Sonoma County Proposition 64 Public Health & Safety Grant Program Local Evaluation Report

Authors' Names, titles, and contact information:

Lori Mulholland, MA
Mulholland Research & Evaluation Services
Sebastopol, CA
LMTerauds@gmail.com (602) 696-2991

with

Tyra Harrington, Code Enforcement Manager
Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department,
Code Enforcement Section
2250 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Tyra.Harrington@sonoma-county.org (707) 565-1280

and

Melissa Struzzo, MPH, RADT
Section Manager, Substance Use Disorder & Recovery Services
Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Division
1430 Neotomas Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95405
Melissa.Struzzo@sonoma-county.org (707) 565-4975

Grant Period: October 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023

Date Submitted: March 12, 2024

Contents

Tables

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Sonoma County's Proposition 64 Public Health & Safety Grant Program was awarded to Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD), Code Enforcement Section (CES), which collaborated on the grant with Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Division, Substance Use Disorder and Recovery Services. Sonoma County was awarded one of the eight grants in the first cohort covering October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2023.

Sonoma County's Prop 64 PH&S grant addressed Project Program Area (PPA) 1: Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention; PPA 3: Public Safety; and PPA 4: Environmental Impacts. The goals and objectives around each of these PPAs, were developed to counteract the impact that legalized recreational cannabis has on communities within Sonoma County. The full Local Evaluation Report describes the extent to which the goals and objectives have been achieved.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The evaluation of Sonoma County's Prop 64 PH&S grant program is based on the development of specific logic models for each PPA. The logic models address the goals and map out project resources (inputs), activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts and are shown in Appendix A. The evaluation involved both process and outcome components, the details of which, and the overall research design, are described in the full report.

Research Design

The evaluation of Sonoma County's grant relied on mixed methods, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data to inform both process and outcome evaluation. Quantitative data was used to document many of the process-related objectives, as well as certain components of all outcome-related objectives. Quantitative and qualitative data were used to assess change in perceptions and knowledge of youth, young adult, and family participants for specific PPA 1 youth prevention-related objectives. Qualitative data also informs the evaluation with insights about communication

and coordination with other County agencies, and systemic barriers, challenges, and successes encountered over the process of implementation for each PPA. Results and Discussion of results are included in the full report.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the last three years, Sonoma County has benefitted from an enhanced ability to engage in multiple efforts to ameliorate the impacts of recreational cannabis that would not have otherwise been possible. Summarized conclusions are shown here by PPA:

PPA 1: Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention

During the Proposition 64 grant, the Behavioral Health Division learned a considerable amount and enhanced its capacity to provide cannabis focused prevention activities and youth development activities as demonstrated by these conclusions:

- **Objective 1A:** Social media efforts reached many more youth and young adults than planned, and based on the HSRI study, and the similarity of messages tested to those already in use, they have the capacity to change attitudes toward cannabis use and the potential associated problems and harms.

- **Objective 1B:** Though attitudes toward cannabis specifically could not be assessed for FNL members, the *Youth Development Survey* found large percentages of members who report benefitting from their participation in the program as intended by the objective.

- **Objective 1C:** Spanish-language parent cannabis education did not successfully recruit and engage as large a number of parents as hoped, though much can be attributed to the pandemic. Those who participated and completed surveys appeared to improve their knowledge and attitudes, with one item reaching statistical significance. With more surveys collected, it is likely that most items would have shown significant improvement.

- **Objective 1D:** The objective around the youth and young adult DUI program participants was not possible to meet due an inconsistently delivered curriculum, which needed to be updated and more thoroughly infused with current information about cannabis- and other drug-impaired driving; however, grant funding provided the ability to completely overhaul the curriculum to include not only alcohol, but cannabis and all other substance-impaired driving. This change will impact every person attending DUI programs into the future. Measuring the change in knowledge and attitudes for DUI program participants is still needed and is being planned for development within the next several months.

PPA 3: Public Safety and
PPA 4: Environmental Impacts

The grant provided CES with the technology and equipment needed to conduct initial and regular site inspections of unpermitted and permitted cannabis sites safely and efficiently while providing staff time to concentrate on grant requirements. Since two objectives within each PPA overlap, conclusions based on objectives under both PPA are combined to demonstrate impact:

- **PPA 3, Objective 1A and PPA 4 Objective 1A:** With the aid of enhanced aerial photography and drones, Cannabis Code Inspectors were able to identify 215 unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites around the county during the grant. This is a 42.2% decrease over the baseline rather than the 20% increase that was intended. However, several factors explain the decrease, including double the Cannabis Code Inspection staff during the baseline year, decreases in complaints during and after the pandemic, and especially in the last year, fewer complaints received and other indications of a decreasing number of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites. CES reports that rather than obtain permits and pay taxes, many smaller cannabis cultivators are moving to nearby counties where code enforcement on cannabis is less consistent. The diligence of CES staff in following up on complaints and using their enhanced technology ensures that those

unpermitted sites that are operating in the County receive inspections and the appropriate follow-up needed. Though the measures went in the wrong direction, the fact that as many unpermitted sites as possible are addressed as needed is a success.

- **PPA 3, Objective 1B and PPA 4 Objective 1C:** The effort to systematically provide relevant information to unpermitted cannabis cultivators about health, safety, and environmental laws and codes was partially successful. Cannabis Code Inspectors were already conveying information during site inspections before the grant, but it was not as uniform and systematic as desired, being driven by site specifics and situational variables. The grant team made efforts to develop a simple guide with links to resources and appropriate contacts within agencies. The intention was to place this on the newly redesigned Permit Sonoma website, but this has not occurred. Providing this improvement and systematically relaying the location to all cultivators during site inspections would greatly enhance easy and equitable distribution of information.

- **PPA 3, Objective 2A:** The objective to decrease initial site inspections was more than achieved. The objective called for a 50% decrease in initial site inspections needed to identify unpermitted cannabis sites, but over the three years, the decrease was 85.5%. The addition of high-quality aerial imagery prevented many site inspections that would otherwise be needed to document the existence of unpermitted cannabis or lack thereof. However, it should be noted that like other objectives, this is subject to external factors such as a smaller number of complaints that would generate the need to research sites.

- **PPA 3, Objective 2B:** This objective planned to 25% decrease in staff time needed to initially identify unpermitted cannabis due to enhanced aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles. It was not feasible to calculate actual time spent on unpermitted cannabis identification due to factors impacting staff time having nothing to do with the use of aerial imagery, such as

travel, warrants, and waiting on law enforcement when needed. Instead, an estimate was used of time needed to do the research needed, with aerial technology, and other preliminary tasks before site visits occur. Before the enhanced aerial imagery, this research took about 50 minutes per site; after, it took 8 minutes per site. This estimate was applied to the number of initial site inspections conducted. Over the grant, the reduction in staff time was 90.5%, far exceeding the 25% goal. The percentage change is dependent on the number of site inspections conducted, but the bottom line is that what used to take staff almost an hour, now takes less than ten minutes. The use of 4 x 4 vehicles, though improving staff safety and site navigation was determined to have little impact on time identifying unpermitted cannabis.

- **PPA 4, Objective 1B:** The final objective in PPA 4 was to improve communication and coordination with the environmental agencies with which CES works most closely. Surveys assessed the quality of communication and coordination between these agencies and CES, from the environmental agency perspective and from the CES view as well. Survey results were mostly positive, with high ratings but there is some room for improvement. Though results were discussed, no action plan was enacted before the grant ended. Several recommendations were offered which are described in the full report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this evaluation are informative and lead to several recommendations which are offered here for continuous improvement of the cannabis-related activities of the Behavioral Health Division (PPA 1) and CES (PPAs 3 and 4).

PPA 1: Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention

1. **Continue to expand targeted messaging to youth about cannabis and other substances on social media.** By all accounts, the messaging about cannabis on social media platforms reached many young people and likely improved perception of harm. It is encouraging that Behavioral Health is focused on meeting young people where they are, and that young people respond by engaging with the content.

2. **Develop a user survey for youth around cannabis messaging seen on social media platforms.** While the HSRI study was helpful, it was geared toward social marketing research. Devising a way to survey the actual young people engaging with the content would be preferrable to accurately determine changes in knowledge, attitudes, and planned behavior.

3. **Expand efforts to understand what the disconnect is between the program and minimal success in member recruitment.** The pandemic did not help recruitment efforts, but for some time before the pandemic, and certainly after, the program has been challenged to engage and retain members in recent years. Talk with FNL members and their peers to learn more. It may also be beneficial to ask the California FNL Partnership for referrals to other FNL programs that are thriving. Then reach out to those programs for tips and strategies to improve membership.

4. **Consider developing a survey about attitudes toward specific types of substance use for FNL members.** Though the *Youth Development Survey* is a helpful tool, its questions are not substance specific, and preventing or intervening in the substance use of young people requires different strategies according to substance. Learning about local FNL members' attitudes and experiences will help provide more targeted prevention and intervention strategies and activities to members and their peers at school.

5. **Think creatively about community engagement when recruiting for Spanish-language parent cannabis education efforts.** Though the provider of the Spanish-language parent cannabis education has considerable experience engaging Spanish-speaking families to participate in their programs, they struggled to get participation. Of course, much of the problem could have been related to the pandemic and its economic impacts, but there may be additional recruitment strategies,

incentives, or other agencies serving Spanish speakers that the Behavioral Health Division has access to which could benefit the provider.

6. **Train contracted providers of Spanish-language parent cannabis education on survey administration and engaging survey participants.** It was encouraging that the contracted provider had a pre-post survey in place to which additional questions around the grant objective could be added. Unfortunately, staffing changes and lack of consistency in staff utilization of the surveys resulted in minimal coverage. Training staff in survey administration and collection, and strategies to use to obtain participation in surveys, including following up with participants, would greatly improve the measurable impacts of this important program component.

7. **Begin to monitor fidelity to the new alcohol, cannabis, and other drug-impaired DUI program curriculum and support ongoing training in its use.** The DUI program received a valuable enhancement through this grant. It is important to ensure that it continues to be used as intended, and that staff training in its use occurs at regular intervals. Establishing a fidelity monitoring system and training plan will support the curriculum reaching its full impact.

8. **Develop a pre-post survey to assess knowledge and attitude change based on the newly launched alcohol, cannabis, and other drug-impaired DUI program curriculum.** Now that the new curriculum addresses not only alcohol but cannabis- and other drug-impaired driving, it is possible to develop the pre-post surveys to assess what DUI participants, young and older, learn through the programs, as well as how attitudes and behaviors change.

PPA 3: Public Safety and

PPA 4: Environmental Impacts

1. **Select an indicator to monitor unpermitted cannabis cultivation that is less subject to external factors than unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites identified.** This indicator in particular was problematic because of its vulnerability to situational, staffing, and policy

or program changes. Its use made it difficult to determine what impacts the aerial imagery had.

2. **Monitor trends in cannabis businesses and court cases to help explain changes in CES activities and what adjustments to make to staffing and related aspects of CES operations.** Throughout the grant, several factors may have influenced the direction of change in some indicators. Further, Cannabis Code Inspectors' time was greatly impacted by ongoing appeals by cannabis cultivators fighting their violations and fees. Formalizing the tracking of trends in such areas as cannabis cultivation operations leaving the county, the changes in the number of court appeals, and similar information can help CES plan for staffing and pivot the direction of their work, based on the realities of the current climate.

3. **Load the guide developed for unpermitted cannabis cultivators on the Permit Sonoma website to increase the equitable distribution of important information.** This was intended to have taken place already but has not. Including the guide on the Permit Sonoma website and ensuring that all cultivators of unpermitted cannabis are told of its location, greatly enhances equity of access to information and consistency of information dissemination.

4. **Create an implementation plan to enact the recommendations from the results of the survey about communication and coordination with environmental agencies.** The efforts of many of CES's environmental partners and CES staff themselves invested considerable time to learn more about the agency's strengths and needs. Since this was an intended outcome of the grant, the findings from the survey conducted should be utilized to improve agency relationships and work done collaboratively.

Project Background

Sonoma County's Proposition 64 Public Health & Safety Grant Program was awarded to Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD), Code Enforcement Section (CES), which collaborated on the grant with Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Division, Substance Use Disorder and Recovery Services. Sonoma County was awarded one of the eight grants in the first cohort which covered the period between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2023.

Proposals were required to address eligible activities related to the local impact of legalization of cannabis within one or more Project Purpose Areas (PPAs) as follows:

PPA 1: Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention (Mandatory PPA)
PPA 2: Public Health
PPA 3: Public Safety
PPA 4: Environmental Impacts

Sonoma County's Prop 64 PH&S grant addressed PPA 1, PPA 3, and PPA 4. The goals and objectives around each of these PPAs, were developed to counteract the impact that legalized recreational cannabis has on communities within Sonoma County. This Local Evaluation Report (LER) describes the extent to which the goals and objectives have been achieved.

Evaluation Overview

The evaluation of Sonoma County's Prop 64 PH&S grant program is based on the development of specific logic models for each PPA. The logic models address the goals and map out project resources (inputs), activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts and are shown in Appendix A. The evaluation involved both process and outcome components, the details of which, as well as the overall research design, and data collection follow. The evaluation questions addressing process and outcome objectives are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Evaluation Questions

Process-related Evaluation Questions	Outcome-related Evaluation Questions
• Were grant activities implemented as planned? • What barriers were encountered in implementation? • What modifications were needed to overcome barriers? • How well were grant activities implemented? • Were the target audiences reached and engaged? • How satisfied was the target audience with services received? • How did external factors impact implementation? • What lessons have been learned to improve program efforts?	• How well did the grant activities work in changing conditions, knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors? • Did grant activities benefit some participants more than others? • Which aspects of the grant were the most successful or seen as most valuable by the target audience? • What external factors influenced the outcomes?

The development and modification of PPA goals, objectives, and linkages within the logic models, as well as subsequent evaluation work, were facilitated by a contracted external evaluation consultant, Lori Mulholland of Mulholland Research & Evaluation Services (MRES) based in Sonoma County.

Research Design

The evaluation of Sonoma County's grant relied on mixed methods, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data to inform both process and outcome evaluation. Quantitative data was used to document many of the process-related objectives, as well as certain components of all outcome-related objectives. Quantitative and qualitative data were used to assess change in perceptions and knowledge of youth, young adult, and family participants for specific PPA 1 youth prevention-related objectives. Qualitative data also informs the evaluation with insights about communication and coordination with other County agencies, and systemic barriers, challenges and successes encountered over the process of implementation for each PPA.

Process Evaluation

The process evaluation focuses on the extent of implementation and completion of grant activities. The evaluation triangulates both quantitative and qualitative data as needed to document implementation and provides various perspectives on the quality of implementation, barriers, and facilitators encountered to inform program improvement efforts. The objectives across all PPAs involve both process and outcome evaluation. Although all objectives under PPA 1 are considered outcome-related, process-related data was collected continuously alongside the measurement of outcomes. PPA 1 process-related indicators documenting implementation were measured in part through program records as well as through surveys as needed.

PPA 3 and PPA 4 include a combination of process and outcome-related objectives. One process-related objective appears in both PPA 3 and PPA 4, and that is documenting the delivery of information about County ordinances related to health and safety (PPA 3) and environmental impacts (PPA 4) and the extent it is delivered in a systematic way to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during initial site inspections along with information on permitting requirements should sites decide to apply for needed permits to legalize their operations. The final process-related objective relates to PPA 3 – improved efficiency of initial site inspections as documented by a decreased amount of staff time needed to conduct initial site inspections to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites.

Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation assesses the change in conditions for intended populations addressed within the objectives being measured. For PPA 1, the outcome measures are based on surveys that directly address the objectives. PPA 3 and PPA 4 share one similar outcome-based objective; to increase the percentage of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites identified using aerial imagery. PPA 3 also includes another outcome-related objective which is to decrease the number of site inspections needed to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites. PPA 4 has the final outcome-related objective, which is to improve communication and coordination with outside environmental agencies with which CES works, as measured by quality of inter-agency contacts and key informant interviews. Quality of contacts was determined through the development of a data collection tool based on communication and coordination protocols. The efforts to assess this working relationship, develop and implement an improvement plan, and evaluate its effectiveness, are activities that were facilitated by the Evaluator through the development of assessment tools, implementation of the tools, support in locating examples of improvement plans and communication/coordination protocols.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Data sources and data collection by PPA, goals, objectives, the description of objectives as process- or outcome-related, and frequency of data collection are shown within the Evaluation Matrix in Table 2.

Quantitative Data Collection

PPA 1 objectives were measured in part with quantitative data from social media analytics, survey data, Friday Night Live (FNL) program records, Spanish-language parent cannabis education program implementation records, and DUI program records. Except for the [Cannabis] Decoded ([C]D) campaign, which is based on social media platform analytics, quantitative program record data was collected from multiple sources such as participant sign in sheets, facilitator lesson plans, and activity records. These records were added to a project database when not otherwise stored in program-specific databases. In addition to the locally developed and administered data collection, FNL conducts its own Youth Development Survey (YDS) with its student members. It is administered by the California FNL Partnership near the end of the school year with students who attend the meeting when the survey is administered. The FNL Partnership starts to heavily promote the YDS several months before the actual due date. They offer webinars for FNL Advisors on how to complete the surveys and how the data is used so they understand the significance. Advisors then promote it to their chapter members and schedule time for the surveys to be taken. Once completed, the surveys are analyzed and reported by county and state. Sonoma County receives its own report, and these results are factored into the data analysis for PPA 1.

PPA 3 and PPA 4 objectives were measured with quantitative data from the database of CES permitting and code enforcement management software, Accela, as well as CES developed Excel databases. All quantitative data sources are shown in Table 3 according to PPA.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected within the evaluation of PPA 1 objectives, including key informant interviews of FNL program facilitators, community health educators, and DUI program staff to gain their perspectives program implementation and impacts. Though they are not described as the official measurement of objectives for PPA 1, key informant interviews were used to gain perspective at various points during the life of the grant as determined by implementation of the components. Surveys conducted with participants provided some insight into participant satisfaction with the materials and presentations.

