

North Hartford Ascend

Social Network Analysis Highlights Brief



Overall, the North Hartford Ascend (Ascend) network is increasing connectedness, reducing gaps & silos in the network, and making positive advancements in partnership cooperation. This is reflected by the increased collaboration across various activities during the grant planning period.

Based on Visible Network Labs' (VNL) experience analyzing social networks over more than ten years, the Ascend network shows the necessary and significant shifts towards substantive and coordinated relationships among its members, suggesting promising development and engagement within the network.

This brief report provides an overview of key findings from the Ascend Social Network Analysis.

Network Findings

Organizations assessed their network relationships prior to the grant and then at the present time (at the end of the planning period). Below are some of the findings when comparing the Ascend network relationships before the grant and the end of the planning period.



The average network distance between members has slightly decreased from 2.18 before the grant to 2.07 after the planning period. This means that there are fewer degrees of separation among members, which helps move information and resources faster.



Many reported relationships were formed or strengthened by Ascend, showing its importance in developing the network.



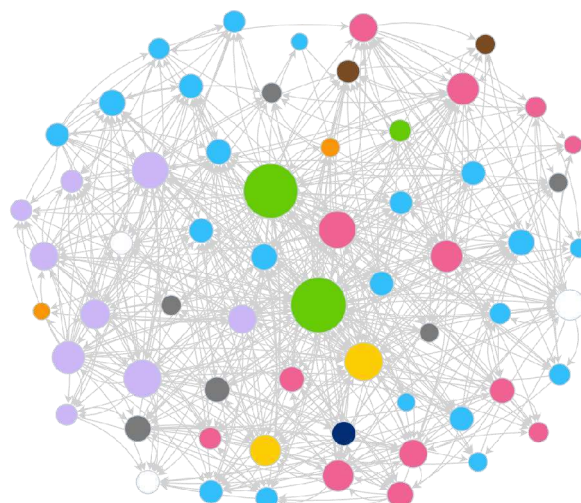
Members report the intensity of their relationships as shifting away from awareness and towards coordination and cooperation.

Network Structure

This map shows the relationships that were reported after the planning period and are color coded by primary organization function.

HOW TO INTERPRET A NETWORK MAP

In a network map, relationships are visualized as "nodes" (circles) and "edges" (lines) which represent the network members and the relationships between them. Nodes may be color-coded by certain organizational characteristics, such as service area or sector. Nodes can also be sized to reflect number of relationships or other key variables.



Primary Org Function

- Education
- Employment
- Health
- Housing & Shelter
- Mental Health & Crisis Intervention
- Other
- Research & Data Analytics
- Transportation
- Youth Development
- No data

Background

Ascend Approach: The overarching objective of Ascend is to build a coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive network of programs, services, and other resources in partnership with the community so that children and families living in the North Hartford Promise Zone reach their full potential.

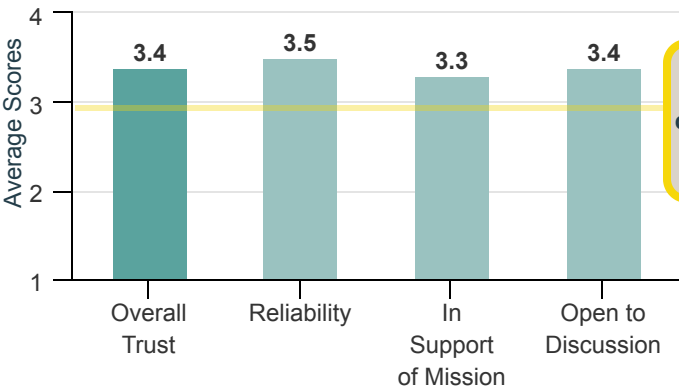
To understand the relationships among programs in the network, Ascend undertook a social network analysis to map network members, their resources and assets, their perceptions of progress and perception of relationship development activities, and compared them at two different points: before the grant and at the end of the planning period.

Method: Using the PARTNER CPRM™ Platform, 62 programs were invited to participate in a social network analysis survey, to which 58 responded for a 94% response rate. The survey included questions about the respondents' programs as well as the other programs with whom the respondents may have a formal or informal relationship. The survey was completed by program leaders/managers.

Relational Measures

Success

Network members reported high levels of trust in their relationships, which can serve as a foundation for additional network building activities.

