



# Tennessee Livability Collaborative

Evaluation Report 2019



# Tennessee Livability Collaborative | Evaluation Report

**August 2019**

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The author would like to acknowledge and thank Leslie Meehan, Matthew Coleman, Patricia Scott, Shannon Velasquez, TyKeara Mims, and the members of the Tennessee Livability Collaborative for their review of and contributions to this report.



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# The Tennessee Livability Collaborative

**The Tennessee Livability Collaborative** is a working group of 17 Tennessee state agencies, departments, and commissions with a mission of improving the prosperity, quality of life, and health of Tennesseans through state department collaboration in the areas of policy, funding, and programming.

The Collaborative was launched in 2015 as a voluntary effort. Member agencies learn about one another's work, identify opportunities for collaboration, and develop new policies and initiatives to support the development of livable communities across the state.

The Collaborative is facilitated by Leslie Meehan and John Vick with the Tennessee Department of Health's Office of Primary Prevention. It is jointly-owned by all participating state agencies and with an open invitation to other agencies to participate. The Collaborative meets bi-monthly with priorities and meeting agendas co-developed by members.

## Tennessee Livability Collaborative Members

Tennessee Department of Health  
Tennessee Department of Transportation  
Tennessee Arts Commission  
Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation  
Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development  
Tennessee Department of Tourist Development  
Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
Tennessee Department of Education  
Tennessee Housing and Development Agency  
Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability  
Tennessee Office of Customer Focused Government  
Tennessee Department of Agriculture  
Tennessee Department of Human Resources\*  
Tennessee Higher Education Commission  
Tennessee Department of Human Services\*  
Tennessee Department of Children's Services\*  
University of Tennessee Extension Service

*\*Joined the Collaborative after the evaluation was conducted*



# Evaluation Executive Summary

## Purpose

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of the **Tennessee Livability Collaborative**. The evaluation was conducted in 2018-2019, roughly 3 years after its first convening, to determine whether the group is achieving its goals, to better understand its accomplishments and value to its members, and to inform the future work and direction of the group.

## Methods

**Surveys and interviews were conducted with all current Collaborative member agencies** to assess changes in collaboration, data coordination, and policies, as well as opportunities for improvement. The research questions for the evaluation were determined by members of the Collaborative.

## Findings

The evaluation findings show the **Tennessee Livability Collaborative is achieving its goals** of building relationships, increasing collaboration and alignment, and developing or enhancing interagency initiatives. Since joining the Collaborative, **agencies are partnering with new agencies and working with other agencies in new ways**.

**Two initiatives were developed** that can be attributed directly to the Collaborative: 1) the ThreeStar Planning Meetings and 2) the Tennessee Ambassador League Institute. Other programs and policies have been developed or enhanced at multiple agencies since joining the Collaborative.

**Key to the Collaborative's successes are the relationships built** through networking, discussions at meetings, and greater awareness of the work of other agencies. These have led to **new interagency work** as well as **stronger feelings of shared purpose and connection** among Collaborative participants. These evaluation findings will be shared with members of the Collaborative to inform discussions about its work moving forward.



## Collaboration

11 of 14 agencies collaborate more often than before with at least one other agency since joining the Collaborative, and the overall strength of interagency working relationships has increased. Most agencies are reaching out to others to participate in events, trainings, or conferences, and for input on plans, reports, or other products.



## Data Coordination and Assessments

4 agencies created new assessments or analyses related to livability. Agencies engaged one another in developing agency data profiles, and created shared datasets with other agencies.



## Policy, Procedure, and Staff Changes

4 agencies aligned their funding opportunities with one another. 6 agencies changed policies and plans to reflect other agencies' priorities. 3 agencies created new staff positions or changed existing positions to encourage cross-sector work.



## Development of New Initiatives

The Collaborative developed two new initiatives to encourage cross-sector collaboration at the local level: the ThreeStar Priority County Planning Meetings and the Tennessee Ambassador League training and leadership institute.



## Perceptions

All members have a better understanding of the work and goals of other agencies since joining the Collaborative. Most members feel a greater sense of personal commitment to improving livability in Tennessee and a stronger feeling of shared purpose with other member agencies since joining the Collaborative.

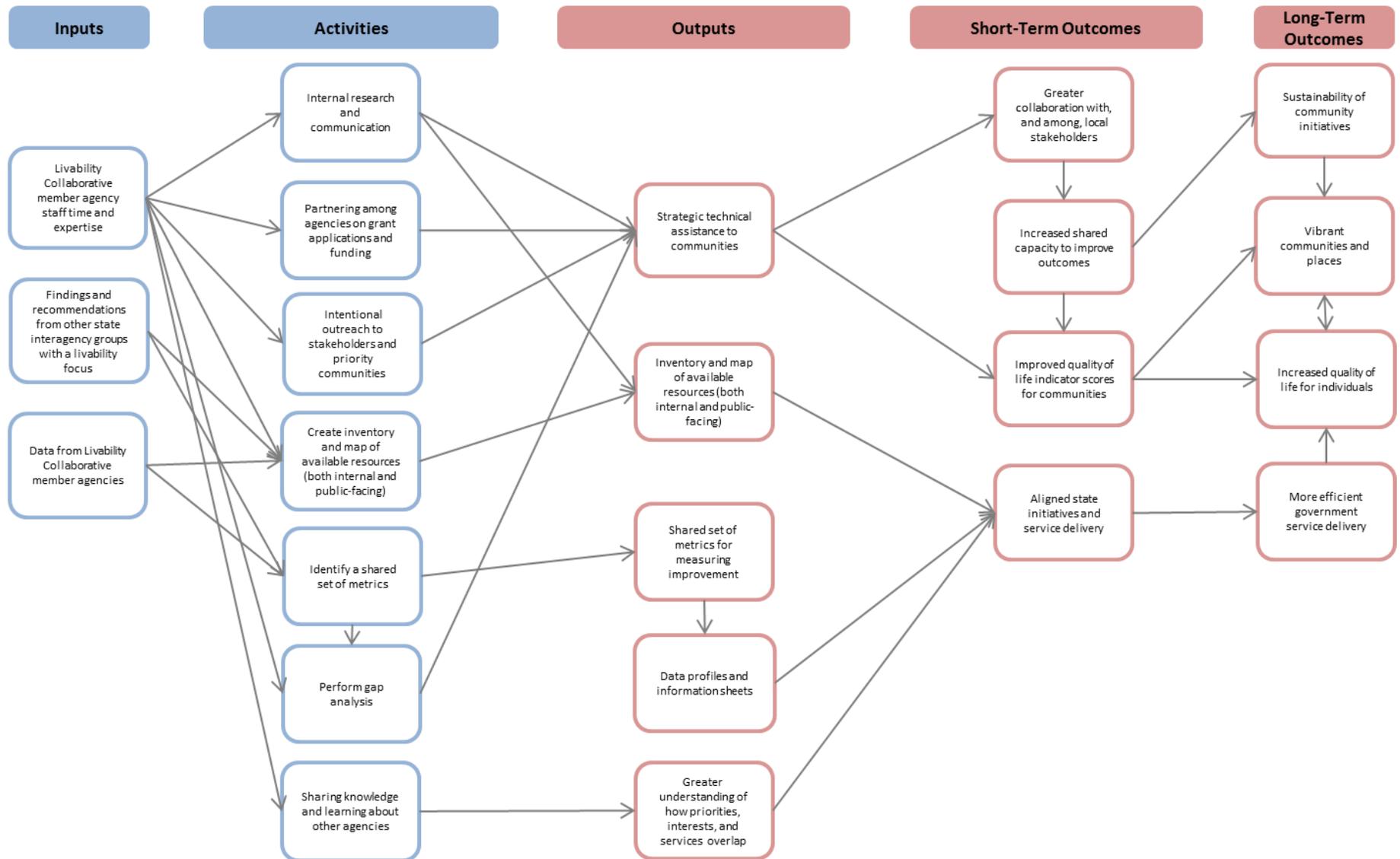


## Opportunities for Improvement

Recommendations include improved interagency data sharing, more intentional relationship building among agencies, greater translation of ideas into action, and adding new member agencies to the Collaborative.

