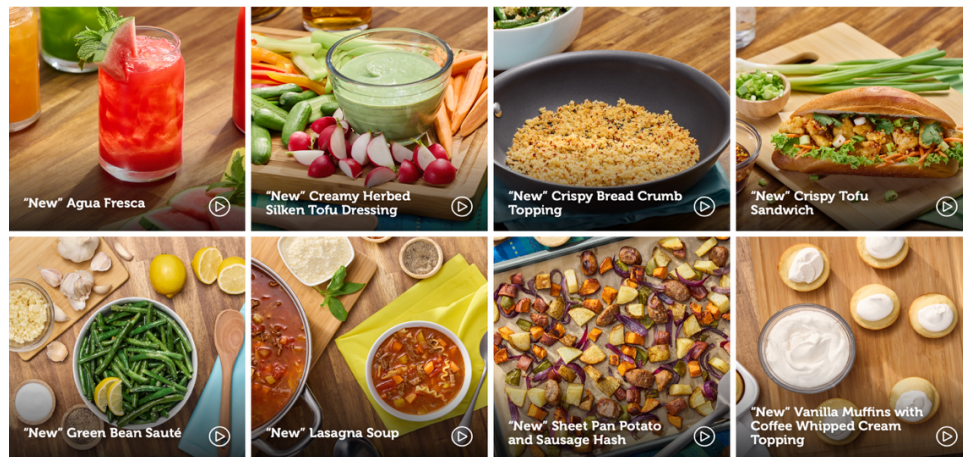


EVALUATION OF THE SNAP-ED WORKING GROUP ENGAGEMENT WITH LIAS

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES
**Nutritional Sciences
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BACKGROUND

This evaluation project explored how Local Implementing Agencies (LIAs) perceive their role in shaping state-level decision-making within Arizona's SNAP-Ed program, known as the AZ Health Zone. The program is Arizona's largest publicly funded nutrition and physical activity initiative, implemented through partnerships between the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and community-based LIAs. While the ADHS oversees implementation at the state level, the University of Arizona's School of Nutritional Sciences and Wellness evaluation team supports ongoing program evaluation grounded in the AZ Health Zone's guiding principles.

In Spring 2025, a graduate research assistant supported by the evaluation team conducted a mixed-methods evaluation with participants from six AZ Health Zone working groups facilitated by ADHS. **The purpose of this evaluation was to understand LIAs' experiences, perspectives, and recommendations regarding their involvement in shaping state-level SNAP-Ed programming, particularly in relation to collaborative decision-making between the ADHS state team and the LIAs.**

METHODS

This project mainly focuses on the evaluation of the Recipe Working Group engagement with LIAs. To better capture the effectiveness of the Recipe Working Group in supporting LIAs' work, we conducted both a survey and a focus group. In addition, we also surveyed members of five other working groups that focused on goals related to Direct Education, Social Marketing, School Systems, Early Care and Education, Physical Activity. Only LIAs from the Recipe Working Group were included in the focus group, as this group is the longest established and is still active.

For both the survey and the focus group, the questions were guided by the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#) framework. The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is a widely used framework that outlines different levels of public involvement in decision-making processes. Developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), the spectrum ranges from Inform to Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower, with each level reflecting increasing degrees of public influence and engagement.

Data Collection

Working Group Survey

The survey was distributed via Qualtrics, an online survey platform, to LIAs across Arizona from April 23rd to May 2nd, 2025. Participants were recruited through an email invitation sent by the State Implementation Team Community Program Coordinator and a member of the evaluation team. The invitation was sent to LIAs from 6 working groups that are currently or previously active during this five-year program cycle, including the Recipe Working Group, Direct Education, Social Marketing, School Systems, Early Care and Education, Physical Activity Game and Guide, and Active Living PA Game groups. The survey included questions covering LIAs' engagement and participation in the working groups, the feedback and support they receive, and how effectively the working groups support their work (See Appendix A). area total

of 32 respondents who opened the survey, however 14 did not provide responses to the working group questions and were therefore excluded from the analysis, resulting in **18** valid responses that were included in the final analysis.

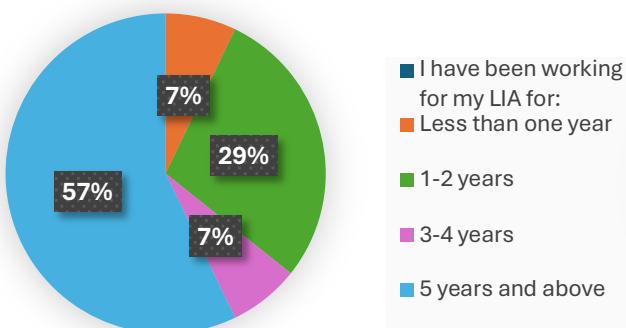
Recipe Working Group Focus Group

A focus group was conducted via Zoom on March 20th, 2025, during the regular meeting time of the Recipe Working Group (RWG). The invitation was sent by email one week prior to all LIAs who regularly attend the group. A total of nine LIA units participated in the focus group. The session lasted approximately 45 minutes and included questions about the LIAs' participation in the RWG and the group's impact on local programming (See Appendix B). Responses were provided verbally or in the Zoom chat. Two working group members were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts and their responses were collected subsequently via email and incorporated into the transcript for analysis, resulting in a total of **11** working group members included in the data analysis.

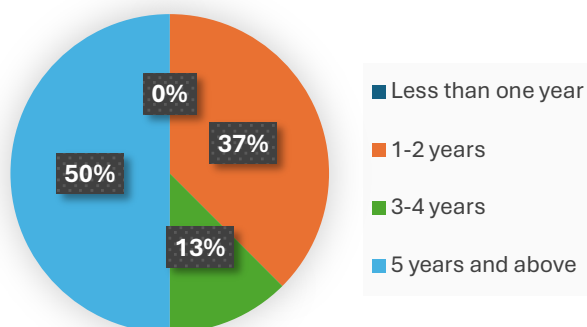
Data Analysis

The survey data was exported analyzed through Excel. The qualitative data from the focus group were analyzed using Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software. Responses were systematically coded and organized into parent codes, child codes, and associated themes to capture key patterns in LIA's' experiences.

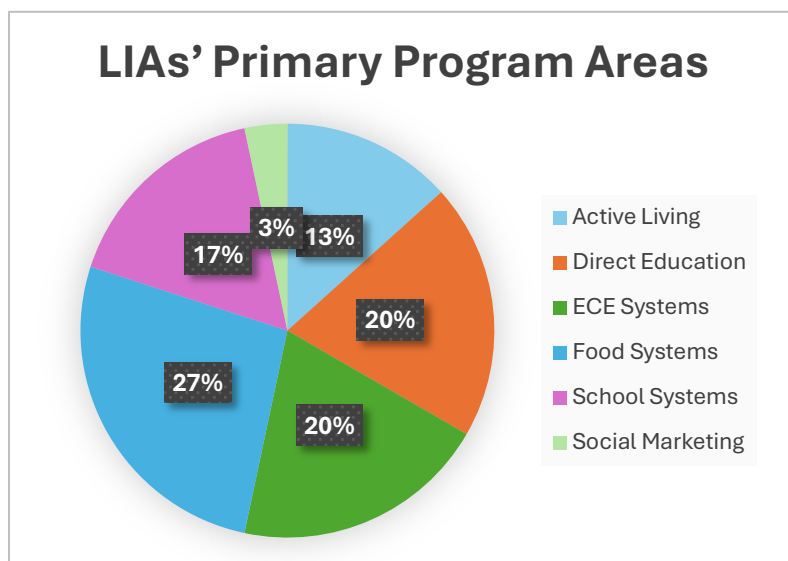
**LIA Years of Service: All Working Goup
Survey Respondents**



**LIA Years of Service: Recipe
Working Group Focus Group
Participants**



The figure on the left above shows the overall years of experience of the LIAs who participated in the survey, with responses from **14 LIAs** representing all working groups across the represented program areas. The figure on the right above shows data from nine LIAs who shared their experiences in the Recipe Working Group, with **eight LIAs** reporting their years of service as an LIA.



The figure on the left shows LIA primary areas of focus within the program, reported by 14 LIAs in the survey.

FINDINGS

The Recipe Working Group: LIAs' Engagement Using the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation Framework

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation provides a clear framework for understanding how LIAs engage in decision-making processes within the Recipe Working Group. Figure 1 presented the survey and focus group results that were coded according to themes mentioned by LIAs that aligned with the levels outlined in the IAP2 Spectrum. There were two open ended questions from the survey asking LIAs to both share an example when their input had an impact on the RWG decision making and how the working group can better support LIAs' programming needs. There is only 1 code mentioned related to Inform, and thus it would be excluded from the Figure 1.