The subjects focused upon during interviews are shown here by role:

FNL facilitators, Community Health Educators, and DUI Program staff:

- Recruitment of FNL members, community health educators, and Spanish-speaking parents), training, and implementation process for the [C]D and other materials and/or activities;
- The usefulness, appropriateness, and participant reaction/engagement with materials and activities;
- Successes and challenges in implementing the materials and/or activities.

Table 2. Evaluation Matrix

PPA	Goal	Objective	Process or Outcome	Data Source	Collection Frequency
PPA 1: Youth Development Youth Prevention	1. Reduce youth and young adult use of cannabis, encouraging them to make healthy lifestyle choices by providing youth, young adults, and adults with the facts and risks of cannabis use through expanded educational materials	A. By 2023, 75% of youth and young adults who view County [Cannabis] Decoded materials on website and social media (e.g., Instagram), will increase their perception that cannabis is harmful, as measured by a viewer survey. B. By 2023, 80% of Friday Night Live (FNL) members, in FNL chapters that choose cannabis as a priority area, will report that the program helped them to 1. learn about the risks and problems that cannabis and other substance use can cause; 2. support other youth to make healthy choices; and 3. decide to do other things instead of using cannabis and other substances, as measured by FNL Youth Development Survey and a cannabis-specific survey. C. By 2023, 80% of Spanish-speaking parents who attend a parent education presentation will report that it increased their knowledge about cannabis, its impact on the developing brain, and gave them strategies and tools to discuss cannabis use with their own teens, as measured by post-presentation evaluations. D. By 2023, 50% of youth and young adults participating in DUI programs will increase their knowledge of cannabis-impaired driving, as measured by DUI program participant survey.	a. Outcome b. Outcome c. Outcome d. Outcome	a. Social media viewer survey (to be developed) b. FNL Youth Development Survey and FNL cannabis-specific survey (to be developed) c. Post-presentation evaluation d. DUI program participant survey (to be developed)	a. Ongoing b. Quarterly c. Annually d. Ongoing
PPA 3: Public Safety	1. Reduce impacts of unpermitted commercial cannabis cultivation/production sites on the public safety of Sonoma County residents 2. Improve safety of staff conducting site inspections to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles	Goal 1: A. By 2023, increase identification of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery by 20% from 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records. B. By 2023, improve the systematic delivery of information on public safety ordinances, permitting requirements, and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during initial site inspections, with 80% of unpermitted sites visited provided with information, as measured by staff records of information disseminated. Goal 2: A. By 2023, decrease the number of initial site inspections needed to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites by 50% compared to 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records. B. By 2023, improve staff preparedness for and efficiency of initial site inspections through timely use of aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles, as measured by a 25% reduction in staff time needed to initially identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites, compared to 2019-20 baseline.	a. Outcome b. Process a. Outcome b. Process	a. CES records b. CES staff records of information disseminated a. CES records b. CES records	a. Ongoing b. Ongoing a. Ongoing b. Ongoing
PPA 4: Environmental Impacts	1. Reduce environmental impacts of unpermitted commercial cannabis cultivation/production sites on Sonoma County	A. By 2023, increase identification of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery 20% from 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records. B. By 2023, improve communication and coordination with environmental agencies, as measured by quality of inter-agency contacts and key informant interviews. C. By 2023, improve the systematic delivery of information about environment-related ordinances, permitting requirements, and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during initial site inspections, with 80% of unpermitted sites visited provided with information, as measured by CES staff records of information disseminated.	a. Outcome b. Outcome c. Process	a. CES records b. CES records and key informant interviews c. CES staff records of information disseminated	a. Ongoing b. Ongoing c. Ongoing

Table 3. Quantitative Data Sources

PPA	Data Source	Quantitative Data Accessed
PPA 1	[Cannabis] Decoded Social Media Platform (Objective A)	• Social media analytics – Sonoma County youth views/actions (e.g., engagement; impressions; likes; page and post clicks; viewer demographics); • Social media viewer survey results –Youth survey participants who report increased perception of harm in using cannabis. (substituted with HSRI study)
	FNL Program (Objective B)	• FNL chapters implementing cannabis-related prevention activities; • Youth participating in FNL Youth Development Survey; • Youth with survey results indicating increased perception of harm; • Youth participating in cannabis specific FNL survey with results indicating increased perception of harm. (planned but not implemented)
	Cannabis Education Program for Spanish-speaking Parents (Objective C)	• Community health educators recruited/hired, trained to deliver Spanish-language parent education presentations; • Spanish-language parent presentations delivered; • Spanish-speaking parent participants in cannabis education presentations indicating improved knowledge, skills.
	Juvenile Officer DUI Program and First-time Offender Program (Objective D)	• Youth and young adult participants in DUI programs; • Pre/ post-survey results – youth, young adult participants who complete survey and number of participants who show increased knowledge of cannabis impaired driving. (planned but not implemented)
PPA 3	CES Records – Accela Database/Excel Databases	• Unpermitted commercial cannabis sites identified with the aid of aerial imagery – based on date of implementation of aerial imagery (Goal 1: Objective A); • Unpermitted commercial cannabis sites identified in 2019 and 2020 (2019 is included since 2020 was greatly affected by the pandemic and does not represent a typical year) (Goal 1: Objective A); • Initial site inspections conducted since approval of LEP (Goal 1: Objective B); • Initial site inspections to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during which information is provided (Goal 1: Objective B); • Initial site inspections required to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites (Goal 2: Objective A) ; • Initial site inspections required to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites in 2019-20 (Goal 2: Objective A); • Hours spent by CES staff to conduct initial site inspections to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites (Goal 1: Objective B); • Hours spent by CES staff to conduct initial site inspections to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites in 2019-20) (Goal 2: Objective B).
	CES staff records	• Information (i.e., safety ordinance requirements, permitting requirements) delivered to unpermitted cannabis sites (collected using a checklist for staff conducting site inspections) (Goal 1: Objective B).
PPA 4	CES Records – Accela Database/Excel Databases	• Unpermitted commercial cannabis sites identified with the aid of aerial imagery – based on date of implementation of aerial imagery (Objective A); • Unpermitted commercial cannabis sites identified in 2019 and 2020 (2019 is included since 2020 was greatly affected by the pandemic and does not represent a typical year) (Objective A); • Initial site inspections conducted since approval of LEP (Objective C); • Initial site inspections required to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during which information is provided (Objective C).
	CES staff records	• Quality ratings of interagency contacts – checklist developed to measure quality of communication and coordination protocol (Objective B)(substituted with communication and coordination survey).

Participant Surveys:

Surveys were conducted with youth participants of FNL, parents attending Spanish-language cannabis education sessions, and were planned with young adult DUI program participants, the latter of which could not be conducted for reasons explained within Evaluation Results (Objective 1D). Open-ended questions solicited participant perspectives on the following:

FNL Youth Participants:

- Engagement and satisfaction with the materials and activities;
- Insights around the best elements of the materials and activities;
- Insights around areas for improvement with the materials and activities.

Parents Attending Spanish-language Cannabis Education Presentations:

- Effectiveness of promotion of educational sessions;
- Cultural responsiveness of community health educators;
- Satisfaction with the educational session, materials, and the community health educator model for parent education;
- Most valuable information learned, how easily it can be applied to their daily lives, and any suggestions for improvements.

No qualitative data was planned for use in reporting on PPA 3 objectives, but the evaluation of PPA 4 includes key informant interviews in the assessment of outcomes around Objective B. A survey was developed and implemented by the Evaluator in collaboration with key CES staff to include questions about the communication and coordination strengths and gaps between CES and its partnering environmental agencies.

Logic Models

Sonoma County's Logic Models by PPA are included as Appendix A to this evaluation report.

Data Analysis

The data analysis methods used within this evaluation include both quantitative and qualitative methods which are described below. Overall, qualitative data was triangulated with quantitative data to allow data from various sources to inform the measurement of each objective where appropriate. In this way, data that describes the extent of implementation is combined with the quality of implementation. Qualitative data provides insights into the reasons why a particular program component was or was not implemented to the extent intended, and the extent to which the objective was achieved.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data for PPA 1 was analyzed using various analytical tools. For social media, the Social Changery's platform analytics were used to understand the extent of reach and efficacy of the [C]D campaign. This was conducted by the Social Changery with whom Sonoma County Behavioral Health contracted to support the campaign. For FNL, the cannabis education program for Spanish-speaking parents, and the DUI program, Excel was used to capture descriptive statistics to address relevant objectives. Certain data was imported into SPSS for statistical analysis, and inferential statistics were used as appropriate to determine whether attitudes, knowledge, and/or behavior changed significantly from the pre- to post-test or by retrospective post-test. The pre-post survey questions were analyzed using dependent samples paired t-tests in SPSS statistical software. The FNL Youth Development Survey is administered through the California Friday Night Live Partnership toward the end of each school year, with the annual survey analyzed by a university contracted to conduct the analysis and report results.

Quantitative analysis for PPA 3 and PPA 4 consisted of basic descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages. This was done using a customized Excel database. The exception to this is data for measurement of PPA 4 Objective B, which is exclusively qualitative.

Qualitative Data Analysis

PPA 1 qualitative data from surveys and key informant interviews underwent content analysis using qualitative analysis software to determine prominent themes and response patterns within and across groups and questions. The qualitative data analysis for PPA 4 Objective B was done in the same manner as that described within PPA 1 with content analysis conducted to find themes and patterns within and across groups and questions.

Data Management

The PPA 1 components of the grant and its data were managed collaboratively between Sonoma County Behavioral Health and MRES. The MRES evaluator met frequently with County Behavioral Health staff to ensure that data collection tools were developed, evaluation activities were implemented as required, timelines maintained, and any unforeseen challenges were addressed in a timely way.

All PPA 1 survey data that required matching (e.g., pre/post-test design) were de-identified prior to being transferred to the Evaluator. Participant codes were substituted for any names or other identifying information to allow matching of pre- and post-test survey data as needed. Data was transferred from Sonoma County Behavioral Health to MRES via a Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP). Once transferred, data was kept in a password protected secure drive.

The data management for PPA 3 and PPA 4 was conducted within CES. CES program staff maintained their regular databases using Accela and entered data into Excel databases developed for grant tracking. Excel databases were de-identified and transferred to the Evaluator for further analysis.

Limitations of Data

Since available funding does not permit a rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation design as the costs of adding a randomly assigned control group or a comparison group would be prohibitive and impractical, it cannot be ruled out that other factors may to some extent have influenced participant change or changes in the indicators of improvement. Therefore, it is not possible to determine, with reasonable certainty, that the changes that participants experience, are due exclusively to the program and not to external factors. The data collected, however, directly assesses the experiences, knowledge gained, attitudes and behavior changes of all program participants which should be used for program improvement and further program planning purposes.

Applied research and evaluation of programs are conducted in real life settings which cannot be controlled to the extent that research within a lab or clinical setting can, and therefore, are subject to several limitations. These limitations include factors such as self-selection bias for FNL and [C]D and the Spanish-language cannabis education program and the limitations of the non-experimental design. Survey data for participants is also self-reported, and therefore is subject to individuals' interpretation, accurate memory around experiences, and sometimes, social responding (i.e., responding in ways that participants believe presents them in a positive light). It is also the case that often program participants are not overly interested in completing surveys and may not provide responses that represent their true feelings, rushing or skipping questions, or in other ways that increase response bias. For instance, some participants answer questions similarly, such as answering "Agree" to all questions or respond randomly. These are examples of "response set" and are a limitation to collecting accurate data.

While it is not possible to prevent all these types of response bias, several strategies were put in place to minimize the likelihood of their occurrence. First, the Evaluator wrote introductions to each survey

describing the need for accurate representations of respondent perceptions and ensured confidentiality and anonymity of results. Staff or students who administered or interacted with participants prior to survey administration were also trained to reiterate to participants the importance of honest answers and the confidentiality and anonymity of results. Most surveys were administered upon completion of a presentation, event, or program to minimize the amount of time for memory to shift. Most items included in surveys were denoted as required, and so could not be skipped. Open-ended questions were not treated in this way so only those who wanted to provide additional insights could do so, as requiring answers to such questions often results in participants abandoning the survey. The Evaluator reviewed survey responses to ensure that there was a limited occurrence of response sets.

Data collected is never perfect and limitations exist based on the consistency and accuracy of its collection. It is also challenging to obtain survey data especially when program staff must administer the surveys themselves. In some instances, program facilitators forgot to administer surveys, limiting the number of responses. In some situations, programs actually served a much smaller number of participants than planned. The resulting small number of surveys limits the reliability of the data in that individual bias can impact results, i.e., outliers can more easily skew results one way or another than if results came from a large sample of respondents.

Most of the data for PPAs 3 and 4 were gathered from an excel database that included several aspects of site inspections. Initial training and ongoing support were provided to Cannabis Code Inspectors who completed the data entry. The quality of the data was good, but it is possible that certain elements were entered incorrectly, and it would not be easy to determine where such errors may lie. Despite this possibility, data collection was conducted to the best of staff's abilities and delivered to the Evaluator on time and complete. Surveys were used to assess Objective B within PPA 4, and these used the same strategies described above.

Evaluation Results

Results by PPA, goals and objective are shown below.

PPA 1: Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention

Goal 1: Reduce youth and young adult use of cannabis, encouraging them to make healthy lifestyle choices by providing youth, young adults, and adults with the facts and risks of cannabis use through expanded educational materials

A. By 2023, 75% of youth and young adults who view County [Cannabis] Decoded materials on website and social media (e.g., Instagram), will increase their perception that cannabis is harmful, as measured by a viewer survey.

Activities related to this objective involved the county-wide [C]D) social media campaign, which planned to reach at least 250 youth and young adults annually and be viewed by one million users total. The Social Changery delivered the website and social media analytics to the Evaluator at the close of each quarter to facilitate quarterly reporting. Table 4 below shows these metrics by year and compiled for the entire grant.

Table 4. Social Media Metrics for Activities by Social Changery

The Social Changery Reach of Social Media	Youth/Young Adults Reached Goal = 250 per year	Parents/Adults Reached	Total Number of Impressions or "Hits" Goal = 1,000,000 (Total)
Year 1	604	88	888
Year 2	206,892	96,296	793,484
Year 3	22,871	991	43,635
All Years - Totals	230,367	97,375	838,007

The annual number of Sonoma County youth and young adults who were reached exceeded the goal of 250 by a large margin. Over the life of the grant, over 230 thousand youth and young adults viewed the social media designed by the Social Changery. While no goal was set for reaching parents for this aspect of the program, data reported quarterly showed over 97,000 parents and other adults reached in Sonoma County. It should be noted that a few aberrations in the number of individuals reached during Year 2 greatly increased these numbers. In Quarter 6, Social Changery engaged in a paid media campaign on behalf of Sonoma County, which increased the number of youth and young adults reached during that time to more than 150,000. Similarly, In Quarter 7, the Social Changery ran paid advertisements to reach parents and other adults in Sonoma County which were very successful. In total, over 95,801 adults were driven to the [C]D social media and website after these ads were placed. Finally, the hope was that over the grant, the campaign's materials would be seen by one million viewers. Considering that individuals may engage with the various components of the campaign (e.g., Instagram, Tik Tok, the website) multiple times, the number of impressions is the most relevant metric to examine. Here, results show that over 838,000 impressions were made during the grant. This does not represent the number of unique individuals accessing the materials but indicates that materials were viewed by many individuals, and frequently.

Discussions began midway through the grant between Sonoma County Behavioral Health, the Evaluator, and the Social Changery to measure the extent of change in youth and young adults' perception of harm in using cannabis. During Quarter 7, Social Changery contracted with Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) to conduct a user experience survey determining the impact that the [C]D messaging across their social media platforms has on youth and young adult viewers' attitudes, beliefs, and planned behavior. Because this was a very involved study, Social Changery did not want to duplicate efforts, and chose to inform their HSRI research with the information needed for the Prop 64 grant.

The HSRI study, conducted during Quarters 9 and 10, with results emerging during Quarter 12, focused on three topics: cannabis, mental health, and environmental and social justice issues related to behavioral health choices. The single most relevant question within the cannabis topic is discussed here. The cannabis component shared four different messages to over 40 young people under age 18 through age 25. The Social Changery provided the Evaluator with a summary of HSRI's findings, shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. PPA 1 Objective 1A Measurement – Cannabis-related Question and Average Scores Before and After Cannabis-related Social Messaging, HSRI Study for Social Changery

Question 1: How harmful (physically and in other ways) do you think it is to use cannabis?					
Media Message #	Content of Message	N	Pre-exposure Average Score	Post-exposure Average Score	% Indicating Improvement
1	**Infographic:** 3 things to know about vaping nicotine and THC	44	2.51	2.02	47.7%
2	**Video:** "Is vaping safer than smoking?"	42	2.02	1.74	14.3%
3	**Quiz:** "Can weed help with anxiety	41	1.74	1.64	14.6%
4	**Picture:** Teen with text, his quotes about impact of weed on his grades	37	1.64	1.59	10.8%

Scale: 1 = Very harmful; 4 = Not harmful

The design of the HSRI study employed a consecutive presentation of messages to all study participants. A pre-exposure survey was given in which the question above was asked along with a number of other questions. The pre-exposure average score for all participants answering Question 1 is shown in the third column. After the first message was viewed, the survey was repeated, generating a post-exposure average score. Three weeks later, the second message was presented to participants and after viewing, they completed the survey again, following the same process for the third and fourth messages. After the pre- and post-score is obtained for message 1, the post-exposure score is then considered the pre-exposure score for message 2, and the pattern is repeated for the other two messages. The right-hand column

above shows the percentage of participants whose scores from pre- to post-survey changed in a desirable direction (i.e., an increased perception of harm).

