

## Evaluation of the Community Navigators Pilot Program (CNPP) Factsheet

### Evaluation Objectives

The purpose of this formative evaluation was to provide the SBA with an understanding of CNPP implementation during the program's initial performance period (December 2021 through November 2023) by addressing **four primary research questions**:

Implementation Fidelity	Outputs & Outcomes	Implementation Alignment	Identification of Best Practices
1) To what extent has the program been implemented as intended?	2) To what extent is the program achieving the desired outputs and short-term outcomes at the agency, partner, and community navigator levels?	3) How well are partners aligning and conforming to the guidelines stated in the application submission?	4) What best practices in customer-centric design and program delivery have been identified in the implementation to date, and how might those practices be integrated into other SBA programs?

### Methodology & Data Collection

The evaluation team utilized a **mixed-methods approach** to collect and analyze a combination of qualitative and quantitative data from the following administrative, secondary, and primary data sources:

- Desk Reviews of all 51 Hub Grant Proposals
- Community Navigator Management Information System (COMNAVS)
- Entrepreneurial Development Management Information System (EDMIS)
- 2020 Census and American Community Survey Data
- Web Surveys
- Virtual Interviews
- Program Site Visits

### Key Findings by Research Question

#### Research Question 1: To what extent has the program been implemented as intended?

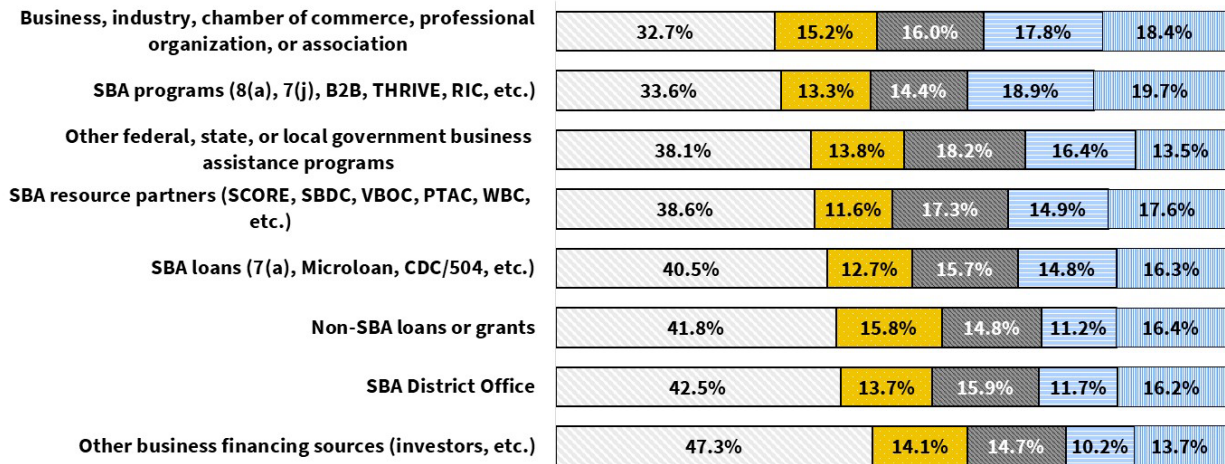
- The CNPP was implemented as intended overall, and particularly with respect to the use of the Hub and Spoke model, which relies on partnerships with culturally knowledgeable and locally trusted organizations to engage underserved populations.<sup>1</sup>
- The CNPP added 8% to the total number of SBA counseling clients and 11% to the number of underserved SBA counseling clients from the 2018-2021 baseline to 2022.
- The CNPP increased client awareness of SBA: 67% of surveyed CNPP clients reported increased knowledge of any SBA programs and services (Exhibit 1).

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of the CNPP, these populations include women, racial and ethnic groups that have been historically marginalized, immigrants, LGBTQ, disabled, veterans, military (including spouses); socially and economically disadvantaged small businesses; and rural and tribal communities.

