



# Final Report

## CIF Evaluation

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# Introduction

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is an internationally-recognized program that supports positive youth development, primarily through mentorship programs that pair mentees with adult mentors in their community. In Saskatchewan, several organizations provide such programs to children and youth mentees in multiple communities, with a focus on facilitating healthy relationships.

This report, in line with previous evaluation work and reports prepared for the Community Initiative Fund (CIF), seeks to understand the outcomes experienced by participating mentees. Specifically, this evaluation process continued to use the Developmental Relationships (DR) model to help identify and categorize key outcomes in the following five areas:

1. **Express Care** - Show me that I matter to you
  - Be Dependable - Be someone I can trust
  - Listen - Really pay attention when we are together
  - Believe in Me - Make me feel known and valued
  - Be Warm - Show me you enjoy being with me
  - Encourage - Praise me for my efforts and achievement
2. **Challenge Growth** - Push me to keep getting better
  - Expect My Best - Expect me to live up to my potential
  - Stretch - Push me to go further
  - Reflect on Failures - Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks
  - Hold Me Accountable - Insist I take responsibility for my actions
3. **Provide Support** - Complete tasks and achieve goals
  - Navigate - Guide me through hard situations and systems
  - Empower - Build my confidence to take charge of my life
  - Advocate - Defend me when I need it
  - Set Boundaries - Put in place limits that keep me on track
4. **Share Power** - Treat me with respect and give me a say
  - Respect Me - Take me seriously and treat me fairly
  - Include Me - Involved me in decisions that affect me
  - Collaborate - Work with me to solve problems and reach goals
  - Let Me Lead - Create opportunities for me to take action and lead
5. **Expand Possibilities** - Connect me with people and place that broaden my world
  - Broaden Horizons - Expose me to new ideas, experiences and places
  - Inspire - Inspire me to see possibilities for my future
  - Connect - Introduce me to more people who can help me develop and thrive

# Process

The evaluation process was designed to answer three key evaluative questions in relation to mentees’ involvement with BBBS mentoring programs, as listed below. Each question is also associated with one or more DR area, indicated in brackets.

1. Did mentees develop their social, emotional, language, and communication skills? (Challenge Growth, Express Care)
2. Did mentees participate in learning, culture, and recreation programs? (Expand Possibilities)
3. Did mentees gain the knowledge, skills, and supports to develop positive mental health, self-esteem, and healthy lifestyle behaviours? (Share Power, Provide Support)

The primary source of data used to answer these questions was an online survey that was sent by BBBS site staff to the following groups:

- Children and youth participating in BBBS programming (**mentees**)
- Volunteer **mentors**
- Parents, guardians, and teachers of BBBS mentees (**parents / guardians / teachers**)

Each group received a separate version of the survey, with minor language changes to reflect their role. Additionally, the parents / guardians / teachers group received additional questions as described below.

Participants were provided the option of entering a draw for a gift card by providing their name and contact information at the end of the survey. This information, along with any personally-identifiable information in the responses, was removed from their responses as part of the data collation and analysis phase.

The survey was open for responses in March and April of 2023. The table below provides the number of completed responses for each group, categorized by BBBS program site.

Site	Mentees	Mentors	Parents / guardians / teachers	Total Responses
Humboldt	0	3	1	4
Lloydminster	10	12	13	35
Moose Jaw	2	4	5	11
Prince Albert	0	4	1	5
Regina (BBBS)	11	17	24	52

Site	Mentees	Mentors	Parents / guardians / teachers	Total Responses
Regina (YWCA)	2	11	9	22
Saskatoon	13	43	17	73
The Battlefords	0	1	1	2
Weyburn	1	5	1	7
Yorkton	5	17	4	26

### Survey Design

Inspired by the Most Significant Change (MSC) method, all participants were asked the following open-ended questions:

- Since the first time you met your mentee, what would you say has been the biggest personal growth that you’ve seen in your mentee<sup>1</sup>?
- In your opinion, why do you think that growth you just described matters? Why is it significant?