Figure 1: Responses based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

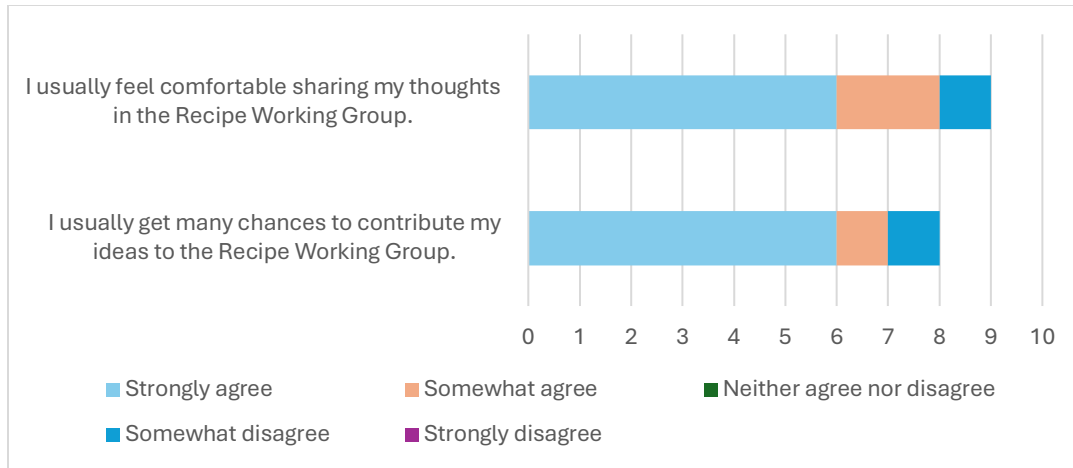


“Folks really participate in the committee projects and have come from all over the state for the recipe testing days. I appreciate that we often have differing opinions, but it is a safe space to express them.”



The results from the survey show consistent findings on how the Recipe Working Group supports LIAs' work. Respondents expressed positive experiences in the working group, including comfortability contributing and to the working group and regular opportunities to do so (Figure 2).

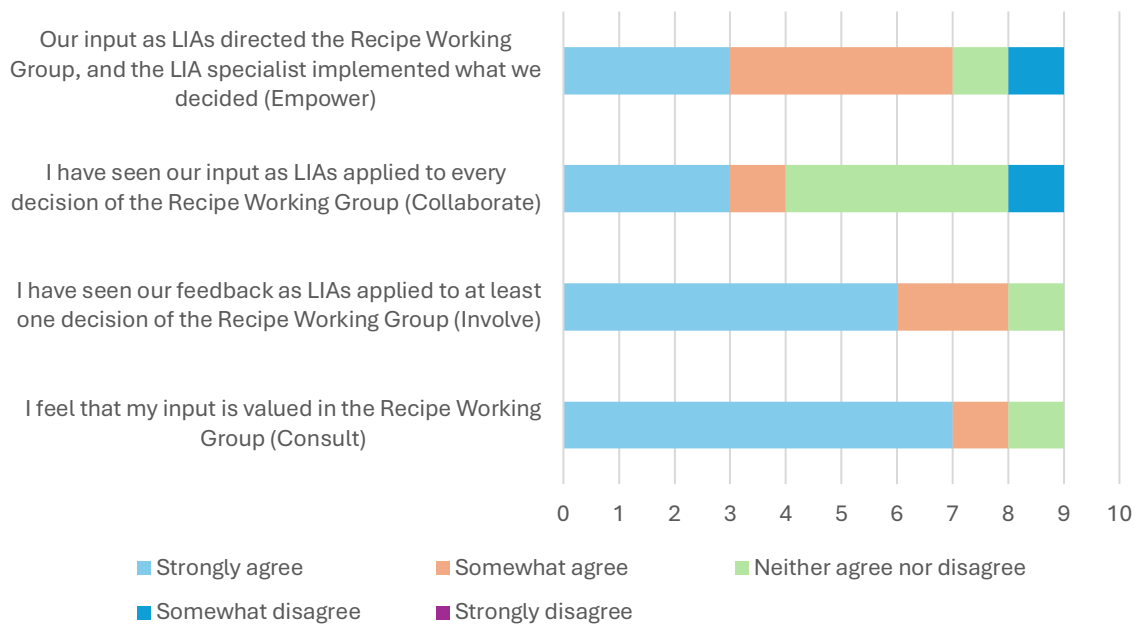
Figure 2: Perceptions on Participating in the RWG



Under the Spectrum of Public Participation, LIA reported more opportunities to engage in the consult and involve level which is expressing ideas and involved partly in the decision process (Figure 3). The result of collaboration align with what LIA motioned in the focus group:

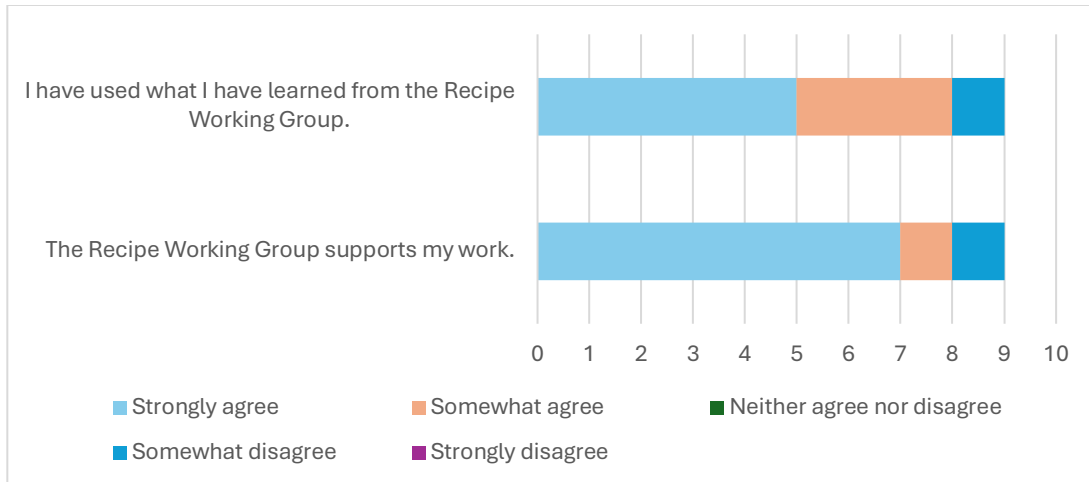
“...the question could better incorporate, like my input into the decision process”

Figure 3: Perceptions on Levels of Engagement in the RWG



We also explored the extent to which members of the RWG feels that the group supports their agency’s work. The survey results showed that the RWG members felt supported their work and applied learnings or practices from the working group into their local programming (Figure 4).

Figure 4: RWG Effectiveness in Supporting LIA’s Work



Motivations for Participating in the RWG

LIAs hold diverse motivations that drive their consistent engagement in the RWG. The most commonly mentioned theme described during the focus group was their enjoyment of food demonstration activities, with many taking the lead in food demos or recipe development as part of their role (Figure 5).

