard for me is that a lot of this isn't—you know, it's not new. It's new language, but it's not new work. And unfortunately, I think that there are a lot of people that get hung up on the new language and maybe even turned off by the new language and forget that maybe they already know how to do this thing that we're doing. "(Focus Group Participant 9)*

> *"…some people do speak out publicly, some people do support tax increases, some people do demand accountability. I actually hear that a lot in the community about accountability for different programs. […] I do see barriers with people really having so much to contend with that they can't, they don't feel they have enough time to do*

this work, whether it's financial or time crunch or expectations from their work of being available all the time or the stresses of knowing that three industries are crashing simultaneously in Alaska. You know, and people are worried about what's gonna happen, and I think that makes them maybe a little less willing to take that extra step to go and volunteer for something or just kind of hunkering down. (Focus Group Participant 2)

"I think the climate is that I don't know – some believe in it, but I think the vast majority maybe see it as a concern but aren't willing to do anything actively to make it better. It's somebody else's issue. Let those nonprofits handle it, or it's the school's issue." (Focus Group Participant 7)

"…we get a lot of people who ask us to do something, but that is sort of the end of it. There isn't much participation. There isn't much involvement. It's pretty passive, and to the degree that folks host conversations to talk about this, I feel like all of those conversations and there's no real follow through or action. Yeah, I think there are a few folks in our community who very much care deeply about this and who work on this, but otherwise it tends to be pretty passive, someone else's responsibility. (Focus Group Participant 11)

"I do see individuals who just on their own time […] are really passionate and try to be involved as much as they can. But I absolutely agree with what [other participant] said is we have, overall, I think as a community climate, we have a lot of complaining about systems that are happening, but nobody stepping up and saying, 'I want to help'. It's again, 'Everybody else fix it.'" (Focus Group Participant 1)

"I'm going to speak for my experience as a young person running a youth organization going to adults and community members and essentially asking for support. What I found is that adults in youth organizations and some community members were so enthusiastic and wanted to provide lots of support for our efforts on [program]. I think the second level to that though is a lot of teachers and local businesses support the idea, and then don't know what to do. So that's what I think of as passive support. I think our response to passive support should be thinking about that link between someone believes this is an issue and doesn't know what the next step is. So I think something that could really improve there is just creating stronger links between the youth or the youth organizations that are asking for support and then helping community members know what to do when someone asks them for support." (Focus Group Participant 6)

Individual scores for resources ranged from a low of 4.00 to a high of 5.50, with an average score given of 4.73. Participants overall felt that a large amount of work is being done to secure resources for this work, although at times there is difficulty moving from identifying potential resources to the next step of securing those resources. Participants also noted specific challenges of the work being primarily funded on a shorter-term basis through grant funding or that people must go to the same sources of grant funding over and over again. Participants also expressed concerns about future impacts of the state's current fiscal challenges, noting that while Alaska has historically had a large amount of resources compared to other states, those resources have been steadily shrinking. One participant observed that there is more work being done towards a train the trainer type model, and that this is a more sustainable route for this work. Participants had mixed opinions about the ease of securing resources to support youth with at least one participant observing that it was easier to solicit both financial and non-financial support for youth-oriented goals, while another observed that it is more difficult. Participants noted that it can be difficult for youth-led initiatives to secure funding including initiatives representing diverse groups such as LGBTQ+ youth. Illustrative comments from focus group participants are provided below.

> *"There's a lot of great work happening, and a lot of it is grant-funded. I've seen in the past, there have been some great grants that come out, and the program that's in place during the grant is fantastic, and then the grant goes away and all the work goes away. That is discouraging, but I have seen [a lot of different organizations moving that needle more] to implementing the teach the teacher type of thing. We're going to bring this program in and we're going to train the staff you have on site, so that when we leave, being the outside resource, you still have people in this capacity to keep the work moving forward. So I am seeing more of a trend increasing with that, which I think is helpful. But I think we definitely need to go more that route, that sustainability piece, because [there are] a lot of times where a lot of these programs, we lose them. Because they're not sustainable once the money runs away. (Focus Group Participant 1)*

> *"I think Spirit of Youth and AYDC have been doing a really good job putting out grants specifically soliciting protective factor initiatives. A couple needs I see are that it's hard for youth themselves to get these grants, or to know that they're available to them. So a lot of school clubs might be doing valuable protective factor work, [but] don't know that there are grants available for the work they're doing. […] Then, I think, something that would make a huge difference in that is just people in schools, whether it's teachers, counselors, nonprofit workers coming in, that could encourage youth-led grant work. (Focus Group Participant 6)*

"People are looking for resources and accessing those resources. It's just, that's how things have to be and that's how you survive, and people are really good at creatively figuring out how to do that across the board, whether that's financial resources or in-kind volunteers – all of that. So, I think that's done really, really well. […] I think often the pools of resources that this type of work goes to are often the same pools over and over and over again. And I don't know if that's good or bad, I just think that is. […] I think there are so many question marks – again, with the state economy, with things changing, with companies moving in and out of the state, just with the nature of grant funding and those type of things or even the nature of in-kind donations – all of those things feel like they can evaporate rather quickly. And the terms of some of that stuff is not even three to five years – sometimes it's year to year or even one season to the next." (Focus Group Participant 8)

"… all of the different resources that were available from – you know, in our community that seemed so accessible, and then I've watched some of those same resources shrink and shrink, and the Medicaid, like we talked about, also shrinking dollars. So, you know, if you compare it to other states, I still feel like we come out strong, but when you compare it to, are these resources accessible, are they enough, and long-term versus short term, it is a bit of a concern." (Focus Group Participant 4)

Appendix: Powerpoint overview of shared youth protective factors provided to participants.

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