### Exhibit 1. Client-reported change in knowledge of SBA resources as a result of CNPP

☐ No change 
 ☐ Slight increase 
 ☐ Moderate increase 
 ☐ Considerable increase 
 ☐ Substantial increase

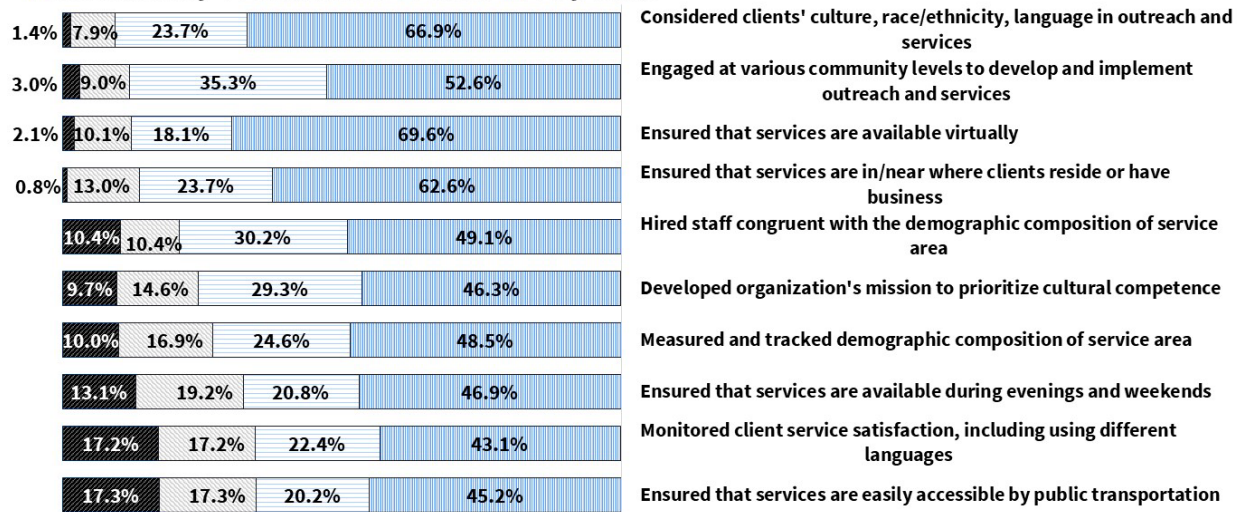


Note 1: client survey (N=415). Note 2: respondents were asked: "As a result of your participation in services through [HUB/Spoke] over the past 12 months, rate the change in your knowledge of the following programs/organizations:".

- Most surveyed Spokes (over 65%) reported using various culturally competent practices to promote equitable outreach and engagement with underserved populations (Exhibit 2).

### Exhibit 2. Spoke-reported culturally competent practices

☐ Never/Rarely 
 ☐ Sometimes 
 ☐ Often 
 ☐ Very often



Note 1: Spoke survey data (n=143). Note 2: respondents were asked: "How often did your organization conduct the following activities?".

- Compared to SBA Resource Partners (RPs), CNPP enrolled a higher proportion of clients belonging to racialized groups and ethnicities that have been historically marginalized (Exhibit 3).

**Exhibit 3.** *SBA counseling clients' selected demographics by program in 2022*

Client Group/Demographic	SBA RPs	CNPP	% point difference
Black or African American	17.4%	33.3%	15.9%
Hispanic	13.3%	20.6%	7.3%
Asian	3.7%	7.5%	3.8%
Native American and Alaska Native	1.3%	4.5%	3.2%

Note: EDMIS and COMNAVS data.

