



HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

Our Journey to Healing

Harnessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge Systems – creating pathways to healing.

Lisa Hillan

***Director Programs and Knowledge
Creation***



WHO WE ARE

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation is an independent Indigenous organisation with a focus on healing our community



HealingFoundation
Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

OUR PURPOSE



Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- To heal from the wounds of past government policies and practices
- To connect to our culture and spirit



HEALING IS

- Cultural knowledge and Identity are central to locating self and creating healing
- Involves application of existing cultural knowledge in a contemporary context
- Addresses trauma stemming from colonisation
- Restores and sustains holistic wellbeing
- Creates change for individuals, families and communities



PRIORITIES



- Developing the story of healing
- Raising the profile
- Building leadership and the capacity
- Defining what healing means
- Acknowledging the intergenerational impact of trauma
- Privileging Indigenous knowledge systems



REINSTATING AND RECONNECTING TO CULTURAL VALUE SYSTEMS

- Enables communities to locate solutions to challenges within long held knowledge, wisdom and values
- Ensures responses are driven from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview
- In the absence of this, communities will continue to struggle with challenges and justice, corrections and welfare will remain the primary responses



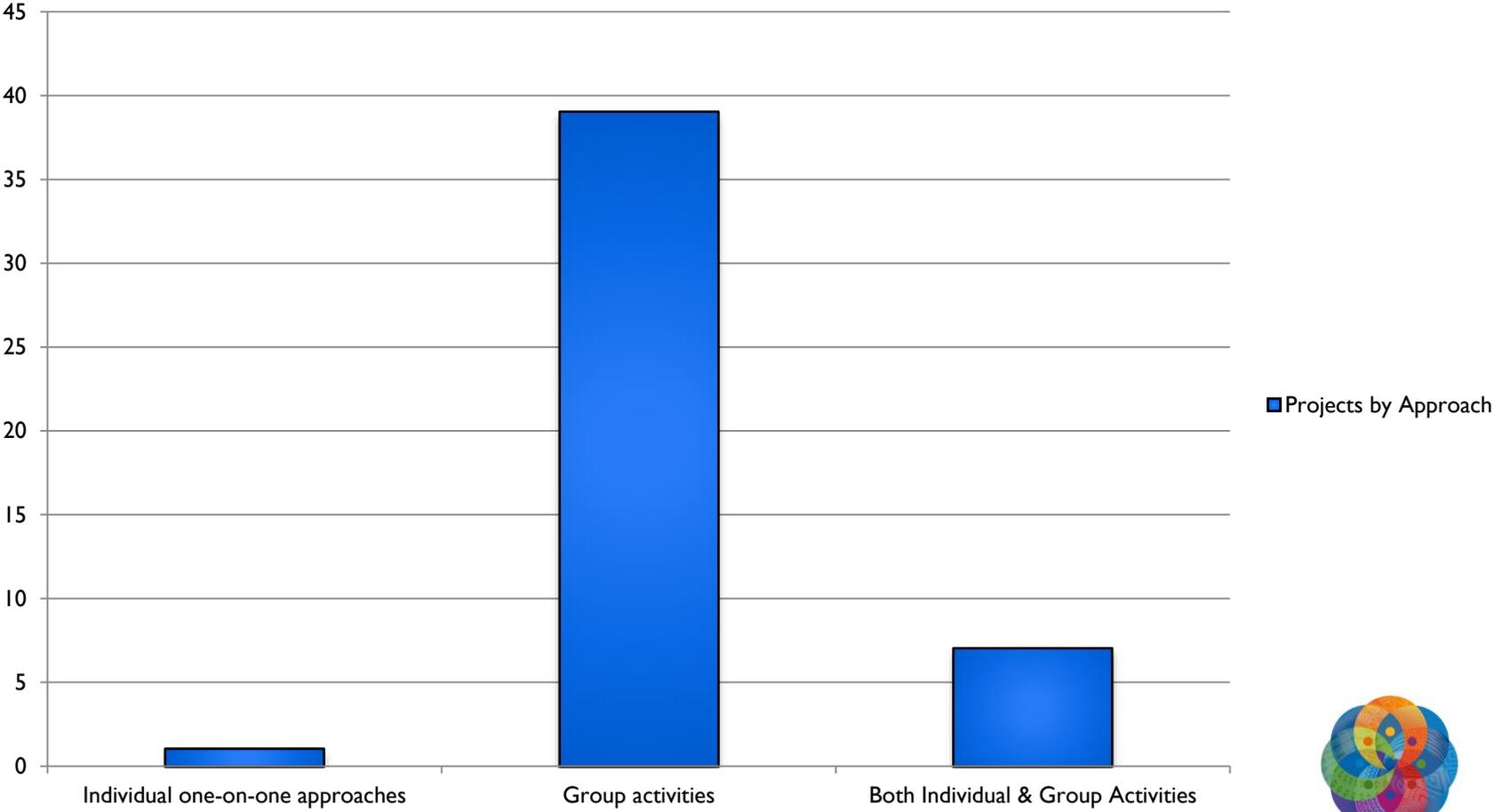
ELEMENTS OF QUALITY HEALING PROGRAMS



Trauma education and healing

- The Healing Foundation funded 62 projects in trauma education
- Projects include both community education and workforce development
- Understanding trauma within a safe cultural space can lead participants on a healing journey

Projects by approach



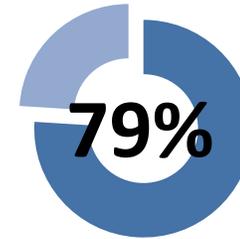
Healing is a collective process

- Projects overwhelmingly favour group-based approaches to trauma education in their peer groups and community
- The experience of trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a collective as well as personal experience
- Understanding trauma as a collective experience enables participants to situate their own experience within the context of community
- Qualitative analysis shows us that the peer support aspect of collective approaches is an important source of strength for participants

National Outcomes and Indicators

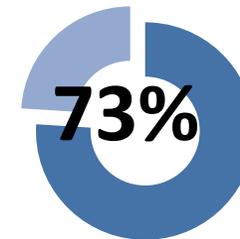
- National Outcome 1, increased knowledge of the impacts of trauma

Participants who reported
an increased knowledge of
trauma



National Outcome 2, increased capacity to manage the
impacts of trauma constructively

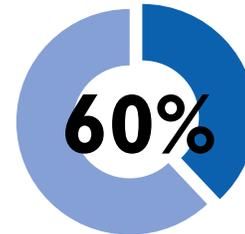
Participants who reported
they can now better manage
the impacts of trauma