# Tennessee Livability Collaborative Logic Model

Members of the Tennessee Livability Collaborative co-developed a logic model to provide a visual representation of the expected work and outcomes of the group. The logic model maps the relationships between the resources dedicated to the collaborative, what activities the group aims to engage in, and outputs and outcomes that are expected to result from the group's efforts.



# Evaluation Process and Questions

**The purpose of the evaluation** is to 1) better understand the work and accomplishments resulting from participation in the Collaborative, 2) determine whether the Collaborative is meeting its goals, and 3) discover what is working well and how the Collaborative could improve to best meet its goals and serve the needs of the members.

**Participants** in the evaluation included members of the Collaborative. At the time of data collection there were 14 Collaborative member agencies, all of which completed both a survey and an interview about their participation.

**The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach**, collecting data from participants via surveys and semi-structured interviews. Data from process records and meeting notes were also included in the evaluation. Participation in the surveys and interviews was voluntary, and information collected during the surveys and interviews will not be attributed to individuals or the agencies they represent.

**Data collection** for the evaluation began in late 2018, about three years after the Collaborative was formed. Survey data were collected in October and November 2018. Participant interviews were conducted December 2018 through February 2019. Each member agency completed one survey and one interview. If multiple staff from a member agency participate regularly in the Collaborative, the survey and interview were conducted jointly with staff from that agency.

## Evaluation Questions

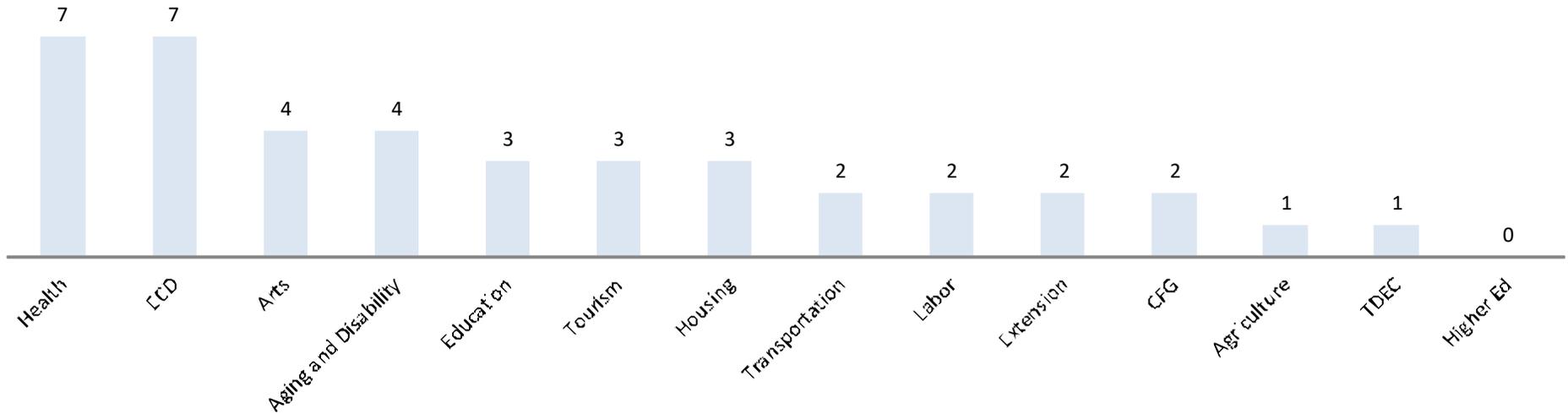
The questions to be answered by the evaluation were jointly determined by member agencies. Six evaluation questions were developed:

1. Have Collaborative members partnered with new people or agencies since joining the Collaborative?
2. Have Collaborative members created new relationships or strengthened existing relationships with other members since joining the Collaborative?
3. Are Collaborative members developing programs, plans, projects, or policies in partnership with other member agencies as a result of participating in the Collaborative?
4. What programs, plans, projects, or policies have been developed by Collaborative member agencies that can be attributed to participation in the Collaborative?
5. Which aspects of Livability are most important to each agency, and how have they changed since joining the Collaborative?
6. Are staff at Collaborative member agencies referring clients to other state departments for services more often since joining the Collaborative?



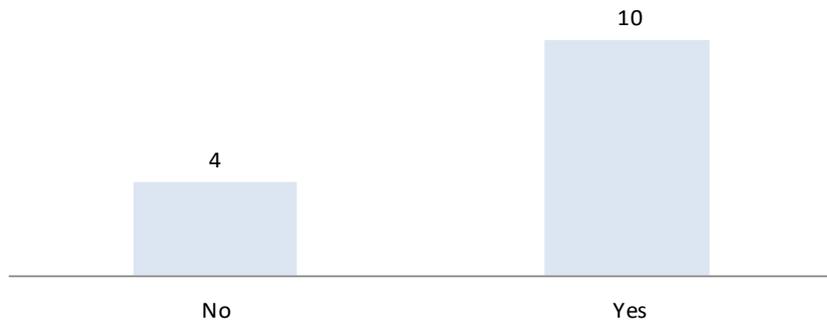
# Evaluation Findings | Collaboration

Which agencies, commissions, or offices do you collaborate with more often since joining the Collaborative?



**11 of 14 agencies** collaborate more often with at least one other agency since joining the Collaborative.

Does your agency currently participate in any formal state-wide collaboratives (e.g. task forces, collaboratives, councils) other than the Tennessee Livability Collaborative?



## Other Statewide Collaboratives Members Participate In

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Rural Task Force                        | Interagency Taskforce on Housing and Health |
| ThreeStar                               | Three Branches Institute                    |
| Joint Task Force for Children’s Justice | Rural Hospital Transformation Program       |
| Children’s Cabinet                      | Project 95                                  |
| Youth Transitions Advisory Council      | Tennessee Obesity Prevention                |
| Coordinated Community Response          | NAS Cabinet                                 |
| Protecting Vulnerable Adults            | Tennessee Together                          |
| Tennessee Re-entry Collaborative        |   |

It’s important to note that members of the Tennessee Livability Collaborative participate in other state-wide collaboratives that may result in increased interagency collaboration, alignment, and knowledge. We should acknowledge that outcomes shared in this evaluation report may be influenced by participation in various interagency efforts and not the Tennessee Livability Collaborative alone.