Overall, participant scores moved in the desirable direction after viewing each message. It should be noted that the percentage of participants for whom scores improved decreases with each consecutive message. This is an artifact of participants' already lower scores (meaning an attitude that already sees cannabis to some degree as harmful), and less room for actual improvement. This is known as the ceiling effect.

The Evaluator ran an additional analysis of the raw data using paired t-tests to determine any statistically significant differences between matched participant pre- and post-survey scores. The assumptions of the original design were kept in place whereby the data points for post-measurement on one item, became the pre-measurement on the next item; however, because of the difference in the number of participants with matched pre/post scores differed for message 4, the mean is different for the pre-score (i.e., 1.73 for message 4 pre vs. 1.64 post-score for message 3). This analysis is shown below in Table 6.

Table 6. PPA 1 Objective 1A Measurement – HSRI Study for Social Changery, Additional Analysis

Question and Average Scores Before and After Cannabis-related Social Messaging	N	Pre-exposure Average Score	Post-exposure Average Score	Statistically Significant Change
Question 1: How harmful (physically and in other ways) do you think it is to use cannabis?				
Media Message 1	25	2.68	2.16	*Yes; $t(24)=4.4373$, $p = 0.0002$*
Media Message 2	25	2.16	1.80	*Yes; $t(24)=3.6742$, $P=0.0012$*
Media Message 3	25	1.80	1.64	*No*
Media Message 4	22	1.73	1.59	*No*

Scale: 1 = Very harmful; 4 = Not harmful

Participants' responses were significantly improved from pre- to post-survey on message 1 and 2. The ceiling effect may also be at play here, where pre-scores are already positive, there is little room for improvement which is likely why no significant change is noted for messages 3 and 4.

Though this study was conducted for social marketing research purposes, the messages tested are consistent with those that appear on the [C]D website and social media outlets. So, it reasonable that the participation of youth in the campaign's social media messaging about cannabis, are improving their attitudes toward it, or rather increasing their perception of harm around cannabis use.

B. By 2023, 80% of FNL program participants, in FNL chapters that choose cannabis as a priority area, will report that the program helped them to 1. learn about the risks and problems that cannabis and other substance use can cause; 2. support other youth to make healthy choices; and 3. decide to do other things instead of using cannabis and other substances, as measured by FNL Youth Development Survey and a cannabis-specific survey.

Over the course of the grant, (from quarters 3 through 12), a total of 551 students were noted as new members. Continuing members totaled 817, though these numbers do not represent unique individuals, but rather total participants at each activity and meeting. For this reason, it is not helpful to describe participants in terms of age and grade – the only two characteristics that are available about members on an ongoing basis. FNL Advisors and Behavioral Health staff confirmed in interviews that FNL member recruitment was a challenge for much of the grant but especially during the height of the pandemic.

The existing chapters of FNL that were active at the time, did not specifically select cannabis use as their priority areas during the grant. Instead, they opted to focus on mental health and vaping, which can include not only tobacco but also cannabis. However, participants were exposed to and engaged in efforts to share information with their peers about several substances, including cannabis, and the results of these presentation evaluations were very positive. The high school students attending these

presentations completed post-presentation surveys indicating that they learned a considerable amount during the presentations and enjoyed learning it from their peers.

After several attempts to develop a cannabis-specific FNL member survey with the existing FNL chapters, the effort could not be completed, limiting the evaluation's ability to measure the extent to which participating in FNL taught members about the problems that cannabis, specifically can cause. However, the FNL *Youth Development Survey* asks a question about each of the three items in Objective B with respect to all substances (i.e., alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, or ATOD). Results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. PPA 1 Objective 1B Measurement – FNL Youth Development Survey - Sonoma County, May 2023

FNL Youth Development Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
1. In FNL, I learn about problems that alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) can cause.	62.5%	33.3%	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%
2. Because of FNL, I support other youth to make healthy choices that don't involve ATOD.	29.2%	54.2%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
3. My involvement in FNL helps me to decide to do other things instead of using ATOD.	50.0%	29.2%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree   N=24   Statistics: 1. mean: 5.6 (out of 6), standard deviation 0.57;
2. Mean: 5.1, standard deviation 0.67; 3. Mean: 5.3, standard deviation 0.88.

In assessing the impact of their participation in FNL, Sonoma County youths' results were positive. For this presentation of results, only responses indicating agreement or strong agreement are considered a positive result. In total, 95.8 percent of FNL members either agreed or strongly agreed that they learned about problems that ATOD can cause in FNL. Most members (83.4%) credited FNL with helping them support other youth to make healthy choices that didn't involve ATOD. Most FNL members (79.2%) also agreed or strongly agreed that FNL helps them decide to do other things instead of using ATOD.

C. By 2023, 80% of Spanish-speaking parents who attend parent education presentations will report that it increased their knowledge about cannabis, its impact on the developing brain, and gave them strategies and tools to discuss cannabis use with their own teens, as measured by post-surveys.

Sonoma County Behavioral Health contracted the Child Parent Institute (CPI) to deliver the Spanish language parent cannabis education program. After being trained by the Social Changery during the early quarters of the grant, CPI began conducting outreach through their existing community engagement channels and offering education sessions in Quarter 5. Over the rest of the grant, 58 parents participated in 12 sessions. Some of these sessions, especially during the earlier quarters, were conducted virtually.

The Evaluator worked with CPI to augment their existing pre/post surveys with eight questions using their own google survey form. Staff changes resulted in some survey implementation problems, and usable surveys were completed by just 15 participants during the grant, 25.9 percent of the number of participants who completed the workshops. However, since many sessions were conducted via Zoom, survey collection was even more challenging than it was for in-person sessions. Because 15 is a low number of participants for conducting statistical analysis, any changes in average scores from pre- to post-have to be quite large in order to attain statistical significance. Results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. PPA 1 Objective 1C Measurement - Spanish Language Cannabis Parent Education

Spanish Language Cannabis Parent Education Survey Items (translated from Spanish)	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Statistically Significant
1. I feel comfortable talking to my teen about cannabis.	3.79	4.43	-
2. I have the information I need about cannabis to answer questions my child may have.	3.64	4.36	-
3. I feel that if my child uses cannabis occasionally, it would not be that harmful.	2.35	1.85	-
4. I would know what to do if I found out my child was using cannabis.	3.54	4.31	-
5. I am aware of the consequences of possessing, using, selling or being under the influence of cannabis for minors.	3.57	4.57	-
6. I am familiar with the evidence suggesting that cannabis use before the age of 25 may impact brain development.	4.07	4.57	-
7. I know about the links between adolescent cannabis use and increased longer term incidence of anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and risk of psychosis.	3.77	4.54	-
8. I am aware of the potency of today's cannabis & the various ways it's consumed.	4.00	4.75	$t(11)=2.6914$ $p = .05$

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree   N=15

While improvements in desirable scores were made from pre- to post-survey for seven of the eight questions, only one item is a statistically significant improvement. That item asked parents the degree to which they agreed with this statement: *I am aware of the potency of cannabis today and the various ways it's consumed.* Parents believed they were significantly more knowledgeable after the session than before.

Because it takes large differences to reach statistical significance with such a small sample, it is not surprising that there was not more significant change. However, it is worth noting that most responses from the post-surveys changed in the desired direction and were much more closely clustered. The closer dispersion of post-scores indicates that there was much more agreement around the improved or desired responses than there was before the workshops, which is also a positive finding. Further, the feedback received on survey questions for CPI's own use was very positive. Parents liked the presentations, the format, the parent educators, and the content of the sessions.

D. By 2023, 50% of youth and young adults participating in DUI programs will increase their knowledge of cannabis-impaired driving, as measured by a DUI program participant survey.

During the grant, 129 young people under age 21 were enrolled in the County's DUI programs. All but two of these were first time offenders. All DUI program participants were court ordered to participate in DUI programs subsequent to their DUI arrest. Data reported on participants enrolled and participants who completed their DUI programs is shown below in Table 9.

Table 9. DUI Program Participant Characteristics, All Years

		DUI Participants Enrolled (N=129)	DUI Participants Completing (N=69 out of 79 exiting)*
Age	**16 – 17**	6 (4.7%)	2 (2.9%)
	18 – 20	123 (95.3%)	67 (97.1%)
Gender	**Female**	33 (25.6%)	19 (27.5%)
	Male	96 (94.4%)	49 (71.0%)
	Unknown	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.5%)

* 10 were asked to leave – non-compliant

Age and gender were the only participant characteristics available for reporting. The overwhelming majority of participants enrolled during the grant were ages 18 – 20 (95.3%) and most were male (95.3%). Participants who completed their DUI programs during each quarter are different than those who enrolled, as each program runs various lengths of time. In total, 79 young people exited their DUI programs, with 69 (87.3%) completing. The remaining 10 (12.7%) were non-compliant and asked to leave.

The intent of the objective associated with this program component was to infuse information about cannabis and other substance-impaired driving into the DUI curriculum. Once added into the curriculum, an assessment of knowledge gained could be developed and implemented. This objective could not be measured for multiple reasons. Due to staffing shortages, it was not possible to work on this objective until mid-way into Year 2 when a new DUI Program Manager was hired. Once this took place, the Evaluator worked with the new Manager who was promoted from the DUI Counseling staff, to understand the way in which curriculum was delivered in an attempt to create an exit survey based on the material presented, and additional new information being incorporated about cannabis- and other drug-impaired driving. The reality of the situation at that time was that though there was a basic curriculum, there was little standardization on which information was presented by the DUI program facilitators. Without a standard set of information covered, and without the integration of the cannabis- and other drug impacts on driving, it was not possible to develop a participant survey assessing knowledge gained.

Though staff were provided some training on the cannabis and other substance impaired driving, in an attempt to add information to the curriculum, it became apparent that the existing DUI curriculum was not being consistently delivered by staff. This led to a search for a curriculum that included cannabis and other drug-impaired driving. One potential curriculum was located, and the DUI Program Manager made efforts to view modules of the curriculum prior to committing to purchase. This took some time as the company repeatedly delayed the delivery of the requested course content. When it was finally provided, it was immediately apparent that this company had greatly overstated the extent to which high quality and current information about cannabis and other drug-impaired driving had been incorporated into the curriculum. Further, the content was presented with scare tactics and stigmatizing language. After this discovery, the Program Manager and AOD Section Manager worked together to determine that an existing contractor (i.e., Panaptic), a provider of cannabis education to youth and families as well as County staff, had the capacity to develop a curriculum that not only addressed cannabis-impaired driving but also all other substance impaired driving. A budget modification was requested of BSCC and approved. Using grant funds, a contract was put in place to develop this curriculum during Year 3. It was completed and staff began to receive training on it during late August and early September of 2023.

The Evaluator attended the training and was quite impressed with the content, visual presentation of the content, and the discussion prompts that were developed by the contractor. In addition, Panaptic provided a resource list organized by unit and PowerPoint slide, with hyperlinks to videos and other content from which the facilitators could select, depending on their own preferences. This allows personalization of the content to meet facilitator needs while still providing uniform content coverage. In addition, the tone of the entire curriculum is one of self-awareness, education, and self-reflection, deleting stigmatizing language and content. In fact, it addresses stigma directly in the lessons.

Unfortunately, the implementation of this curriculum was too late to develop a pre-post assessment of knowledge gained, and for young people to move through the program itself. However, this is an evaluation activity that the Behavioral Health Division is committed to developing, so it will likely be developed and implemented within six months to a year of the curriculum's implementation.

PPA 3: Public Safety

CES's PPA 3 activities included two goals and four objectives, and are shown below, followed by results describing the extent to which each objective was attained.

Goal 1: Reduce impacts of unpermitted commercial cannabis cultivation/production sites on the public safety of Sonoma County residents

A.   By 2023, increase identification of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery by 20% from 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records.

In the baseline year, 2019-20, a total of 124 unpermitted commercial cannabis sites were identified by CES. A 20 percent increase to this number would be 149. Table 10 shows the total numbers collected by year, based on all quarterly data captured.

Table 10. PPA 3 Objective 1A Measurement - Unpermitted Commercial Cannabis Site Identification

	Goal	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total / % Change
Sites identified	149	99	87	29	**215***
% Change from Baseline (i.e., 124 sites)	+ 20%	- 20.2%	- 29.8%	- 76.6%	**- 42.2%**

* The 3-year total was used along with the baseline number multiplied over 3 years to calculate the percentage change.

At of the end of Year 1, the identification of unpermitted cannabis sites had dropped by 20 percent compared to the baseline year, where the objective was to increase the identification of sites by 20 percent. Year two results showed a further decrease in identification, down a total of 29.8 percent from baseline. Year three showed a substantial decrease, down 76.6 percent from baseline. In total, the decrease from the baseline measure over the three years was – 42.2 percent.

As documented within the QPRs, the fact that during the baseline year, CES employed four Cannabis Code Inspectors, resulted in greater identification of unpermitted cannabis sites. For most of the grant, there were only two Cannabis Code Inspectors. However, over the life of the grant, the number of complaints received decreased. Even with the improved ability to spot and investigate sites through grant-funded technological improvements, Inspectors simply did not see the number of unpermitted sites that was expected at the outset of the grant.

B. By 2023, improve the systematic delivery of information on public safety ordinances, permitting requirements, and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during initial site inspections, with 80% of unpermitted sites visited provided with information, as measured by staff records of information disseminated.

The CES Manager and Cannabis Code Inspectors indicated that they provide some information to all cultivators of unpermitted cannabis, but that a consistent document would be an improvement. Initially, the plan to systematically provide information about public safety ordinances and permitting requirement resources to unpermitted cannabis cultivators was envisioned as a resource guide that could be printed or handed out. It would include links to all relevant health and safety codes, laws, other resources, and agency staff contacts that those wishing to pursue permits could reach for more information. The resource guide was developed during Quarter 7, modified in Quarter 8, and final decisions about content made within Quarter 11. The final plan, per the CES Manager, was to print it out to give to cultivators of unpermitted cannabis during initial site inspections and then upload the document to the County's Permit Sonoma website once it was redesigned and relaunched. The new website was launched in November 2023, but as of this writing, the document has not been uploaded.

Goal 2. Improve safety of staff conducting site inspections to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles

A. By 2023, decrease the number of initial site inspections needed to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites by 50% compared to 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records.

In the baseline year, 2019-20, CES conducted a total of 124 initial site inspections to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites. A 50 percent decrease in this number would be 62 per year. Table 11 shows the total numbers collected by year, based on all quarterly data reported.

Table 11. PPA 3 Objective 2A Measurement - Initial Site Inspections Needed to Identify Unpermitted Cannabis

	Goal	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total / % Change
Initial Site Inspections Needed to Identify Unpermitted Cultivation Sites	62	25	19	10	**54**
% Change from Baseline (i.e., 124 initial site inspections)	- 50%	- 79.8%	- 84.7%	- 91.9%	**- 85.5%**

* The 3-year total was used along with the baseline number multiplied over 3 years to calculate the percentage change.

After Year 1, analysis of results showed the total number of initial site inspections was down 79.8 percent compared to the baseline. The second year of data saw an 84.7 percent decrease. Year 3 data showed a further decrease of 91.9 percent. This decrease far exceeds the goal, which is positive. Interviews with Cannabis Code Inspectors confirmed that their inspection work has been greatly aided by the improved aerial photography. Prior to the grant-funded additions, each complaint received would have to be investigated with a site visit because available images, sometimes with google earth, were often outdated. However, like other objectives related to CES, some of the change, especially later in the grant, is at least partially related to the increasingly smaller pool of unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites to investigate.

B.   By 2023, improve staff preparedness for and efficiency of initial site inspections through timely use of aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles, as measured by a 25% reduction in staff time needed to initially identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites, compared to 2019-20 baseline.

The measurement of this objective presented a challenge. Though the aerial imagery, purchased with grant funding, was in place early, the 4x4 vehicles were not. Discussions took place between the Evaluator and the Cannabis Code Inspectors to begin measurement with the aerial imagery time savings. While it would be preferrable to count actual hours to determine whether the addition of aerial imagery impacted staff time, and staff time is tracked for all site inspections, the team decided that there were too many factors that go into the length of time needed for inspections which have nothing to do with staff efficiency or the benefits of aerial imagery. Instead, a specific estimate of time needed to research sites before and after the use of aerial imagery was used. This number was applied to the number of aerial site inspections initiated.

Table 12. PPA 3 Objective 2B Measurement - Staff Time Needed to Initially Identify Unpermitted Cannabis

	Goal	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total / % Change
Number of Site Inspections Conducted to Initially Identify Unpermitted Cannabis	-	99	87	29	**215**
Estimated Staff Time (in hours) Needed to initially Identify Unpermitted Cannabis Sites.	77.5	13.2	11.6	3.9	**28.7**
% Change from Baseline (Baseline 2019-20; 124 sites investigated at 50 minutes for each site = 103.3 hours)	- 25%	- 87.2%	- 88.8%	- 96.3%	**- 90.6% A**

* The 3-year total was used along with the baseline number multiplied over 3 years to calculate the percentage change.
A   The baseline hours (103.3) over 3 years would be 309.9 hours; 3 year estimated hours of 28.7 = percentage change of - 90.6%

Using this method, the staff time needed for the research on each inspection before the implementation of the enhanced aerial imagery was approximately 50 minutes. After the enhanced imagery was put in place, the estimated time needed for the research on each inspection was calculated to be 8 minutes. The 124 inspections conducted in the baseline year (2020) took approximately 103.3 hours. In Year 1 (2021), the 99 inspections took approximately 13.2 hours of staff time. This is an 87.2 percent decrease. In Year 2 (2022), the research on the 87 inspections done took 11.6 hours to complete, an 88.8 percent decrease over baseline. In year 3, the 29 inspections took 3.9 hours to complete, a 96.3 percent decrease over baseline. The average staff time reduction over the three years was 90.6 percent.