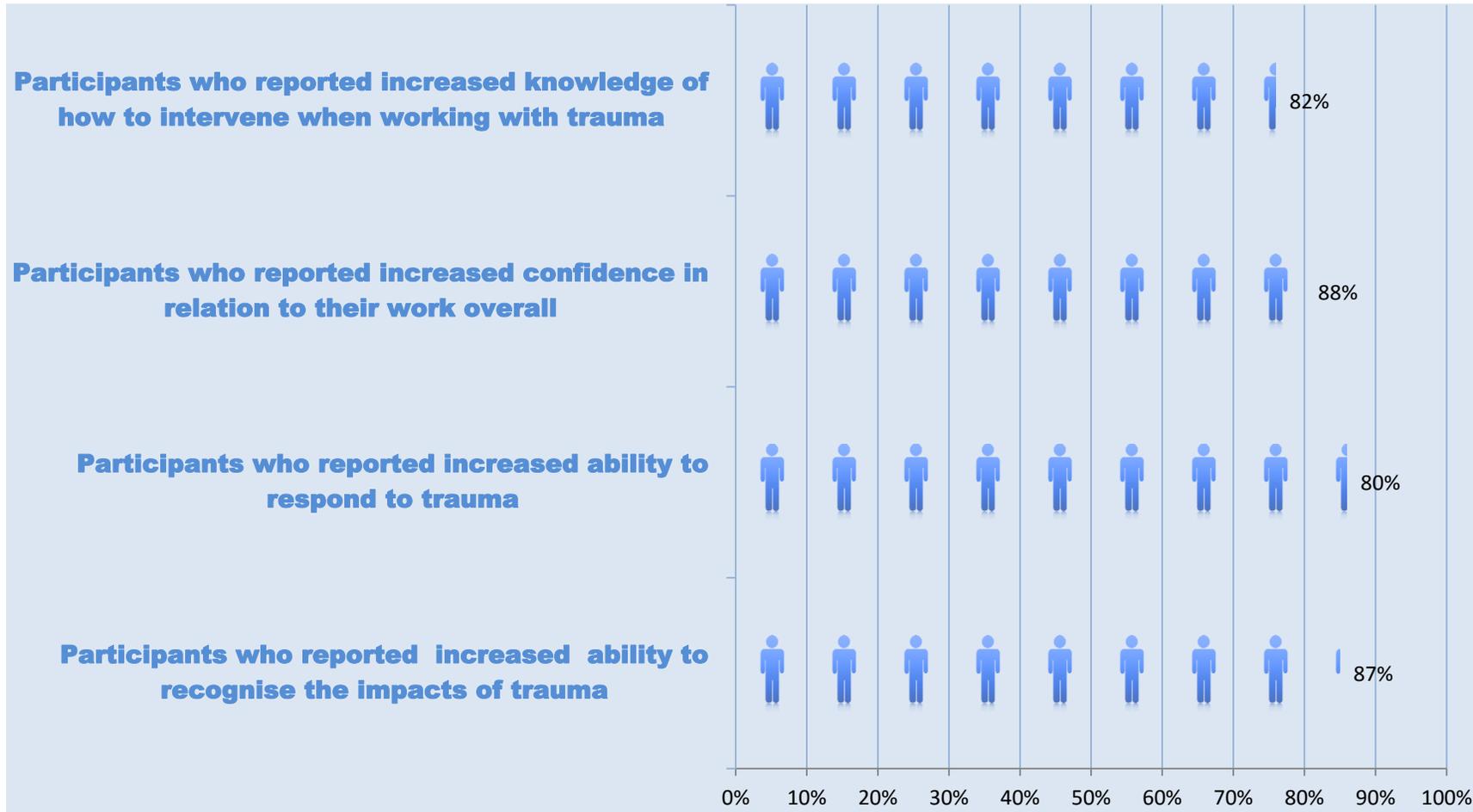
National Outcomes and Indicators

- National Outcome 3, increased knowledge of support services available to assist participants

The percentage of participants that report increased use of support services in their community



National Outcomes and Indicators



Creating trauma-informed workplaces

The evidence from this evaluation is strong that these projects have:
increased knowledge of how to intervene when working with trauma
increased confidenceincreased their ability to respond to trauma increased their ability to recognise the impacts of trauma.