**Research Question 2:** *To what extent is the program achieving the desired outputs and short-term outcomes at the agency, partner, and community navigator levels?*

The CNPP achieved its intended **key outputs** at:

- the agency level: SBA interviewees reported the provision of grant management support and technical assistance to Hubs and Spokes
- the partner level: most surveyed Spokes reported engaging clients in business assistance services and providing referrals to various business support programs and resources (Exhibit 4)

**Exhibit 4.** *Business training and assistance activities conducted by Spokes*

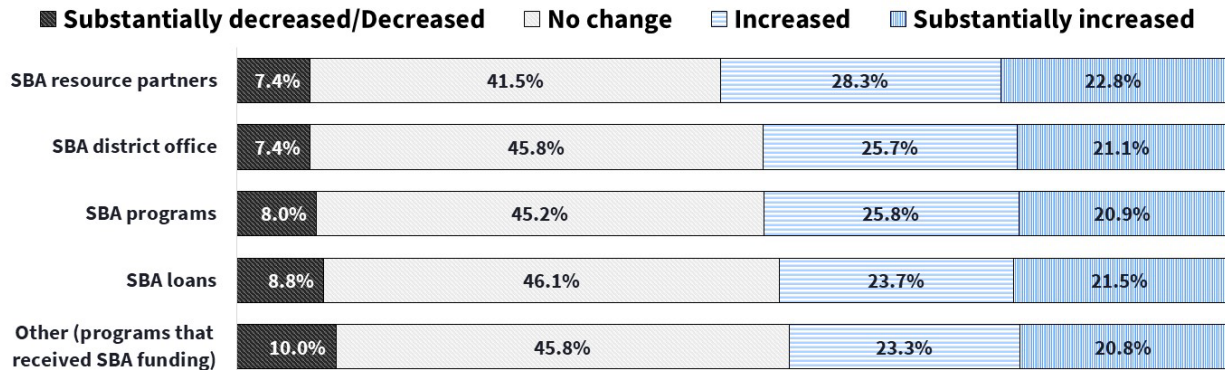
	Spokes (n=143)
Business networking	93.7%
Startups and business development	93.7%
Business operations	93.0%
Access to capital	86.0%
Loans/program applications	85.3%
Financial literacy, counseling	82.5%
Contracting, procurement	68.5%
Business certifications	60.8%
Disaster preparedness, recovery	54.5%
Referred clients to any other business support programs or services	89.5%

Note 1: Spoke survey data (n=143). Note 2: respondents were asked: "How successful was your organization in promoting participation by entrepreneurs and business owners in the following business training and assistance activities conducted by your organization?"

The CNPP achieved its intended **short-term outcomes** at:

- the agency level: SBA interviewees reported increasing knowledge of best practices for capacity-building among Hubs and Spokes, developing communities of practice, and engaging underserved communities and business ecosystems.
- the community navigator level, including:
  - increased clients' trust in the SBA: 52% of surveyed clients reported that CNPP participation increased their trust in any SBA resource (Exhibit 5)

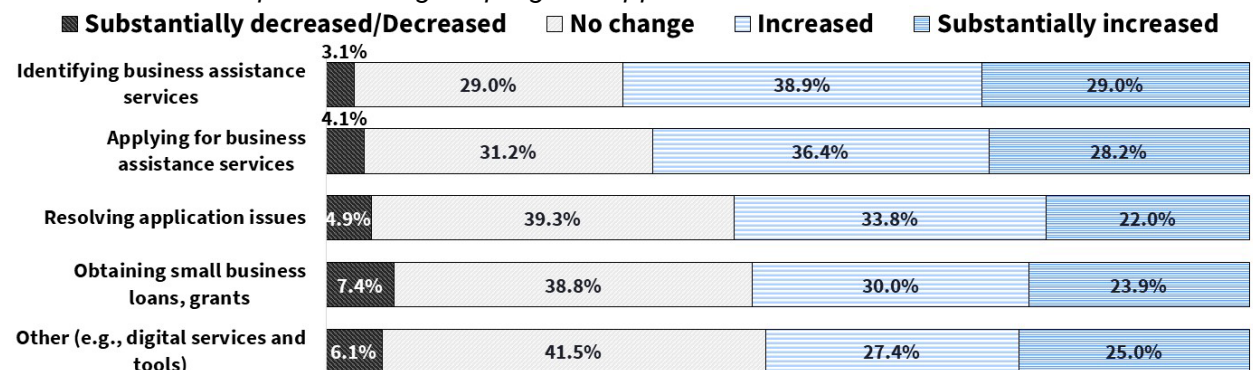
**Exhibit 5. Client-reported change in trust of SBA sources as a result of CNPP**