Figure 5: LIA Motivation for Joining the RWG



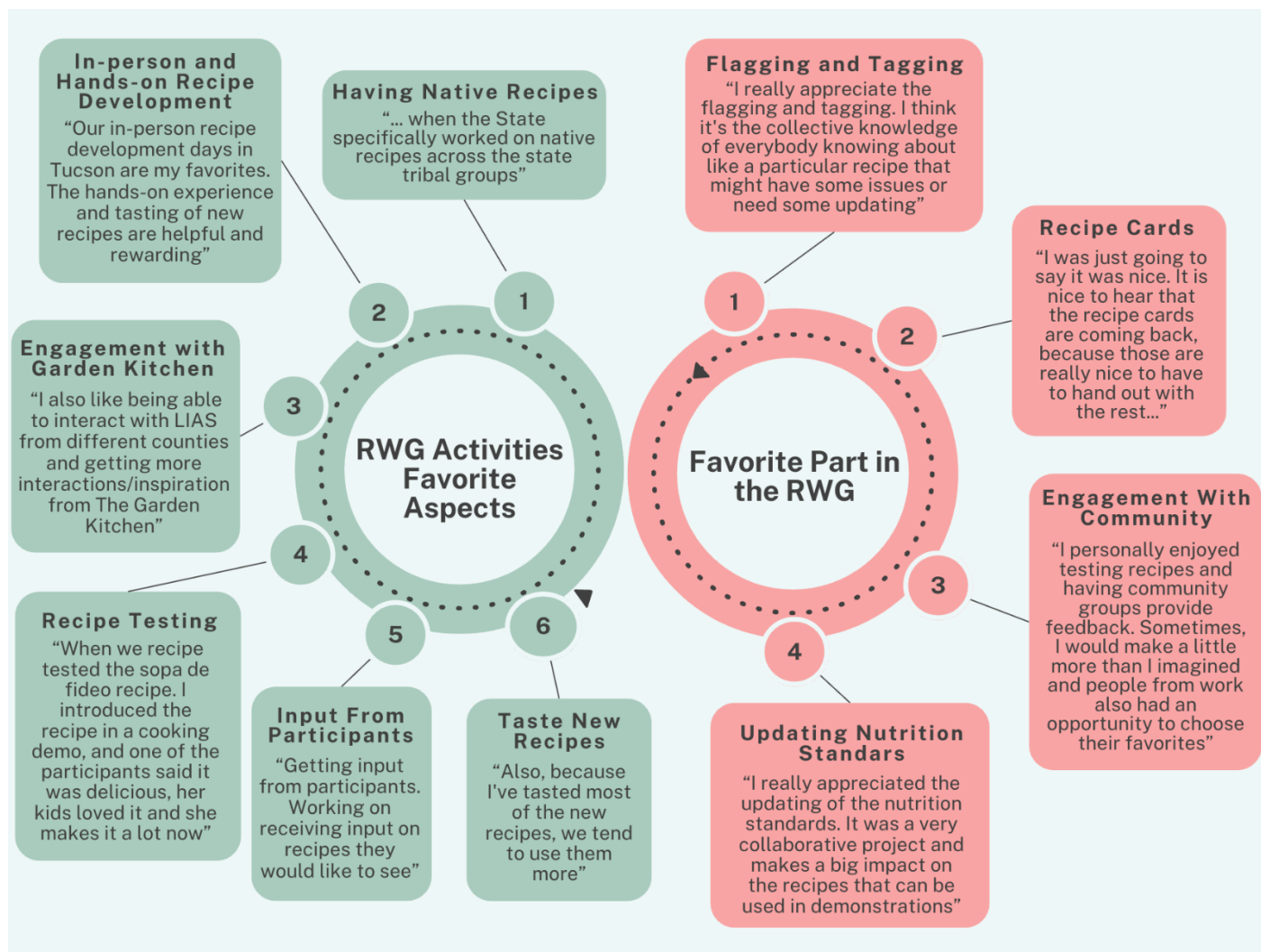
LIAs also mentioned they not only enjoy developing the recipes but also treasure the opportunity to work with other LIAs, which is one of the biggest strengths of the RWG.

“Folks really participate in the committee projects and have come from all over the state for the recipe testing days. I appreciate that we often have differing opinions”

LIAs contribute to the Recipe Working Group in various ways. Survey results indicate that most LIAs participate by attending meetings and supporting existing projects, followed by sharing resources and materials from their own programs. This level of engagement aligns with the findings based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, demonstrating that LIAs are actively involved and consistently contributing ideas within the group.

To support the work of LIAs, the RWG offers various opportunities and activities (Figure 6)

Figure 6: Favorite Projects and Activities mentioned by the LIAs



One of the LIAs shared their **successful experience** testing and tasting a recipe with community members:

“My group that taste tested a recipe was able to choose their favorite pudding and that is the one that made it to the top ten [Recipes under consideration in the RWG]”

The RWG supports LIAs' work in different ways that were identified in the focus group:

1. Being able to request recipes when needed
2. Open communication and feedback
3. Having recipes for tribal communities
4. Having a group of recipes for food boxes and tips to add fresh products
5. Having new recipes

These insights highlight the value they found in collaboration, resource sharing, and practical applications for their local programming.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the focus group, many LIAs expressed that the **website** could benefit from increased attention and improvement:

“I think we've recognized that there are some barriers on the website that are an issue to people accessing the recipes, and some of that is outside of our control”

To encourage greater LIA participation and idea sharing within the working group, the focus group mentioned that the RWG can enhance engagement by incorporating the following recommendations:

1. More voices from different LIAs from different counties.
2. More native community input.
3. Offering a more flexible and well-planned meeting schedule.
4. Increasing community advertisement.
5. Organizing smaller breakout groups.
6. Inviting guest chefs to participate.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the Recipe Working Group highlights its strong support among LIAs and its positive impact on their local programs. LIAs have had many opportunities to contribute to the group's efforts. Moving forward, the Recipe Working Group could further strengthen its effectiveness by ensuring their work is supported in the most meaningful way using the findings that emerged from this project and future feedback loops.

Appendix A. Working Group Survey Questions

This survey aims to better understand working groups and collaborative projects at AZ Health Zone. Your feedback is essential in helping us understand your experience with these working groups and projects, ensuring that we continue to support Local Implementing Agencies (LIAs) in state-level decision making. In this survey, you will be asked to share your experiences and insights regarding different working groups and/or projects you may have participated in.

The survey should take less than **10** minutes to complete. Your responses will remain anonymous, and the information gathered will be used solely to enhance state-level operations. We will develop and share our findings with you in June.

We appreciate your time and valuable input—thank you for participating!

1. Which working group(s) have you participated in?
 - ☐ Recipe Working Group - (Jennie)
 - ☐ Direct Education - Curriculum Workshops (Savannah)
 - ☐ Social Marketing - Campaign Planning (Jennie and Cristina)
 - ☐ School Systems - Resource Creation (Kathryn)
 - ☐ Early Care and Education (ECE) Systems - Resource Creation (Melisha)
 - ☐ Physical Activity Game and Guide (Jacques and Kathryn)
 - ☐ Other: _____

Engagement and Cooperation

In this section, you will be sharing your experience engaging with the working group.

2. What are the main ways that you contribute (or previously contributed) your ideas to the working group?
 - ☐ Attended meetings
 - ☐ Contributed between meetings to projects that were being worked on
 - ☐ Generated new materials that you shared with the working group
 - ☐ Shared existing resources or materials from your program with the working group
 - ☐ Other: _____
3. I usually get many chances to contribute my ideas to the working group.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
4. I usually feel comfortable sharing my thoughts in the recipe working group.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree

Feedback and support

In this section, you will be sharing your experience of getting support in the working group

5. I feel that my input is valued in the working group.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
6. I have seen our input as LIAs applied to at least one decision of the working group.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
7. I have seen our input as LIAs applied to every decision of the working group.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
8. My input as LIAs directed the working group, and the LIA specialist implemented what I decided.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
9. Can you share an example of when you felt that your input made a direct impact on the decisions of the working group?

Working Group Effectiveness

In this section, you will be sharing your experience about how the working group supports or previously supported your work

10. The working group supports my work.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
11. I have used what I have learned from the working group.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. How could the working group better align its resources and support with your program's specific needs? (open-ended)

Please share a little bit about you:

13. I am filling out the survey as a LIA that primarily works in (check all that apply):

- Active Living
- Direct Education
- ECE Systems
- Food System
- School Systems
- Social Marketing
- Other: _____

14. I have been working as a LIA for:

- Less than one year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5 years and above

Closing

15. Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share with us about the working group?

Appendix B. Focus Group Question

Ice breaker:

1. Before we start our questions, let's do a small introduction on how long you have been working as a LIA?

Joining the Working Group:

2. What motivated you to join the recipe working group when you first learned about it?

Participation in the Working Group

3. Is there a particular working group project that stands out as one of your favorites that you've worked on?
4. What specific activities or aspects of the project did you enjoy working on the most?
5. To what extent did you feel that your feedback is usually incorporated into the final decisions or changes?
6. How do you think the Recipe Working Group could better incorporate your input into the decision process?
7. Can you share an example of when your contributions were utilized into the final decision making within this working group?
8. Are there any changes to this working group that you can think of that would make you even more engaged in the working group's projects and activities?

The Impact of the Working Group on Local Programming

9. I'm now going to ask you to switch gears and think more broadly about the impact of the working group on your local programs in general. In what ways does the recipe working group overall most effectively support your work as an LIA?
10. Can you describe a particularly successful experience where you incorporated recipe working group results into your teaching or program? What was your biggest takeaway from that experience?

Wrapping up:

11. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with the recipe working group that hasn't been covered in the previous questions?