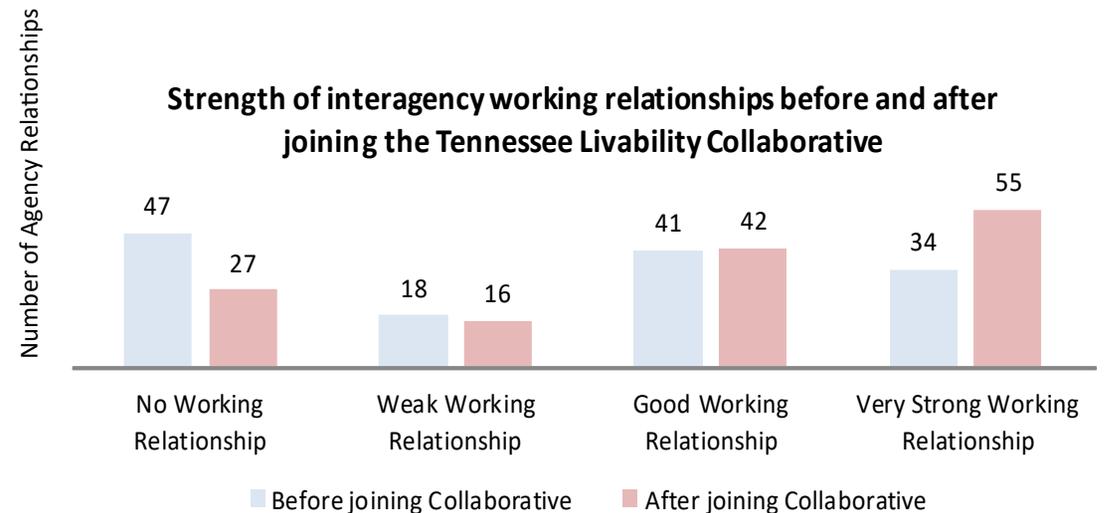
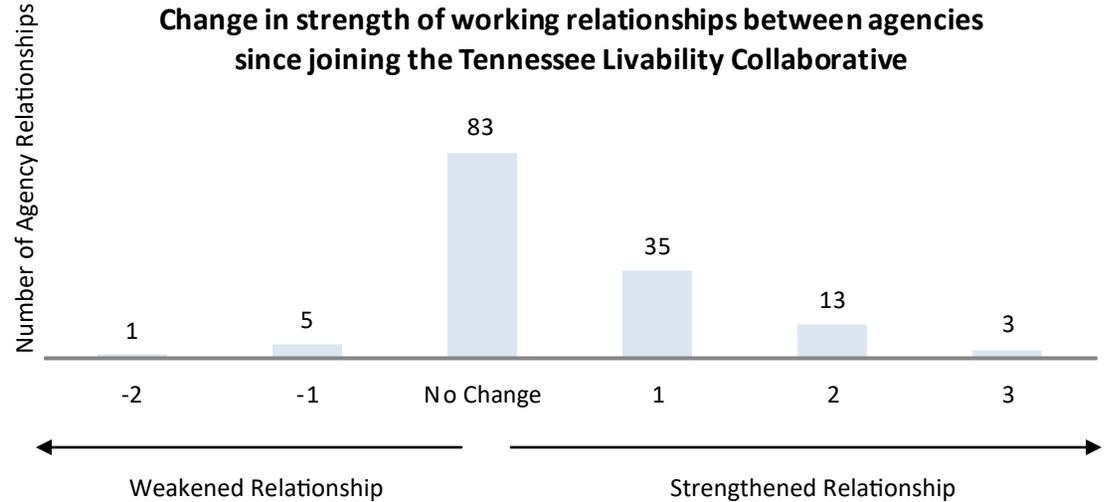
# Evaluation Findings | Collaboration

## Strength of Working Relationships between Agencies

Each Collaborative member agency was asked to rate the strength of its relationship with each of the other member agencies both before and after joining the Livability Collaborative. Participants rated the relationships as either very strong, good, weak, or no relationship. Twelve of the fourteen agencies rated their relationships, with a total of 140 interagency relationships assessed.

For analytical purposes, each of the relationship strength categories was assigned a number from 1 to 4, with very strong being a 4 and no relationship being a 1. The change in score from before participation in the Collaborative to the score at the time of the survey was calculated for each relationship (a pre-intervention and post-intervention change score).

The analysis found that 51 of the 140 interagency relationships had strengthened since joining the Collaborative, and only 6 had weakened. While 83 relationships remained unchanged, 30 of these were rated as “very strong” before joining the Collaborative and could not be rated higher as a result of participation. Before joining the Collaborative, 47 working relationships did not exist between member agencies, falling to 27 since joining. The number of very strong interagency working relationships increased from 34 to 55 since joining the Collaborative.





# Evaluation Findings | Collaboration

**8 agencies** reached out to a member of the Collaborative from another agency to participate in a conference, training, presentation, or other event since joining the Collaborative

## Instances of Interagency Collaboration: Participation in Conferences, Trainings, Presentations, or Other Events

- The TN Arts Commission invited representatives from the TN Department of Health and TN Commission on Aging and Disability to participate in series of roundtables on senior health through the arts sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts.
- The TN Arts Commission Executive Director participated on a panel with the Commissioner of Health at a TN Department of Health conference.
- The Director of Community Arts presented at the training for the TN Department of Health's new regional built environment coordinators.
- The TN Commission on Aging and Disability asked the TN Housing Development Agency to present at quarterly Commission meetings.
- The TN Commission on Aging and Disability asked the TN Department of Health and TN Department of Transportation to attend the Built Environment Stakeholder meeting in Ridgeley.
- The TN Commission on Aging and Disability asked UT Extension and the TN Department of Transportation to join the Senior Volunteer Transportation Network.
- The TN Department of Health reached out to the TN Department of Education, the TN Department of Economic and Community Development, the TN Department of Environment and Conservation, the TN Arts Commission, the TN Higher Education Commission, the TN Department of Transportation, the TN Housing Development Agency, UT Extension, and the TN Commission on Aging and Disability to participate in conferences and presentations.
- The TN Higher Education Commission reached out to UT Extension to engage the Reconnect Ambassadors, participated in a UT Extension Conference, and presented at the TN Ambassador League Institute.
- The TN Housing Development Agency presented at the TN Ambassador League Institute, and has engaged with the TN Department of Health, the TN Commission on Aging and Disability, and the TN Department of Economic and Community Development.
- UT Extension invited the TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development to speak at the FCS Professional Development Conference for Extension agents.





# Evaluation Findings | Collaboration

**6 agencies** reached out to a member of the Collaborative from another agency for input on a draft policy, plan, report, or other produce since joining the Collaborative

## Instances of Interagency Collaboration: Input on Draft Policies, Plans, Reports, or Other Products

- The TN Arts Commission developed plans related to the Arts Education Data project with the TN Department of Education.
- The TN Arts Commission worked with the TN Department of Economic and Community Development and the TN Department of Tourist Development on the Arts & Economic Prosperity statewide study.
- The TN Arts Commission worked with the TN Department of Environment and Conservation to explore markets for Tennessee crafts.
- The TN Commission on Aging and Disability provided input on TN Housing Development Agency reports and participated in joint meetings with the TN Housing Development Agency with community members.
- The TN Commission on Aging and Disability participated in joint meetings with the TN Department of Transportation to discuss transportation maps for the MyRide volunteer transportation program for seniors.
- The TN Department of Health included TN Department of Transportation and TN Department of Environment and Conservation staff in its Built Environment grants review and scoring process.
- UT Extension reached out to the TN Department of Health who provided technical support, partnership, and expertise on a CDC grant.
- UT Extension reached out to the TN Department of Transportation who provided support and guidance for physical activity initiatives with CDC partners and grants.
- The TN Department of Tourist Development sent grant requests to the TN Arts Commission for review.
- The TN Department of Health reached out to the TN Arts Commission for input on built environment grants with an arts focus.
- The TN Department of Health invited and worked with multiple other agencies for input on the Vital Sign Actions implementation and funding recommendations related to the department's County Health Assessments.
- The TN Arts Commission collaborated with the TN Commission on Aging and Disability on a grant application for the statewide Music & Memory nursing home initiative.