While this decrease is going in the correct direction, it is obviously a function of the number of inspections conducted. The real improvement is that the work that used to take 50 minutes to conduct now takes 8 minutes, a percentage change of – 84.

These calculations were based solely on the benefits of the aerial imagery and not the 4 x 4 vehicles. Once the vehicles were purchased and put into service, the Evaluator and Code Inspectors revisited the time savings due to the use of 4 x 4 vehicles during site inspections. After several discussions, the Evaluator and Code Inspectors agreed that the time savings was negligeable; the benefits of the vehicles relate more to staff safety and the ability to navigate and carry awkward loads.

PPA 4: Environmental Impacts

CES's PPA 4 included one goal and three objectives, as shown below followed by results of data collection.

Goal 1. Reduce environmental impacts of unpermitted commercial cannabis cultivation/production sites on Sonoma County

A. By 2023, increase identification of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery 20% from 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records.

This objective is also listed within PPA 3. In the baseline year, 2019-20, a total of 124 unpermitted commercial cannabis sites were identified by CES. A 20 percent increase to this number would be 149. Table 13 below shows the total numbers collected by year, based on all quarterly data captured.

Table 13. PPA 4 Objective 1A Measurement - Unpermitted Commercial Cannabis Site Identification

	GOAL	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	TOTAL
Sites identified	149	99	87	29	**215**
% Change from Baseline (i.e., 124 sites)	+ 20%	- 20.2%	- 29.8%	- 76.6%	**- 42.2%**

* The 3-year total was used along with the baseline number multiplied over 3 years to calculate the percentage change.

Clearly, the numbers moved in the opposite direction that what was intended. Considering the possible reasons for the consistent downturn in identification of unpermitted sites, there were four Cannabis Code Inspectors in the baseline year, resulting in greater identification. Further, CES data shows many fewer complaints received than in past years, which indicates to some degree that there may be fewer sites to investigate, overall. Given the fact that the improved ability to spot and investigate sites through grant-funded technological improvements has made investigations much easier, it is quite possible that CES has greatly impacted the numbers of unpermitted cannabis operations in the county. Separate data collected by CES and relayed to the Evaluator during interviews, shows that smaller operations, and even permitted cultivators, have moved out of the Sonoma County to nearby counties such as Lake, Mendocino, and Trinity, all of which have less developed cannabis code enforcement. Larger cannabis producers that are well-established in Sonoma County find it much less challenging to be profitable while paying required fees and taxes on their products.

B. By 2023, improve communication and coordination with environmental agencies, as measured by quality of inter-agency contacts and key informant interviews.

The measurement of this objective was delayed for multiple reasons, including COVID-related issues earlier in the grant cycle, and later, seasonal staff workload issues. The Evaluator, working with CES, determined that the quality of communication and coordination between CES and its environmental partners would best be determined through the use of a survey to assess partner and CES perceptions around inter-agency communication and coordination. In Quarters 8 and 9, the Evaluator worked with CES to develop a survey for its environmental partners. The survey was implemented in July 2023 and an internal CES survey was implemented in August. The results were analyzed and reported to CES in early

September. The survey results were mostly positive, but a set of recommendations was provided within the report to improve upon the areas which received lower ratings. These recommendations were discussed with staff in a subsequent meeting. CES developed an action plan to address some feedback received which they planned to implement in the months following the end of the grant. Though it will be too late to assess any change over time, the results indicated that there were very limited concerns around communication and coordination, and so attempting to show improvement would be limited due to a ceiling effect (i.e., a limit on the ability to show improvement due to baseline measures that are already positive). The report summarizing survey results and recommendations is included as Appendix B.

C. By 2023, improve the systematic delivery of information about environment-related ordinances, permitting requirements, and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during initial site inspections, with 80% of unpermitted sites visited provided with information, as measured by CES staff records of information disseminated.

This objective is similar to Objective 1B that appears within PPA 3 but with a focus on environmental ordinances and permitting requirements. Both health and safety and environmental components were included in one resource guide. As described earlier, the guide would include links to all relevant environmental-related ordinances, health and safety codes, laws, other resources, and agency staff contacts that those wishing to pursue permits could reach for more information. A resource guide was developed during Quarter 7, modified in Quarter 8, and final decisions about content made within Quarter 11. The plan was to print it out to give to cultivators of unpermitted cannabis during initial site inspections and then upload the document to the County's Permit Sonoma website once it was relaunched. The new website was launched in November 2023, but as of this writing, the document has not been uploaded to the website.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Discussion of program results along with the general degree of effectiveness of the project activities in achieving the objectives are presented by PPA below.

PPA 1: Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention

Goal 1: Reduce youth and young adult use of cannabis, encouraging them to make healthy lifestyle choices by providing youth, young adults, and adults with the facts and risks of cannabis use through expanded educational materials

Over the course of this grant, the evaluation of PPA 1 objectives proved to be challenging for multiple reasons. The social marketing efforts by the Social Changery (Objective 1A) were well implemented based on the Evaluator's observations, Behavioral Health staff interviews, and social media metrics which were reported quarterly. However, getting the timing correct and a survey in place that was practical was difficult. The research conducted for the Social Changery by HSRI was done from a market research perspective, and in a more staged design, with the message being the unit of analysis. Overall, the results show that all messages had capacity to alter attitudes among viewers, but some had stronger impact than others; participants' responses were significantly improved from pre- to post-survey on the first two messages. Despite the design of the study and its intended purpose, the findings have some crossover. The messages tested are consistent with those that appear on the [C]D website and social media outlets. So, it is likely that the participation of youth in the campaign's social media messaging about cannabis, are improving their attitudes toward it, or rather increasing their perception of harm around cannabis use.

The evaluation work conducted with FNL members (Objective 1B) was also beset by challenges. As an in-person after school program, it was greatly impacted by COVID, and the number of participants never really recovered subsequently. A retrospective pre/post survey specific to cannabis could not be implemented, but the *Youth Development Survey*, a requirement for all FNL chapters, was implemented,

and results were positive. Almost all FNL members (95.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed that in FNL they learned about problems that substances (i.e., alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs) can cause in FNL. Most members (83.4%) credited FNL with helping them support other youth to make healthy choices that didn't involve substances, and most FNL members (79.2%) also agreed or strongly agreed that FNL helped them decide to do other things instead of using substances. Though it would have been better to have information specifically about cannabis, the results indicate that participation in FNL provided students with prevention education that minimized the normalizing of substance use in adolescence.

The Spanish-language cannabis prevention education work by CPI (Objective 1C) was partially successful. Behavioral Health and CPI staff reported that parent educators were well trained by the Social Changery and outreach efforts to engage the target population were consistent throughout the grant. However, this is another program that was greatly impacted by COVID, and the effects lingered. When in-person sessions could not be conducted, the Institute shifted to virtual sessions, which resulted in some participation. However, even these sessions were not well attended. As program staff described the issue, most of the Spanish-speaking parent population they work with, struggle financially, and when COVID put a long pause on service jobs, which is the type of work many parents had, it was not uncommon to see parents holding down two and three jobs just to survive. This of course left very little time for more optional educational activities.

In total, only 15 pre-post surveys were available, which is a low number to analyze for statistically significant change. For the most part, changes in participant average responses from pre- to post-survey moved in the desirable direction (for seven of the eight questions). However, only one change was significant. Participant responses indicated that they learned significantly more about the strength of cannabis as it is produced today and the various ways in which it is consumed compared to when they began the workshop. This is helpful information for parents to have as cannabis use is a very different experience today than it was even 15 years ago. With more surveys to analyze, other items may well have reached statistical significance, but unfortunately, this is not the case. Were this work to continue with other funding, training of staff should include survey administration and follow-up emails to ensure as many surveys as possible are collected.

The development of a survey for young DUI program participants (Objective 1D) could not be developed. DUI staff received training in cannabis- and other drug-impaired driving, but in the attempting to add information about cannabis and other drug impaired driving to the existing curriculum, it became apparent that staff was not using the existing curriculum consistently in their sessions. It is possible that at one point, the curriculum had been consistent between AOD counselors who facilitate the DUI programs, but over the years, with staff and management turnover, it was not being utilized consistently at the time of these efforts. However, this was extremely helpful to acknowledge. It sparked the need to redesign the curriculum while adding content about the driving impairment caused by substances other than alcohol. This led to the contract with Panaptic to develop a new curriculum that was focused not only on alcohol, but cannabis and all substances that impair driving. It further differs from many DUI curriculum in that it is intentionally not stigmatizing and also draws the participants' focus on introspection and considering the overall impacts of the substance use that led to their DUI arrests. At the end of the grant, the new curriculum had been implemented and staff had been trained and were able to get support from Panaptic on any issues they had with implementation. The Evaluator attended staff training and found that not only is the content focused on cannabis and other substances in addition to alcohol, but it allows facilitators to select additional curated content that can support the basic curriculum. This cures the need for excessive non-standard personalization of the curriculum by the AOD counselors delivering the programs, which had been a problem previously. So, while the objective could not be achieved, it set in motion a full curriculum redesign along with the necessary precursors to develop a fine-tuned assessment of knowledge gained which will be put in place with other funding within the next year.

PPA 3: Public Safety

Goal 1: Reduce impacts of unpermitted commercial cannabis cultivation/production sites on the public safety of Sonoma County residents

The outcomes related to Objectives A and B were mixed. While Objective A called for an increase in identification of unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites, the results showed a decrease from the baseline measurement of 42.2 percent. However, it is clear that the decrease was driven by multiple factors. These factors include a cannabis code inspection staff that was twice as small as was employed during the baseline year, fewer complaints being received earlier on due to the disruption to work caused by COVID-19, and a likely smaller number of unpermitted sites to be discovered, which appears to be at play later in the grant.

As is the case in many naturalistic studies, there are interactional effects that are not always possible to attribute to the intervention itself but more than likely related to the end result. Based on interviews with Code Inspectors, and the feedback and information they receive formally and informally in their work around the County, it is quite likely that CES has impacted the numbers of unpermitted cannabis operations. CES has obtained evidence that smaller cultivators, unpermitted and permitted alike, have moved out of Sonoma County, often to Lake, Mendocino, and Trinity Counties, which have less developed cannabis code enforcement. There, unpermitted cultivators can continue to operate under the radar and avoid taxation. Large producers who are well established in Sonoma County find it less challenging to be profitable while paying required fees and taxes on their products. The benefits and detriments of this impact are beyond the scope of this evaluation but should be considered by the County in any review of code enforcement operations and fees.

Regarding Objective B, information for unpermitted cannabis cultivators was delivered to operators of unpermitted sites, but due to the need to minimize the data collection burden on staff, data did not allow for documentation of specific delivery of information to unpermitted cannabis cultivators. Staff indicated that all sites received information after initial site visits. To consolidate and facilitate the delivery of information, the Evaluator worked with Code Enforcement Inspectors to develop a brief resource guide containing all relevant hyperlinks. This effort promised to be a useful tool for staff in the field. Including the document on the Permit Sonoma website was planned as an even easier mechanism to deliver the information, but this did not occur by the end of the grant or as this report was being written.

Goal 2. Improve safety of staff conducting site inspections to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles

Objectives A and B under Goal 2 were met and exceeded. Objective A called for a reduction of initial site inspections by 50 percent, but this target was exceeded by 35 percent (i.e., an 85% reduction in initial site inspections needed). Though some of the decrease must be attributed to the same external factors impacting Objective A under Goal 1, Code Inspectors described the ability to view recent high-quality images of the landscape when complaints were received as greatly minimizing the need to conduct on-site inspections. This often resulted in a dismissal of the complaint without ever having to conduct an inspection. It is likely that some of the change is at least partially related to the increasingly smaller pool of unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites to investigate. Overall, the aerial imagery has successfully impacted the need for a large number of the site inspections previously required to verify the existence of unpermitted cannabis.

The decrease in staff time needed to conduct initial site inspections (Objective B), presented staff and the Evaluator with more of a challenge. In disaggregating the tasks involved in site inspections, it became clear that only the research done prior to an actual inspection was impacted by aerial imagery; the rest of the time needed to conduct site inspections is subject to too many variables that have nothing to do with efficiency, such as contacting property owners, waiting for law enforcement to accompany staff if needed,

travel time, and whether warrants had to be delivered, etc. Further, trying to remove those parts of staff time that were outside of the control of Code Inspectors and tracking the time needed for various parts of staff time taken up by initial site inspections was far too time intensive a data collection effort with which to burden busy staff.

While conducting the research prior to doing a site inspection, staff reviewed the aerial photography and determined what the likely issues were, where on the property greenhouses, plants, and areas with likely code violations were located, such as greenhouses with unpermitted electrical services, for example. Since exact time tracking was not feasible, an estimate was utilized. As described in QPRs, the estimated time needed to conduct the pre-site inspection before the addition of the aerial photography was 50 minutes per site. After the added technology, it was estimated to take eight minutes per site. This is a substantial time savings that is then multiplied by the number of initial site inspections done.

During the process of determining how to estimate staff time, it became obvious that the 4 x 4 vehicles did not meaningfully impact the staff time needed to conduct site inspections, but instead increased the safety of staff conducting inspections and enabled access to previously impassible terrain. Further, staff described feeling safer and more confident that if needed, the power of their vehicles could help extricate them from dangerous situations.

PPA 4: Environmental Impacts

Outcomes for objectives related to PPA 4 are also mixed. As Objective A also appears under PPA 3, the results are the same. To reiterate, Objective A called for an increase in identification of unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites due to the addition of aerial imagery, the results showed a decrease from baseline of 42.2 percent. However, it is clear that the addition of aerial imagery had nothing to do with the decrease. Instead, a variety of factors contributed to the decrease. These factors include a smaller cannabis code inspection staff than was employed during the baseline year, fewer complaints being received earlier on due to the disruption to work caused by COVID-19, and a likely smaller number of unpermitted sites to be discovered, which appears to be at play later in the grant. Because of these external factors and the lesser number of available unpermitted sites to identify, it would be beneficial to identify an alternative indicator that demonstrates the benefits of aerial imagery.

The intent of Objective B was to improve communication and coordination between CES and its environmental partnering agencies. Here, results are primarily positive. Environmental partners rated CES highly on most areas, with few challenges noted. In particular, environmental partners noted some confusion over the best ways to contact CES staff (e.g., office or cell phone, email), and noted that the Manager should assign someone as a back-up decision-maker who will be available when she is out of the office. The full report is included in Appendix B. Its recommendations for improvement include:

1. **Take steps to formalize aspects of CES operations related to communication.** Though ratings were not exceptionally low, there was some confusion from CES's environmental partners as to the correct phone numbers to use (i.e., office vs. cell), staff schedules (i.e., in office vs. working from home), and who is the appropriate decision-maker when the Manager is out of the office.
2. **Discuss with CES staff the benefits of utilizing Sonoma County's internal messaging application, *Jabber,* as well as *Microsoft Teams*.** Partners as well as some CES staff discussed challenges around these communication tools.
3. **Implement improvements to information sharing and training based on feedback received from partners.** Requests were made to provide certain Sonoma County agencies with periodic updates on enforcement actions for permitted and unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites and additional training on *Accela*, so that staff can more independently access information about violations and complaints. Further, a state agency requested the ability to attend some site inspections.
4. **Consider ways to improve the consistency sharing of internal CES communication.** Partners were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed that internal communication between CES staff

appeared to be consistent and widely shared. Just over half agreed or strongly agreed. It is clearly an ongoing challenge to ensure that knowledge and information sharing among staff at all levels is consistent; but to some degree, this is a function of continuous training and sharing updates to policies, procedures, and general knowledge.

5. **Work with environmental partners to determine ways to improve aspects of coordination that each group sees as less than optimal.** Two areas within coordination received the highest number of "neutral" and "disagree" responses by both groups: Contacting key staff when things don't go as planned and problems must be addressed, and working together to creatively solve problems that arise. Discussing with environmental agencies which types of unplanned issues warrant quick notification, and preferred ways to send and receive that quick notification. Working together to find creative solutions likely requires a more intensive discussion about each agency's parameters and limitations in solution seeking and moving forward from there.

6. **Develop a plan to improve the working relationships that CES has with particular agency partners.** Most of CES's partners rated the quality of their partnerships with CES as good or excellent, but CES's ratings of individual agencies varied more widely. CES staff rated the quality of their partnerships with more than one-third of agencies at the low-end of the "acceptable" range. It would be beneficial for CES to examine their working relationships with each agency in terms of strengths and challenges, and directly engage with each agency to determine how to improve. Often these issues relate directly to communication.

7. **Consider the validity of feedback from partners that CES's policy direction is more punitive and less solution-seeking and determine if there is any room for additional CES support and help for cannabis cultivators and permit applicants.** Some comments made by partners related to the challenges they face when interacting with landowners and permit applicants where violations and fines have been assessed by CES. Certainly, CES is responsible for determining violations, assessing fines, and monitoring compliance, and civil penalties are mandated by county code. However, there may be ways to incorporate some supportive suggestions or resources for cannabis cultivators and permit applicants so that CES's own relationships with them as well as their partners relationships with cultivators and permit applicants is not diminished.

Objective C is very similar to Objective B under Goal 1: to improve the systematic delivery of information about environment-related ordinances, permitting requirements, and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis cultivators during initial site inspections. Code Inspection staff and the Manager indicated that relevant environmental information was delivered to all unpermitted sites upon initial inspection but was not as systematic or uniform as desired. To streamline the effort to facilitate the delivery of information, the Evaluator worked with Code Enforcement staff to develop one resource guide containing all relevant hyperlinks and agency contact information around health, safety, and environmental codes and permitting requirements. Staff planned to hand this resource guide out to all cultivators of unpermitted cannabis on initial site inspections. Then, once the revised Permit Sonoma website was relaunched, it would be uploaded to the website which promised to be an even easier mechanism to deliver the information, but this did not occur by the end of the grant or as this report was being written.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the last three years, Sonoma County has benefitted from an enhanced ability to engage in multiple efforts to ameliorate the impacts of recreational cannabis that would not have otherwise been possible.