Closing:

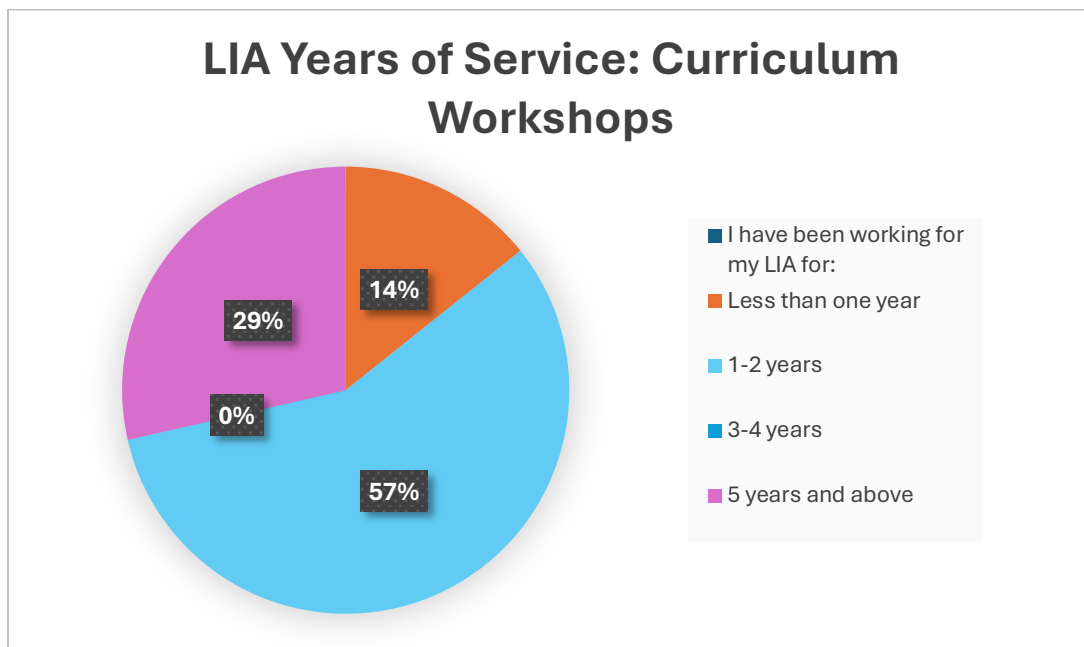
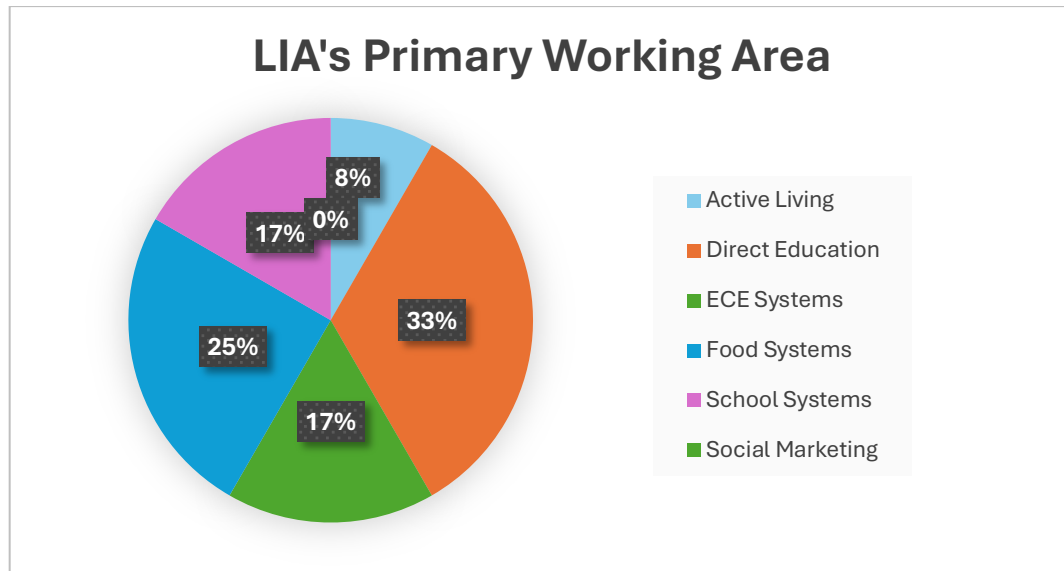
Thank you all for your time for joining the focus group and sharing those valuable experiences. As I mentioned earlier, your insights will help the working group and the AZ Health Zone

program continue to improve decision making, and we will circle back to you with the results of this project later in the Spring.

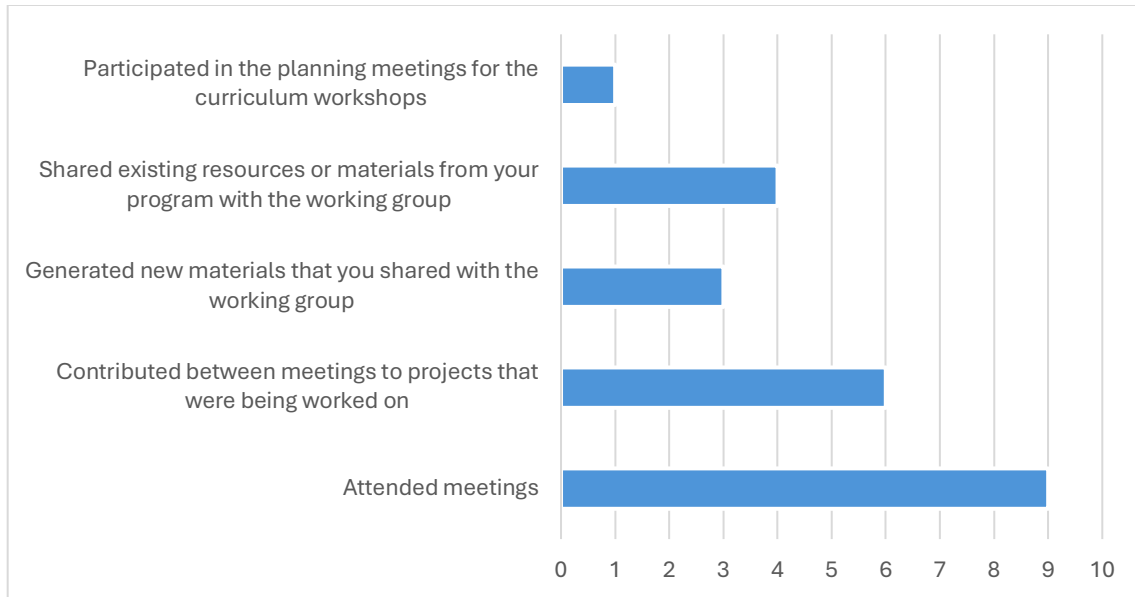
Appendix C. Survey Results from Other Working Groups

Direct Education - Curriculum Workshops

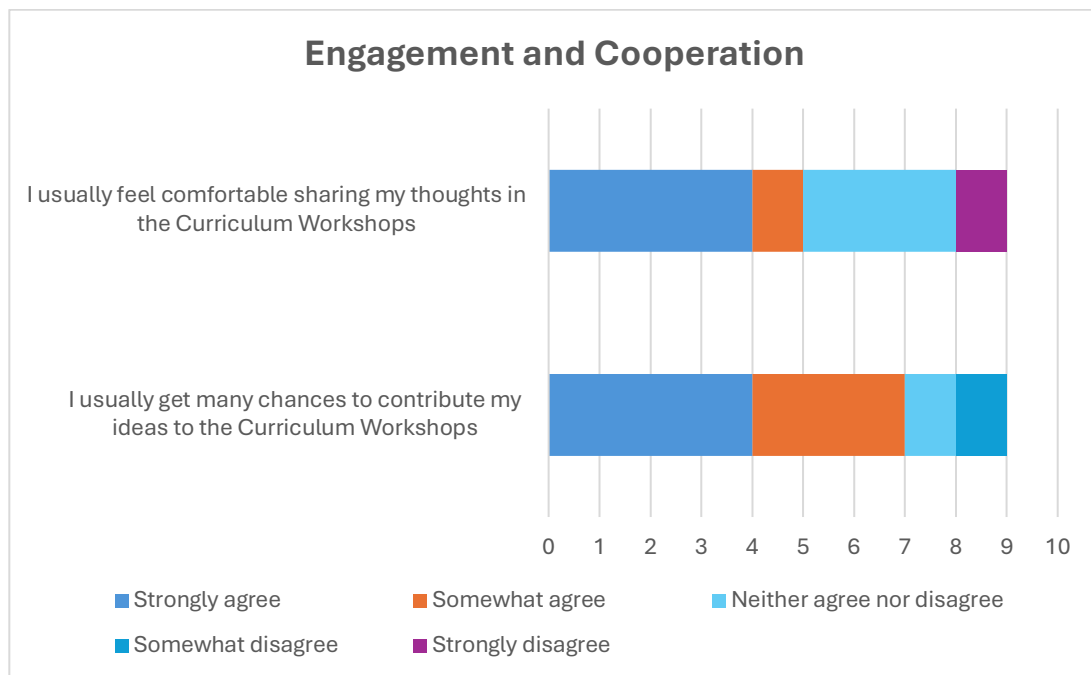
There were a total of nine LIA staff who shared their experiences in the Curriculum Workshops. Below are their years of service working for an LIA and their primary working area, with seven of nine respondents answering these questions.



