

# Decoding the Art of Practice: What works in social and emotional learning?

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# CENTER FOR YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY

a division of the Forum for Youth Investment that advances research-validated continuous improvement with organizations serving children and youth.

The Weikart Center's core purpose is to provide high-quality learning experiences for all.

[www.cypq.org](http://www.cypq.org)



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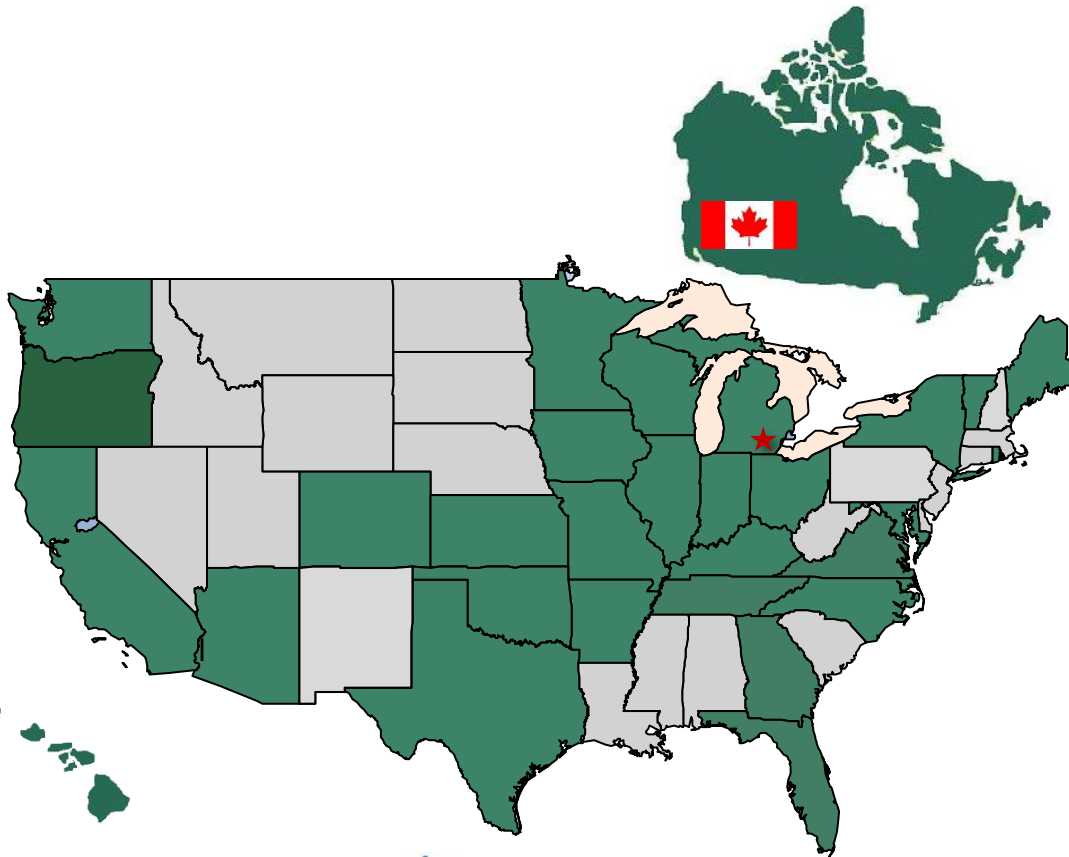


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# QIS Policies: Scaled Adoption of YPQI



Policy Setting

105 Networks/  
Systems

Organization Setting

>4000 Sites

>26,000 Staff

Estimate based on mean of 6.5  
staff per site in YPQI Study Sample

Point of Service Setting

>340,000 Child &  
Youth

Estimate based on mean daily  
attendance of 85 youth per day in YPQI  
Study Sample



# Agenda

- Overview and positioning
- Social and Emotional Skills Framework
- What we're learning about:
  - Program designs
  - Staff practices and key youth experiences
  - Supporting Staff
  - SEL Measures
- Q&A

# Why SEL?

**Disconnect: Demands for life success have evolved...**

**while education systems have not.**

*Many youth are **ill-equipped** to succeed.*

*Education and youth development systems are **overwhelmed and underperforming.***

Leaders aim to make change, but efforts aren't adding up:

- Nationally, **4 in 10 youth are not doing well.**
- Only **2 out of 5 youth are getting the supports** they need.\*