The responses to these questions were coded according to the three evaluation questions and the associated DR areas, with the total number of responses categorized as follows:

	Mentees	Mentors	Parents / guardians / teachers	Total Responses
Challenge Growth / Express Care	25	75	34	134
Expand Possibilities	6	18	13	37
Share Power / Provide Support	6	31	16	53

Additionally, those who completed the parents / guardians / teachers survey were asked to rate the changes they had seen in mentees, by indicating how much they agreed with statements such as “Since starting the program, my child/grandchild/student has more self-confidence.” Similar to the MSC coding, each rating statement is associated with one of the evaluation questions and the associated DR areas (see Appendix for the full list).

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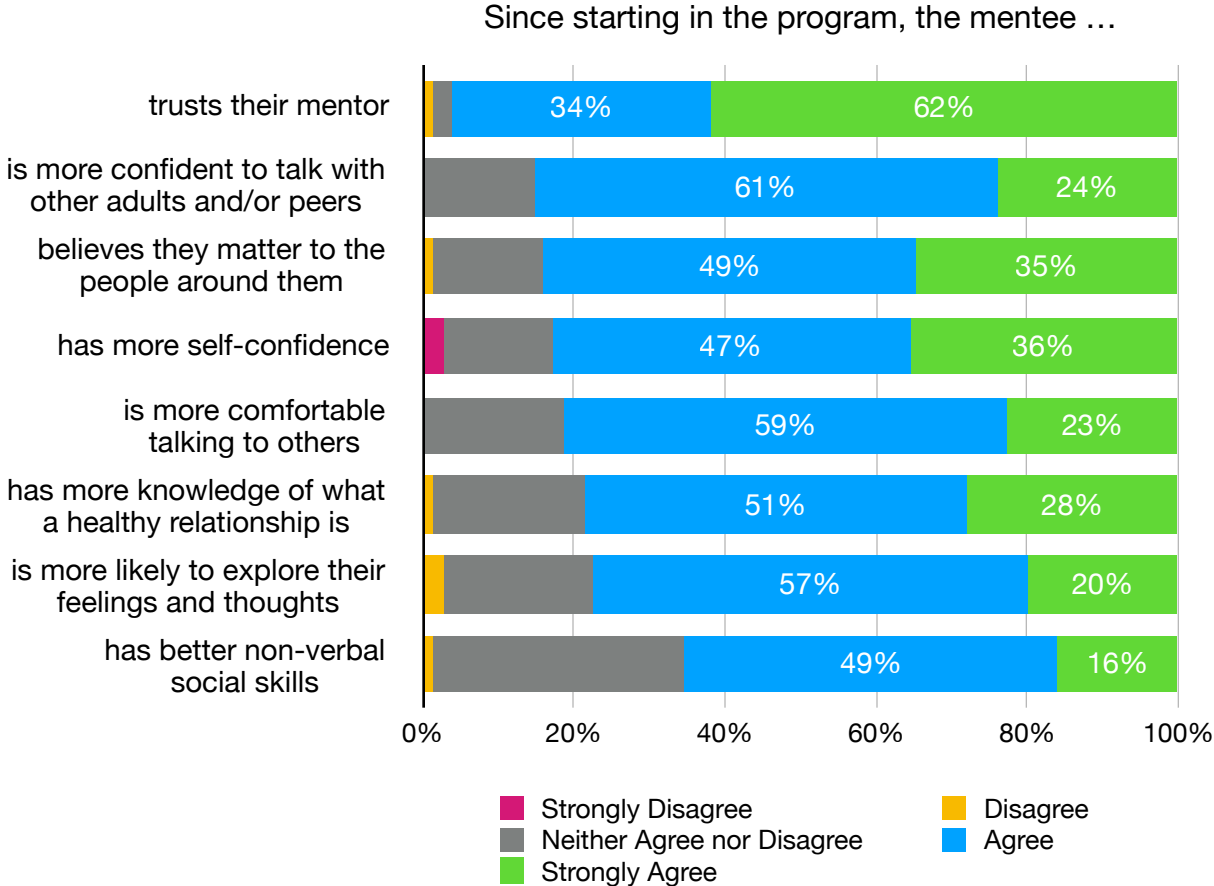
<sup>1</sup> The language of this question was modified appropriately for the mentee and parent / guardian / teacher versions of the survey.