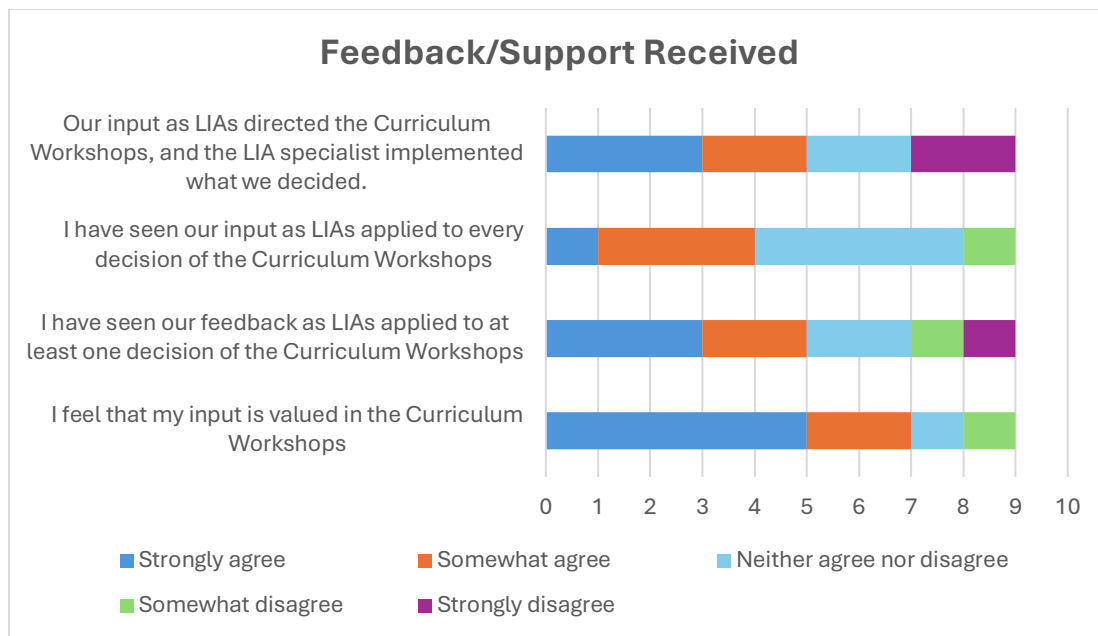
The figure below shows the ways that LIA contributed to the Curriculum Workshops:



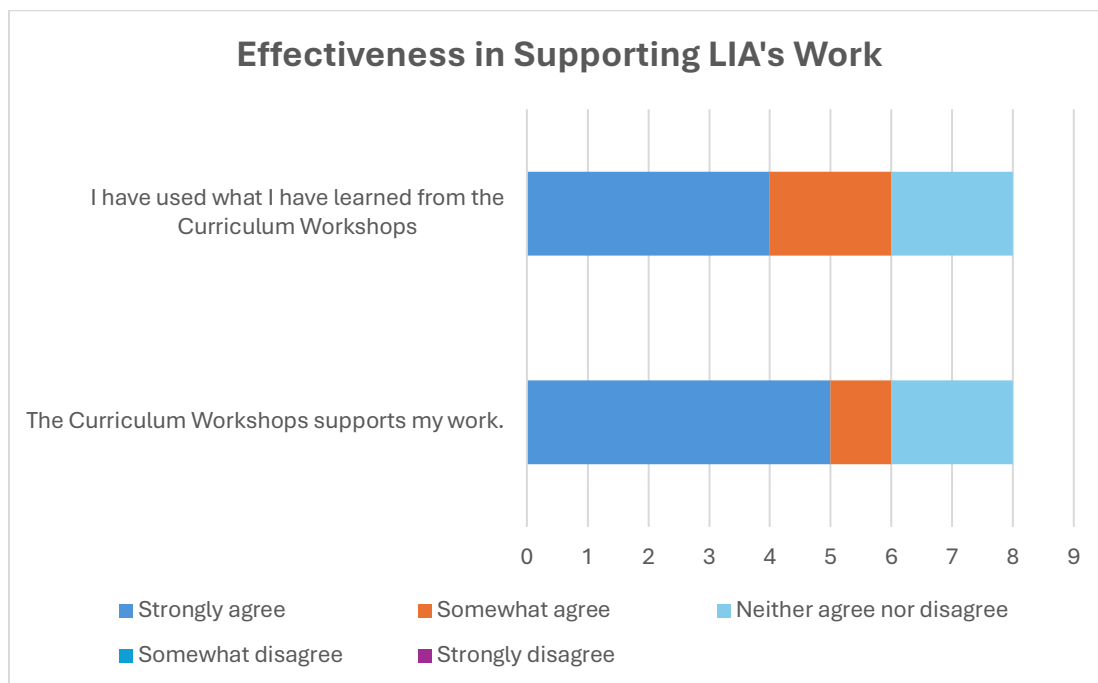
The following figure shows LIA engagement in the Curriculum Workshops. The results show that there are many opportunities to share ideas in the workshop, however there is an improvement of creating a safe and open space for LIAs to share thoughts in the Workshop.



The figure below shows that the Curriculum Workshops did a good job in listening and cooperating to LIAs' input and involving them in decision process. There may be room to further incorporate LIA suggestions into one or more decision-making stages.



The figure below show that most of the LIAs found the Curriculum Workshops to support their work and have used knowledge gained from the workshop in their role.



Regarding experiences where LIA input had a direct impact on workshop decisions, one LIA shared that they were involved in and contributed to the lesson development process. Two other participants reflected that their concerns were taken seriously and addressed with care and quality.

“I brought up the fact that the curriculum we were reviewing had many lessons that didn't aligned with our SNAP-Ed goal of encouraging students to eat more fruits and veggies by teaching them about gardening for harvesting purposes. I shared a file with a list of the lessons that best aligned and those that didn't. This file was worked on by other LIAS and was used at the training as a guide for all participants”

In regard of how the workshop can better support their work included:

1. Having a curriculum newsletter with stories on what methods worked that could be shared online from each county.
2. Getting together more to talk about the specific ways that the curriculum could be presented, especially from the Junior Master Gardener series.
3. Sending updates and progress emails to all LIAs.
4. Having more locations for attending workshop meetings.
5. Having a separate guide for LIAs to discuss program specific modifications (i.e. time modifications, activity modifications, etc.)

Social Marketing - Campaign Planning Workshops

A total of three LIAs shared their experiences with the Campaign Planning Workshops. Only one participant reported years of work experience and topical area. This person has served as an LIA for 2–3 years and primarily worked in food systems.

LIAs reported that they contributed to the campaign planning process mainly by attending meetings and sharing existing resources or materials from their programs with the workshop. However, two out of the three LIAs reported not having opportunities to explain their ideas, and one mentioned feeling uncomfortable sharing input within the group.

Regarding the working group's engagement with LIAs, two participants noted that the Campaign Planning Workshops needs significant improvement in listening to LIA concerns and collaborating more effectively in decision-making processes. They mentioned that the working group did not fully support their work. Additionally, they emphasized the need for resources to be better tailored to rural or low-income communities.