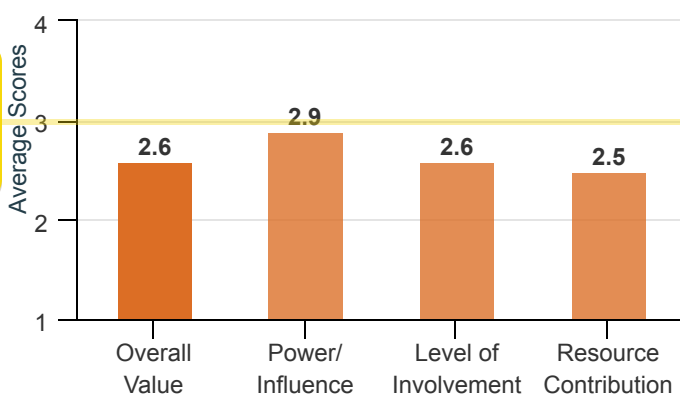


The chart depicts the average trust scores for each of the three measures as well as average overall trust within the network at the end of the planning period of the grant.

Trust in inter-organizational network relationships facilitates effective information exchange and decision-making, and reduces duplication of effort among groups that may have previously competed.

Opportunity

Network members perceive their network partners as having more power and influence but fewer resource contributions and less involvement.



The chart depicts the average value scores for power and influence, level of involvement, and resource contributions within the network at the end of the planning period of the grant.

Understanding the perceived value of network relationships is important for leveraging the different ways in which members can contribute to the network.

Leverage trust among partners to build value.

Developing leadership throughout a diverse membership strengthens the network's influence and avoids centralizing power. Identifying well-connected members not yet in leadership roles and integrating trusted members with fewer connections supports this strategy.

Network Resources: Contributions

Success

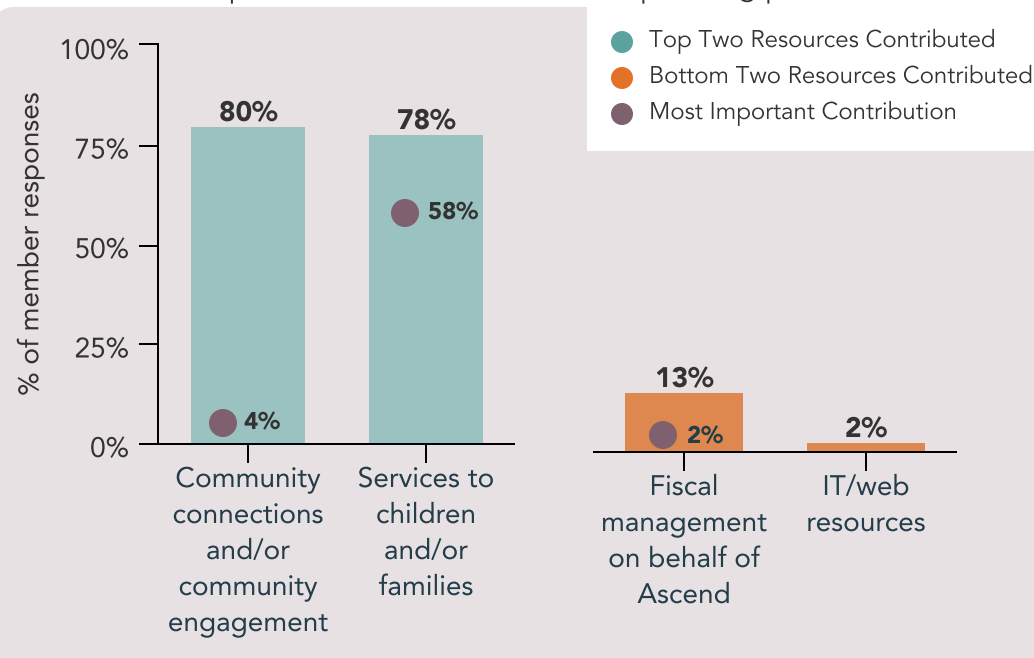
Community connections and services to children and families were the most frequently provided resources, and services for children and families were named as the most important resource contributed for most programs in the network.

Opportunity

There were fewer members that indicated they can provide IT/web resources and fiscal management on behalf of Ascend.

Network members should consider whether these types of resources are critical to advancing the network. They can plan training or development work to build them if needed.

The graph below shows the top and bottom two resources contributed and the most important contributions after the planning period.



Network Resources: Perceptions

After the planning period, half of respondents reported sufficient resources in content expertise, community connections, and facilitation...

...while identifying a need for increased resources in stakeholder feedback, funding, advocacy, and training for leaders and staff.

Success



Facilitation (57%)



Community Connections (51%)



Content area expertise (50%)

Opportunity



Stakeholder feedback (49%)



Funding (47%)



Advocacy (45%)



Training for staff and leaders (45%)

Network members can explore opportunities to develop resources that are less abundant in the network by building on existing trust and existing resources.