Note 1: client survey data (n=415), based on valid responses other than N/A. Note 2: respondents were asked: “As a result of your participation in services through [HUB/Spoke] over the past 12 months, please rate the change in your trust in the following SBA programs/partners:”.

- increased skills in applying to business assistance programs: 68% of surveyed clients reported that CNPP participation increased their skills, abilities, and/or confidence in applying for and enrolling in business assistance services (Exhibit 6)

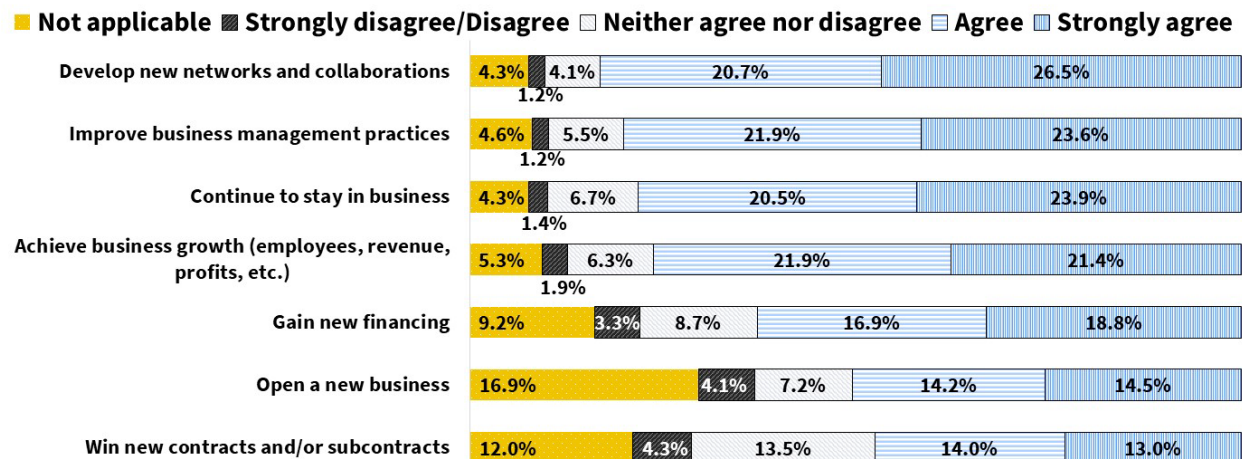
**Exhibit 6. Client-reported change in program application skills as a result of CNPP**



Note 1: client survey data (n=415), based on valid responses other than N/A. Note 2: respondents were asked: “As a result of your participation in services through [HUB/Spoke] over the past 12 months, please rate the change in your skills, abilities, and/or confidence to complete the following activities:”.

- achieved business outcomes: 56.9% of surveyed clients reported that CNPP allowed them to achieve at least one business performance or growth outcome (Exhibit 7)

**Exhibit 7. Client-reported business goals or outcomes achieved as a result of CNPP**



Note 1: client survey data (N=415). Note 2: respondents were asked: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the services provided by [HUB/Spoke]? The services provided by [HUB/Spoke] have allowed me to..."