School Systems - Resource Creation Workshops

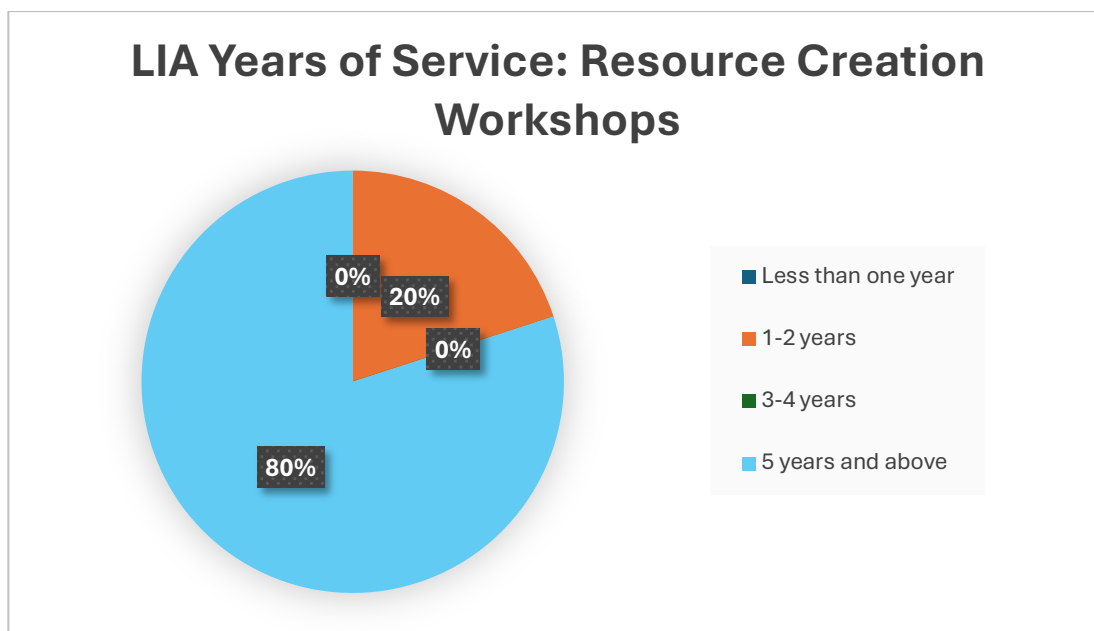
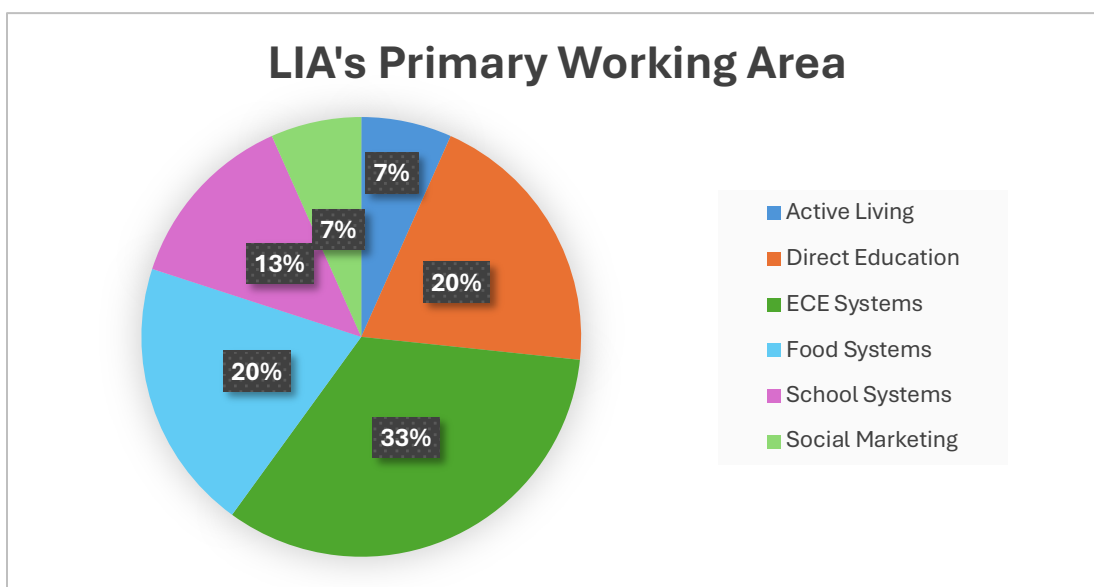
A total of three LIAs shared their experiences with the Campaign Planning Workshops. Two LIAs reported serving as LIAs for 2–3 years, with only one of them primarily working in the school system. One LIA indicated that they were not familiar with the working group, so their response was not included in the analysis.

Both of the remaining LIAs reported contributing to the workshop by attending meetings, generating new materials to share, and offering existing resources from their programs. They expressed satisfaction with the opportunities to share and contribute ideas.

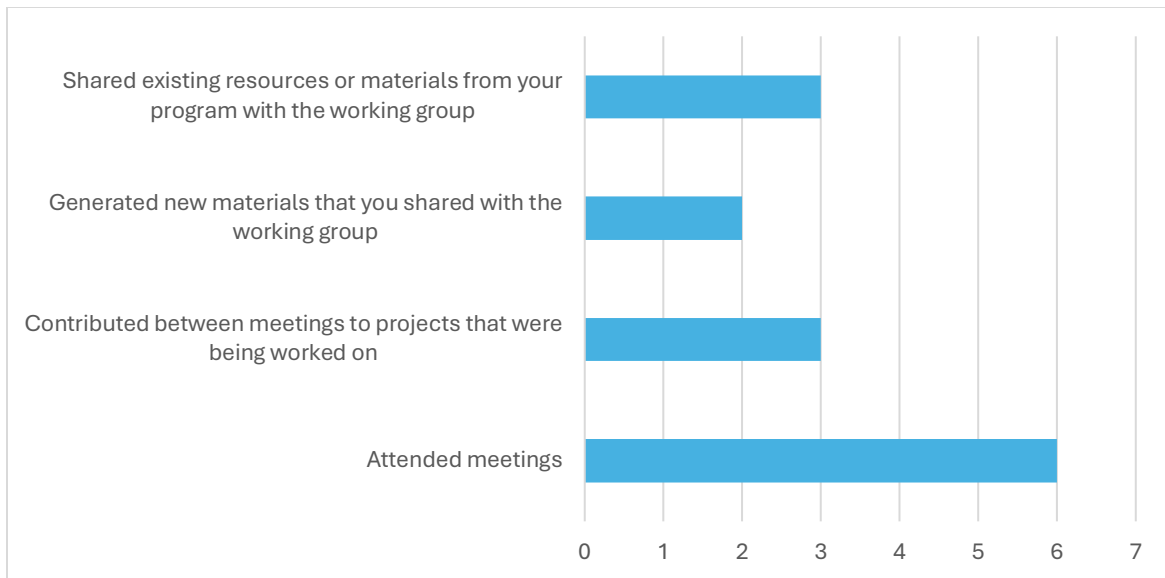
Regarding support from the working group, both participants noted that they felt their input was validated during the decision-making process, and they agreed that the workshop had been effectively supporting their work.

Early Care and Education (ECE) Systems - Resource Creation Workshops

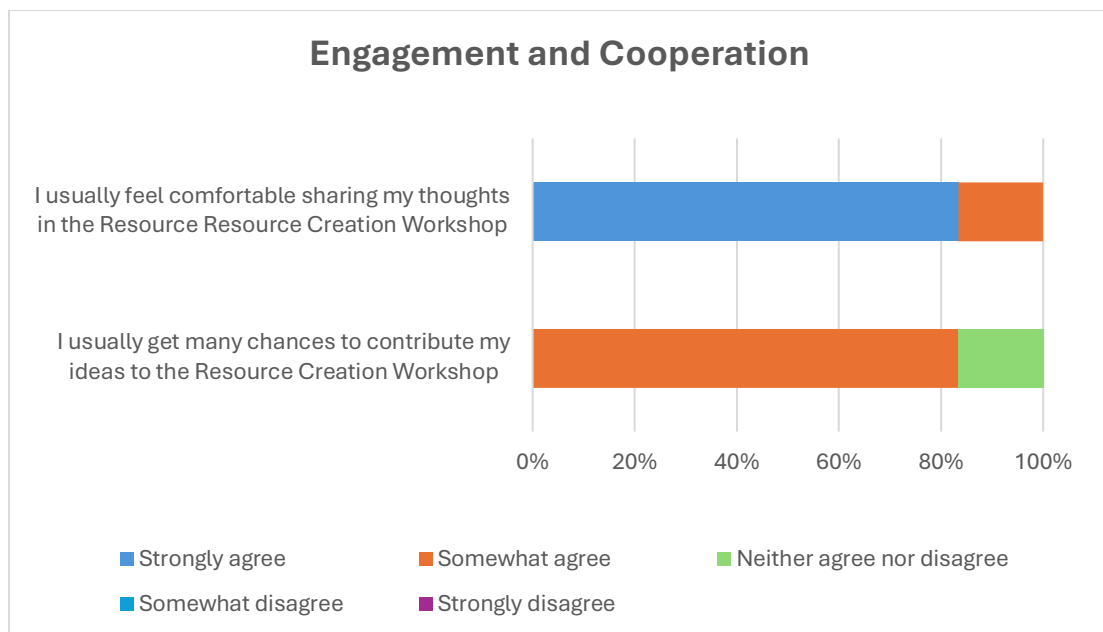
There were a total of six LIAs who shared their experience in the Resource Creation Workshops. Figures below are the years reported working as LIA and their primary working area.