# Evaluation Findings | Policy, Procedure, and Staff Changes

**6 agencies** made changes to new, proposed, or existing policies, plans, or procedures to include the priorities of another Collaborative member agency since joining the Collaborative

## Changes to New or Proposed Policies and Procedures

- The TN Arts Commission included TN Department of Health and TN Commission on Aging and Disability priorities in its TN Music & Memory initiative.
- The TN Arts Commission developed a grant application for a program to address the TN Department of Health's nursing home improvement priorities through the arts.
- The TN Department of Health included the TN Department of Transportation and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation plans and resources in the development of its new Built Environment Grant programs in order to fill gaps in funding opportunities.
- The TN Department of Health is working more closely with the TN Department of Economic and Community Development on aligning the ThreeStar Plans with the County Health Assessments.
- The TN Department of Health sought input from the TN Department of Economic and Community Development and the TN Department of Education on its new Vital Sign health indicators and corresponding metrics.
- UT Extension worked to include workforce readiness strategies in agents' educational portfolio in a collaboration with the TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

## Changes to Existing Policies and Procedures

- The TN Arts Commission partnered with the TN Department of Health and the TN Commission on Aging and Disability on the Creative Aging initiative.
- The TN Commission on Aging and Disability State Plan on Aging contains housing and transportation priorities related to the 60+ population.
- The ThreeStar Plan development meetings in Clay and Cocke counties included participation from 12 Collaborative member agencies.
- TN Housing Development Agency explored reducing or eliminating a match requirement for a grant program in economically-distressed counties, ultimately proposing the elimination of a match for all counties.
- UT Extension expanded work with farmers market nutrition initiatives in partnership with the TN Department of Agriculture.
- TN Department of Health reached out to the TN Arts Commission for RFP best practices to use in their Built Environment Grant program.





# Evaluation Findings | Policy, Procedure, and Staff Changes

**4 agencies** developed new staff training or skill-building initiatives in partnership with other member agencies since joining the Collaborative

## New Staff Training or Skill-Building Initiatives

- The Collaborative developed the Tennessee Ambassador League leadership and cross-sector training institute for customer-facing state government staff.
- The TN Department of Health held a multi-day training in partnership with other state agencies for the department's new regional Healthy Development Coordinator positions.
- The TN Higher Education Commission and UT Extension partnered on the Reconnect Ambassadors training program.
- The TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development provided expertise and financially supported a workforce readiness training for initiative for UT Extension agents.

**5 agencies** developed a formal document with another member agency that establishes collaboration since joining the Collaborative

## Formal Documents Developed to Establish Collaboration

- A contract was developed between the TN Arts Commission and the TN Department of Health for the Creative Aging Initiative.
- A letter of commitment was provided by the TN Commission on Aging and Disability to the TN Arts Commission for the TN Music and Memory Grant Proposal funded by the TN Department of Health.
- UT Extension and the TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development developed a contract for SNAP Employment and Training initiative.

**3 agencies** established new staff positions or changed requirements for existing staff to increase engagement in cross-sector work since joining the Collaborative

## New Cross-Sector Staff Positions or Requirements

- UT Extension hired an Extension Specialist for Coalitions focused on building internal and external capacity for partnerships across the state.
- The TN Arts Commission adjusted the Arts Access Director position responsibilities to reflect healthy aging priority activities.
- New positions were developed at the TN Department of Health focused on cross-sector work: a County Health Assessment Coordinator, a Built Environment Grants Coordinator, and seven regional Healthy Development Coordinators.

**5 agencies** developed or changed funding requirements to align with other member agencies since joining the Collaborative

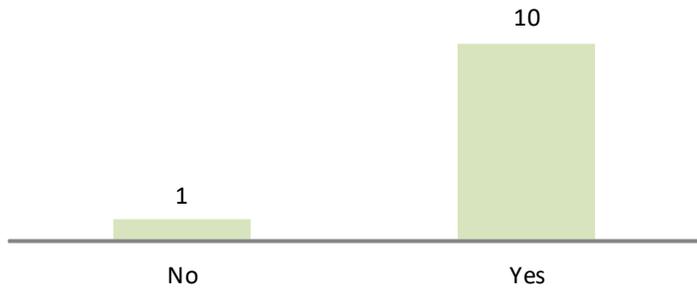
## Instances of Funding Alignment

- The TN Department of Health aligned its Built Environment grant funding programs with those of the TN Department of Transportation and the TN Department of Environment and Conservation to fill gaps.
- TN Housing Development Agency has better aligned expectations of Development District Technical Assistance contracts to ensure the best use of funds for TN Department of Economic and Community Development and housing programs.

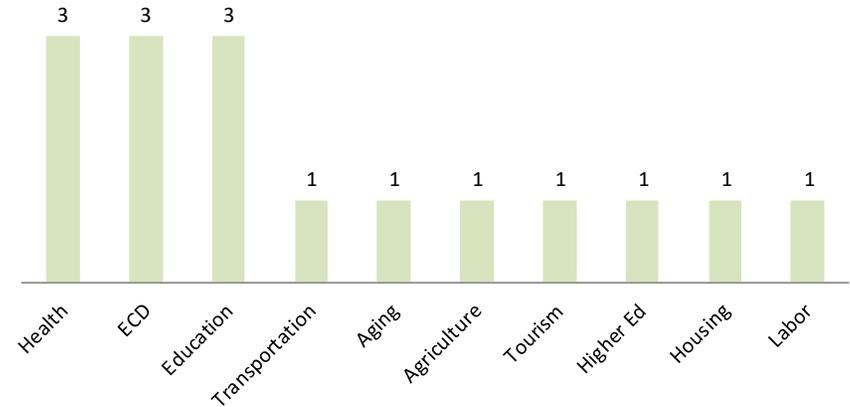


# Evaluation Findings | Data

**Does your agency routinely develop data profiles or reports for the state, counties, or other geographic areas?**



**Which agencies, commissions, or offices did you engage in the development of your data profiles?**



## 6 agencies engaged

other agencies in the development of their data profiles. Agencies such as Health, Education, and Economic and Community Development that collect primary data and manage large statewide datasets are engaged most often. The Tennessee Arts Commission and UT Extension reached out to the greatest number of agencies when developing their data profiles.