# Findings

This section provides an overview of the survey and MSC results as they pertain to the three evaluation questions. Each question includes a summary of related survey ratings from parents / guardians / teachers and select MSC responses<sup>2</sup> that highlight key themes. In analyzing the data, we looked primarily at areas of congruence between the data provided by the three groups (mentees, mentors, parents / guardians / teachers) as well as any notable differences or unique findings.

## Did mentees develop their social, emotional, language, and communication skills?

In line with the results from previous years and as demonstrated by the chart below, some of the most positive ratings were connected to the area of development of positive relationships, social-emotional skills, and self-confidence.



<sup>2</sup> Note that for some of the MSC responses below, some text may have been replaced or removed to aid in comprehension or take out personal identifiers while taking care not to change the meaning of the responses. The responses are otherwise presented verbatim.

One commonly mentioned key outcome was the **development of trust and comfort with others**, particularly between mentees and their mentors. As the above chart demonstrates, nearly all parent / guardian / teacher survey respondents reported seeing that trusting mentorship relationship, with similar results for improved confidence in engaging with other adults and their peers and talking with people in general. Similarly, the MSC responses spoke to the building of trust and “coming out of their shell”, as the quotes below illustrate.

*i met her when i was 11 maybe 12, so i was still learning how to socialize and grow, but i noticed that i'm better at opening up about my interests and i'm not as afraid to ask questions. (Mentee)*

*I have seen the biggest personal growth in the area of my daughter developing a close, trusting relationship with an adult, other than myself. It is important because she has struggled with being abandoned by trusted adults in her life previously, and me being the one constant adult that she is very close to. (Parent / guardian / teacher)*

Similarly, the development or improvement of **social, emotional, and communication skills** were frequently mentioned, including growth in emotional self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

*She has really come out of her shell; at the beginning she was timid and didn't offer much conversation, but as she has become more comfortable she has become more involved and started initiating conversations. It's significant because conversation-making and socializing are skills that will be valuable in all facets of life. (Mentor)*

*More talkative and social with others. It matters because socializing and not being shy with others is a very important and good skill to have (Mentee)*

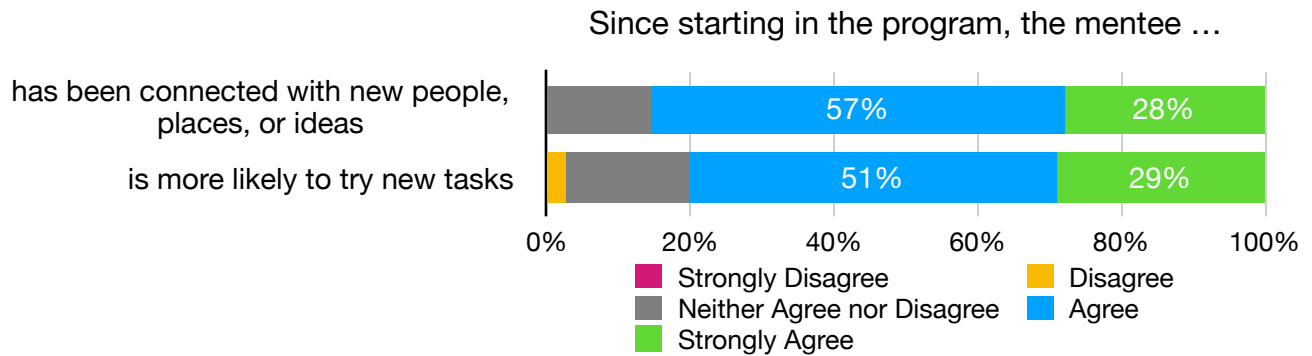
*Her being more self aware of how she is feeling and how those feelings impact her actions. Self awareness and making links between your feelings and actions shows emotional intelligence. This helps grow self confidence and plays an important role in building relationships with others. (Mentor)*