Network Goals & Achievements

Success

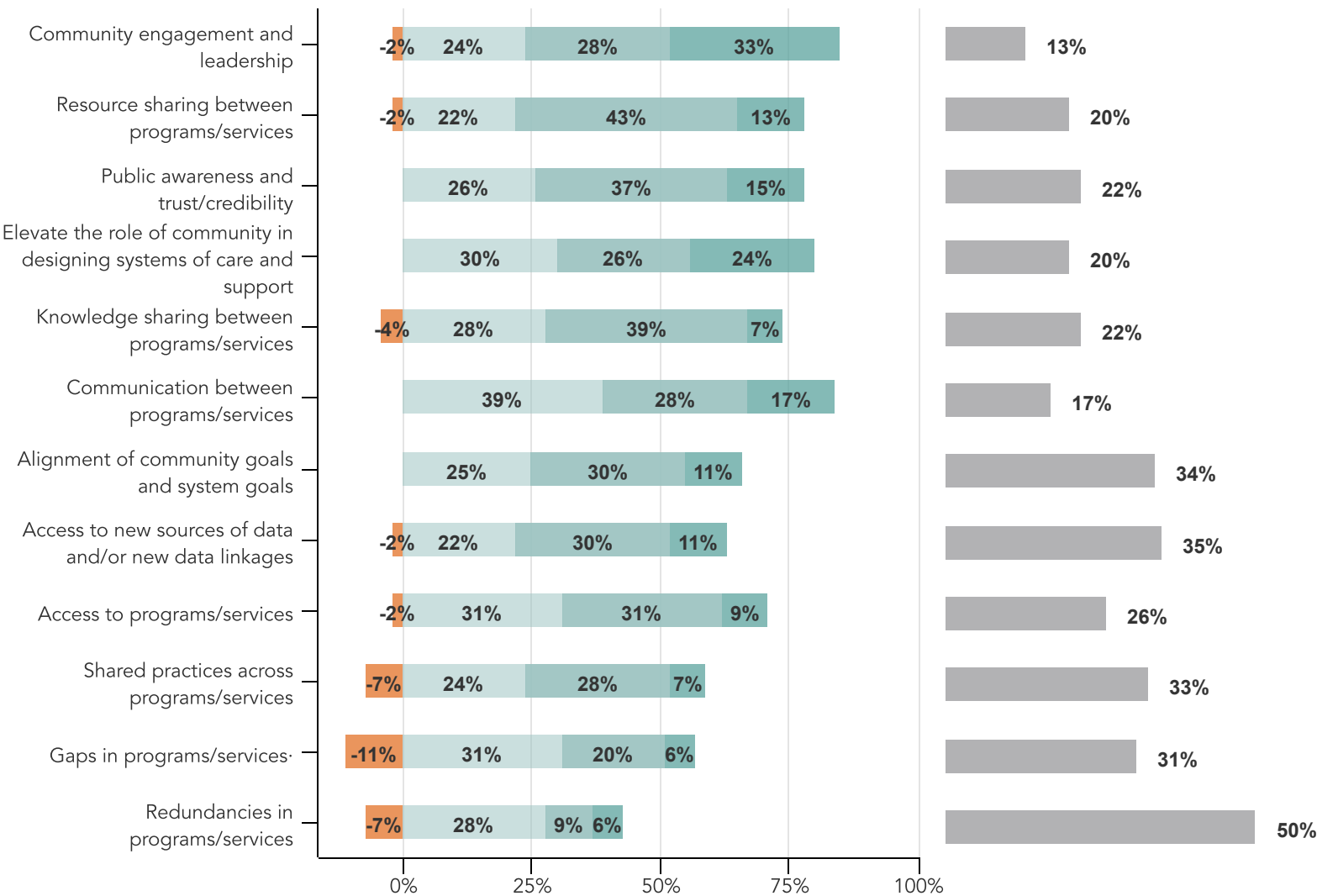
Results demonstrate that Ascend has achieved a fair amount or great deal of success in community engagement, public awareness/trust, and elevating the role of community. Ascend also achieved moderate success in terms of the alignment of community and system goals and goals related to the relationships between programs, including resource and knowledge sharing, communication, and accessing new sources or linkages of data.

Opportunity

Leverage progress in the above areas to increase access to services and adoption of shared practices, and to reduce gaps and redundancies in the system, which may take additional coordination and time to achieve.

The graph below shows the perceptions of progress and improvement Ascend has made through the planning period of the grant.