**Which agencies, commissions, or offices did you engage in the development of your data profiles?**

|                                    | Health | Transportation | Arts | Aging and Disability | Agriculture | Economic and Community Development | Education | Environment and Conservation | Tourism | Higher Education | Housing | Labor | UT Extension | Customer Focused Government |
|------------------------------------|--------|----------------|------|----------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|---------|------------------|---------|-------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Customer Focused Government        |        |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Arts                               |        |                |      | x                    |             | x                                  | x         |                              | x       |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Aging and Disability               | x      |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Agriculture                        |        |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Economic and Community Development |        |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Education                          |        |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Environment and Conservation       |        |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Health                             |        |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Labor and Workforce Development    |        |                |      |                      |             | x                                  | x         |                              |         | x                |         |       |              |                             |
| Tourism                            |        |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Transportation                     |        |                |      |                      |             | x                                  |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Higher Education                   |        |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| Housing                            | x      |                |      |                      |             |                                    |           |                              |         |                  |         |       |              |                             |
| UT Extension                       | x      | x              |      |                      | x           |                                    | x         |                              |         |                  | x       | x     |              |                             |



# Evaluation Findings | Data

**4 agencies** conducted new assessments or analyses related to livability since joining the Collaborative

## New Livability Assessments or Analyses

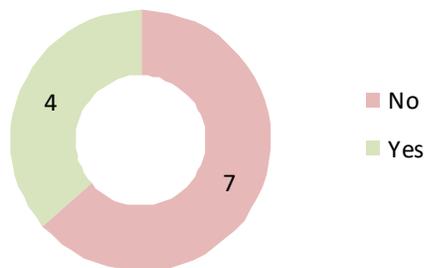
- The TN Arts Commission: The Arts & Economic Prosperity study examined the economic impact of nonprofit arts organizations and their audiences for 25 local communities, 9 development districts, and statewide for Tennessee.
- The TN Commission on Aging and Disability conducted a walkability study for Ridgeley, TN as part of a TN Department of Health-funded built environment grant project.
- The TN Department of Health developed county-level data profiles for all 95 Tennessee counties as part of their County Health Assessment process.
- TN Housing Development Agency developed the Housing and Transportation Issue Brief focusing on cross-sector issues.

**7 agencies** worked with another Collaborative member agency on aligning data since joining the Collaborative

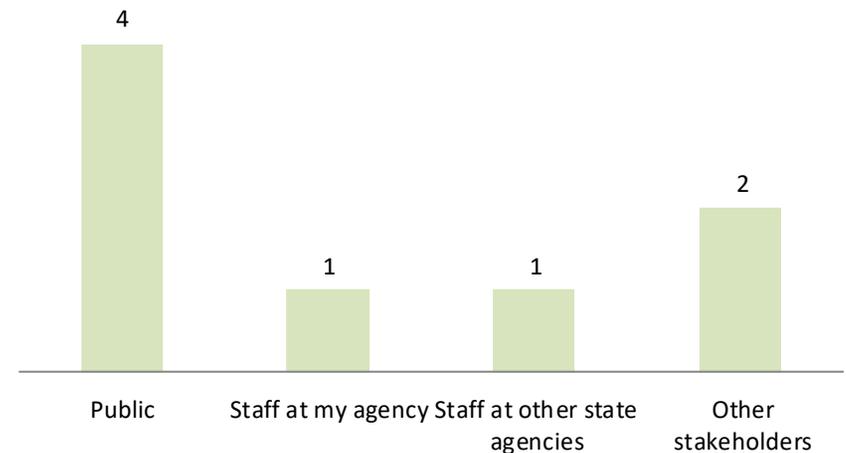
## Instances of Data Alignment

- The TN Arts Commission and the TN Department of Education partnered on the Arts Education Data project.
- The TN Commission on Aging and Disability is partnering with the TN Housing Development Agency for TN Housing Search
- The TN Department of Health provided life expectancy data to the TN Housing Development Agency for affordable housing development location prioritization.
- UT Extension and the TN Department of Health discussed a set of shared health metrics
- UT Extension and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development partnered on shared metrics and data system for the SNAP Employment and Training initiative.

**Has your agency disseminated any new information such as reports or educational materials related to livability since joining the Collaborative?**



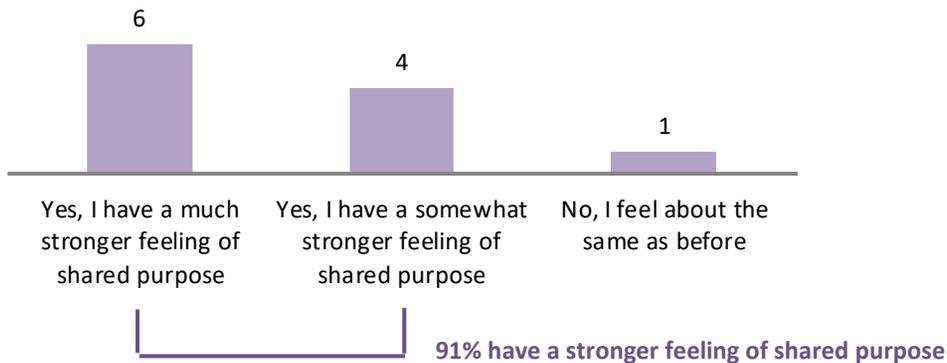
**Who was this information disseminated to?**



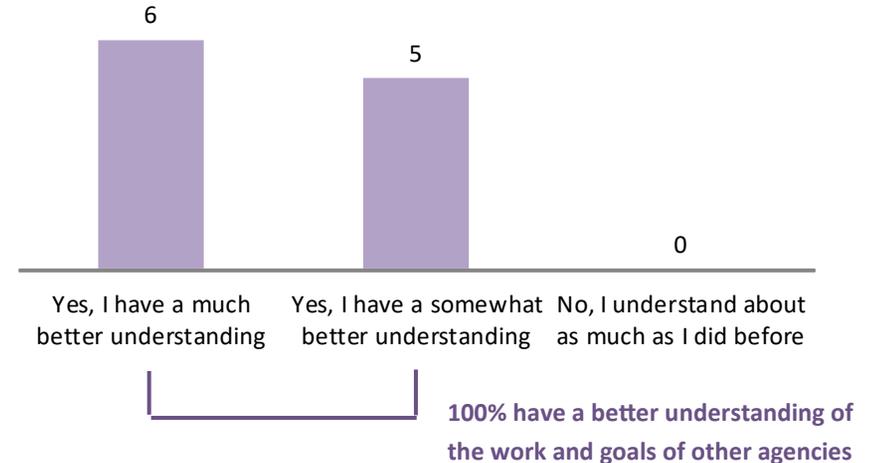


# Evaluation Findings | Attitudes and Perception

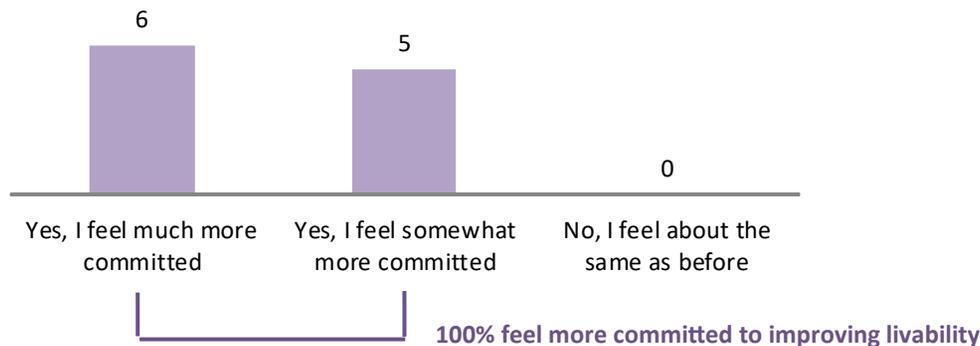
**Do you feel that participating the Collaborative has given you a stronger feeling of shared purpose with other member agencies?**