Taken together, these benefits culminate in improved **self-confidence**, as the following quote highlights:

*She is more confident when speaking with others ... she is able to verbalize her thoughts and feelings better. When she tells me her thoughts and feelings, positive or negative, it brings me into her world and her experiences and allows me the opportunity to help or to just be there to experience it with her. (Parent / guardian / teacher)*

## Did mentees participate in learning, culture, and recreation programs?

Outcomes related to increasing openness to and participation in new activities also saw positive responses, if not to the same extent as was reported in the previous section: this result may reflect the local context in 2022-2023, where organized group activities had not fully resumed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



MSC responses spoke to benefits such as eagerness to try new activities or learn new things, showing less fear or getting out of one’s “comfort zone”, and in the case of one older youth, increased awareness of possibilities for life after graduation.

*I find it easier to talk to new people and to go to different places ... I never could do what I can now (Mentee)*

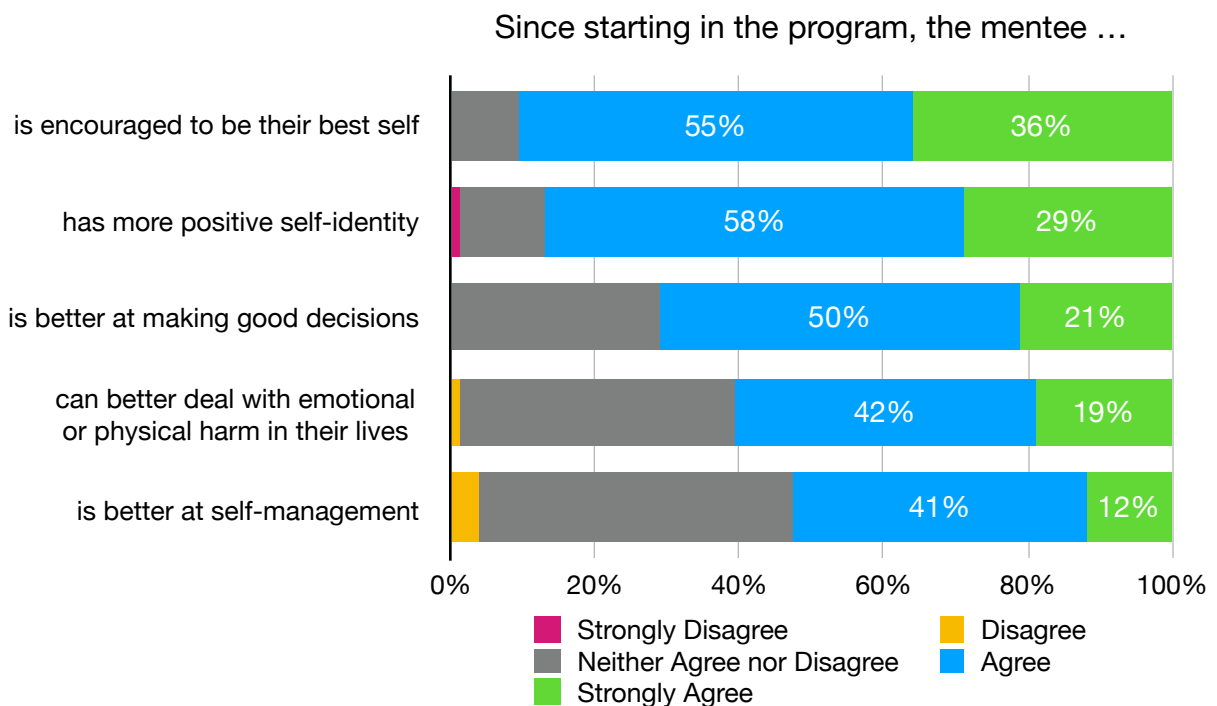
*Trying new things. It helps get her out of her comfort zone and know that sometimes trying something new can create a new hobby, new friends and new knowledge. (Parent / guardian / teacher)*

*Their horizons, ambitions, and ideas about what they might be able to do in their life have really widened. They're excited about post-secondary education and making plans to move forward ... They're capable of finding things they can do well and goals that matter to them but wouldn't bother if they didn't realize that they are capable and that those possibilities exist. (Mentor)*



## Did mentees gain the knowledge, skills, and supports to develop positive mental health, self-esteem, and healthy lifestyle behaviours?