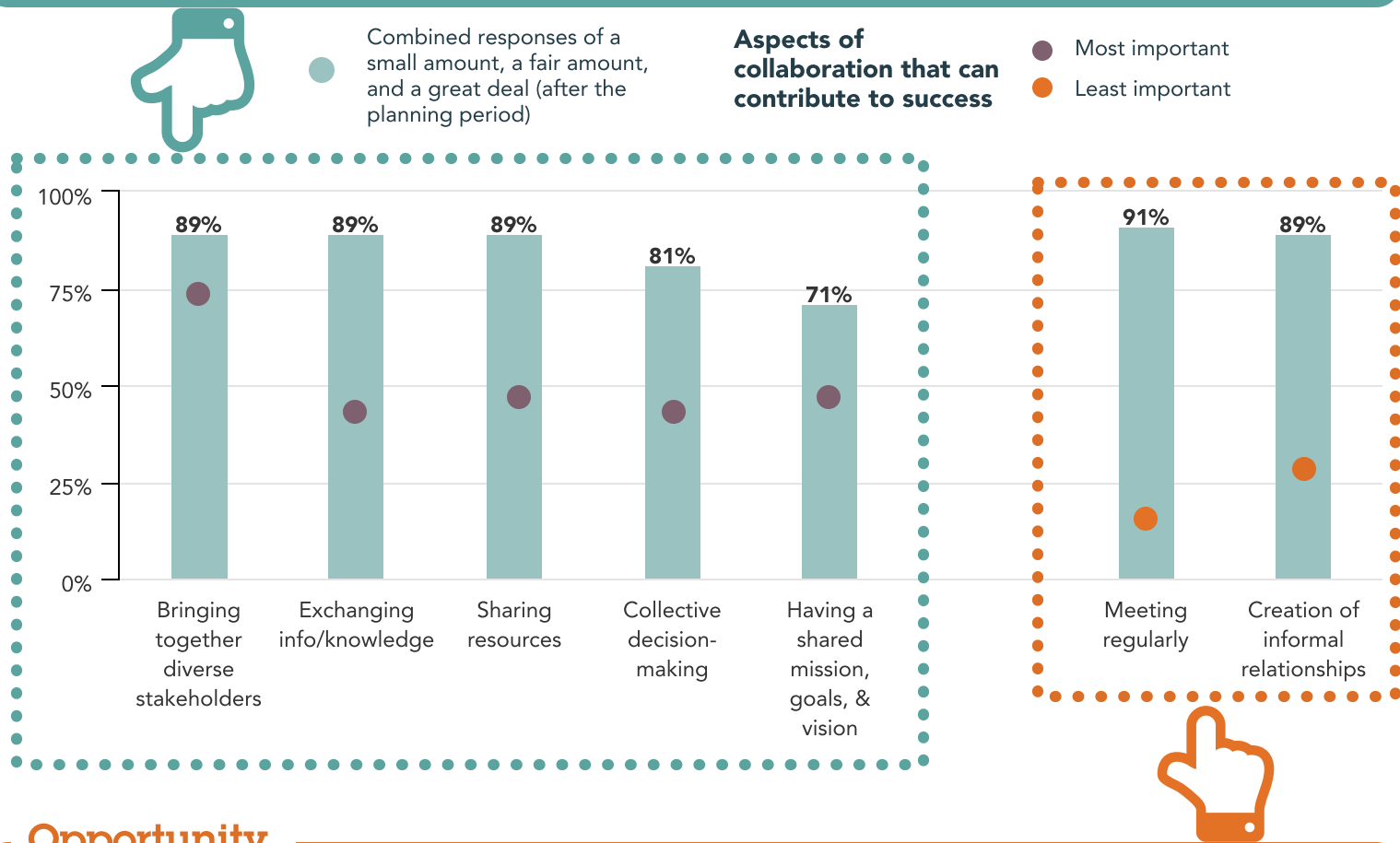
None at all A small amount A fair amount A great deal I don't know/unsure



Network Effectiveness and Impact

Success

Results demonstrate strong evidence that Ascend has made progress in bringing together diverse stakeholders. This was also the aspect of collaboration most often indicated as being essential for success. There is also evidence that Ascend has made progress in exchanging knowledge, sharing resources, engaging collective decision making, and having a shared mission/goals/vision, which were all identified as important to success.



Opportunity

While Ascend has been successful at holding regular meetings and creating informal relationships, these were not reported to be as important for success. These domains are often important as a network is developing, but resources can be diverted to more substantive work as the network becomes more established.