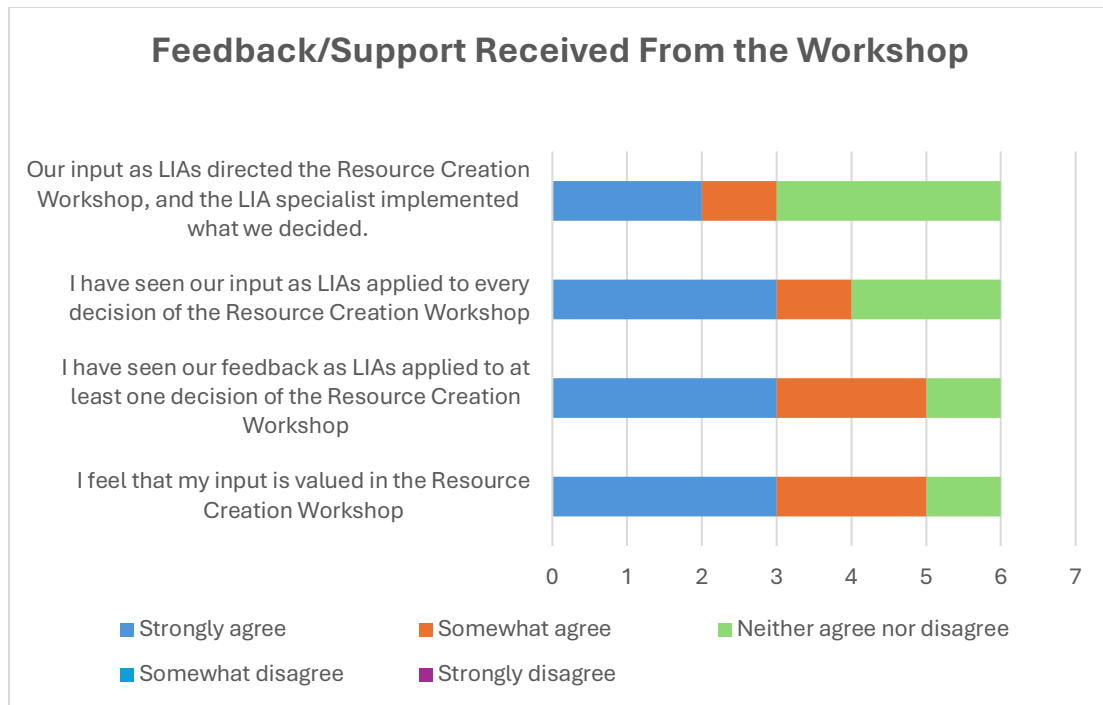
The figure below shows the ways that LIAs reported contributing to the Resource Creation Workshops:



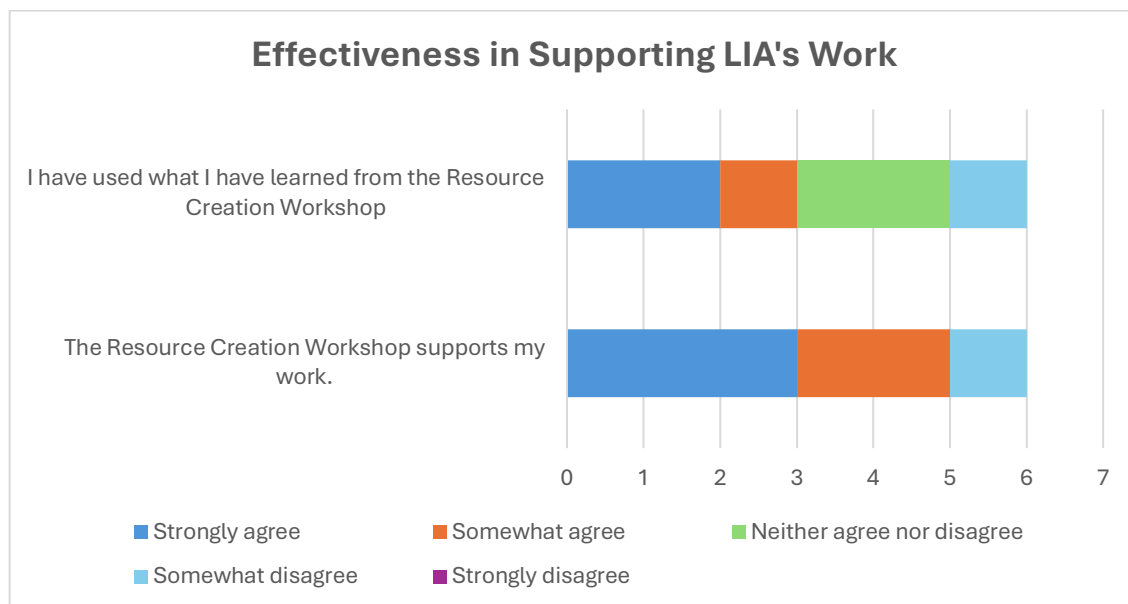
The following figure shows LIA engagement in the Resource Creation Workshops. The results show that there were many opportunities to share ideas in the workshop, and LIA reported feeling comfortable sharing ideas in the workshop.



The figure below shows that the Resource Creation Workshops did a good job in cooperating with LIAs and involving them in decision-making processes. There may be improvements to be made in incorporating LIAs' suggestions into the final decision-making process.



The below figure shows the Resource Creation Workshops provided strong support for the work of LIAs.



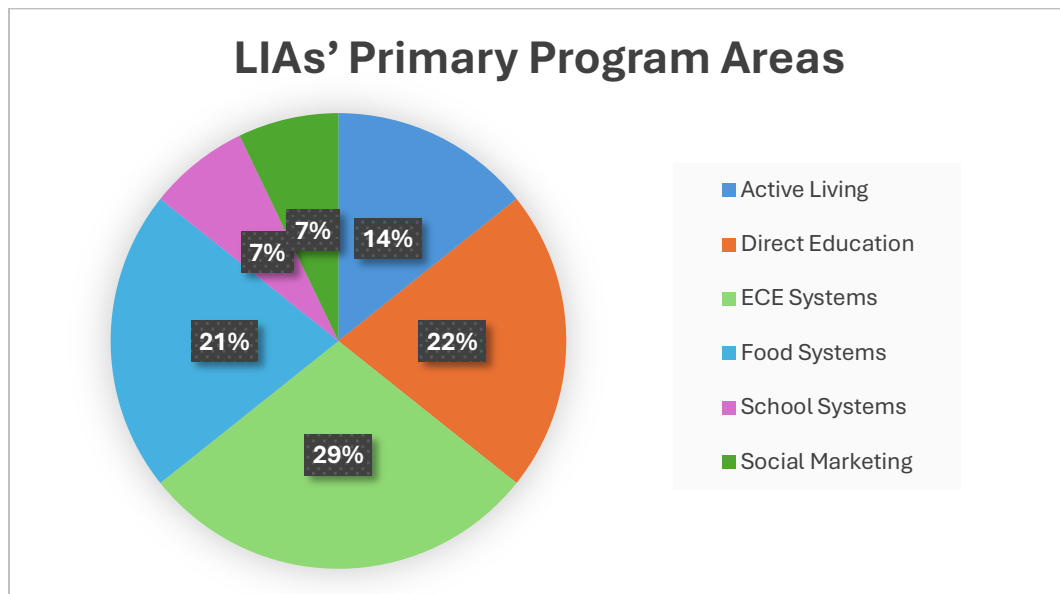
An example of LIAs feeling that their input influenced decision-making was that two participants mentioned their ideas were included in the final product. However, another two LIAs expressed that more effective incorporation of their input is still needed.

There were several improvements identified by the LIAs that the workshop could do to better support their work:

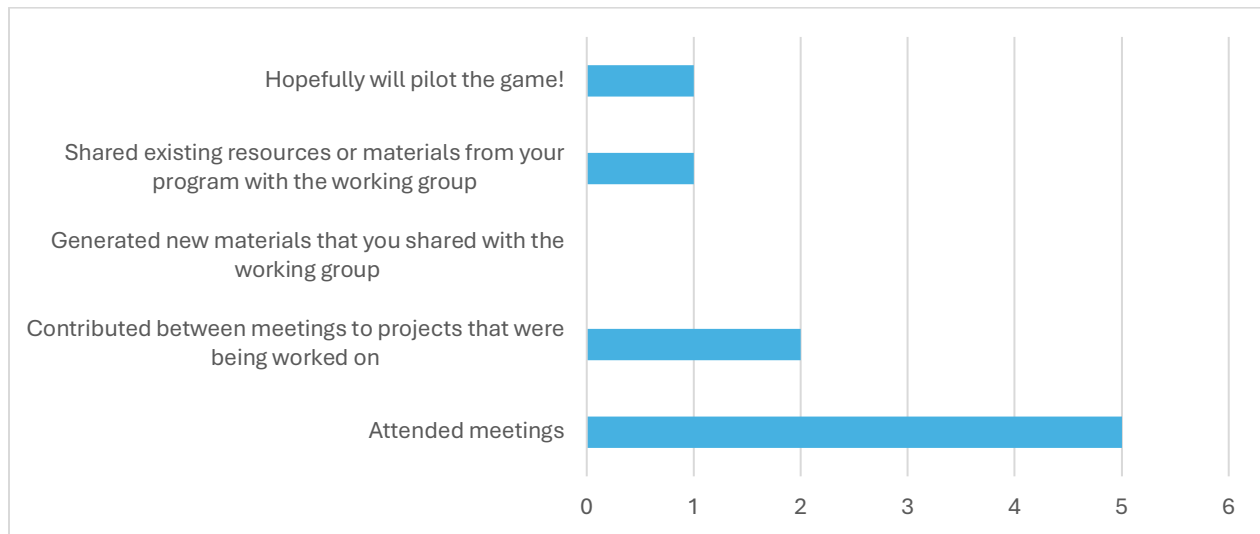
1. More training and guidance on how to support ECE sites.
2. Returning the products that the workshop spent time creating back to LIAs to use in a timely manner.
3. Having a place to brainstorm in order to meet the diverse need of LIAs' ECE programs.