\*Forum for Youth Investment Ready by 21



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# Field-Wide Challenges

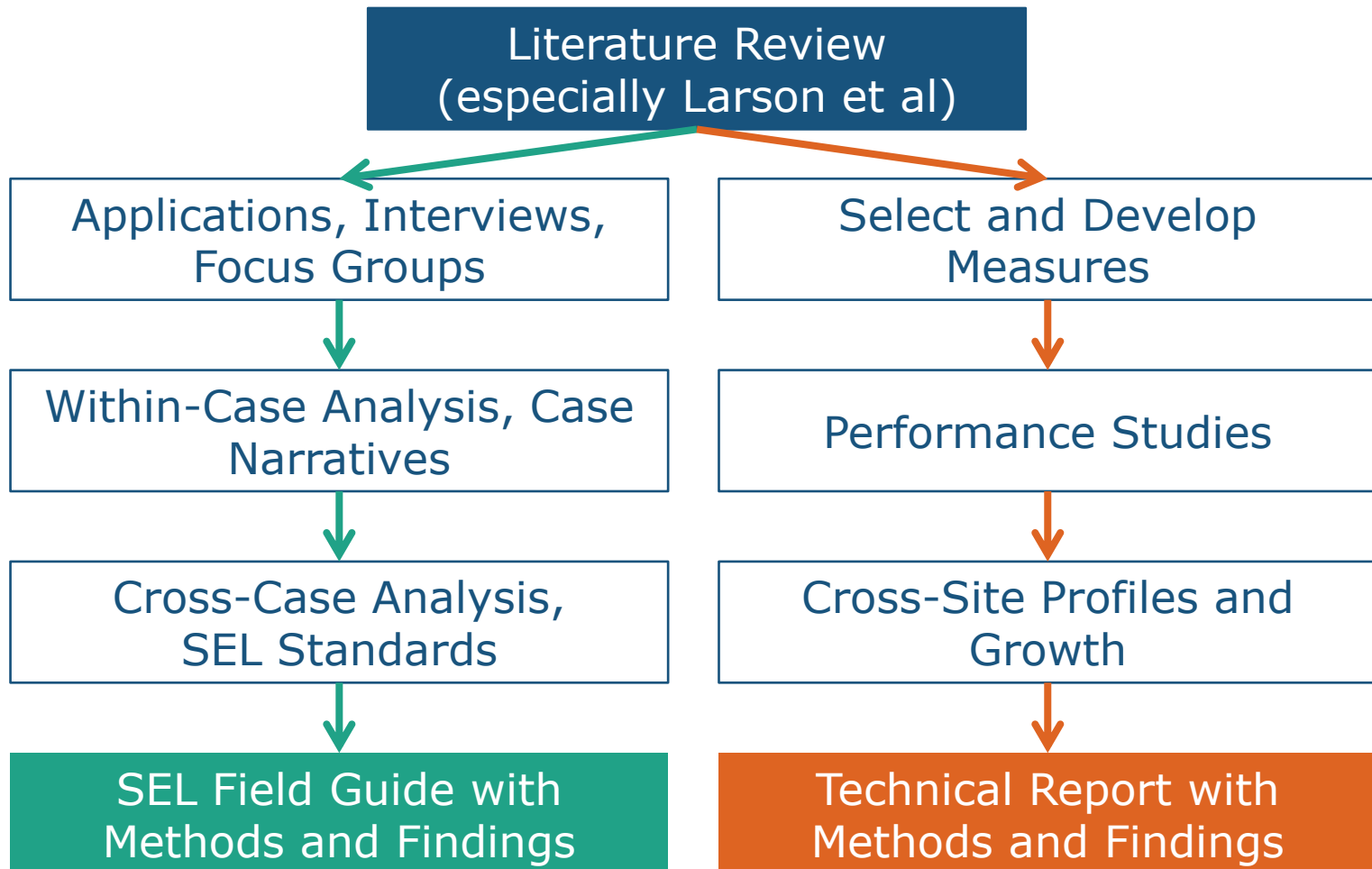
- Need for a more **compelling and unified message** about the value of soft/non-cognitive/SEL skills
- Lack of **information about how to embed SEL** in programs and settings
- **Overabundance of SEL assessments**, making it hard to understand how to choose among them and use the best one for your needs

# SEL Challenge

**GOAL:** To develop a *practical theory* of how social and emotional growth is nurtured in the OST context.

- **Surface and spread the most effective SEL practices**
- **Why a Challenge grant? Why not traditional research?**
  - Discover and connect with unlikely partners
  - Directly fund innovative, exceptional work
- **Defining SEL: SCE's approach**
  - Keep open the pluralism (Jingle-Jangle-Jungle)
  - Wellness: think well beyond academic outcomes
  - Defer to the experts: the people actually working with kids

# Project Phases



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# Impact

- **“Field Guide”** will provide resources for making SEL a more intentional component of programs by identifying staff practices and key youth experiences
- **Raise profile of SEL** as a valuable, essential component of helping to cultivate the rising generation
- **Catalyze smarter investments** in improving youth outcomes



Social and Emotional Learning

# THE FRAMEWORK



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# SEL Skills Framework

- Emotion Management**
- Build awareness of emotion (e.g., identify; reason about cause and effect).
  - Harness emotions for functional purposes.
  - Anticipate and influence emotional responses.

- Empathy**
- Set and pursue group goals.
  - Communicate clearly and respectfully to foster trust and cohesion.
  - Negotiate and manage the challenges of group work.
  - Help cultivate positive group norms.

- Teamwork**
- Understand effects of stereotypes, discrimination and social structures (e.g., based on race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, and ability, etc.).
  - Develop and share -personal stories.
  - Practice acceptance of others' experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives.