PPA 1: Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention

During the Proposition 64 grant, the Behavioral Health Division learned a considerable amount and enhanced its capacity to provide cannabis focused prevention activities and youth development activities as demonstrated by these conclusions:

- **Objective 1A:** Social media efforts reached many more youth and young adults than planned, and based on the HSRI study, and the similarity of messages tested to those already in use, they have the capacity to change attitudes toward cannabis use and the potential associated problems and harms.
- **Objective 1B:** Though attitudes toward cannabis specifically could not be assessed for FNL members, the *Youth Development Survey* found large percentages of members who report benefitting from their participation in the program in the ways intended by the objective.
- **Objective 1C:** Spanish-language parent cannabis education did not successfully recruit and engage as large a number of parents as hoped, though much can be attributed to the pandemic. Those who participated and completed surveys appeared to improve their knowledge and attitudes, with one item reaching statistical significance. With more surveys collected, it is likely that most items would have shown significant improvement.
- **Objective 1D:** Finally, the objective around the youth and young adult DUI program participants was not possible to meet. Some training around cannabis- and other drug-impaired driving was delivered to DUI counseling staff. However, the plan to update the existing curriculum with current information about cannabis- and other drug-impaired driving was not appropriate as the current curriculum was not being consistently delivered by all DUI counseling staff. Fortunately, the grant funding provided the ability to completely overhaul the curriculum to include not only alcohol, but cannabis and all other substance-impaired driving. This change will impact every person attending DUI programs into the future. Measuring the change in knowledge and attitudes for DUI program participants is still needed and is being planned for development within the next several months.

PPA 3: Public Safety and PPA 4: Environmental Impacts

The grant provided CES with equipment needed to conduct initial and ongoing site inspections of both unpermitted and permitted cannabis sites safely and efficiently. It also provided for staff time to concentrate on grant requirements. Since two objectives within each PPA overlap, conclusions based on objectives under both PPA are combined to demonstrate the impact:

- **PPA 3, Objective 1A and PPA 4 Objective 1A:** With the aid of enhanced aerial photography and drones, Cannabis Code Inspectors were able to identify 215 unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites around the county during the grant. This is a 42.2 percent decrease over the baseline rather than a 20 increase that was intended. However, several factors explain the decrease, including double the Cannabis Code Inspection staff during the baseline year, decreases in complaints during and after the pandemic, and especially in the last year, fewer complaints received and other indications of a decreasing number of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites. CES reports that rather than obtain permits and pay taxes, many smaller cannabis cultivators are moving to nearby counties where code enforcement on cannabis is less consistent. The diligence of CES staff in following up on complaints and using their enhanced technology ensures that those unpermitted sites that are operating in the County receive inspections and the appropriate follow-up needed. Though the measures went in the wrong direction, the fact that as many unpermitted sites as possible are addressed as needed is a success.

- **PPA 3, Objective 1B and PPA 4 Objective 1C:** The effort to systematically provide relevant information to unpermitted cannabis cultivators about health, safety, and environmental laws and codes was partially successful. Cannabis Code Inspectors were already conveying information during site inspections before the grant, but it was likely not uniform and systematic, instead being driven by site specifics and situational variables. The grant team made efforts to develop a simple guide with links to resources and appropriate contacts within agencies. The intention was to place this on the newly redesigned Permit Sonoma website, but this has not occurred. Providing this improvement and systematically relaying the location to all cultivators during site inspections would greatly enhance easy and equitable distribution of information.

- **PPA 3, Objective 2A:** The objective to decrease the number of initial site inspections was more than achieved. The objective called for a 50 percent decrease in initial site inspections needed to identify unpermitted cannabis sites, but over the three years, the decrease was 85.5 percent. The addition of high-quality aerial imagery prevented many site inspections that would otherwise be needed to document the existence of unpermitted cannabis or lack thereof. However, it should be noted that like other objectives, this is subject to external factors such as a smaller number of complaints that would generate the need to research sites.

- **PPA 3, Objective 2B:** This objective called for a 25 percent decrease in staff time needed to initially identify unpermitted cannabis due to enhanced aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles. Several factors limited an actual calculation of time spent on unpermitted cannabis identification including the many factors that impact time spent that have nothing to do with the use of aerial imagery, such as travel time, warrants, and waiting for law enforcement when needed. In addition, the amount of tracking needed to disaggregate irrelevant tasks that impact time from those related to aerial imagery would place an undue burden on Code Enforcement staff. The use of 4 x 4 vehicles, though greatly improving staff safety and site navigation was determined to have little impact on time spent identifying unpermitted cannabis. Instead, an estimate was carefully calculated of the time needed to do the research needed, using aerial technology and other preliminary tasks needed before a site visit took place. Before the enhanced aerial imagery, this research took on average 50 minutes per site; after, it took 8 minutes per site. This estimate was then applied to the number of initial site inspections that took place. Over the grant, the reduction in staff time was 90.5 percent, far exceeding the 25 percent goal. This percentage change obviously is dependent upon the number of site inspections conducted, but the bottom line is that what used to take staff almost an hour, now takes less than ten minutes.

- **PPA 4, Objective 1B:** The final objective in PPA 4 was to improve communication and coordination with the environmental agencies with which CES works most closely. Surveys were developed to assess the quality of communication and coordination between these agencies and CES, from the environmental agency perspective and from the CES perspective as well. Survey results were mostly positive, with high ratings overall, but there is some room for improvement. Though results were discussed, an action plan was not enacted before the grant ended. However, several recommendations were offered by the Evaluator which are described in the full report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this evaluation are informative and lead to several recommendations which are offered here for continuous improvement of the cannabis-related activities of the Behavioral Health Division (PPA 1) and CES (PPAs 3 and 4).

PPA 1: Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention

1. **Continue to expand targeted messaging to youth about cannabis and other substances on social media.** By all accounts, the messaging about cannabis on social media platforms reached many young people and likely improved perception of harm. It is encouraging that Behavioral Health invested in work that meets young people where they are, and that young people responded by engaging with the content.

2. **Develop a user survey for youth around cannabis messaging seen on social media platforms.** While the HSRI study was helpful, it was geared toward social marketing research. Devising a way to survey the actual young people engaging with the content would be preferrable to more accurately determine their changes in knowledge, attitudes, and planned behavior.

3. **Expand efforts to understand what the disconnect is between the program and minimal success in member recruitment.** Certainly, the pandemic did not help recruitment efforts, but for some time before the pandemic, and certainly after, the program has been challenged to engage and retain members. Talk with FNL members and their peers to learn more. It may also be beneficial to ask the California FNL Partnership for referrals to other FNL programs that are thriving. Then reach out to those programs for tips and strategies to improve membership.

4. **Consider developing a survey about attitudes toward specific types of substance use for FNL members.** Though the *Youth Development Survey* is a helpful tool, its questions are not substance specific, and preventing or intervening in the substance use of young people requires different strategies according to substance. Learning about local FNL members' attitudes and experiences will help provide more targeted prevention and intervention strategies and activities to members and their peers at school.

5. **Think creatively about community engagement when recruiting for Spanish-language parent cannabis education efforts.** Though the provider of the Spanish language parent cannabis education has considerable experience engaging Spanish-speaking families to participate in their programs, they struggled to get participation. Of course, much of the problem could have been related to the pandemic and its economic impacts, but there may be additional recruitment strategies, incentives, or other agencies serving Spanish speakers that the Behavioral Health Division has access to which could benefit the provider.

6. **Train contracted providers of Spanish-language parent cannabis education on survey administration, and engaging survey participants.** It was encouraging that the contracted provider had a pre-post survey in place to which additional questions around the grant objective could be added. Unfortunately, staffing changes and lack of consistency in staff utilization of the surveys resulted in minimal coverage. Training staff in survey administration and collection, and strategies to use to obtain participation in surveys, including following up with participants, would greatly improve the measurable impacts of this important program component.

7. **Begin to monitor fidelity to the new alcohol, cannabis and other drug-impaired DUI program curriculum and support ongoing training in its use.** The DUI program received a valuable enhancement through this grant. It is important to ensure that it continues to be used as intended, and that staff training in its use occurs at regular intervals. Establishing a fidelity monitoring system and training plan will support the curriculum reaching its full impact.

8. **Develop a pre-post survey for the DUI program to assess knowledge and attitude change based on the newly launched alcohol, cannabis, and other drug-impaired DUI program curriculum.** Now that the new curriculum addresses not only alcohol but cannabis- and other drug-impaired driving, it is possible to develop the pre-post surveys to assess what DUI participants, young and older, learn through the programs, as well as how attitudes and behaviors change.

PPA 3: Public Safety and PPA 4: Environmental Impacts

1. **Select an indicator to monitor unpermitted cannabis cultivation that is less subject to external factors than unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites identified.** This indicator in particular was problematic because of its vulnerability to situational, staffing, and policy or program changes. Its use made it difficult to determine what impacts the aerial imagery had.

2. **Monitor trends in cannabis businesses and court cases to help explain changes in CES activities and what adjustments to make to staffing and related aspects of CES operations.** Throughout the grant, several factors may have influenced the direction of change in some indicators. Further, Cannabis Code Inspectors' time was greatly impacted by ongoing appeals by cannabis cultivators fighting their violations and fees. Formalizing the tracking of trends in such areas as cannabis cultivation operations leaving the county, the changes in the number of court appeals, and similar information can help CES plan for staffing and pivot the direction of their work, based on the realities of the current climate.

3. **Load the resource guide developed for unpermitted cannabis cultivators on the Permit Sonoma website to increase the equitable distribution of important information.** This was intended to have taken place already but has not. Including the guide on the Permit Sonoma website and ensuring that all cultivators of unpermitted cannabis are told of its location, greatly enhances equity in access to information and consistency of information dissemination.

4. **Create an implementation plan to enact the recommendations from the results of the survey about communication and coordination with environmental agencies.** The efforts of many of CES's environmental partners and CES staff themselves invested considerable time to learn more about the agency's strengths and needs. Since this was an intended outcome of the grant, the findings from the survey conducted should be utilized to improve agency relationships and work done collaboratively.

Appendix A: Logic Models

SONOMA COUNTY PPA 1 LOGIC MODEL – PROP 64 GRANT

GOAL 1: PPA 1: Reduce youth and young adult use of cannabis, encouraging them to make healthy lifestyle choices by providing youth, young adults, and adults with the facts and risks of cannabis use through expanded educational materials.				
INPUTS	**ACTIVITIES**	**OUTPUTS**	**OUTCOMES**	**IMPACTS**
• Staff trained in prevention research and programming • Staff time for program development and monitoring • Several active county-led prevention programs (e.g., FNL, [Cannabis] Decoded, Cannabis prevention education) ([C]D) • Financial support (e.g., Prop 64 PH&S Grant, SABG, County funding) • Community support (e.g., Sonoma County Prevention Partnership (SCPP), SCPP Cannabis Prevention Subcommittee, SUD prevention and treatment providers, CBOs) • County agencies and other partners (e.g., Environmental Health and Public Health, Probation Department, City Police Departments, school districts hosting Friday Night Live (FNL) chapters and hosting cannabis prevention education, Santa Rosa Junior College, Sonoma State University) • Evaluation support to document program implementation and outcomes (e.g., tracking tools, surveys, evaluation consultant)	A. Launch county-wide [C]D campaign through the website, and social media platforms such as Instagram; disseminate website link to County partners including CBOs, schools, and health professionals working with youth and young adults. B. FNL chapters utilize [C]D and other materials in implementing activities, including [Your Story] Decoded, Graffiti Walls, and other supported activities. C. Identify and train community health educators to deliver prepared cannabis educational materials in Spanish to Spanish-speaking parents; implement parent presentations for Spanish-speaking parents, county-wide. D. Provide quarterly trainings to DUI program staff on cannabis prevention education and on the harms of driving under the influence of cannabis; DUI program staff teach cannabis prevention to the youth and young adults in the Juvenile DUI Offender Program and the First Time Offender Program.	A1. [C]D website to be viewed by 750 County youth and young adults, and 250 adults, annually; A2. [C]D social media efforts to be viewed by 1 million users B1. 3 new FNL chapters to participate in [C]D and cannabis- related programming and activities; B2. 25% of FNL youth participants to engage in [C]D and other cannabis-related education and activities, annually C1. Recruit and train 5 Spanish speaking community health educators; C2. 10 Spanish-language parent education presentations delivered, annually C3. 100 parents to attend Spanish-language cannabis education presentations D1. 10 DUI programs that include cannabis-impaired driving materials/information delivered annually to juveniles and young adult participants; D2. 75 participants between Juvenile DUI Offender Program and First Time Offender Program to receive information about cannabis-impaired driving, annually	A. By 2023, 75% of youth & young adults viewing [C]D materials on website & social media (e.g., Instagram), will increase perception that cannabis is harmful, as measured by a viewer survey. B. By 2023, 80% of FNL program participants, in FNL chapters that choose cannabis as a priority, will report that the program helped them 1. learn about risks & problems cannabis/other substance use can cause; 2. support other youth to make healthy choices; 3. decide to do other things instead of using cannabis/other substances, as measured by FNL Youth Survey & cannabis-specific survey. C. By 2023, 80% of Spanish-speaking parents attending cannabis education presentations will report it increased their knowledge about cannabis, its impact on the developing brain, and gave them strategies and tools to discuss cannabis use with their teens, as measured by post-presentation evaluations. D. By 2023, 50% of youth & young adults participating in DUI programs will increase their knowledge of cannabis-impaired driving, as measured by a DUI program participant survey.	A. Youth and young adults who view [C]D website and social media posts will have the information they need to make healthy lifestyle choices regarding the use of cannabis. B. FNL participants who engage in [C]D and other cannabis-related education and activities will experience the benefits of positive drug-free activities and support in making healthy lifestyle choices around the use of cannabis. C. Parents who attend community health educator-led Spanish-language cannabis education presentations will share their knowledge with their teens and support them in making healthy choices around the use of cannabis. D. Youth and young adult DUI program participants will use the knowledge gained in the program to avoid driving under the influence of cannabis, thereby improving public safety.

SONOMA COUNTY PPA 3 LOGIC MODEL – PROP 64 GRANT

GOAL 1: PPA 3: Reduce impacts of unpermitted commercial cannabis cultivation/production sites on the public safety of Sonoma County residents				
GOAL 2: PPA 3: Improve safety of staff conducting site inspections to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles				
INPUTS	**ACTIVITIES**	**OUTPUTS**	**OUTCOMES**	**IMPACTS**
- Staff trained in code enforcement and permitting of commercial cannabis sites - Staff time for program development and monitoring - Aerial surveillance tools (e.g., Aerial imagery system, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle/Drone) - Two 4 x 4 vehicles than can access remote commercial cannabis sites - Financial support (e.g., Prop 64 PH&S Grant) - Organizational tools (e.g., Quarterly meetings with District Attorney's Office for Environmental Health) - Data collection and tracking tools (e.g., Accela Permitting Software and Excel databases, Extra Help workers for data entry, and an Evaluation Consultant) - Partners (e.g., Sonoma County Departments of Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife, Environmental Health, Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Environmental Unit, CA Bureau of Cannabis Control) - Other (e.g., Complaints received/referrals about commercial cannabis sites from government agencies, law enforcement, and citizens)	**Goal 1:** A. Implement surveillance of aerial imagery to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites. B. Provide Information to permitted commercial cannabis sites about required public safety-related ordinances and resources available for further information during site inspections for code violations. **Goal 2:** A. Conduct initial site inspections as needed to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites. B. Document staff time needed to conduct initial site inspections to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites.	**Goal 1:** A. 156 unpermitted commercial cannabis sites identified through aerial imagery B. 104 unpermitted commercial cannabis sites that the Sonoma County CES provides with information about public safety ordinances and permitting requirements **Goal 2:** A. 133 site inspections needed to initially identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites B. Two hours less staff time (per site) spent conducting initial site inspections to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites	**Goal 1:** A. By 2023, increase identification of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery by 20% from 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records. B. By 2023, improve the systematic delivery of information on public safety ordinances, permitting requirements, and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during initial site inspections with 80% of unpermitted sites visited provided with information, as measured by CES staff records of information disseminated. **Goal 2:** A. By 2023, decrease the number of initial site inspections needed to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites by 50% compared to 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records. B. By 2023, improve staff preparedness for and efficiency of initial site inspections through timely use of aerial imagery and 4 x 4 vehicles, as measured by a 25% reduction in staff time needed to initially identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites, compared to 2019-20 baseline.	**Goal 1:** A. Reduced presence of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites in Sonoma County. B. Improved information and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites about public safety ordinances and permitting requirements resulting in better informed potential commercial cannabis applicants. **Goal 2:** A. Improved staff safety through a decreased need for site inspections to initially identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites. B. Improved staff safety through a reduction in the staff time and number of initial site visits needed to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites.