The third evaluation question focuses on positive self-development, including self-identity, handling challenges, and making positive life decisions. While survey responses related to mentees being their “best self” and having a positive self-identity showed high ratings, others in this area had a relatively large number of “Neither Agree nor Disagree”. It is possible that these neutral responses reflect areas of growth that are more likely to occur with older youth or for those who have been matched for several years, as opposed to mentees who are newer to the program.



MSC responses focused on personal growth, including being able to trust themselves and understand and articulate their own needs.

*that growth matters to me because it taught me to recognize my needs and that it's okay to communicate and be curious and how to express it. that is important because in society, it's a good thing to have to ability to be open and expressive. (Mentee)*

*It's crazy the difference I have seen her grow. She has become more independent, and her coming into her personality ... Making that transition from a child to a teenager. (Mentor)*

*I would say that the biggest personal growth that I have seen in my mentee is greater trust in herself and her perspective. I believe that the growth described matters as cultivating a good relationship with yourself at a young age is crucial for wellbeing as she gets older too. (Mentor)*

## Comparison with 2022 Results

A similar evaluation was conducted for BBBS in 2022 by Micheal Heimlick of Reciprocal Consulting. As the same types of questions and question wording was used in the current evaluation, we were able to compare results for the rating questions between the two years.

Overall, **the results were comparable between 2022 and 2023**. The percentage of “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” ratings from parents, guardians, and teachers<sup>3</sup> across all areas of growth was 79% in 2023, representing a small decline from 82% in 2022. In terms of specific questions, “has been connected with new people, places, or ideas” (Expand Possibilities) showed a 13% decline in “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” responses from 2022 to 2023, and “has more knowledge of what a healthy relationship is” (Challenge Growth / Express Care) showed a similar drop of 11% between the two years. Conversely, “more confident to talk with other adults and/or peers” (Challenge Growth / Express Care) showed a 6% increase in 2023 compared to 2022.

It is unclear from the available data, including the MSC results, what could be the potential cause of this slight decline between the two years. As the overall difference was relatively small, it could represent natural variability based on who completed the survey in the two years. It is also important to note that both years showed very low rates of “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” (at most in the 2-4% range for a small number of questions), indicating that the variability reflects differences in the “Neither Agree nor Disagree” category.

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<sup>3</sup> Teachers were only included in 2023

## Additional Findings

In addition to the insights related to the DR areas, the evaluation identified two further insights from the open-ended MSC responses.

### Interest in School

Several responses identified positive changes to mentees' feelings and attitudes towards school over the course of the mentorship. As the quotes below highlight, parents, guardians, teachers and mentors saw an increased interest and excitement in attending school for some mentees, along with having "a better attitude" towards school and being happy in the school environment. For some mentees, this association was connected to an interest in future possibilities and recognizing the role that education plays in achieving one's goals.

*Excitement about going to school and being more present within the school. She did not want to be at school as much until she started the program, she seems generally happier about going and that gets me excited. I want my daughter to have a good school experience and believe this will improve it. (Parent / guardian / teacher)*

*She has also become much more excited about reading and doing well in school, which is very exciting. She seems excited about things in the future and looks forward to high school. As my mentee is about to enter high school, it is really important that she sees the value in education. (Mentor)*

In addition to these benefits, mentees also noted that the connection between the mentorship program and school provided additional motivation to attend school. One mentee specifically noted that they were proud to attend school when cousins their age did not and that mentoring was the reason for their continued attendance.