- Responsibility**
- Accept or create a challenging role.
  - Negotiate and/or revise role.
  - Draw upon resources to fulfill role (e.g., inner strength, peer support).

- Initiative**
- Set and pursue individual goals.
  - Build awareness of motivation (e.g., identify; reason about cause and effect).
  - Persevere through challenge and tedium.

- Problem Solving**
- Build task-specific knowledge (e.g., carpentry, vocabulary).
  - Evaluate designs and plans (e.g., backwards map, brainstorm).
  - Monitor progress toward task completion (e.g., manage time; reflect).

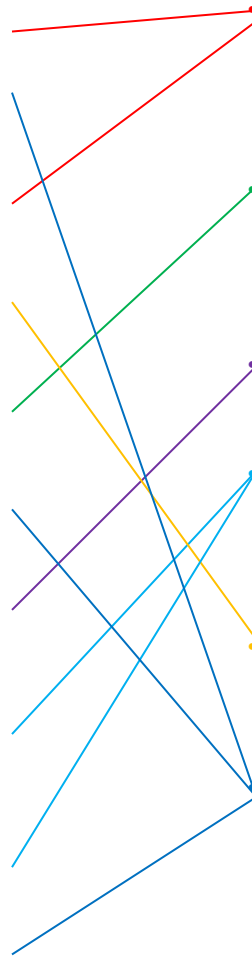
**AGENCY**  
*The ability to DO.*



# Alignment

<http://www.casel.org/>

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to **accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior**. This includes **accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations** and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
- **Self-management:** The **ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.**
- **Social awareness:** The ability **to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior**, and to **recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.**
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to **establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.**
- **Responsible decision making:** The **ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.**



**Emotion Management:** Abilities to be aware of and constructively handle positive and negative emotions.

**Empathy:** Abilities to relate to others with acceptance and intentionally understand diverse perspectives and experiences.

**Teamwork:** Abilities to collaborate and coordinate action with others.

**Responsibility:** Dispositions and abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfill obligations of challenging roles.

**Initiative:** Capacities to be motivated and persevere through challenging tasks toward an identified goal.

**Problem Solving:** Abilities to plan, strategize, and implement complex tasks.



What We're Learning About...

# PROGRAM OFFERING DESIGNS



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# Eight Exemplary SEL Programs

Organization	Explicit Skill Focus	Sessions	Youth Characteristics
Voyageur Outward Bound School	Outdoor Adventure	35	14-18; African American men; low SES
Youth on Board	Youth Organizing in School Policy	20	Low SES, high school students of color
Philadelphia Wooden Boat Factory	Carpentry Apprenticeship	45	14-18; exp. gang violence, crime, neglect
The Possibility Project	Theater & Community Service	75	13-19; 80-90% youth of color; low SES; 15-25% LGBT; foster care
Wyman	Service Learning	36	High school seniors from low-income, single parent households
Boys and Girls Clubs Greater Milwaukee	Poetry & Community Service	48	Minority teens; exposed to extreme effects of poverty & violence
YWCA Boston InIt	Youth Organizing	20	14-18; diverse race, gender, religion
AHA	Group Self-Improvement	36	Female, Latina/Hispanic, divorced parents



# “Explicit Skills”

## ***Explicit Skills: Boat Building***

Shop safety

Wood selection

Spiling

Fractional measurement

Sanding

Scarfig

## ***Explicit Skills: Community Organizing***

Campaign process

Public speaking

Manage message

Campaign content

Build alliances

Managing volunteers



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# “Implicit SEL Skills”

## ***Explicit Skills: Boat Building***

Shop safety    Wood selection    Spiling  
Fractional measurement    Sanding    Scarfing

## ***Implicit Skills: Social-Emotional***

Teamwork/Empathy    Initiative/Grit    Responsibility  
Emotion management    Problem Solving

## ***Explicit Skills: Community Organizing***

Campaign process    Public speaking    Manage message  
Campaign content    Build alliances    Managing volunteers