**Research Question 3: How well are partners aligning and conforming to the guidelines stated in the application submission?**

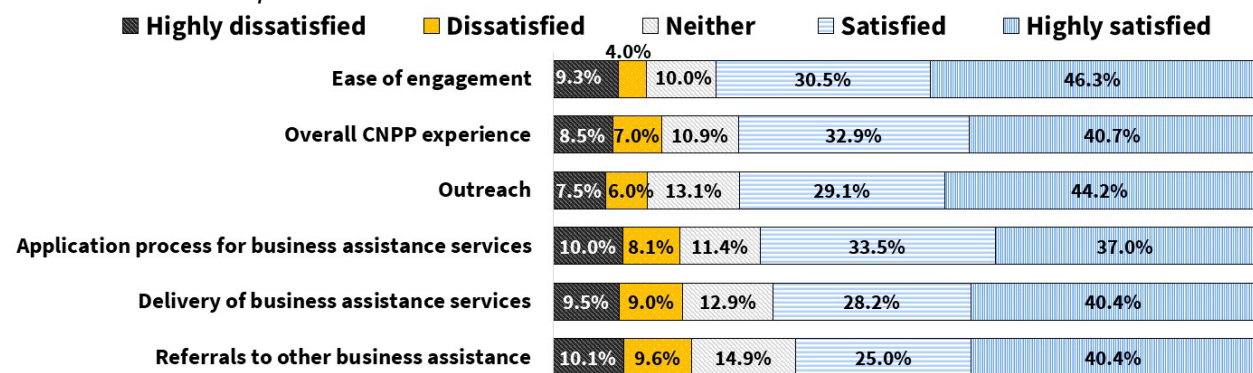
- The majority of surveyed Spokes (over 54%) reported implementing activities according to the plan stated in the Hub applications.
- The findings for the implementation alignment by targeted groups of clients provided further support for the Hub and Spoke model. Spokes tailored their activities to meet their clients' needs. For instance, Spokes that targeted immigrants had a higher alignment for assistance in languages other than English than Spokes that did not target immigrants (69% vs. 40.4% proposed and conducted this activity).
- Reasons for implementation misalignment reported by Spoke and Hub interviewees involved an increased understanding of client needs and contextual circumstances, which necessitated modifications to service delivery to better accommodate clients.
- Most of the program funds (over 75%) were allocated and spent on contractual services (i.e., reimbursing Spokes) and Hub personnel salaries. This pattern reflected the Hub and Spoke model.

**Research Question 4: What best practices in customer-centric design and program delivery have been identified in the implementation to date, and how might those practices be integrated into other SBA programs?**

- Most surveyed clients (over 75%) reported being satisfied or highly satisfied with CNPP overall (Exhibit 8)



**Exhibit 8. Client-reported satisfaction with CNPP**



Note 1: client survey (n=415), based on valid responses other than N/A. Note 2: respondents were asked: "Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following services or activities provided by [HUB/Spoke] over the past 12 months:".

- Qualitative findings provided support for using the Hub and Spoke model that engages culturally knowledgeable and competent Spokes that can improve the engagement of underserved populations by being responsive to their needs and circumstances.
- Qualitative data collected from Hub and Spoke administrators supported recommendations for developing a community of practice and streamlining the CNPP data reporting system and procedures.
- CNPP client qualitative data revealed themes about improving communication, follow-up, and responsiveness of Hubs, Spokes, and the SBA to address their needs more quickly.
- Hub and Spoke administrators and clients also shared best practices for online and in-person outreach activities to better engage underserved clients and their communities.

## Recommendations

The evaluation team identified the following recommendations for integrating best practices of customer-centric program design and delivery into other SBA programs and initiatives, which are detailed in a Recommendation Action Plan.

Program Marketing	Data Systems & Procedures	Performance Metrics	Community of Practice (CoP)
Improve branding and marketing of SBA programs, initiatives, and activities	Reduce burden and difficulty of data collection and reporting	Refine program performance metrics to better measure partnerships and client engagement, and to better align with population needs	Promote engagement in SBA CoPs to identify and disseminate best practices for client outreach, client engagement, partnerships, fundraising, volunteering, data collection, and contractor management