

Community Needs Assessment in Experiential Learning

Produced by CESI and Student Life for the University of Guelph's Experiential Learning Hub
Infographic created by Sarah Cahill, 2018



Background Information

In spring 2018, the University of Guelph conducted a Community Needs Assessment around Experiential Learning (EL) Partnerships which consisted of two phases.



Phase One Online Survey

The survey asked past, current, and prospective community partners about their own needs and experiences in working with students, faculty, and staff through EL at the University of Guelph.

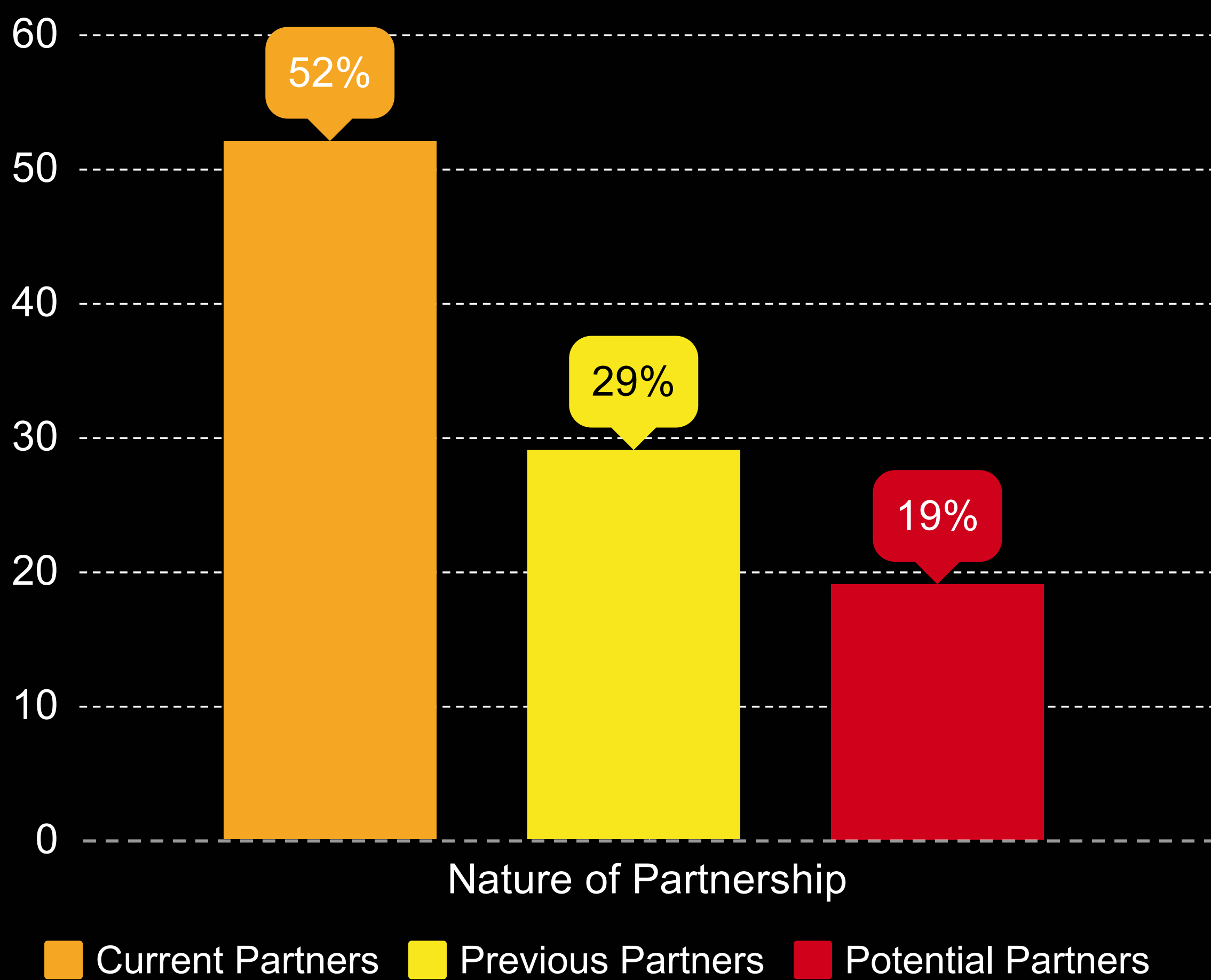


Phase Two Roundtable Discussions

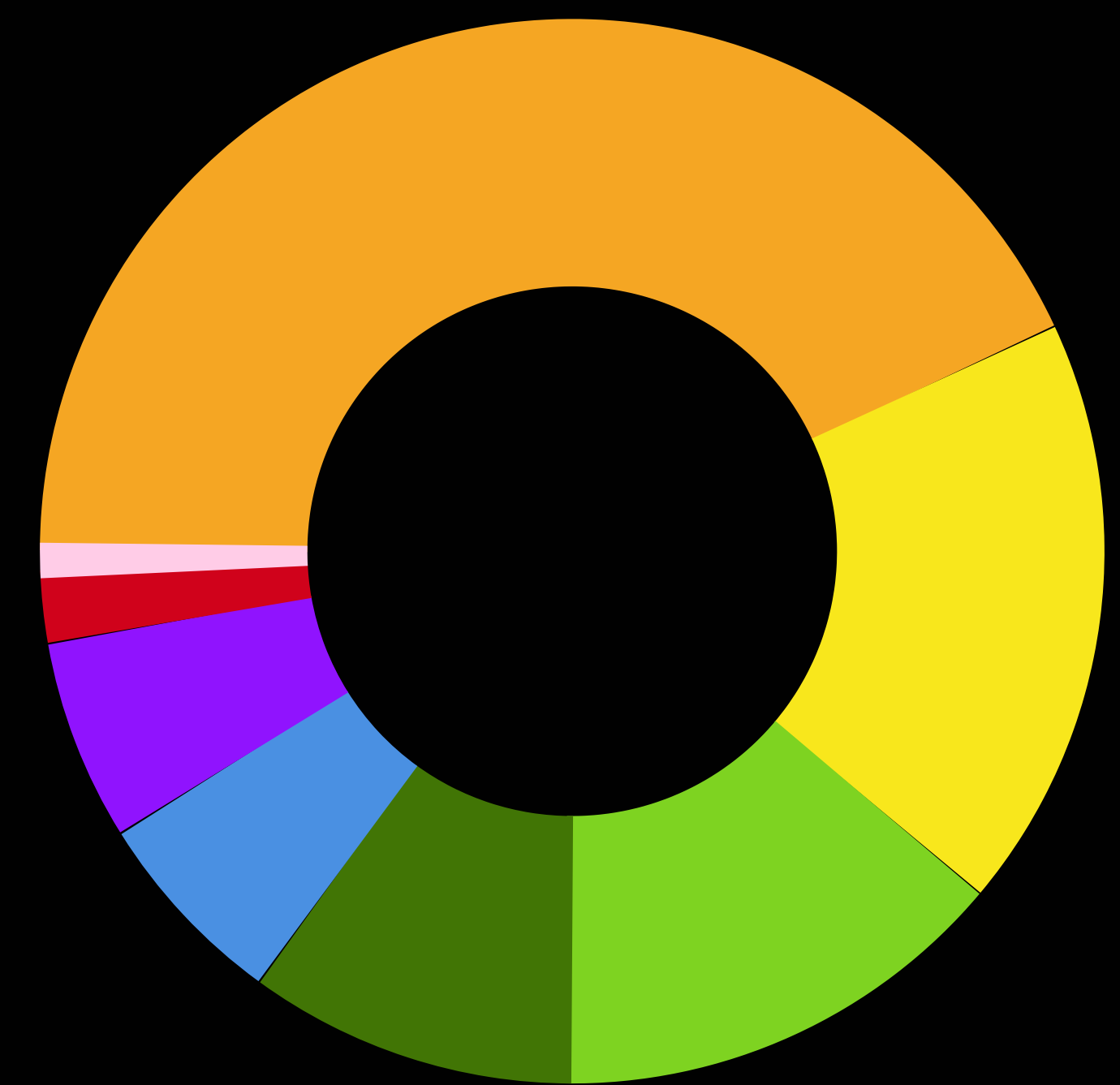
Representatives from community organizations engaged in roundtable discussions to address some of the key themes that emerged from the survey and to make recommendations.