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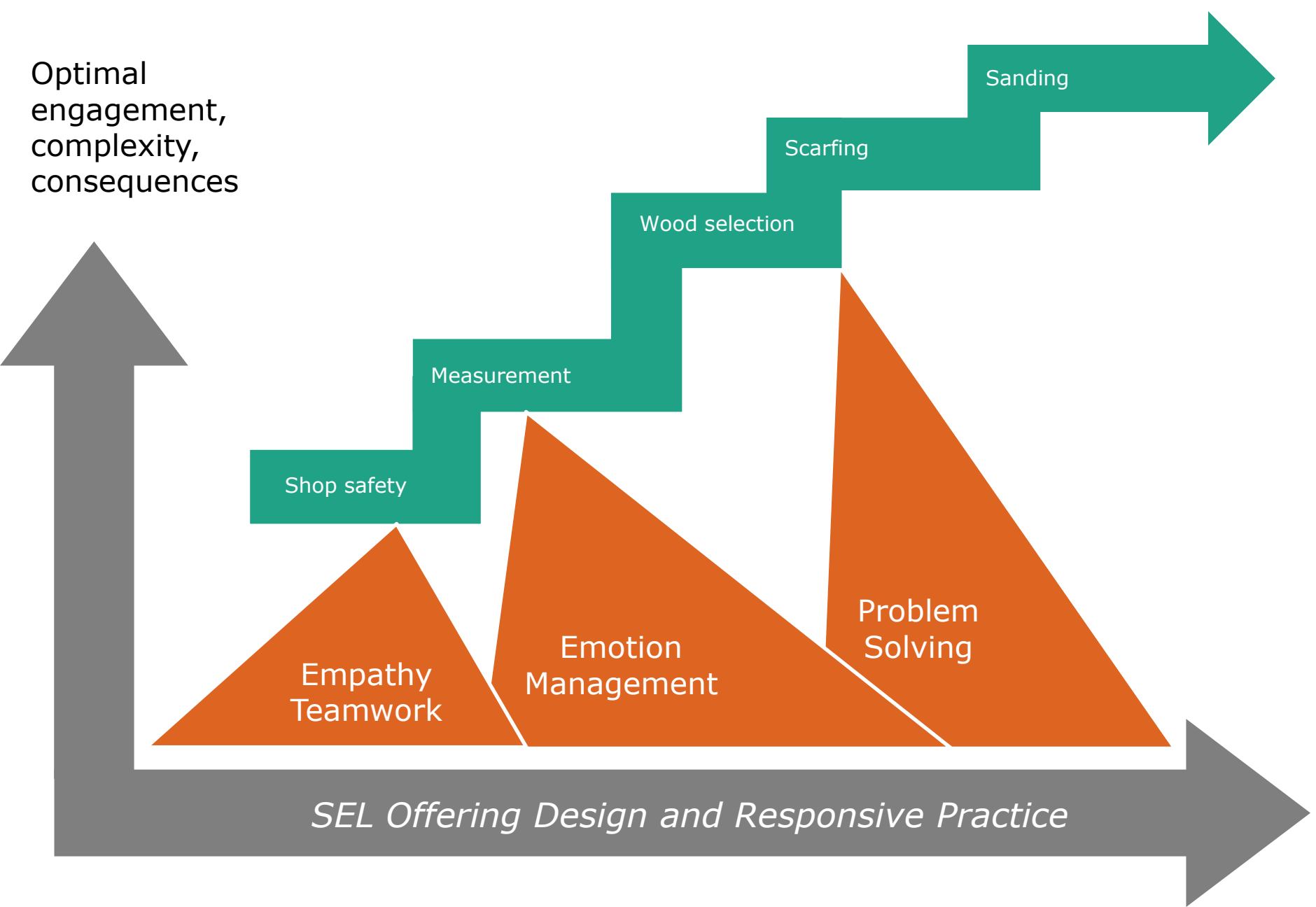
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Optimal  
engagement,  
complexity,  
consequences



# How Programs Build Youth Skills

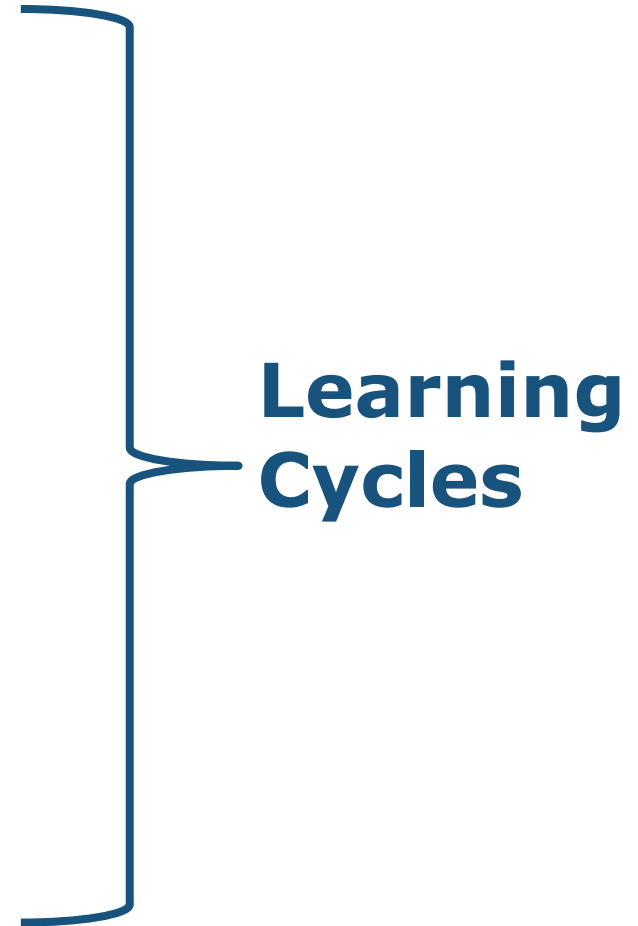
**Offering Sequence**



**Key Experiences**



**Staff Practices**



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# Core Features

- Safe space
- Caring developmental relationships
- Authentic work
- Youth ownership, interest, input

What We're Learning About...