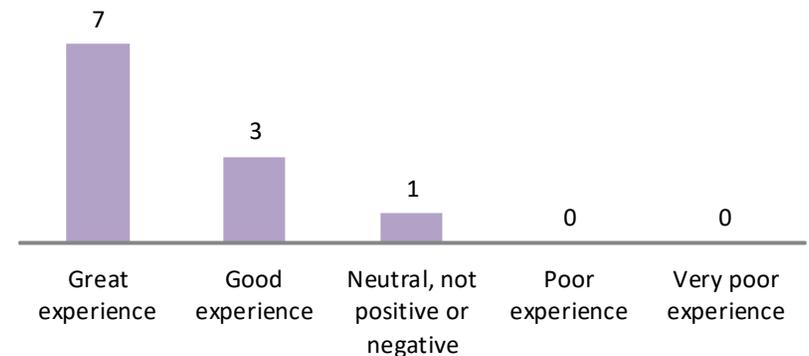
**Overall, do you feel that you have a better understanding of the work and goals of other member agencies since joining the Collaborative?**



**Do you personally feel a greater sense of commitment to improving livability in Tennessee communities since joining the Collaborative?**



**Overall, how would you rate your experience as a participant in the Tennessee Livability Collaborative?**



# Evaluation Findings | Interview Themes

This section describes the key themes that emerged from the interviews with Collaborative participants.

## Expanded Relationships and Knowledge

The value of relationships and expanded knowledge of what other agencies are doing emerged as a key theme from the interviews. Many participants already worked with other Collaborative participants, but they strengthened their relationships and expanded their knowledge. Participants feel better informed about what others are doing. In some cases this knowledge has already led to new opportunities for collaboration and partnerships, and others noted these relationships provide a foundation that will be useful in the future. Participants see value both in learning about the work of other agencies and the ability to share their work with others.

**We know who can come to the table with us... the Livability Collaborative helps draw those triple bottom lines. If the Livability Collaborative is supportive of this, or even just a few members, it helps to make the case...it's helpful to be in a group where we have experts from other areas ready to help.**

## Increased Opportunities for Collaboration

Being informed about the work of other agencies helped to identify points of intersection and overlap between agencies. Participants have been able to identify opportunities for partnerships to enhance ongoing initiatives without the need for additional resources. The ThreeStar planning meetings were noted as helping staff at the local level collaborate with other agencies and leading to deeper conversations within those communities that ultimately led to new opportunities.

**"I don't have to go through the higher ups in my agency; I'm able to do that on my own."**

**"The fact that the Livability Collaborative is looking beyond just a health component or just beyond an economic component, it's one of the first and only organizational structures that I know of that really looks at how do we make Tennessee livable and a sustainable place for families to be nurtured."**

# Evaluation Findings | Interview Themes

This section describes the key themes that emerged from the interviews with Collaborative participants.

## Meeting and Participation Format

Participants felt the frequency, format, time, and rotating location of meetings were all working well. Participants were divided on how deep the discussions should be at the meetings. Some noted the meetings are informative but don't go too deep into the details which helps keep the meetings productive. Others wanted more time for small group or open discussions of topics. Participants are often busy and cannot attend every meeting but are comfortable sending others to attend in their place. Most agencies have 1 to 3 staff who rotate or participate regularly. One challenge noted is that it's difficult to include new participants and keep the meetings productive for those who are regulars. Participants mentioned it would be helpful to have a staff person dedicated to managing the logistics of the meetings and of the Collaborative's efforts more generally. One participant recommended a structured process for determining meeting topics and building the agendas.

**“Leveraging those resources together...when we work together we're more efficient and stronger, you know...So, it's been really remarkable I think and a top point in my career working in [my agency] and I haven't seen that kind of collaboration before.”**

## Improved Communication and Dissemination of Information

Partnerships developed through the Collaborative have helped multiple agencies to better disseminate information about their services at the local level, particularly through the ThreeStar planning meetings. One agency noted receiving grant applications from communities that had not previously applied, attributing this to increased communication and dissemination via partnerships with Collaborative agencies. Agencies have also found it helpful to develop a shared way of thinking and talking about livability. Participants recommended developing a communications strategy with consistent branding and messaging to engage local communities about the importance of livability.

## Connecting with Rural Communities

Participants like the transition to working with local communities through initiatives like the ThreeStar Planning meetings and the Tennessee Ambassador League Institute. The ThreeStar planning meetings were noted as helpful for communities to know who to reach out to, bridging the gap between staff working at the local and statewide levels, with specific examples noted by participants of new partnerships that have developed as a result of those meetings.

# Evaluation Findings | Recommendations for Improvement

## How do you feel the Tennessee Livability Collaborative could be improved?

**Improve collaboration around data:** “Would like better access to data from other agencies and more input on data included in scorecards.”

**Reduce overlap with other groups’ work:** “It’s a great group, and I always enjoy learning more about other agencies. However, this seems to duplicate a lot of the work already performed by the Rural Task Force.”

**Take a systems approach:** “Getting into more policy, systems, and environmental change work.”

**Create tangible products:** “To determine a tangible product/resource to offer and move the needle for communities.”

**Translate ideas into action:** Lots of ideas are conjured at the meetings but they don’t always translate into action. Create a repository for these ideas, a way to share resources electronically, and then follow up regularly on the status of action items.

**Engage the Governor’s Office and State Legislature:** Gubernatorial support would encourage more focus on action. This would be a perfect time to frame the discussion around distressed counties since that is going to be one of his metrics of success. Include a state senator and representative in the Collaborative.

**Intentionally build relationships between agencies where needed:** “Perhaps have each agency map out how they see the most salient relationship is with each collaborative member. If there is no link established by either agency, perhaps explore further. Take actions based on these priority linkages.”

**Add new members:** “Please include the Department of Human Services in the collaborative. To not have the SNAP program represented and the other host of programs is overlooking a major player. Dedicated staff to facilitate the collaborative.”

## Are there any barriers to your participation in the Collaborative?

**Time constraints:** Scheduling conflicts. Prioritization due to number of work responsibilities. Scheduling and competing priorities. Time constraints. Distance to travel is sometimes a limitation to participation.

# What the Evaluation Findings Tell Us

The findings from the surveys and interviews with Collaborative participants provide useful insights into the six evaluation questions and can help determine whether the Collaborative is meeting its goals. Findings are described here for each evaluation question.

## Evaluation Question 1 | Have Collaborative members partnered with new people or agencies since joining the Collaborative?

The evaluation found that Collaborative members are partnering with new people and agencies since joining the Collaborative, and in general are collaborating more often with other agencies than before. Of the 14 agencies who participated in the evaluation, 11 are collaborating with at least one other agency more often than before participating in the Collaborative. For the 12 agencies that rated the strength of their relationships with other member agencies, 51 of the 140 interagency relationships had strengthened since joining Collaborative, and the number of very strong interagency working relationships increased from 34 to 55 since joining. Also, the number of interagency working relationships that did not exist fell from 47 to 27 since joining. Participants noted a number of examples where new partnerships were formed to develop new initiatives or enhance existing ones.

## Evaluation Question 2 | Have Collaborative members created new relationships or strengthened existing relationships with other members since joining the Collaborative?