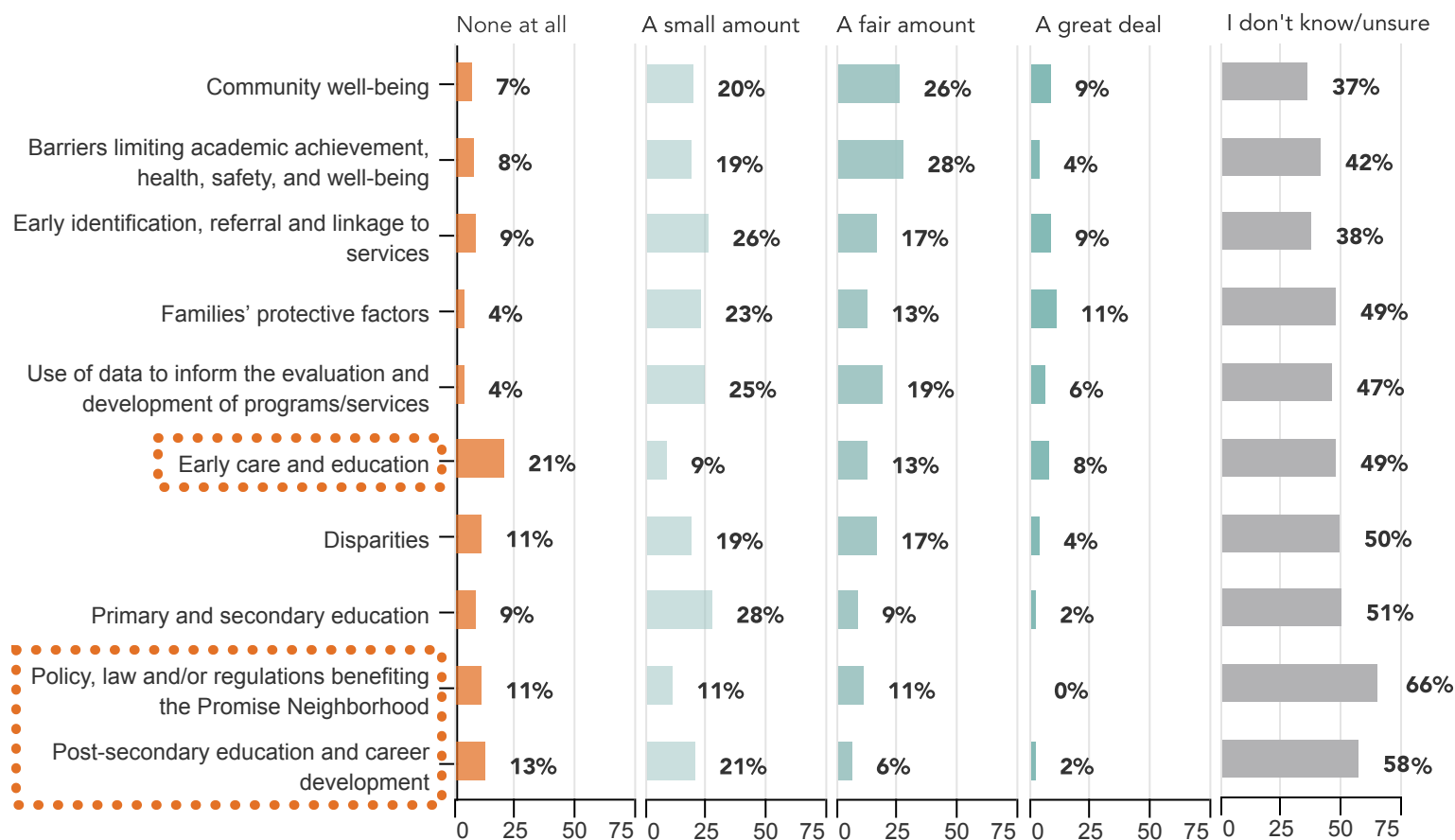


Network Effectiveness and Impact

Success

The results indicate that respondents perceive Ascend has made progress in improving community well-being, reducing barriers, coordinating services (such as early identification, referral, and linkage), strengthening families' protective factors, and utilizing data for program evaluation and development. Moderate progress was observed in addressing disparities and improving outcomes in primary and secondary education.

This graph shows how programs have rated the success of the Ascend network in improving each of the following after the planning period.



Opportunity

Network members reported less success in early care and education, policy, and post-secondary education and career outcomes.

Summary

Overall, the results show that Ascend has made progress in building trust and developing relationships between programs over the first two planning years of the grant. The network is also rich in resources that can help advance its goals. Members report strong early gains in collective efforts, which set the stage for further collaborative success as the network moves into the implementation phase of the grant.