# STAFF PRACTICES AND KEY YOUTH EXPERIENCES



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# Method

- Use evidence base to identify practices
- Invite expert organizations
- Analyze content of data in applications
- Subject content to review by expert practitioners
- Conduct interviews
- Conduct content analyses

... Repeat

# Expert Groups

- **Read** the standards in your domain
- **Discuss** within your group:
  - What resonates with you?
  - What stands out?
  - What questions are raised?
- **Prepare** to share important points with the full group in a 1-2 presentation.

What We're Learning About...

# **SUPPORTING STAFF THAT SERVE VULNERABLE YOUTH**



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# Trauma (staff definitions)

- The emotional impact that some catalyst has on your psyche.
- Some deep painful experience that someone has gone through that has altered their life in a painful way.
- Trauma equates to their life being altered in some type of way... in a way that I can't affect, I can't do anything about it.
- An event or circumstance that negatively impacted the quality of life of whoever experienced it.



# Trauma (examples)

- High levels of toxic stress
- Misdiagnosed learning issues
- Losing someone to death or suicide
- Violence
- Family member who is alcoholic or on drugs
- Poverty - basic needs not met
- Abuse – physical, sexual (assault, molestation, trafficking)
- Prison
- Sexual identity (of youth or their parents)

# Staff Supports

- Program structure
- Ongoing (daily) conversations about how to best support individual youth
- Shared professional development experiences
- Encouragement to maintain a work-life balance and self care (e.g., time off)
- Group decisions and behavior modeled by supervisors
- In times of acute need, counselors for staff
- Exposure to new ideas (e.g., brown bag presentations from peers, networking with other providers, videos, books, research)

What We're Learning About...

# SEL MEASURES



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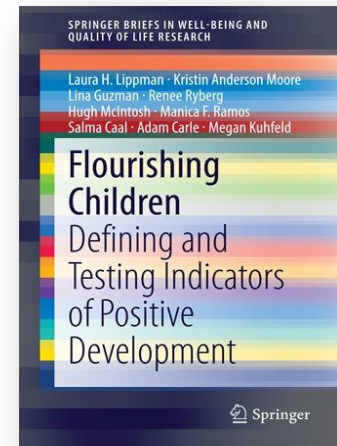
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# Measure Development

- Goal is to put performance reports in the hands of people who can make change.
- **Belief** measures (youth report) provide context.
- **Behavior** measures (staff rating) may provide insight on both youth skill attainment and program design. Iterative development process with SEL program experts.
  - Identified a hierarchy of skill demonstration to (hopefully) detect change over time.

# Efficacy Beliefs: Child Trends' Flourishing Measures



## Emotion Management

Emotional Reappraisal (6 items) *"I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in"* [Emotion Regulation Questionnaire]

## Empathy/ Teamwork

Adolescent Empathy (4 items) *"It is important to me to understand how other people feel"*  
Adolescent Social Competency (9 items) *"I avoid making other kids look bad"*

## Responsibility

Adolescent Diligence and Reliability (7 items) *"Do you work harder than others your age?"*

## Grit/Initiative

Adolescent Initiative Taking (4 items) *"I like coming up with new ways to solve problems"*