Physical Activity - PA Game and Guide Workshops

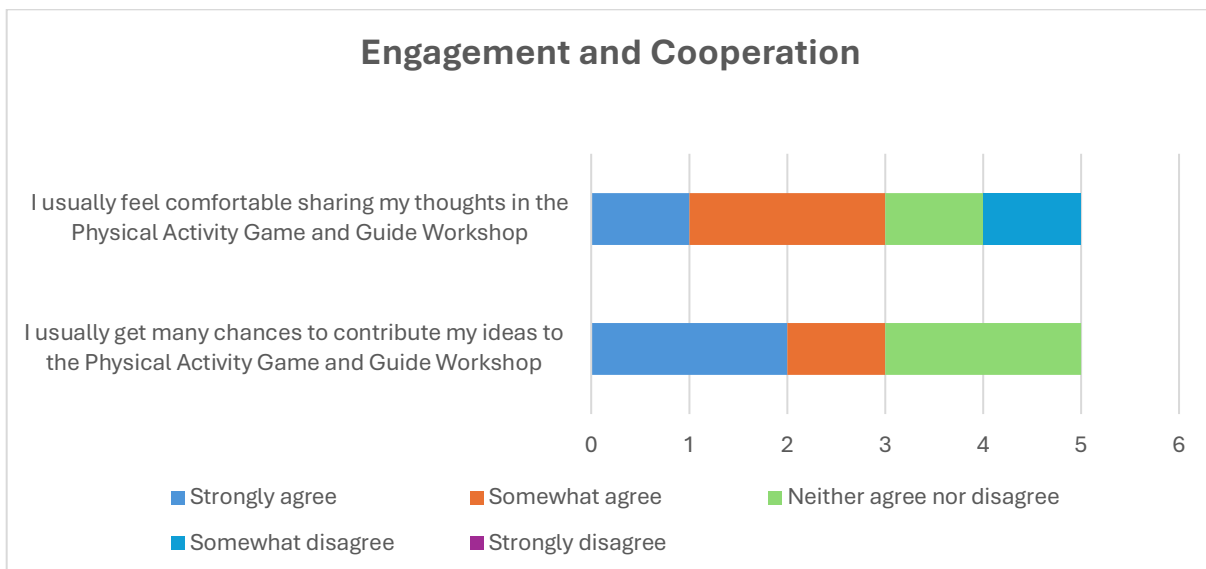
There were a total of five LIAs who shared their experience in the Physical Activity Game and Guide Workshops. The figures below illustrate their years working as LIA and their primary working area.



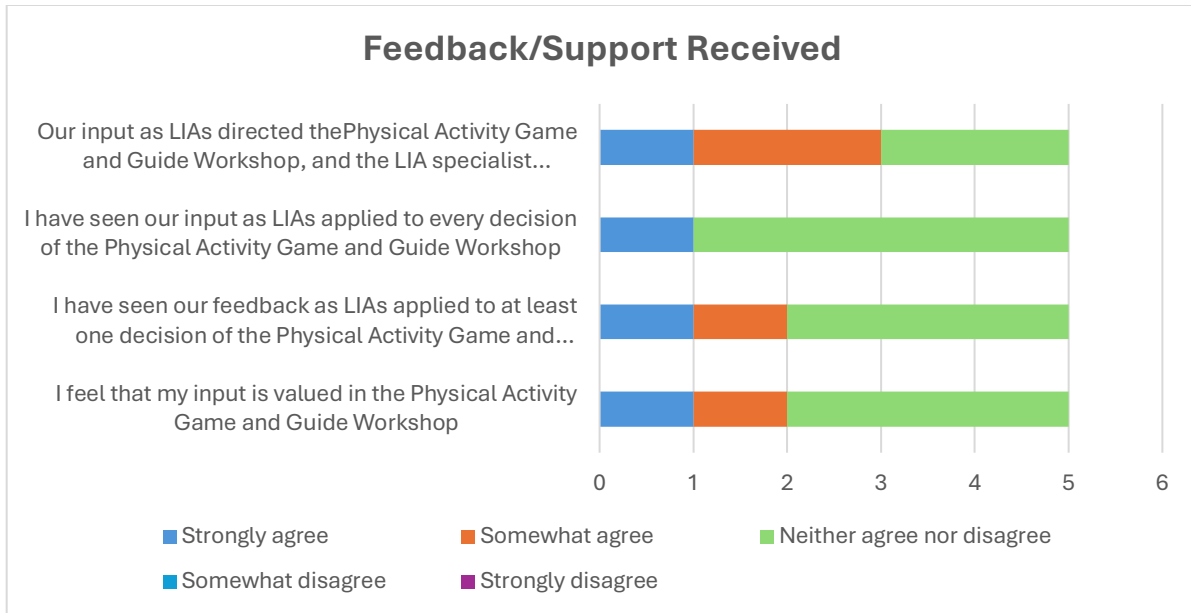
The figure below shows the way that LIAs' reported contributing to the Physical Activity Game and Guide Workshops:



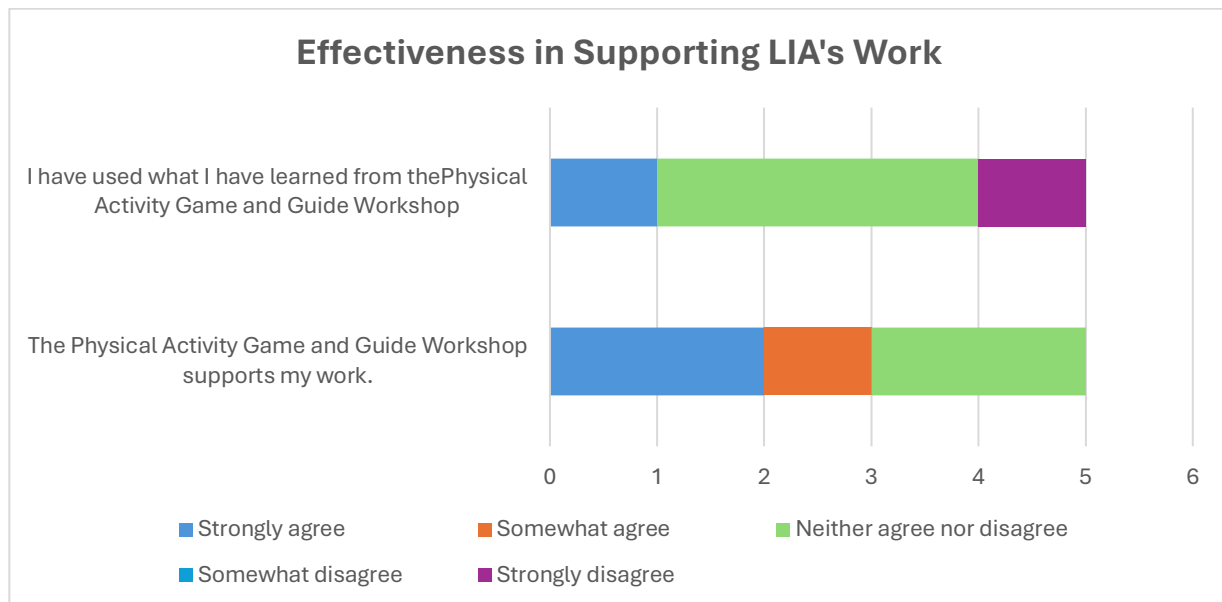
The following figure shows LIA engagement in the Physical Activity Game and Guide Workshops. The result shows that there were many opportunities to share ideas in the workshop, and LIAs were comfortable in sharing their ideas in the workshop.



The figure below shows that the Physical Activity Game and Guide Workshops did a good job in listening to LIAs' input and involving them in decision-making processes. There is potential room for improvement in incorporating LIAs' suggestions into the final decision-making process.



The below figure shows that the Physical Activity Game and Guide Workshops provided good support for the work of LIAs, but that there is also a need to help LIAs enhance the practical application of the materials developed by the group.



One example where LIAs felt that their input impacted decision making was the productive discussion on reinventing the wheel for the game development and incorporating the color, design, size and game activities into the decision.

There were several improvements identified by LIAs that the workshop could consider continuing to enhance support of their work:

1. Sending update emails.

2. Bigger font size on materials.
3. Having the prototypes for people to discuss during the meeting.
4. More communication.
5. Easier game instructions for both the LIA and the program participants to follow.