SONOMA COUNTY PPA 4 LOGIC MODEL – PROP 64 GRANT

GOAL 1: PPA 4: Reduce environmental impacts of unpermitted commercial cannabis cultivation/production sites on Sonoma County				
INPUTS	**ACTIVITIES**	**OUTPUTS**	**OUTCOMES**	**IMPACTS**
• PRMD Code Enforcement Section (CES) staff trained in code enforcement and permitting of commercial cannabis sites • Staff time for program development and monitoring • Aerial surveillance tools (e.g., Aerial imagery system, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle/Drone) • Two 4 x 4 trucks than can access remote commercial cannabis sites • Financial support (e.g., Prop 64 PH&S Grant) Organizational tools (e.g., Meetings with District Attorney's Environmental Unit, Fish & Wildlife, Permit Sonoma, Sonoma County Agriculture Department) • Data collection and tracking tools (e.g., Accela Permitting Software and Excel databases, Extra Help workers for data entry, and an Evaluation Consultant) • Partners (e.g., Sonoma County Departments of Agriculture, Fish & Wildlife, Environmental Health, Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office for Environmental Health, CA Bureau of Cannabis Control) * Other (e.g., Complaints received/referrals about commercial cannabis sites from government agencies, law enforcement, and citizens)	A. Implement surveillance of aerial imagery to identify unpermitted commercial cannabis sites. B. Work with environmental agencies to: mutually identify strengths and gaps in communication and working relationships around coordination; develop and implement a communication / coordination improvement plan; develop and implement a communication / coordination protocol; and train staff in its use. C. Provide Information to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites about required environment-related ordinances and resources available for further information during site inspections.	A. 156 unpermitted commercial cannabis sites identified through aerial imagery B1. Communication / Coordination Improvement Plan developed and implemented B2. Communication / Coordination Protocol developed and implemented B3. CES and other agency contacts trained in Communication / Coordination Protocol's use C. 104 unpermitted commercial cannabis sites that CES provides with information about environment-related ordinances and permitting requirements during initial site inspections	A. By 2023, increase identification of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites using aerial imagery 20% from 2019-20 baseline, as measured by CES records. B. By 2023, improve communication and coordination with environmental agencies, as measured by quality of inter-agency contacts and key informant interviews. C. By 2023, improve the systematic delivery of information about environment-related ordinances, permitting requirements, and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during initial site inspections, with 80% of unpermitted sites visited provided with information, as measured by CES staff records of information disseminated.	A. Reduced presence of unpermitted commercial cannabis sites in Sonoma County. B. Improved communication and coordination with environmental agencies, which improves efficacy of environmental regulation efforts, resulting in a reduction in environmental impacts of all commercial cannabis activity in Sonoma County. C. Improved delivery of information and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites about environment-related ordinances resulting in better informed potential commercial cannabis applicants.

APPENDIX B:
COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION WITH
ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES
SURVEY RESULTS

Sonoma County Code Enforcement – Environmental Partners Communication and Coordination Survey Results
September 26, 2023

Introduction

In July 2023, Mulholland Research & Evaluation Services, an external evaluator contracted with Code Enforcement Section (CES), developed two surveys for CES to assess the agency's strengths and areas for improvement in working with their environmental agency partners. One survey was developed for use with CES's environmental agency partners; the second was developed for the CES Cannabis Code Enforcement team. These surveys were used to address an objective within CES's Proposition 64 grant which called for improved communication and coordination with CES's environmental agency partners. This report summarizes the results of both surveys.

Survey Development, Implementation, Responses, & Participants

The first survey, developed in collaboration with CES staff, was implemented via an online survey platform in July 2023. The survey was primarily composed of multiple-choice questions which included responses to indicate level of agreement with statements, or Likert-type ratings of "poor" to "excellent." Certain questions that would not be relevant to certain staff included a "not applicable" response. Several open-ended questions were included to provide additional detail around communication and coordination from the respondent perspective. The second survey was developed by the evaluator, modified from the partner survey with an added component to assess internal communication, and was also conducted using an online survey platform in August 2023.

Environmental Agency Partners

CES staff sent an email to multiple individuals with whom they work at the following agencies to request their participation in the survey along with the link to the online survey:

State Agencies	County Agencies	
• State Department of Fish and Wildlife • State Department of Cannabis Control • State Water Boards	• Department of Agriculture • Sheriff's Office • Office of County Counsel • District Attorney's Environmental Crime Task Force	• Cannabis Program • Permit Sonoma Planning Department • Environmental Health Department • Regional Parks

Partnering Agency Responses

After several reminder emails sent by CES's Manager and a Senior Cannabis Code Inspector, a total of 15 individuals from 10 agencies responded to the survey out of 24 requests for a response rate of 62.5%. Given the length of the survey and its voluntary nature, this response rate is not unusual. Despite this, only one agency was not represented in the results: CA state Department of Cannabis Control. The most responses came from the Sonoma County Office of the County Counsel (4). Sonoma County Department of Agriculture and California Fish and Wildlife each submitted 2 surveys. All of the other agencies were represented by one staff member's response.

Respondents were asked to indicate the role they held within their agency. One-third of the responses (5 or 33%) were from attorneys working within the two legal agencies above. Most respondents (9; 60%) were in higher level positions, as determined by their titles which included descriptors such as Deputy, Supervising, Manager, Senior, or Lead. The other six (40%) were described with roles such as

Ombudsperson, Attorney, Officer, and two with only a general description rather than a specific job title (i.e., Enforcement and Permitting). All respondents worked on cannabis related issues within their agencies for at least two years.

CES Staff Responses

All six eligible CES staff completed the survey, representing CES's Manager, Supervisor, three Cannabis Code Inspectors and the Department Administrative Assistant. Five of six (83.3%) had worked in cannabis code enforcement for over two years, while one was newer to CES (i.e., between one and two years).

Results

Results presented relate to communication between CES and its environmental agency partners. Partnering agency results are presented for each question, and where reasonable, a parallel or related question asked of CES follows. The communication results end with the remaining internal CES communication results not addressed prior. This is followed by questions related to coordination of efforts between CES and its partners, with the same pattern as used for communication results.

Communication with Cannabis Code Enforcement

Several questions focused on satisfaction with communication between CES and its environmental partners, along with the type, quality, and other aspects of communication. Table 1 shows results around satisfaction with overall and specific aspects of communication.

Table 1. Environmental Partners' Satisfaction with CES Communication

Item	Unsatisfied/ Very Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Average
Overall communication between your agency and CES	--	13.3%	26.7%	60%	4.5
Amount of information from CES	--	20%	33.3%	46.7%	4.3
Frequency of contact from CES	6.7%	13.3%	40%	40%	4.1
Accuracy of information from CES	--	--	40%	60%	4.6
Quality of follow-up/needed actions to be taken by CES			53.3%	46.7%	4.5
Timeliness/responsiveness of communications from CES		6.7%	40%	53.3%	4.5

* 5-point scale where 1 = Very unsatisfied and 5 = Very satisfied

High ratings were reported for all items, with none receiving less than a 4.1 out of five. The average rating of overall communication between the environmental agencies and CES was 4.5. The lower ratings were for the amount of information and frequency of contact from CE.

Satisfaction with CES Staff

All respondents indicated that they worked most closely with either the CES Manager (46.7%) or Cannabis Code Inspectors (53.3%). The next table displays results about communications with individuals in different roles within CES. A "N/A" choice was added to this question to account for roles for which environmental partners would have no reason to interact with CES staff in particular roles.

Table 2. Environmental Partners' Satisfaction with CES Staff Communication

Item	Unsatisfied/ Very Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Average
Manager	--	20%	20%	60%	13.3%	4.3
Supervisor	--	13.3%	33.3%	33.3%	26.7%	4.1
Cannabis Code Inspectors	6.7%	--	26.7%	66.7%	--	4.5
Administrative Assistant	--	--	26.7%	66.7%	--	4.5

* 5-point scale where 1 = Very unsatisfied and 5 = Very satisfied

Environmental partners were satisfied with all CES staff, and most satisfied with Cannabis Code inspectors and the Administrative Assistant, each receiving a 4.5 rating. No points were assigned to these "N/A" responses, so the average ratings were unaffected.

CES Staff's Satisfaction with Internal Staff

CES staff were also asked about their satisfaction with the communication between their colleagues. The "NA" choice was used by sole role holders, so they did not rate themselves, in addition to any roles with which staff felt they had no interaction. Results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. CES Staff - Internal Communication Satisfaction

Item	Unsatisfied/ Very Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Average
Manager	--	--	16.7%	66.7%	16.7%	4.8
Supervisor	--	16.7%	--	50%	33.3%	4.5
Cannabis Code Inspectors	6.7%	--	33.3%	66.7%	--	4.7
Administrative Assistants	--	--	16.7%	83.3%	--	4.5

* 5-point scale where 1 = Very unsatisfied and 5 = Very satisfied

CES staff provided high ratings for communication with each individual's role. The Manager received a rating near 5 (4.8), followed by Cannabis Code Inspectors at 4.7. The Supervisor and Administrative Assistance each received a rating of 4.5, indicating strong satisfaction with communication with each role.

Communication Flow

CES's environmental partners and CES staff were also asked which direction communication typically flowed. Reports varied widely by respondent type (i.e., environmental partners vs. CES), as Figure 1 below shows.

Figure 1. Communication Flow Between CES and Environmental Partners
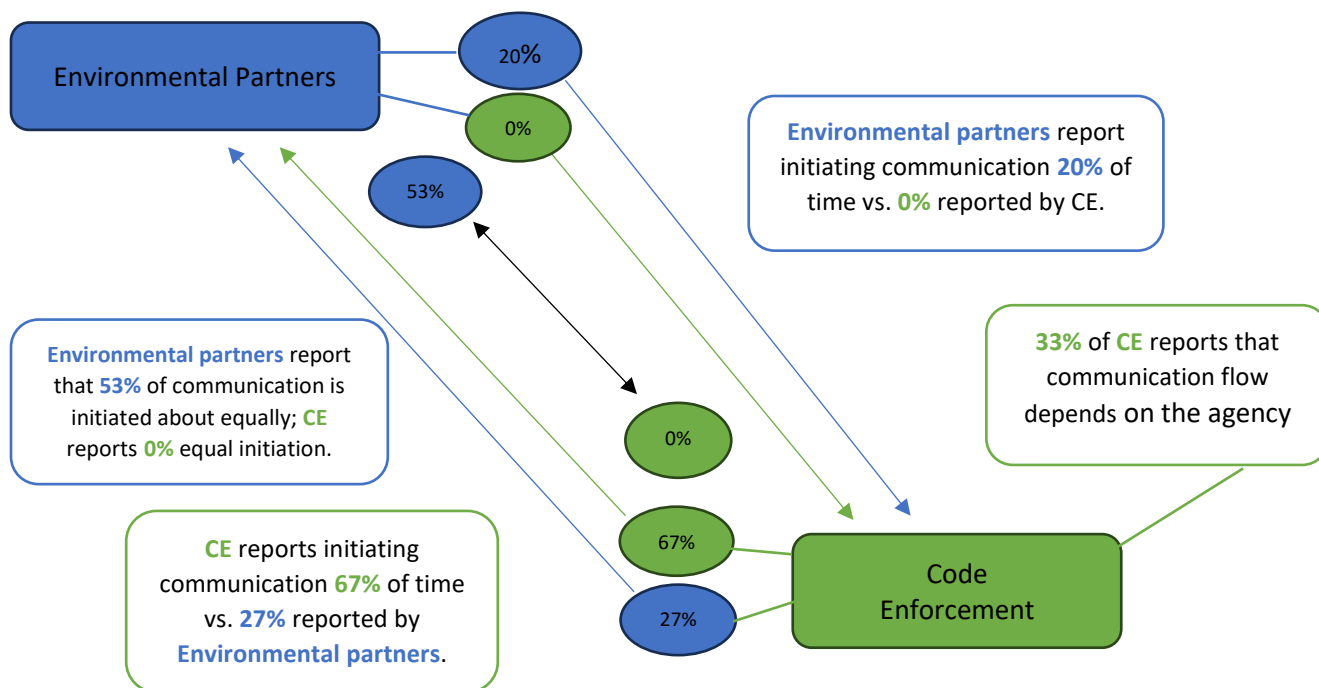
Environmental Partners

20%

0%

53%

Environmental partners report initiating communication **20%** of time vs. **0%** reported by CE.

33% of **CE** reports that communication flow depends on the agency

Environmental partners report that **53%** of communication is initiated about equally; **CE** reports **0%** equal initiation.

0%

67%

27%

CE reports initiating communication **67%** of time vs. **27%** reported by **Environmental partners**.

Code Enforcement

CES's environmental partners report that the majority of communication is initiated equally between themselves and CES (53%), followed by communication flowing from CES (27%), and the remainder (20%) being initiated by their own agencies. From CES's perspective, they initiate two-thirds (67%) of all communications with environmental partners; the remaining 33% being dependent upon the agency.

Reasons for Communications

The reasons that environmental partners communicate with CES (note: respondents could choose all that apply) are overwhelmingly to plan or coordinate joint activities or to work on common concerns (73.3%), followed by the need to discuss litigation/hearings (60%), and less so to ask for help from CES (26.7%). A smaller percentage (20%) had other reasons to communicate with CES staff. Asked to specify, the three respondents reported that they reach out to ask if there is an investigation on a specific site, discuss specific site information, and to get authority to act or make certain decisions in cannabis-related cases.

From CES's perspective, communicating with environmental partners includes planning, coordinating joint activities, and working on common concerns (100%); asking for help from the partners (83.3%), or to discuss litigation/hearings (50%). Half also noted that reasons for communicating depends on the agency.

Frequency of Contact

Next respondents were asked how often they interact with specific CES staff on cannabis-related work. Figure 2 below shows these results by CES position.

Figure 2. Environmental Partners' Frequency of Contact with CE Staff
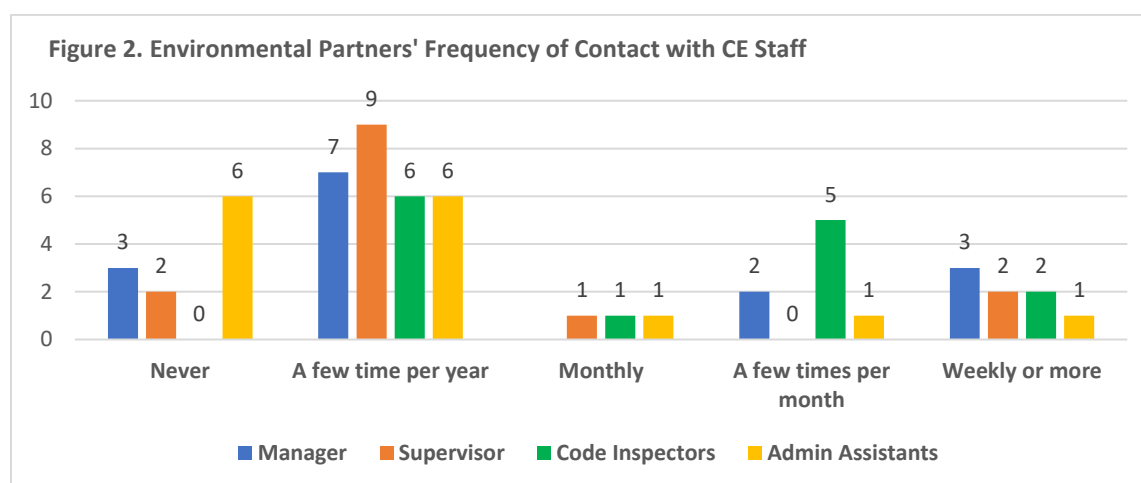
Overall, agencies reported that the most common frequency of contact with any of the four roles was a few times per year. For CES's Manager and Supervisor, these were the most common amount of contact overall. For the Administrative Assistant, this rating was died with "never." Respondents also indicated that they interact most typically with Cannabis Code Inspectors a few times per year, but more respondents reported interacting with Code Inspectors either more than a few times per week or month. When these categories are assigned values (from 1 for "Never" to 5 for "Weekly or more"), the averages per position indicate that Code Inspectors are contacted most frequently (3.7), followed by the Manager (3.0), the Supervisor (2.5), and the Administrative Assistant (2.1). CES was also asked about frequency of contact, but in terms of specific agencies. The results are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. CE's Frequency of Contact with Environmental Partners

Agency	Never	A few times/year	Monthly	A few times/month	Weekly or more
County Dept of Agriculture		16.7%	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%
County Sheriff's Office		33.3%	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%
Office of County Counsel				33.3%	66.7%
DA's Environmental Crime Task Force	50.0%	50.0%			
County Cannabis Program		16.7%	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%
Permit Sonoma Planning Dept		16.7%	16.7%	33.3%	33.3%
County Environmental Health Dept	33.3%	50.0%		16.7%	
County Regional Parks	33.3%	50.0%		16.7%	
CA Dept of Fish & Wildlife		33.3%	50.0%	16.7%	
CA Dept of Cannabis Control	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%		
CA Waterboards	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%		

Results show that CES has the least regular contact with three county agencies: the District Attorney's Environmental Crime Task Force, the Environmental Health Department, and Sonoma County Regional Parks, though one CES staff member is in touch with the latter two agencies a few times per month. CES is also in less frequent contact with two state agencies: The Department of Cannabis Control and California Waterboards, though even here, there is some monthly contact. Despite infrequent interaction of two CES staff members with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (a few times per year), four staff members interact with this agency at least monthly or more. The agencies noted by CES most frequently contacted (more than monthly) are the County Department of Agriculture, the Sheriff's Office, the County Cannabis Program, Permit Sonoma's Planning Department, and the Office of County Counsel, the last of which is noted by two-thirds of CES staff as the agency with which they interact most (at least weekly or more).

Means of Communication

Primarily, environmental partners most often use email to contact CES staff, with less frequent contact by office phone and cell phone. Three respondents (county staff) noted that it does not appear that either staff uses or is unfamiliar with the County-supported instant messaging application, *Jabber*, and so they do not try to contact staff through this means. Another response indicated confusion over which phone (personal/work cell, or desk phone) should be used when contacting Code Enforcement Inspectors.