## Agency

Adolescent Goal Orientation (7 items) *"I know how to make my plans happen"*



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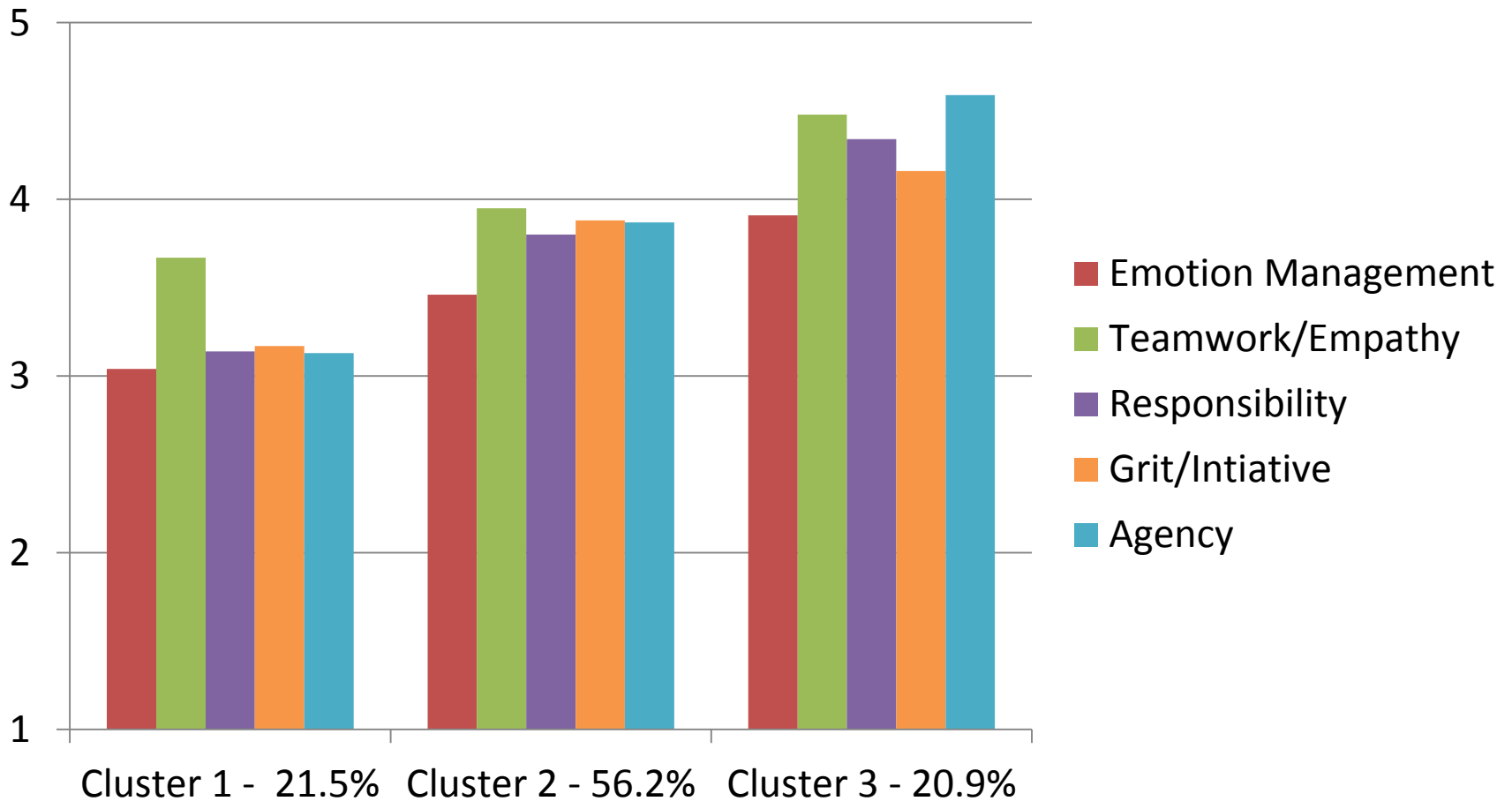


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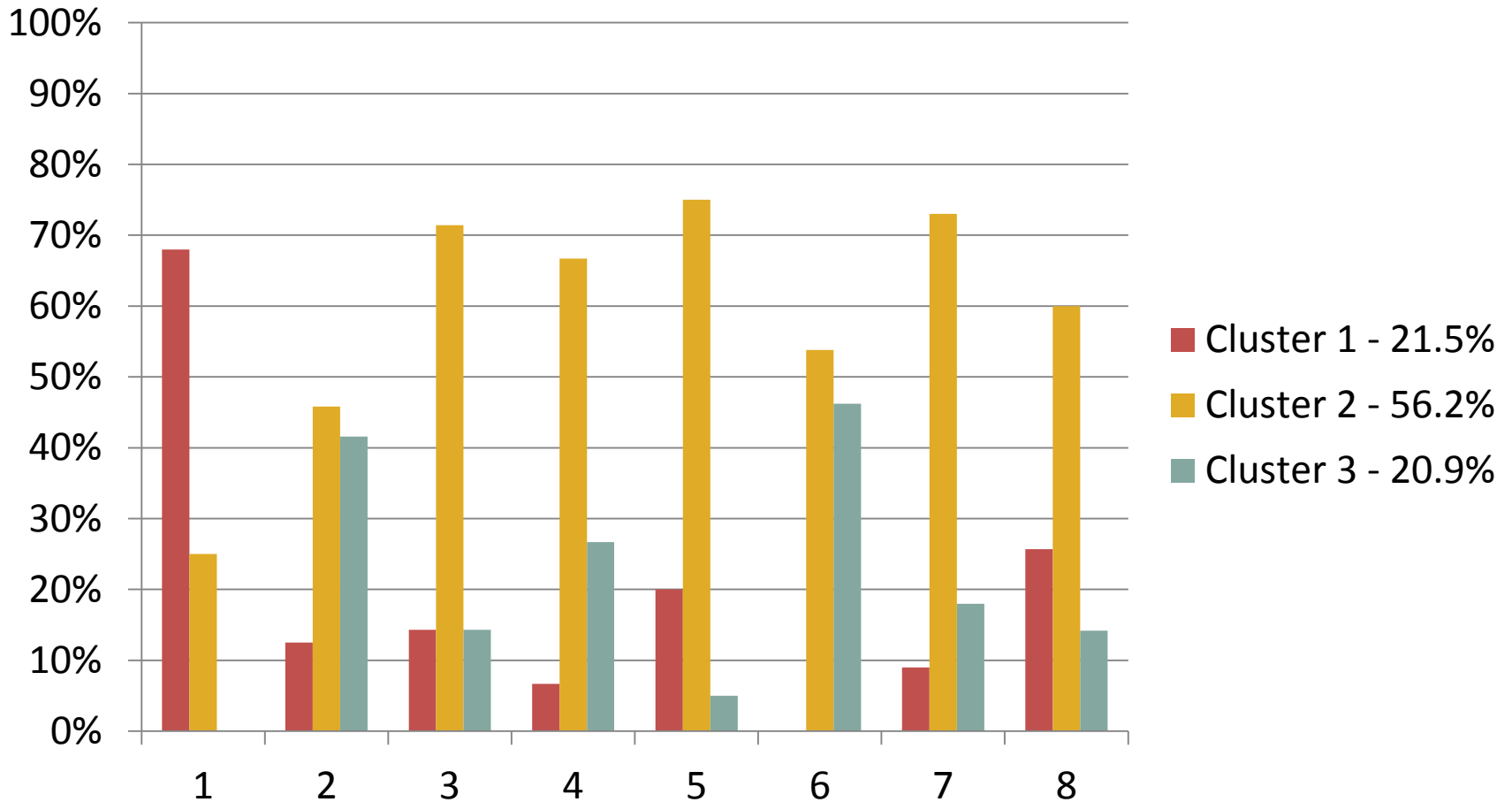
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# Belief profiles