The building and strengthening of relationships was perhaps the strongest theme that emerged from the interviews. Every participant noted the value of these relationships, and attributed the development of relationships directly to participation in the Collaborative. These relationships have given participants a person they know and trust at other agencies, and have been utilized as an entry point when Collaborative members need to connect with staff from another agency but may not know who contact. Thus far, these relationships have been leveraged to partner on cross-agency initiatives such as trainings or data sharing, have resulted in invitations to present at one another's meetings and conferences, and have led to member agencies receiving grant awards from other agencies to fund new programs and projects. However, some participants noted that new ideas are often generated during Collaborative meetings but are not further developed, suggesting an opportunity to more effectively leverage the relationships and information sharing that occurs during meetings to translate these ideas into action. Additionally, relationships at the local level were built through the ThreeStar planning meetings and the Tennessee Ambassador League Institute. These two initiatives developed by the Collaborative succeeded in building relationships between member agency staff at the local level.

# What the Evaluation Findings Tell Us

The findings from the surveys and interviews with Collaborative participants provide useful insights into the six evaluation questions and can help determine whether the Collaborative is meeting its goals. Findings are described here for each evaluation question.

## **Evaluation Question 3** | Are Collaborative members developing programs, plans, projects, or policies in partnership with other member agencies as a result of participating in the Collaborative?

Collaborative members are developing programs, plans, projects, and organizational policies in partnership with other member agencies. Some participants felt confident these collaborations can be attributed to participation in the Collaborative, although it is difficult to know whether some would have materialized because of existing relationships or participation in other cross-agency groups. Examples of these partnerships include Music and Memory initiative, a partnership between Arts and TCAD with funding from Health; alignment of new built environment grant programs with TDOT and TDEC funding; a training collaboration between UT Extension and Labor and Workforce; and new positions created at Health and UT Extension focused on cross-agency work.

## **Evaluation Question 4** | What programs, plans, projects, or policies have been developed by Collaborative member agencies that can be attributed to participation in the Collaborative?

Two initiatives were developed by the Collaborative: the ThreeStar planning meetings and the Tennessee Ambassador League Institute. Both were developed in response to needs identified during discussions at Collaborative meetings. A number of other interagency collaborations on programs, policies, and projects were identified by participants in the surveys and interviews. However, while they may have been developed or enhanced as a result of the Collaborative, it is difficult to determine whether they can be attributed to participation in the Collaborative alone.

# What the Evaluation Findings Tell Us

The findings from the surveys and interviews with Collaborative participants provide useful insights into the six evaluation questions and can help determine whether the Collaborative is meeting its goals. Findings are described here for each evaluation question.

## Evaluation Question 5 | Which aspects of Livability are most important to each agency, and how have they changed since joining the Collaborative?

Collaborative members talked about the shift to using the term “livability” as a way to frame their work. Some noted that using the term was particularly useful when describing how the work of their agency complements the work of another agency. The survey results showed that greatest number of members work more often with Health and with Economic and Community Development (7 agencies work more with each compared to before joining the Collaborative), followed by Arts and Aging and Disability (4 agencies work more with each). This may not necessarily indicate a greater importance placed on the work of these agencies, but could be an indication of a shift toward aspects of livability not previously prioritized.

## Evaluation Question 6 | Are staff at Collaborative member agencies referring clients to other state departments for services more often since joining the Collaborative?

This evaluation question relates primarily to outcomes of the Tennessee Ambassador League Institute (TALI). As a training and leadership institute for front-line staff and their supervisors who interact with the public, a goal was to encourage staff at one agency to refer their clients for services at other agencies when they may be eligible or in need of those services. Educating staff at each agency about service offerings at other agencies would provide awareness of a broader range of services available across state government, and encourage staff to refer their clients to one another’s agencies for services. An increase in these types of referrals is best evaluated a year after the conclusion of the institute. A one-year followup evaluation has not yet been conducted but will serve to answer this question and others related to the long-term success of TALI.



# Evaluations of Tennessee Livability Collaborative Initiatives

ThreeStar Planning Meetings

Tennessee Ambassador League

# ThreeStar Planning Meetings | Evaluation

The Tennessee Livability Collaborative identified an opportunity to provide a concentrated and collective effort by member agencies to assist rural counties in the development and implementation of their community and economic development plans. These plans, called ThreeStar, are developed by all 95 Tennessee counties with facilitation from the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. The plans aim to promote collaboration among sectors and are an ideal format for multiple agencies to come together in promoting and aligning state government resources.

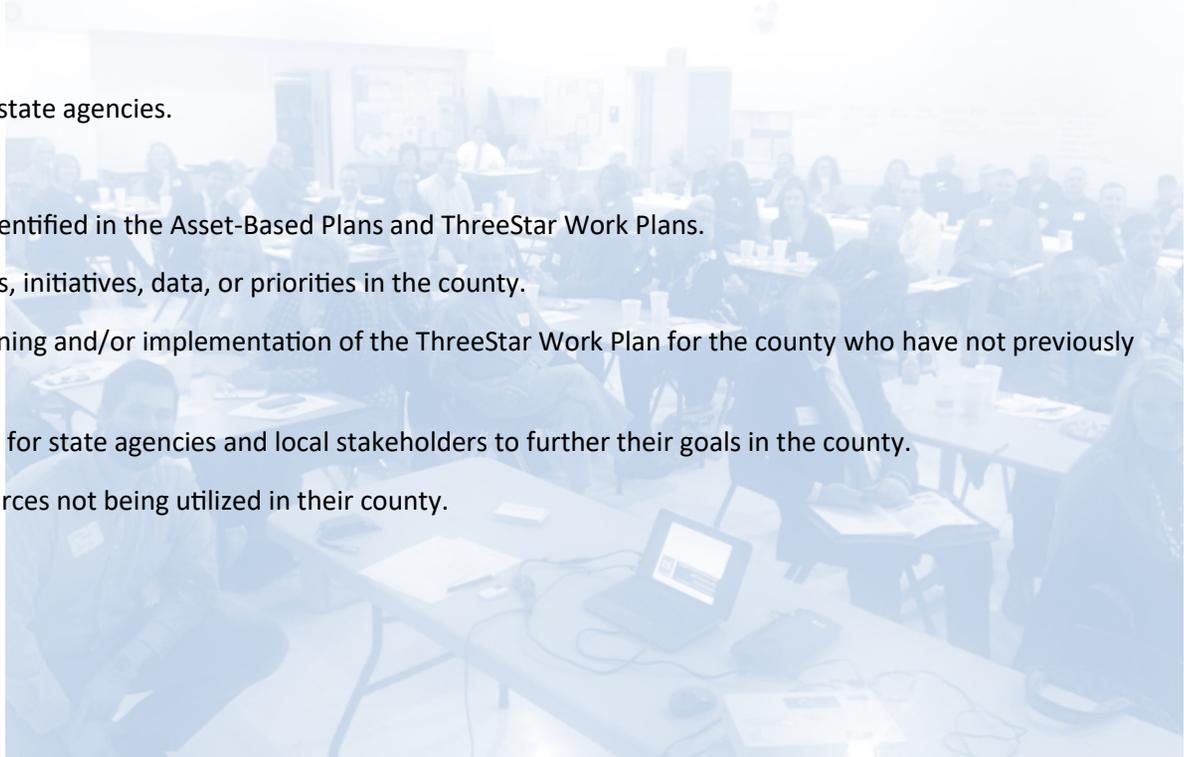
## Overview

The Tennessee Livability Collaborative, in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, hosted two public meetings in February 2018 to assist counties with the development of their 2018-2019 ThreeStar Plans. Three priority counties, one from each of Tennessee's Grand Divisions, were selected by Collaborative members to participate in this pilot initiative: Clay County, Lake County, and Cocke County. These three county meetings were intended to serve as a pilot project for expanding future meetings to other counties across the state. Ultimately two meetings were held, one in Clay County and the other in Cocke County.