*I think it's just made me feel better about school. It helps to refresh my mind. I think it's important because when I don't like school, I know I have to come so I can see my mentor. (Mentee)*

## Benefits of Same-gender Mentors

Connecting with a mentor of the same gender was identified as a benefit for some mentees, particularly those who did not have access to such a role model in their home life. Some of these comments spoke to modelling healthy relationships and ways of behaviour, particularly for male participants, along with being able to engage in typically same-gender activities.

*So my son understands the right from wrong as he is growing up. I can't give him what he needs from a male. So he having a big brother to look up to and see is wonderful.*  
(Parent / guardian / teacher)

*My dad isn't a big part of my [life] and I need a male role model to do fun things with me that my dad won't* (Mentee)

*Getting more in touch with their girly side coming from a single father home other female contact is essential* (Parent / guardian / teacher)

*It's important because now he has a fantastic male influence in his love that shows him how to treat people (women) the way their supposed to be treated.* (Parent / guardian / teacher)

# Conclusion and Recommendation

Overall, the evaluation supports the conclusion that the evaluated BBBS programs are contributing to positive outcomes for participating children and youth in the DR areas. Based on both the quantitative ratings made by parents / guardians / teachers through the survey and the MSC responses provided by that group along with mentees and mentors, there is clear evidence that many mentees showed growth in their emotional, social, and communication skills, self-confidence, ability to trust mentors and other adults, and willingness to try new things. Data related to older mentees in particular also suggest benefits related to positive self-identity, independence, and goal-setting.

The evaluation data did not identify any specific suggestions or areas to focus on for program improvement. As noted in the Findings section, some rating questions showed relatively fewer positive ratings, particularly those related to specific skills such as non-verbal social skills and time management or scenarios such as dealing with emotional or physical harms. Given the higher number of neutral (“Neither Agree nor Disagree”) responses for those items, these responses likely represent the area not being applicable for the mentee given their age or life circumstances or the respondent not being able to recall more subtly changes such as non-verbal skills.

Accordingly, our primary recommendation focuses on how to support future evaluation work and thus ongoing learning and development for the program. Specifically, we recommend that BBBS consider revisiting their **Theory of Change** for the mentoring program. By showing how desired short- and long-term outcomes are connected to mentoring activities, a Theory of Change demonstrates how activities such as building trust between mentees and mentors can lead to outcomes like increased trust between mentees and other adults, growth in social skills, and higher levels of engagement with school, and ultimately to goals such as positive youth development. A Theory of Change also helps focus future evaluation work by identifying data indicators for relevant outcomes. Finally, when anticipated outcomes are not realized, a Theory of Change can be used to help identify mistaken assumptions or previously-unknown factors and thus contribute to improvements to the program delivery model.

Currently, BBBS utilizes a Theory of Change that includes the five DR areas as a key component linking activities to desired outcomes. We suggest reviewing the current Theory of Change in light of these evaluation results as well as additional factors such as mentee age, number of years matched with a specific mentor, and presence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to better understand how the five DR areas connect to BBBS activities, processes, and key outcomes.

We conclude this report with the experiences shared by a mentor:

*My mentee has developed a solid sense of self discovery and awareness. They've been able to become confident enough to stand up for themselves and others, and have begun to identify times when they need more support. The growth my mentee has had is one of the hardest things to develop and is something that can never be perfected and the fact that at such a young age my mentee has shown significant development within self identification has made many within their life very proud.*

# Appendix: Survey Rating Questions

On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

(Note: each statement started with “Since starting the program, my child/grandchild/student ...”

Question	DR Area
has more self-confidence has more confident to talk with other adults and/or peers is more likely to explore their feelings and thoughts is more comfortable talking to others (e.g., talk more often to friends and adults) trusts their mentor has more knowledge of what a healthy relationship is has better non-verbal social skills (e.g., eye contact, body language) believes they matter to the people around them (feel understood and valued)	Challenge Growth / Express Care
is more likely to try new tasks has been connected with new people, places, or ideas	Expand Possibilities
has a more positive self-identity. (e.g., happy, confident, believe in themselves) is better at making good decisions is better at self-management (time management, emotional regulation, etc.) can better deal with emotional or physical harm in their lives is encouraged to be their best self	Share Power / Provide Support