# Belief profiles across sites



# Behavioral Indicators

## **Emotion Management**

- Identify positive and negative emotions
- Reason about causes and uses of emotion
- Manage emotions for functional purpose

## **Empathy/ Teamwork**

- Values own/others perspectives and stories with sensitivity to context
- Practices respectful and effective communication within a team
- Coordinates and supports action toward team goals

## **Responsibility**

- Fulfills roles and commitments
- Successfully defines, adjusts, and negotiates roles and commitments when required

## **Grit/Initiative**

- Develops and hones motivation for the OST task
- Perseveres through internal and external circumstances that challenge the OST work

## **Agency**

- Intentionally learns OST-related methods and tools
- Uses problem-solving skills to develop, evaluate, and adopt a course of action
- Successfully manages time
- Connects with external stakeholders
- Reflects on learning and significance of results



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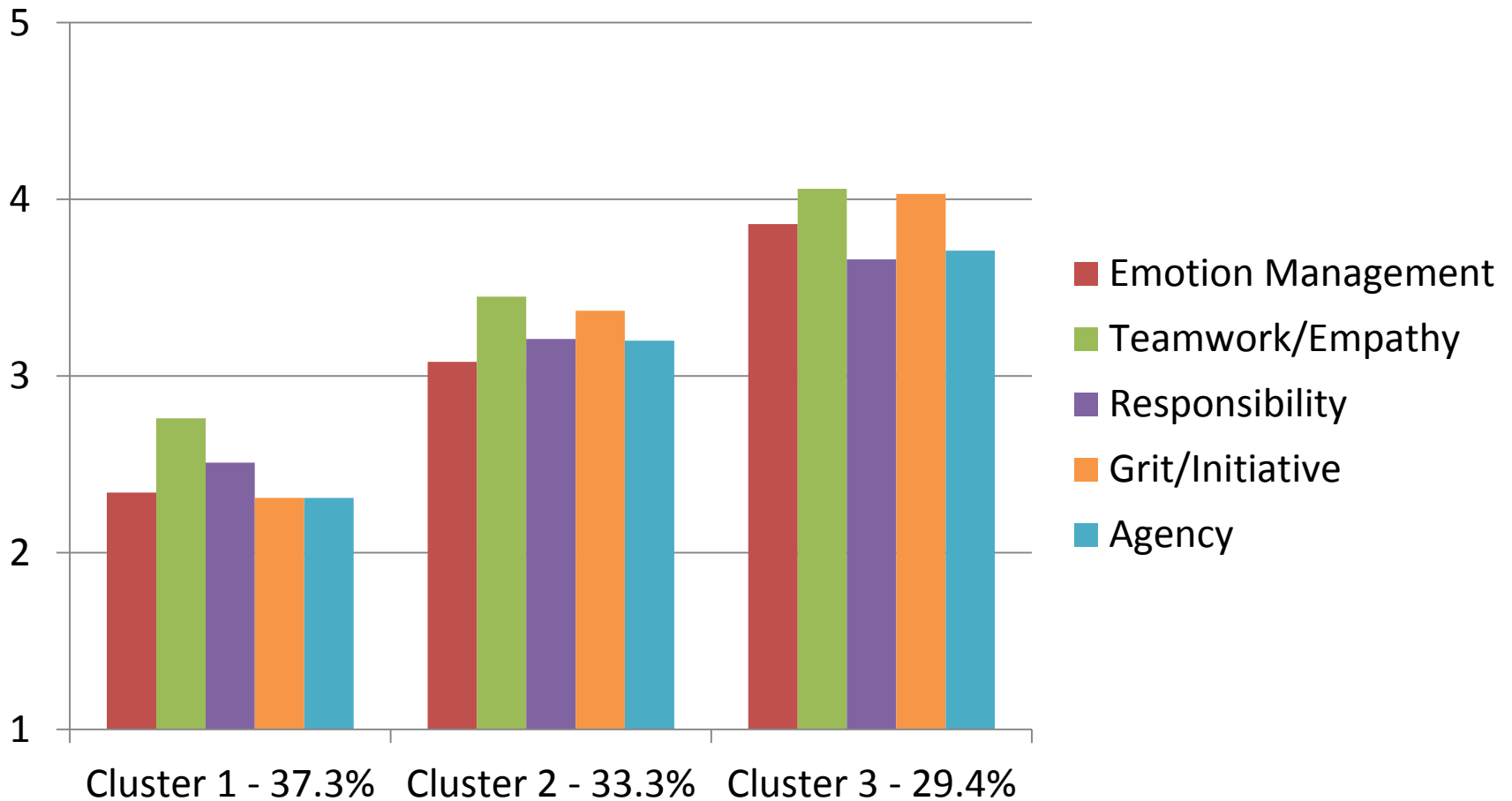
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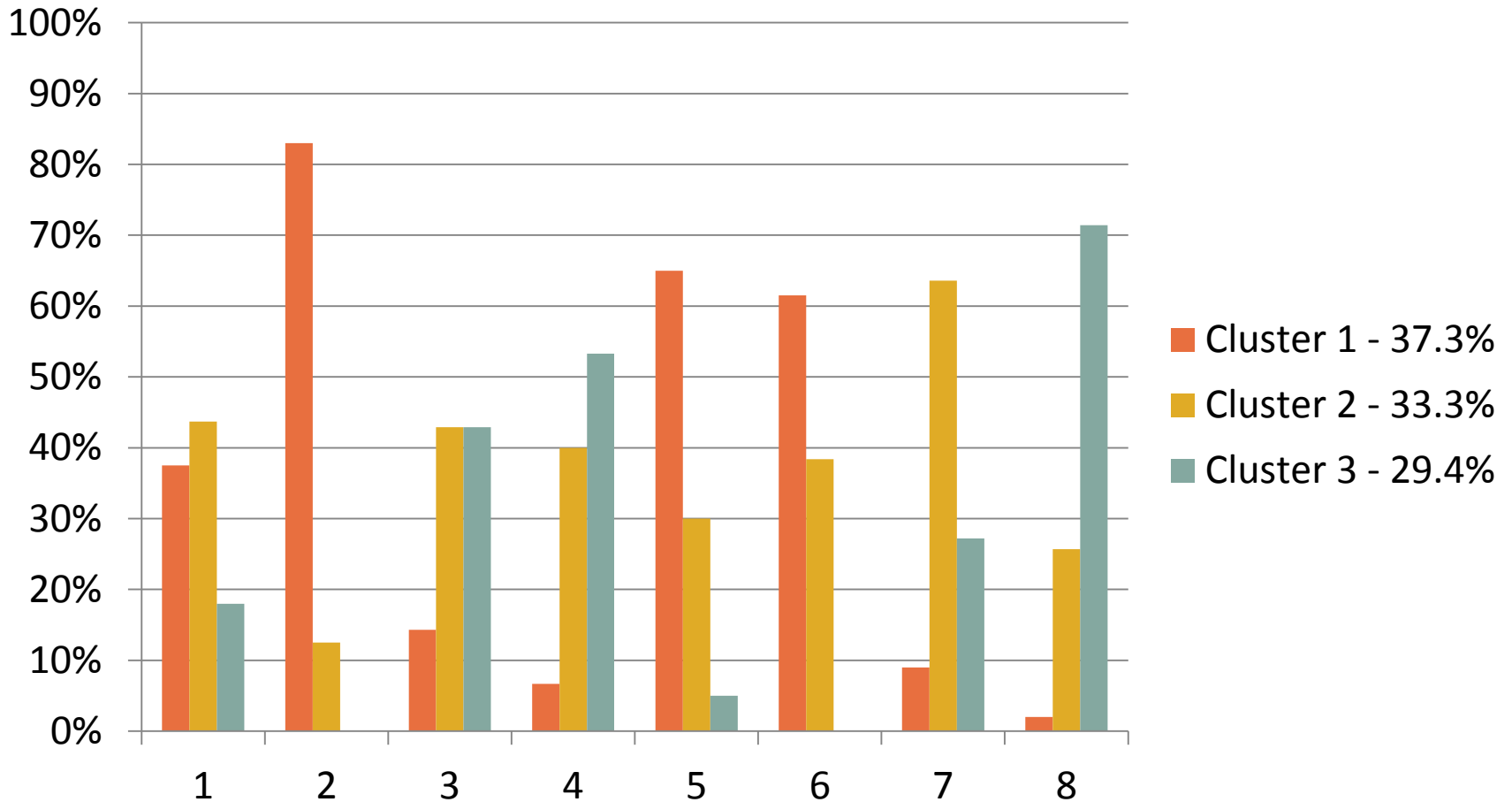




# Behavior profiles



# Behavior profiles across sites



# Stay Connected

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- Tweet about your session! #Rb21
- Contact us at:
  - Gina McGovern [gina@cyqp.org](mailto:gina@cyqp.org)
  - Kiley Bednar [kiley@forumfyi.org](mailto:kiley@forumfyi.org)