For the agencies CES staff work most often, the method of communication is most often email (100% a few times monthly or more), office phone less frequently (33.3% a few times/year; 16.7% monthly), cell phone (83.3% a few times a month or more). Virtual meetings are heavily relied upon, with 50% using zoom a few times a month and 33.3% more often); 83.3% engage if small in-person meetings monthly or more, with larger meetings occurring monthly (33.3%) or a few times per year (50%). In person events, joint activities, planning, training, or field work is widely variable with some noting only a few times a year (33.3%), monthly (33.3%), or at least weekly or more often (33.3%). Open ended responses requesting whether any form of communication was challenging elicited two responses: *Jabber* and *Microsoft Teams*.

What Information is Desired?

An open-ended question asked environmental partners what information they wish they had more or less of from CES. Only one-third of respondents provided a comment, but among them was a request for periodic information about enforcement actions for both permitted and unpermitted cannabis operations.

A county staff person requested additional training on using *Accela* to locate violations and complaints. The other comment focused on the desire to attend site inspections.

Code Enforcement Staff were asked the reverse open-ended question: *What information from CES's environmental partnering agencies do you wish you had more or less of?* One-third of the respondents provided comments which focused on the desire for more involvement among specific agencies and additional available staff within a state agency who could help in cannabis-related work.

Examples of Good and Poor Communications and Recommendations for Improvement

Though a minority of respondents provided responses to open-ended questions, the feedback that was received is instructive. When asked to share instances of very positive communication, environmental agency respondents indicated that all staff with whom they worked communicated with them well, kept them informed, and were well prepared for joint activities. Noted was the helpfulness of the interagency coordination meetings. Code Enforcement Inspectors were also described as being an excellent resource for specific characteristics of cannabis cultivation sites, especially since other staff do not have the same access to know what these sites look like. While no specific examples of excellent communication were described, neither were any negative or failed interactions. However, a few respondents suggested specific communication improvements. Ensuring that a back-up decision-maker is informed and up to date on important cases and actions when the Manager is out of the office was noted as critical as this has been a challenge before, noting that when the Manager is on extended leave, certain decisions cannot wait.

CES staff were asked the same questions about interactions with its partnering agencies. On the positive side, half the staff had examples, including excellent in-person assistance of the Sheriff's Office while serving an inspection warrant for unpermitted cannabis cultivation. The other examples also related to warrant service, and the helpful involvement of partnering agencies that were actively involved in the service. Only one example was provided of a failed communication, involving a lack of a timely response from a state office about an urgent request.

## Perceptions of CES Staff's Communication Strengths and Challenges

Several questions asked environmental partners to rate the extent to which they agreed with statements focused on CES staff's communication skills and practices. Results are shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. CES Staff Communication Practices
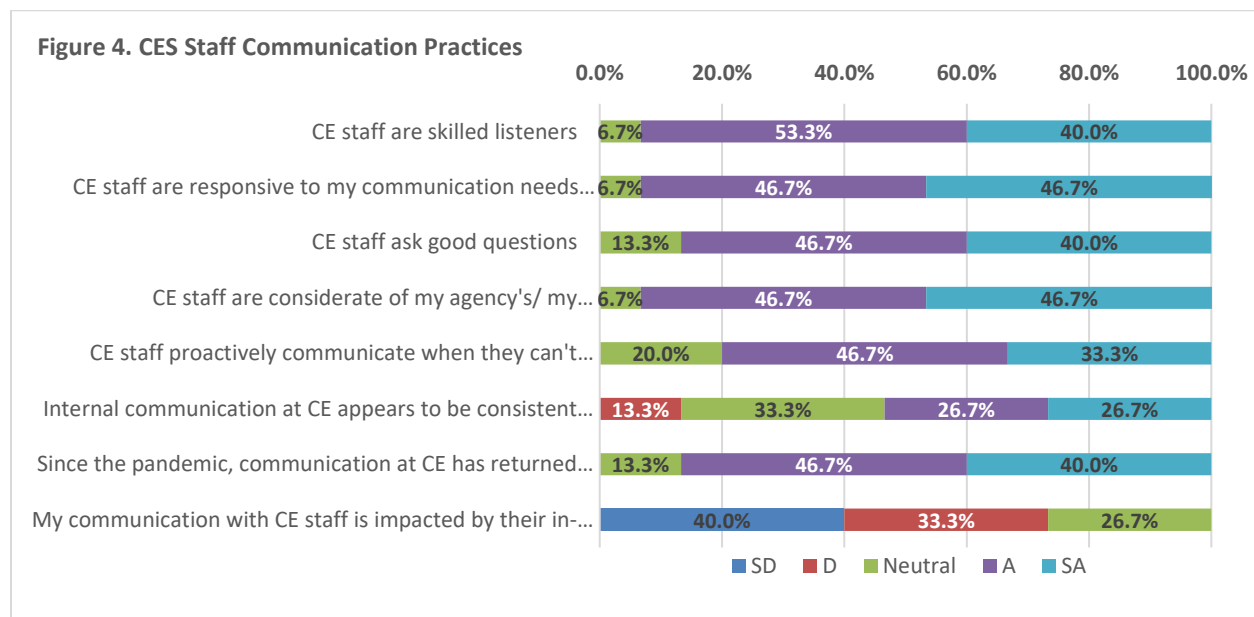
Note: SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; N=Neutral; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree

CES staff was rated highly on their listening skills (93.3% strongly agreed or agreed), asking pertinent questions (86.7%), responsiveness to their partners' communication needs and preferences (93.4%), proactive communication when things don't go as planned (80%). Partners also widely agreed that communications had returned to pre-pandemic normalcy (86.7%) and disagreed with the statement that communication with staff is impacted by in-office vs. work from home schedules (73.3%). The lowest ratings came from consistency and well-shared internal communications, to which just over half agreed or strongly agreed (53.4%).

CES staff were asked to rate themselves on similar items, results of which are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. CES Staff Communication Practices (internal)
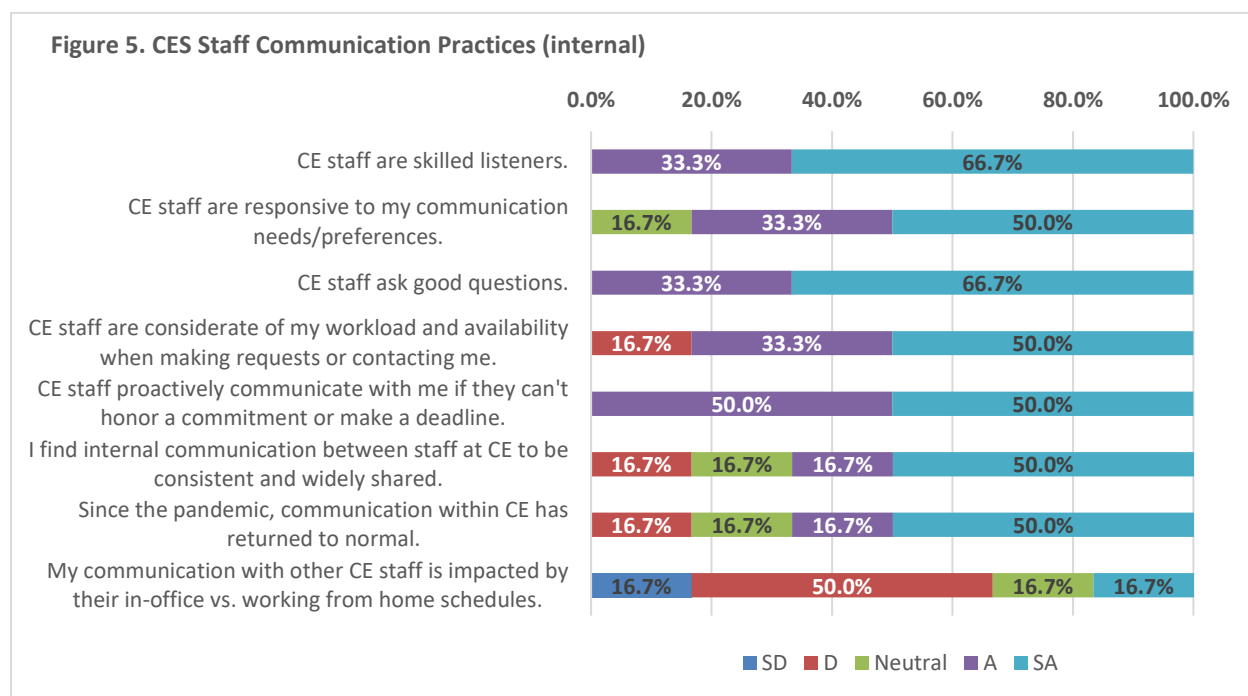
Overall, results were positive, with only one staff member disagreeing with three items, with the exception of the last item, which is actually positive—two-thirds (66.7%) of CES staff disagreed that communication with CES staff is impacted by in-office vs. work from home schedules. Regarding the pandemic's impact on communication, one-third of the staff did not agree that things had returned to normal.

Comparing the CES results with the partnering agencies reveals a few interesting differences. With regard to the widely held and consistent nature of CES's internal communications, 32% of CES staff were neutral or disagreed, compared to 47% of partnering agency respondents who gave those ratings. Additionally, 77% of CES staff believe communication has returned to the pre-pandemic normal vs. 87% of partnering agency respondents. Finally, 33% of CES staff agreed or were neutral (an even split between the two ratings) that communication was impacted by staff in-office vs. work at home schedules where only 26.7% of partnering agency respondents reported a neutral stance on this dimension. Their strong disagreement (40%) with any impact adds perspective to the more neutral finding.

Internal Communications: Cannabis Code Enforcement Staff

The items described here relate to Code Enforcement's internal communications. These two questions did not have a parallel question that was asked of environmental partners. CES staff were asked to provide a rating of CES's overall internal communication. Table 4 presents these results.

Table 4. CES's Ratings of the Quality of Intra-agency Communication

Number of Responses	% of Total Responses	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Acceptable (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
1	16.7%	★	★	★	★	★
3	50.0%	★	★	★	★	
2	33.3%	★	★	★		

Results were skewed in a positive direction, with the lowest ratings in the "acceptable" range. Two-thirds of staff rated internal communication either good or excellent, and one-third rated it as "acceptable," indicating some room for improvement. The average rating was 3.8 of 5.

Table 5 shows results for CES staff's agreement with several aspects of internal communication.

Table 5. CES Staff Satisfaction with Internal Communication

Item	Unsatisfied/ Very Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Average
Overall communication within CES	--	16.7%	50%	33.3%	4.2
Amount of information you receive that is needed to do your work	--	16.7%	16.7%	66.7%	4.5
Frequency of contact you have with others in CES	6.7%	13.3%	40%	40%	4.1
The availability of your colleagues to answer questions or deal with issues that come up	--	--	33.3%	66.7%	4.7
The availability of your manager/person to whom you report, to answer questions or deal with issues that come up	--	--	33.3%	66.7%	4.7
The accuracy of information you receive in order to do your job	--	16.7%	33.3%	50%	4.33
Quality of follow-up communication or needed actions to be taken by colleagues and managers/person to whom you report	--	16.7%	16.7%	66.7%	4.5
Timeliness/responsiveness of communications from your colleagues and managers/person to whom you report	--	16.7%	33.3%	50%	4.33
The extent to which your opinion or feedback is considered in departmental decisions or work	--	--	50%	50%	4.5
The tone and content of the feedback you receive about your work	--	--	50%	50%	4.5

Here the overall rating is 4.2 out of 5. While the same numerical scale is used as the data in Table 4, the questions' wording differs. This question asked respondents to indicate how satisfied overall with CES's internal satisfaction, which rated at 4.2, indicates on average, staff are satisfied. The former question asks for a rating of quality, from "poor" to "excellent," and here, the average rating of 3.8 out of 5 indicating that, on average, staff feel that internal communication is between "acceptable" and "good."

The most highly rated items were around the availability of colleagues and superiors to answer questions or deal with issues that come up, both of which were rated at 4.7 out of 5. Also highly rated was the extent of information that staff have to do their jobs and the quality follow-up communications needed by colleagues and superiors, both rated at 4.5. Results also indicate that CES staff feel valued as their opinions and feedback are considered in departmental decisions or work, and they are fairly satisfied (4.5) with the tone of the content and feedback about their own work.

Coordination Between CES and Environmental Partners

The final part of the survey assessed various aspects of the ability of partners and CES to coordinate work together. The first question relates to the environmental partners' reliance on CES to conduct their cannabis-related work. Results are shown below by agency.

Table 6. Environmental Agencies' Ratings of Reliance on CES to Conduct their Cannabis-related Work

Not at all reliant	Not very reliant	Somewhat reliant	Very reliant
• Sonoma County Environmental Health	• Sonoma County Regional Parks • Sonoma County Department of Agriculture (1) • CA Department of Fish & Wildlife (1)	• Sonoma County DA Environmental Crime Task Force • Sonoma County Sheriff's Office • Sonoma County Cannabis Program • Office of the County Counsel (1) • Sonoma County Department of Agriculture (1) • CA State Waterboards	• Office of the County Counsel (3) • CA Department of Fish & Wildlife (1) • Sonoma County Permit Sonoma Planning Department

Reliance on Each Other to Conduct Cannabis-related Work

There was some diversity in terms of reliance on CES to successfully conduct cannabis-related work among the 10 agencies represented by the survey results, even from respondents within a few of the same agencies. One county agency described no reliance on CES to conduct its own cannabis-related work. However, the rest described some need for interaction with CES to accomplish their cannabis-related work objectives. Looking first at undivided agency responses, one agency believed they were not very reliant upon CES; four agencies reported that they were "somewhat reliant" on CES, and one agency described being "very reliant" upon CES to do their cannabis-related work.
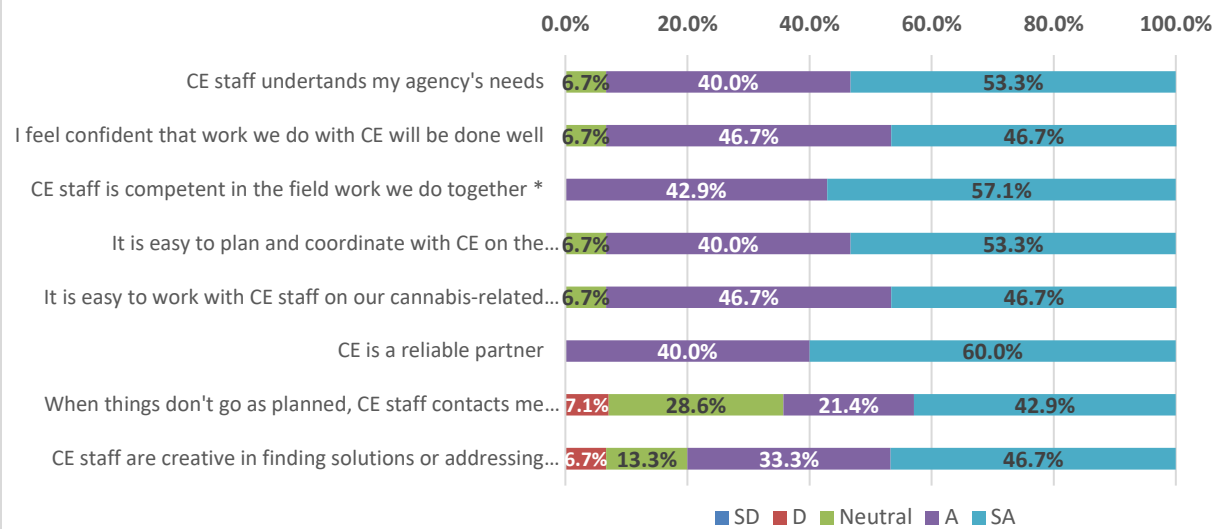
Staff at three agencies had different opinions about their reliance on CES: California Department of Fish and Wildlife staff differed by two levels (i.e., one chose not very reliant while the other chose very reliant). The two County Department of Agriculture respondents differed by one level (one choosing "not very reliant," the other choosing "somewhat reliant." Most respondents from the Sonoma Office of County Counsel indicated that their agency was very reliant upon CES to conduct their cannabis-related work while one respondent chose "somewhat reliant." These differences may relate to the specific types of work that individuals who responded do with CES, but results did not provide additional insight into these differences.

CES was asked overall how reliant they were on their environmental partnering agencies to accomplish their own cannabis-related work. Most often, staff described CES's status as somewhat reliant (50%), followed by not very reliant (33.3%), and very reliant being chosen by 16.7% of CES respondents.

Perceptions of Coordination with Each Other

The last section of the survey assessed the perceptions of various aspects of CES's coordination with its environmental partners. Figure 6 below shows results obtained from environmental partners about specific aspects of coordination with CES.

