

# Defining NCP Success: Partners' Perspectives



This project is supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP0206 awarded to Monroe County, New York by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.



Prepared by Nicole Pratt, MS, Research Associate,  
and Janelle Duda-Banwar, PhD, Founder and Director ([onthegroundny.com/about](http://onthegroundny.com/about))

## Introduction

In late July to early August, 2023, On the Ground Research team members interviewed staff from the NCP partner organizations about what NCP success looks like to them. The staff interviewed represented the following NCP organizations:

- Father Tracy Advocacy Center**
- S.W.A.N at Montgomery Neighborhood Center**
- Cameron Community**
- The People's Pantry**
- Barakah Muslim Charity**
- Action for a Better Community Action Front Center**
- Beyond the Sanctuary**
- MC Collaborative**
- C3 Consultancy Services**

This document focuses on the themes that emerged from asking the question “What does NCP success look like to you?” The researchers followed up by asking about what success specifically looks like at the client, agency, and neighborhood levels. Respondents were then asked “What should we watch out for? What are your concerns?” The responses were analyzed to identify common themes for each of these questions. This paper highlights our findings from the interviews.

## “What Does NCP Success Look Like to You?”

*In this section, we list the client success themes and provide examples of what some of the respondents said.*

Meeting the needs of the clients was the most common theme that emerged in this category.

“Meeting basic needs so they can focus on what they want to do in life.”

“Meet their needs that they [clients] come to them [agency] for and those needs are removed from their life as a negative or issue.”

“Being able to assist everyone that comes to the door.”

“That we hear that clients feel heard, that clients feel involved, and participating in their own aspects of success or whatever in addressing the need that they present to us or need.”

Providing easy access to services was also identified as an indicator of NCP success.

“Access to services that are low barrier.”

“To make sure that we actually provide a really low barrier, low eligibility criteria service, so that we can get people what they need.”

Being informed about the agency, NCP, and/or resources for services was another important indicator of success at the client level.

“Provide levels of support, resources, and information on available resources.”

“It's important to me that clients know that through NCP, we have access to solutions, but we don't have a solution.”

Warm handoffs between agencies was described as a crucial aspect of the NCP. Warm handoffs are defined as linking clients directly from one service provider to another. Frequently, this occurs either in-person or via another direct communication method.

“Being able to work as a collaborator to meet the needs that we're hearing about.”

“We are providing services or connecting them to services in the way that that serves them.”

## “What Does NCP Success Look Like to You?”

*In this section, we list the agency success themes and provide examples of what some of the respondents said.*

Agency and resident connection emerged as an indicator of agency success. Respondents said that increasing the agency-to-agency connection to meet clients' needs was important. They went on to describe success as the agency itself better connecting directly with residents.

“Talking to as many people as they can beyond food & connecting with people to understand their problems and get them to the right next agency.”

“Working with NCP to ensure we are all supporting each other.”

“Having people feel comfortable and talking to us about what their needs are.”

“There's a connection, not just agency to agency, but there's a connection within each agency that they really understand and know their story, that they know what value they're bringing, that they have found a way to define their space on the map of services and feel empowered to do what they do well.”

Employee skill and capacity building was described as another way to measure agency success.

“Staff have better skills and are trained where all resources exist and are able to take training and capacity building to continue to impact individuals.”

Agencies having the ability to be responsive to the community's needs was described as key to this work. Respondents took this concept a bit further by explaining that needs must be met ASAP.

“Quickly responsive.”

Agency Sustainability and Expansion of Services was another indicator. Respondents described service enhancement and expansion as potential approaches to sustainability as well as diversifying their funding streams.

“Gathering information to help tailor services.”

“Recognize the importance of sustainability and succession so that we start thinking about not just how we're going to serve the community today, but what does that look like next week, next year, next decade.”

The agency being well-known in the area for their services and support was another indicator of agency success. Reputation and credibility emerged as important themes.

“Known as the help center in the neighborhood.”

“Known as the place where people know where to go.”

## “What Does NCP Success Look Like to You?”

# Neighborhood

*Defining long-term neighborhood success is more abstract than describing the more short- and intermediate-term client and agency success. Nonetheless, respondents were asked about long-term NCP impact on the neighborhood. Respondents described increased collaboration, information sharing, and multiple points of service entry as examples of success.*

One important theme that emerged was improving the quality of life in the neighborhood. This is unsurprising considering that the NCP is focused on building the capacity to problem solve and address emerging community needs.

“Increase quality of life.”

“Feeling comfortable in the neighborhood.”

“The neighbors actually become neighbors again. You may not know them by name, but you feel comfortable, you can walk down the street, that you feel a part of a system outside of just your own four walls.”

*To actually measure changes in quality of life at the neighborhood level, a next step for the research team is to operationalize “quality of life.” This means identifying which indicators can measure changes in neighborhood quality of life. For example, the U.S. Census lists the following quality of life aspects: standard of living, health, education, economic security, housing quality, and neighborhood quality.*



## “What Should We Watch Out For? What Are Your Concerns?”

Respondents identified the following to watch out for:

- Ongoing, consistent agency funding during and beyond the grant period
- Growing too quickly: “Getting too big too fast.”
- Being stuck in the past ways of doing things
- Not knowing enough about all the NCP agencies, especially the partners outside of their quadrant
- Lack of clarity about the NCP processes: “Having different ideas on what is supposed to be done for the project.”
- Changes in the political landscape: “A different County Executive being elected next year and having different plans for the NCP.”
- A potentially burdensome data collection process
- Consistent communication with other organizations
- Taking on a larger client caseload than prior to the NCP
- Maintaining consistent and capable staff
- Having enough space for services
- Maintaining interest and excitement around the NCP over time
- Understanding that the NCP is not a linear process and not getting caught up in reaching certain milestones: “Something can happen tomorrow which will change the trajectory of everything we had planned for today. And that's okay.”