## Goals

The goals of the ThreeStar Planning Meetings were to:

- Build new relationships between local stakeholders and state agencies.
- Build new relationships between government agencies.
- Educate staff at state agencies about county priorities identified in the Asset-Based Plans and ThreeStar Work Plans.
- Educate staff at state agencies about their own programs, initiatives, data, or priorities in the county.
- Engage state agencies and local stakeholders in the planning and/or implementation of the ThreeStar Work Plan for the county who have not previously been involved.
- Provide a space for discussion that is mutually-beneficial for state agencies and local stakeholders to further their goals in the county.
- Inform local communities about state government resources not being utilized in their county.



# ThreeStar Planning Meetings | Evaluation

## Clay and Cocke County Planning Meetings Pilot | 2018

Within two weeks of the meetings, participants completed a survey about their experience to help inform and improve future planning meetings. A total of 56 surveys were completed for a response rate of 62%. This survey total includes 37 participants from the Clay County meeting and 19 participants from the Cocke County meeting. The surveys were anonymous and voluntary.

## Pilot Evaluation Findings

- **79%** of state agency representatives felt the meeting was very beneficial or mostly beneficial for their agency's work in the county.
- **84%** of participants felt the meeting was very beneficial or mostly beneficial for the county in developing their ThreeStar plan.
- **43%** of participants felt very well informed about the county's ThreeStar plan after the meeting, compared to **19%** before the meeting.
- Almost all participants (**98%**) met a state agency representative they didn't know before the meeting, and most agency representatives (**67%**) met community stakeholders they didn't already know.
- **33%** of participants had already followed up with someone they met at the meeting at the time of the survey, and an additional **53%** of participants planned to follow up with someone they met.
- **80%** of participants planned to be involved in their county's upcoming ThreeStar Plan, compared to **48%** being involved in previous years' plans. Of those who plan to be involved, **53%** attribute their involvement to the ThreeStar meeting.
- Participants noted several **opportunities for improving future meetings**:
  - A greater leadership role for community members and more time for the community to present their priorities to state officials.
  - More clearly-defined next steps and opportunities for follow up and continued collaboration.
  - Leave more time for discussion during the meeting, including small group discussions around specific topics.
  - Greater diversity and representation at the meetings from community residents and other community organizations.

## Next Steps

The Collaborative will now determine whether to conduct ThreeStar planning meetings in additional counties in Tennessee. If the Collaborative decides to host additional meetings, the findings and recommendations from the evaluation can be used to improve the meeting format, participation, and continued support during plan implementation.

# Tennessee Ambassador League | Evaluation

In 2017, the Tennessee Livability Collaborative identified a need for a greater awareness of Tennessee State Government services among front-line staff working in local communities across the state. In response, the Collaborative recommended the development of a cross-agency training institute for local staff to learn about programs and services offered by member agencies, as well as leadership competency training to further develop staff as leaders and champions for collaboration. The institute would also build relationships and encourage cross-agency collaboration among staff at the local level. In 2018, a pilot cohort for the initiative was launched through a partnership with the Tennessee Department of Human Resources and was named the Tennessee Ambassador League and Institute.

## Overview

**The Tennessee Ambassador League and Institute (TALI)** is a learning institute and training opportunity for state government staff to learn about programs and resources available across the Tennessee Government enterprise around jobs, transportation, housing, food, and education. Graduates of the Tennessee Ambassador Institute become members of the Tennessee Ambassador League and continue to promote collaboration between state government agencies in the communities they serve. Participants in TALI are front-line staff, or their supervisors, who interact directly with the public. TALI was developed by members of the Tennessee Livability Collaborative and facilitated by staff from the Tennessee Department of Human Resources. Members of the Collaborative provided content training presentations and interactive exercises during sessions at the institute on their respective topic areas.

## Goals

The goals of the Tennessee Ambassador League and Institute are to:

- Empower the citizen-facing workforce as leaders who are knowledgeable about state resources.
- Learn about programs and resources available through Tennessee State Government.
- Connect customers to resources to improve service utilization.
- Help participants recognize the connections and common goals between the work of their agency and others.
- Familiarize participants with the My TN app so they can serve as early adopters and promote it to others.
- Become local or regional champions for cross-sector collaboration from their respective agencies.
- Encourage participants to collaborate with staff at other agencies.



# Tennessee Ambassador League | Evaluation

## TALI Pilot Cohort | 2018

A pilot institute was launched in 2018 with 21 participants representing 9 state agencies. The pilot helped determine whether the institute was effective at accomplishing its goals and helped the steering committee learn how to improve the institute experience for future cohorts. The pilot institute was implemented between July and November 2018, with all 21 participants graduating and becoming the first members of the Tennessee Ambassador League.

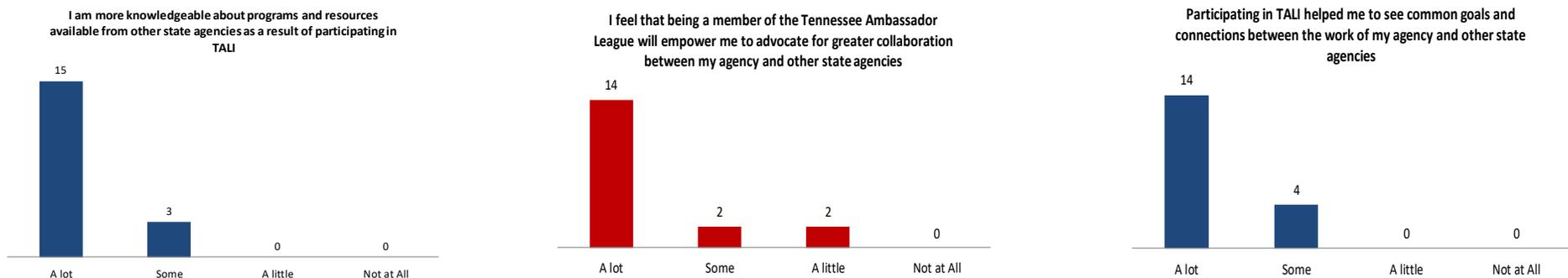
## Pilot Evaluation Findings

The pilot was evaluated to determine whether the institute's goals were met and to gather feedback to strengthen the institute for future participants. Eighteen of the 21 TALI pilot cohort participants completed a voluntary and anonymous survey about their experience.

- **100%** of TALI participants feel what they learned will improve their agency's ability to serve their customers' needs.
- **78%** of participants feel TALI provided them with the skills and confidence needed to collaborate with staff from other state agencies.
- **94%** of participants have contacted, or plan to contact, staff they met at TALI to discuss available resources or collaborate on a project.
- **100%** of participants feel they are more knowledgeable about programs and resources available from other state agencies.
- **100%** of participants feel they made lasting connections with staff at other state agencies.

## Next Steps

The second TALI Cohort is scheduled for October 2019 and will incorporate feedback from participants to improve the experience. Changes include the addition of a health-focused session, an overview of systems thinking and how it informs cross-agency work, and a greater emphasis on planning for continued collaboration after the conclusion of the institute.



# Tennessee Livability Collaborative | Evaluation Report

August 2019