Figure 6. Environmental Partners' Perceptions on Coordination with CE

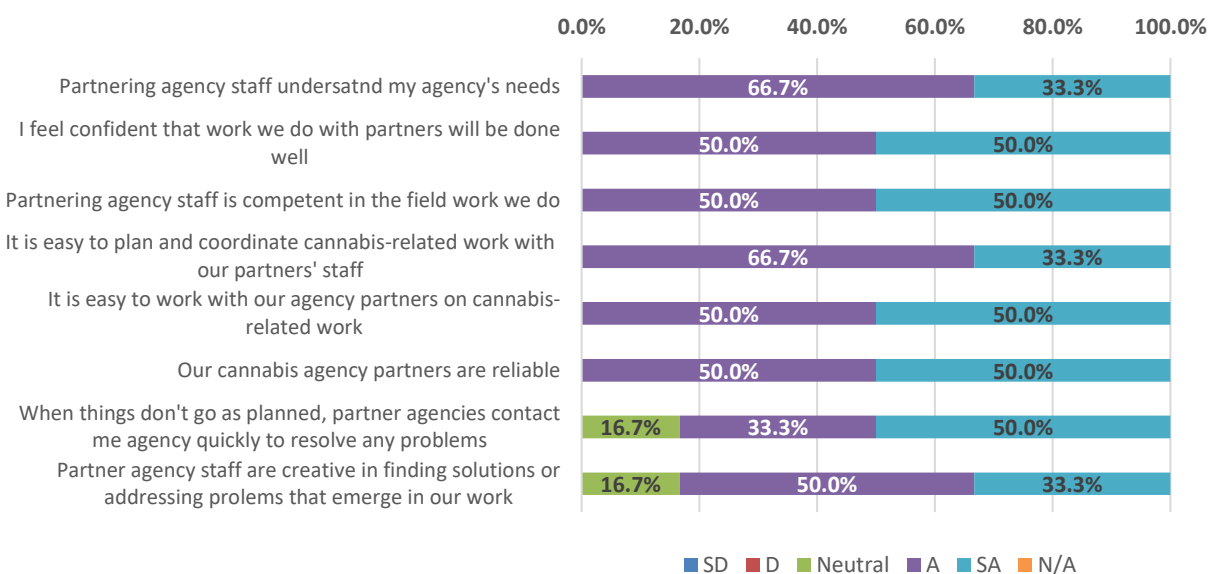| Item	D	Neutral	A	SA
CE staff undertands my agency's needs		6.7%	40.0%	53.3%
I feel confident that work we do with CE will be done well		6.7%	46.7%	46.7%
CE staff is competent in the field work we do together *			42.9%	57.1%
It is easy to plan and coordinate with CE on the…		6.7%	40.0%	53.3%
It is easy to work with CE staff on our cannabis-related…		6.7%	46.7%	46.7%
CE is a reliable partner			40.0%	60.0%
When things don't go as planned, CE staff contacts me…	7.1%	28.6%	21.4%	42.9%
CE staff are creative in finding solutions or addressing…	6.7%	13.3%	33.3%	46.7%

Legend: SD, D, Neutral, A, SA

* A "N/A" response was included but was only chosen by only one participant (6.7%) for two items. Since the item was not relevant for that respondent, the percentages were recalculated without the N/A response.

Overall, ratings for these items were very positive, with two indicators having only positive ratings ("agree" and "strongly agree"). These questions related to perceptions of competence in conducting field work with CES and the reliability of CES. All other items but two had no greater than 6.7% "neutral" responses, which equates to one respondent. The final two questions related to addressing problems that come up during activities between the environmental agency partners and CES. The first question referred to CES's quick action to contact partners when a problem emerges so that issues can be resolved; the second question related to the creativity of CES staff to find solutions for problems that emerge. Both of these items had the largest percentage of "neutral" responses as well as the only appearance of "disagree" responses.

CES Staff were asked the same question from their vantage point, with results shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. CE Staff Perceptions on Coordination with Environmental Partners

Item	Neutral	A	SA
Partnering agency staff undersatnd my agency's needs		66.7%	33.3%
I feel confident that work we do with partners will be done well		50.0%	50.0%
Partnering agency staff is competent in the field work we do		50.0%	50.0%
It is easy to plan and coordinate cannabis-related work with our partners' staff		66.7%	33.3%
It is easy to work with our agency partners on cannabis-related work		50.0%	50.0%
Our cannabis agency partners are reliable		50.0%	50.0%
When things don't go as planned, partner agencies contact me agency quickly to resolve any problems	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%
Partner agency staff are creative in finding solutions or addressing prolems that emerge in our work	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%

Legend: SD, D, Neutral, A, SA, N/A

CES staff responses were even more positive on each aspect of coordination than the responses of their agency partners, indicating strong working relationships. Only the last two items included any "neutral" responses which is consistent with the perceptions of environmental partners.

Perceptions of Partnership Quality

The survey also requested respondents to rate the quality of the partnership between the environmental agencies and CES. Table 7 displays the results which were positive, with 90% providing an equal number of "good" or "excellent" ratings. When translated to numerical values, where 1 = Very poor and 5 = Excellent; the average rating was 4.4 out of 5.

Table 7. Agency Ratings of the Quality of the Partnership with CES

Number of Responses	% of Total Responses	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Acceptable (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
7	46.7%	★	★	★	★	★
7	46.7%	★	★	★	★	
1	6.7%	★	★	★		

Next the survey requested respondents to describe any detail, positive or negative, that helped to explain their quality rating. Just under half (46.7%) chose to elaborate. The tone of all responses was positive, and responses included words such as competent, engaged, consistent, and responsive. Cannabis Code Inspectors were singled out by one respondent as being *"extremely helpful and willing to work collaboratively with other staff as well as landowners and applicants."* This respondent indicated that the partnership with CES was excellent due to their work. Further, it was noted, from a County Counsel perspective, that the Code Inspectors *"go above and beyond to find the facts, documentation, and provide excellent follow-through at trials and hearings."* Another agency staff person noted that CES staff are always willing to share their knowledge and experience. A response from a different agency described that *"CES is a good partner, working inclusively and collaboratively to conduct inspections with their agency,"* with the mutual realization that both agencies *"bring something unique to the table."*

Regarding challenges, one responded succinctly stated that *"their policy direction can be a bit different from other divisions."* A finer point was put on this idea, by more than one respondent, where they believed the priority of management appeared to be in *"fining and penalizing operators, regardless of permit status, rather than finding solutions to remediate violations."* This was noted as making the county and applicant/landowner relationship more difficult for non-CES staff who still must continue to work with the applicant/landowner during and after the CES violations and fines are assessed, in order to complete other required activities.

CES staff were asked to provide ratings of the quality of the partnership with each environmental agency individually, with results shown in Table 8.

Table 8. CES Staff Average Ratings of the Quality of the Partnerships with Environmental Agencies

Agency	Average Rating	Very Poor		Poor		Acceptable		Good		Excellent
		1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Office of County Counsel	4.8								★	
County Dept of Agriculture	4.7								★	
County Sheriff's Office	4.2							★		
Permit Sonoma Planning Dept	4.2							★		
CA Dept of Fish & Wildlife	4.2							★		
County Cannabis Program	3.7						★			
County Environmental Health Dept	3.5						★			
County Regional Parks	3.3					★				
CA Dept of Cannabis Control	3.0				★					
CA Waterboards	2.8				★					
County DA's Environmental Crime Task Force	2.8				★					

For the most part, CES staff's ratings of agency partnerships were positive, with seven of the 11 agencies rated near or at "good" or "excellent," (a 3.5 or above). The relationships with four agencies were still in the "acceptable" range, but comparatively, could be improved. The only answer to elaborate on ratings from CES staff was global: *"We tend to work very well with the departments/programs with which we have a relationship."* An additional comment offered within another section of the survey relates to coordination. With regard to environmental agencies development of policies and procedures, a CES staff person indicated that some of the difficulties reside in a lack of consultation with Code Enforcement before setting policy, *"which creates significant difficulties with the pragmatic issue of how to enforce [certain] policies and procedures."*

The final question, asked on both surveys, was for suggestions to improve coordination; However, no suggestions were offered.

Summary of Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

These surveys provide some valuable insights into the perceptions around communication and coordination held by CES's environmental partners, as well as CES staff on the same domains. Overall, the findings are mostly positive with a few areas where improvement or items for consideration are evident. Below is a list of summarized findings.

Communication Findings from Environmental Partners

- Overall, respondents were satisfied with communication with CES.
- Respondents communicate most often with the CES Manager and Cannabis Code Inspectors, and they were satisfied with the communication with the individuals in these roles.
- CES's environmental partners report that the majority of communication is initiated equally between themselves and CES (53%), followed by communication flowing from CES (27%), and the remainder (20%) being initiated by their own agencies.
- Most often, environmental partners communicate with CES staff around the planning or coordination of joint activities or common concerns (73%), followed by discussion of litigation or court hearings (60%), or to ask for help from CES (27%).

- Partners interact most with Cannabis Code Inspectors, usually monthly or more often. The CES Manager is the next most commonly contacted CES staff member, with typically monthly contact from environmental partners.
- Partners communicate with CES most often by email. Though *Jabber*, an instant messaging application used by the county, is available but staff within some county agencies noted that they did not believe CES uses or is familiar with it. There was some confusion over which phones were most appropriate to contact CES staff—cell or office phones.
- When asked if there was any information that they would like more or less of from CES, partners noted that periodic updates on enforcement actions for permitted and unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites would be helpful, and a desire to attend some site inspections. Other county staff requested additional training on *Accela*—the permitting software, so that they could more easily look up violations and complaints.
- Partners found the interagency coordination meetings helpful, and noted the helpfulness, preparation for joint field work, and the proactive communication of Code Inspectors in keeping them informed.
- The only suggestion made by environmental partners to improve communication relates to coverage when the CES Manager is out of the office. Ensuring that the back-up decision-maker is informed of all pending activities was noted as critical for timely completion of work.
- Environmental partners gave CES staff high ratings on interpersonal communication skills; the lowest rated item was around their perception of the degree to which CES's internal communication is consistent and widely shared.

Communication Findings from CES Staff
- From CES's perspective, they initiate two-thirds (67%) of all communications with environmental partners; the remaining 33% being dependent upon the agency.
- All CES staff communicate the most with environmental partners to plan and coordinate joint activities, followed by asking for support from partners (83%) or to discuss litigation or hearings (50%). Half of the CES staff also noted that the nature of communication depends upon the agency.
- CES staff most regularly interact with Sonoma County Departments of Agriculture, the Sheriff's Office, the County Cannabis Program, and the Office of County Counsel; the most frequently contacted agency is the Office of County Counsel, with whom CES interacts at least weekly or more.
- Email is the most commonly used means of communicating with environmental partners. In-person and virtual meetings are also routinely held. Staff noted that *Jabber* and *Microsoft Teams* were sometimes challenging to use.
- When asked if there was any information that they would like more or less from their environmental partners, CES staff responded that they would like more involvement from agency partners as well as more state agency staff that could help them in their efforts.
- CES staff rated themselves highly on interpersonal communication skills; the lowest rated items was around their perception of the degree to which CES's internal communication is consistent and widely shared, the degree to which internal communications had returned to normal (pre-pandemic), and the degree to which internal communication is impacted by staff's in-office and work from home schedules. However, while these were rated lower, none were dramatically lower than the rest.

CES's Internal Communication

- Staff were fairly satisfied with their communication with the individuals in each role, with none getting a rating lower than 4.5 of 5.
- When asked to rate CES's internal communication from "poor" to "excellent" the average staff rating fell in the high "acceptable" range (3.8 out of 5).
- Overall, CES staff were fairly satisfied with various aspects of internal communications. In particular, follow-up communications and the availability of colleagues and superiors to answer questions or deal with issues were highly rated. The extent to which staff feel their opinions and feedback is considered in departmental decisions, and the tone and content of feedback around their work, were also rated highly.

Coordination Findings from Environmental Partners

- Six of the 10 environmental partnering agencies surveyed described their agency as "somewhat" or "very" reliant upon CES to conduct their cannabis-related work. However, those agencies with multiple respondents did not always hold the same perception of reliance.
- Environmental partners held positive perceptions about multiple aspects of their coordination with CES. In particular, CES's competence in conducting field work, the ease of coordinating and working with CES, and the reliability of CES as a partner were all highly rated; agencies were also confident in the competence of the work that CES does with their agencies.
- On average, partners rated the quality of their partnership with CES at 4.4 out of 5 – midway between "good" and "excellent."
- Partners were satisfied with all aspects of coordination but gave more "neutral" and "disagree" ratings around CES's quick notification when problems arise and CES's creative problem solving.
- On open-ended questions, respondents were very positive about the part that Code Inspectors contribute to their partnership quality ratings. They were described as competent, engaged, consistent and responsive. Comments focused on their willingness to share information with others and work collaboratively with staff as well as landowners and permit applicants. It was noted that they go "above and beyond" to provide facts and documentation and follow-through on hearings.
- Other responses described a perception that CES management's policy direction could be more focused on finding solutions to remediate violations rather than fining and penalizing operators.

Coordination Findings from CES

- Half of the CES reported being "somewhat" reliant on environmental partners, with 33% noting they were "not very" reliant, and 17% choosing "very" reliant upon environmental partners to do their cannabis-related work.
- Average ratings from CES staff regarding the quality of their partnerships with individual agencies ranged from "acceptable" to "excellent." The majority of ratings (64% of agencies) were rated between 3.5 to 4.8 out of 5; 36% of agencies were rated at the low-end of the "acceptable" range.
- CES staff were satisfied with all aspects of coordination, but the only appearance of "neutral" responses was around environmental partners' quick notification when problems arise and partners' creative problem solving.
- An open-ended response related to the quality of coordination highlighted the challenges that emerge when agencies do not consult with CES before setting specific policies which then requires CES to figure out how to enforce certain policies and procedures.

Recommendations

The results of this survey effort are positive and informative. While the vast majority of results indicate that CES and its environmental partners are satisfied with communication and coordination, there are certain points where more investigation can occur, and improvements can be made. The following recommendations are offered to Sonoma County Code Enforcement to continually improve its working relationships with partnering agencies.

1. **Take steps to formalize aspects of CES operations related to communication.** Though ratings were not exceptionally low, there was some confusion from CES's environmental partners as to the correct phone numbers to use (i.e., office vs. cell), staff schedules (i.e., in office vs. working from home), and who is the appropriate decision-maker when the Manager is out of the office. Most of these concerns can be addressed in one meeting, with changes made to the staff's email signature lines, or in the case of the Manager's out of office automatic reply, amending the notification with the appropriate person to contact. This would also require providing important updates and notifications to the designated decision-maker prior to the Manager leaving the office.

2. **Discuss with CES staff the benefits of utilizing Sonoma County's internal messaging application, *Jabber,* as well as *Microsoft Teams*.** Partners as well as some CES staff discussed challenges around these communication tools. It is certainly up to CES to determine if these tools would serve the department well and support their work with partnering agencies, but it should be determined and communicated to county departments (i.e., Sonoma County agencies in the case of *Jabber*), and all partners regarding *Microsoft Teams*.

3. **Implement improvements to information sharing and training based on feedback received from partners.** Requests were made to provide certain Sonoma County agencies with periodic updates on enforcement actions for permitted and unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites and additional training on *Accela*, so that staff can more independently access information about violations and complaints. Further, a state agency requested the ability to attend some site inspections.

4. **Consider ways to improve the consistency sharing of internal CES communication.** Partners were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed that internal communication between CES staff appeared to be consistent and widely shared. While 53.4% agreed or strongly agreed, the remaining 46.6% were neutral or disagreed with this statement. Within CES, 33.4% of staff were neutral or disagreed with this item. It would be very surprising to find any organization where every staff member is on the same page about everything, and it is clearly an ongoing challenge to ensure that knowledge and information sharing among staff at all levels is consistent; but to some degree, this is a function of continuous training and sharing updates to policies, procedures, and general knowledge. CES should discuss possible ways to ensure that updates and changes are widely shared with staff and then reinforce that knowledge periodically.

5. **Work with environmental partners to determine ways to improve aspects of coordination that each group sees as less than optimal.** Two items within coordination received the highest number of "neutral" and "disagree" responses by both groups: 1. When things don't go as planned, CES/environmental partners contact me quickly to resolve any problems; and 2) CES/environmental partners are creative in finding solutions that emerge in our work together. The first item should be fairly easy to resolve by discussing what types of unplanned issues warrant quick notification, and preferred ways to send and receive that quick notification. Solutions for the second item may be less straight forward. The item was worded in a way that put responsibility on the other group (i.e., either CES or the environmental partners). However, it may be that working on finding creative solutions to problems together would improve perceptions of all.

6. **Develop a plan to improve the working relationships that CES has with particular agency partners.** While 93.3% of CES's partners rated the quality of their partnerships with CES as good or excellent, CES's ratings of individual agencies varied more widely. CES staff rated the majority of agencies (64%) between the high-end of the "acceptable" range to "good" or "excellent," but 36% of the agencies were rated at the low-end of the "acceptable" range. This information is amplified by survey feedback describing CES's desire for more involvement from particular agencies, and challenges that emerge when agencies do not consult with CES before setting specific policies that impact CES's enforcement efforts. It would be beneficial for CES to examine their working relationships with each agency in terms of strengths and challenges, and directly engage with each agency to determine how to improve. Often these issues relate directly to communication.

7. **Consider the validity of feedback from partners that CES's policy direction is more punitive and less solution-seeking and determine if there is any room for additional CES support and help for cannabis cultivators and permit applicants.** Some comments made by partners related to the challenges they face when interacting with landowners and permit applicants where violations and fines have been assessed by CES. Certainly, CES is responsible for determining violations, assessing fines, and monitoring compliance, and civil penalties are mandated by county code. However, there may be ways to incorporate some supportive suggestions or resources for cannabis cultivators and permit applicants so that CES's own relationships with them as well as their partners relationships with cultivators and permit applicants is not diminished.

   It is worth noting that two objectives within Sonoma County's PPA 3 and PPA 4 call for the improvement in the systematic delivery of information on public safety ordinances, permitting requirements, and resources to unpermitted commercial cannabis sites during initial site inspections. To this end, a resource page was developed for distribution by Cannabis Code Inspectors. It is also scheduled to be added to the redesigned CES website in the coming months. This is the type of support that CES itself envisions as within its scope of work but is also supportive of cannabis cultivators and permit applicants.

8. **Celebrate the positive perceptions of CES held by its partners and the quality of intra-agency communication and satisfaction.** On average, partners rated the quality of their partnerships with CES midway between "good" and "excellent." On open-ended questions, respondents were very positive about the part that Cannabis Code Inspectors contribute to this rating, but also noted that all CES staff with whom they interact are competent, good communicators, and easy to work with, among other positive qualities. Further, CES staff describe being supported by their colleagues and superiors, feel that their opinions and feedback are considered in departmental decisions, and the tone and content of feedback around their work is positive. These are good outcomes, and though continuous improvement efforts should always be a focus, the results of these surveys indicate that current status is a good place from which to start.