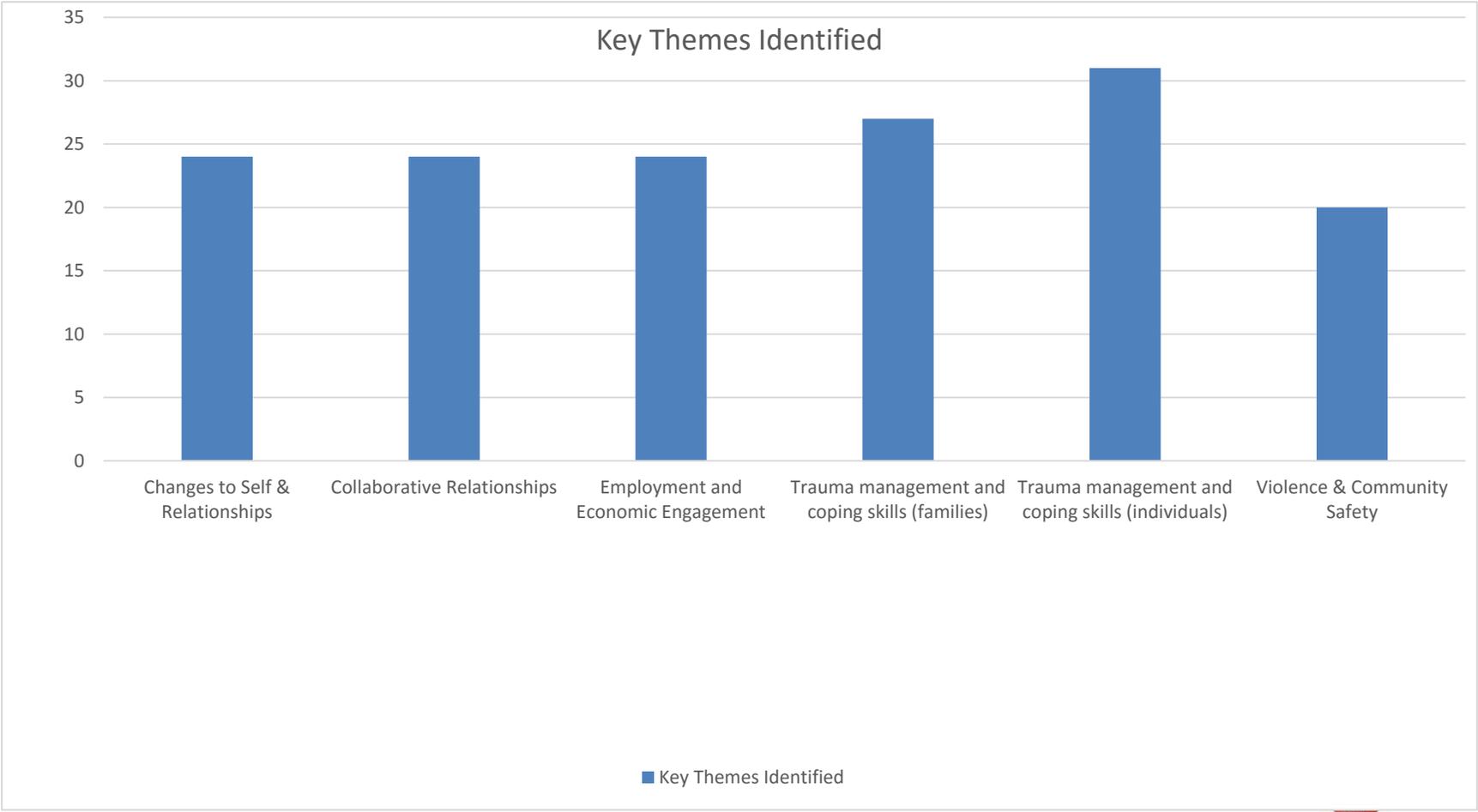
This is suggestive of a trauma informed workforce being built.

Workplaces are more culturally safe and aware of the historical and intergenerational nature of trauma.

The impacts of this change in workplaces for individuals, service provision, families and communities are evidenced in the data. There are changes that are substantive and sustainable.”

– Social Compass 2014

Key Emerging Themes



What does this tell us?

- Understanding trauma can have a powerful impact on individuals and their families
- Trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Islander communities is both a collective and an individual experience, and addressing trauma collectively can enable healing on the individual level to follow
- Understanding trauma can enable participants to better engage educational and employment opportunities
- Understanding trauma can enable communities, families and individuals to address the issue of violence

Healing is a collective process

“ It is clear that trauma is still an emerging concept within Indigenous communities. Indigenous people and communities have understood the impacts of colonisation, forced removals, and other past government

policies as traumatic. However, in nearly every case, program participants across the five programs acknowledged that the depths of trauma have not been well understood- individually or collectively ...

There is a sense that Indigenous people(s) have known the existence of trauma but have not been able to fully apprehend the levels and degree of trauma and how such trauma is being played out in the details of their lives, their homes, their communities, and their workplaces.”

– Social Compass 2014

Cultural Load

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who work in the government or industry do not leave their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity and culture at the door when they go to work.

- Indigenous workers bring a 'cultural load' – “a sense of the accumulation of factors/trauma that builds over time and cause [stress, to daily living and working”
- This concept recognises the high frequency of events that range from sad through to traumatic in Indigenous people, from family bereavements, to incarceration of relatives and community members, to acts of violence, racism and discrimination.
- Each event adds to the 'load' and can result in a burden that is carried into the workplace, increasing their susceptibility to stress, anger, and burnout.

HEALING INFORMED ORGANISATIONS

Developing a
healing orientated
system

Procedures and
Policies that reflect
the org values

The discipline to
stick to clearly
defined policies
and procedures

Good Leadership
at management
and governance
level