Phase One: Survey Results

84 representatives from community organizations responded to the survey

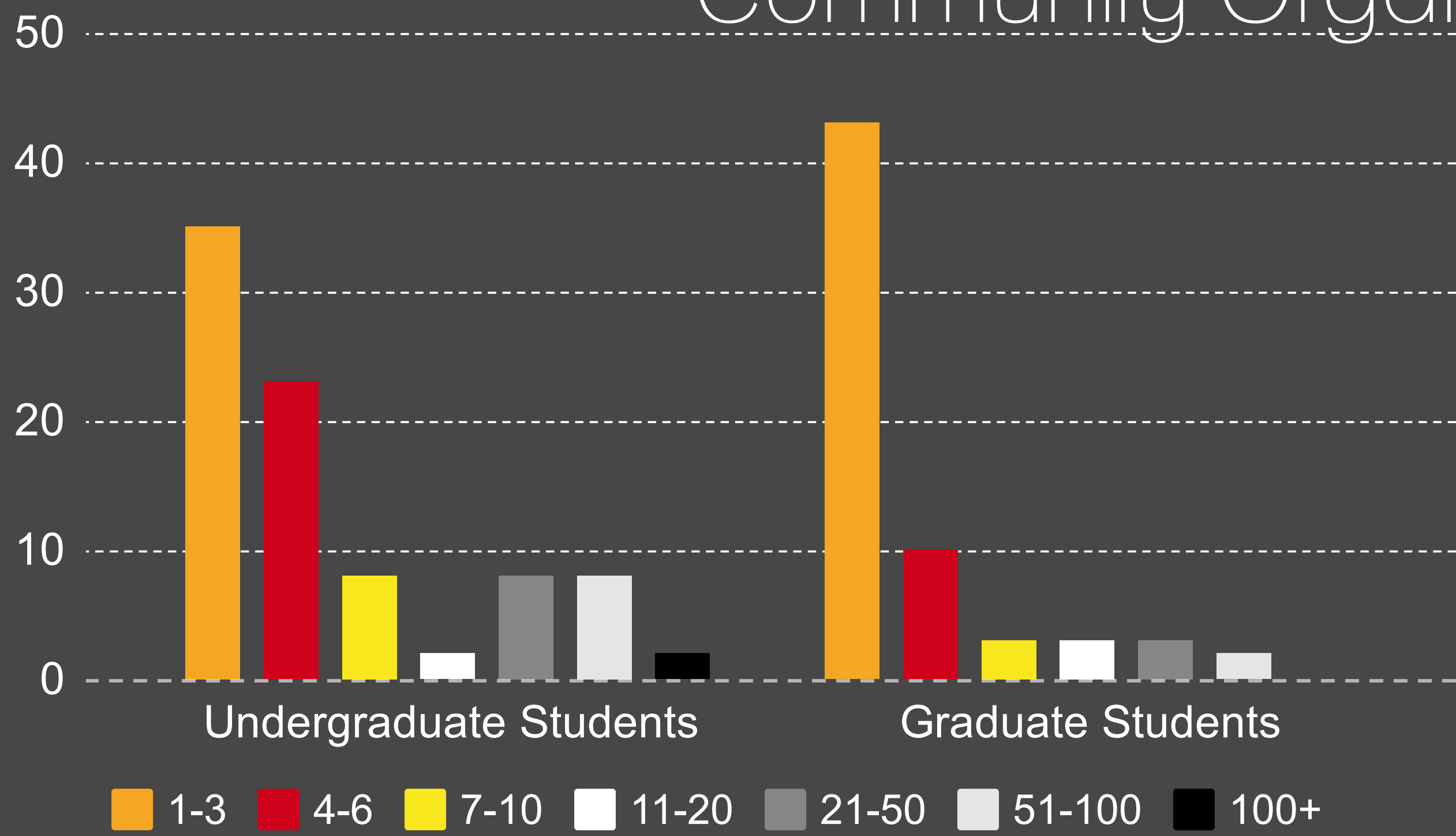


Community Partner Relationships



Existing Partnerships by College

Number of Students Participating in EL Activities at Community Organizations



Most community partners have between 1-3 students working at their organizations in an EL capacity

Top 6 student contributions provided to community organizations

- 1 Primary research
- 2 General support
- 3 Program delivery
- 4 Creation of program materials
- 5 Program Evaluation
- 6 Secondary Research

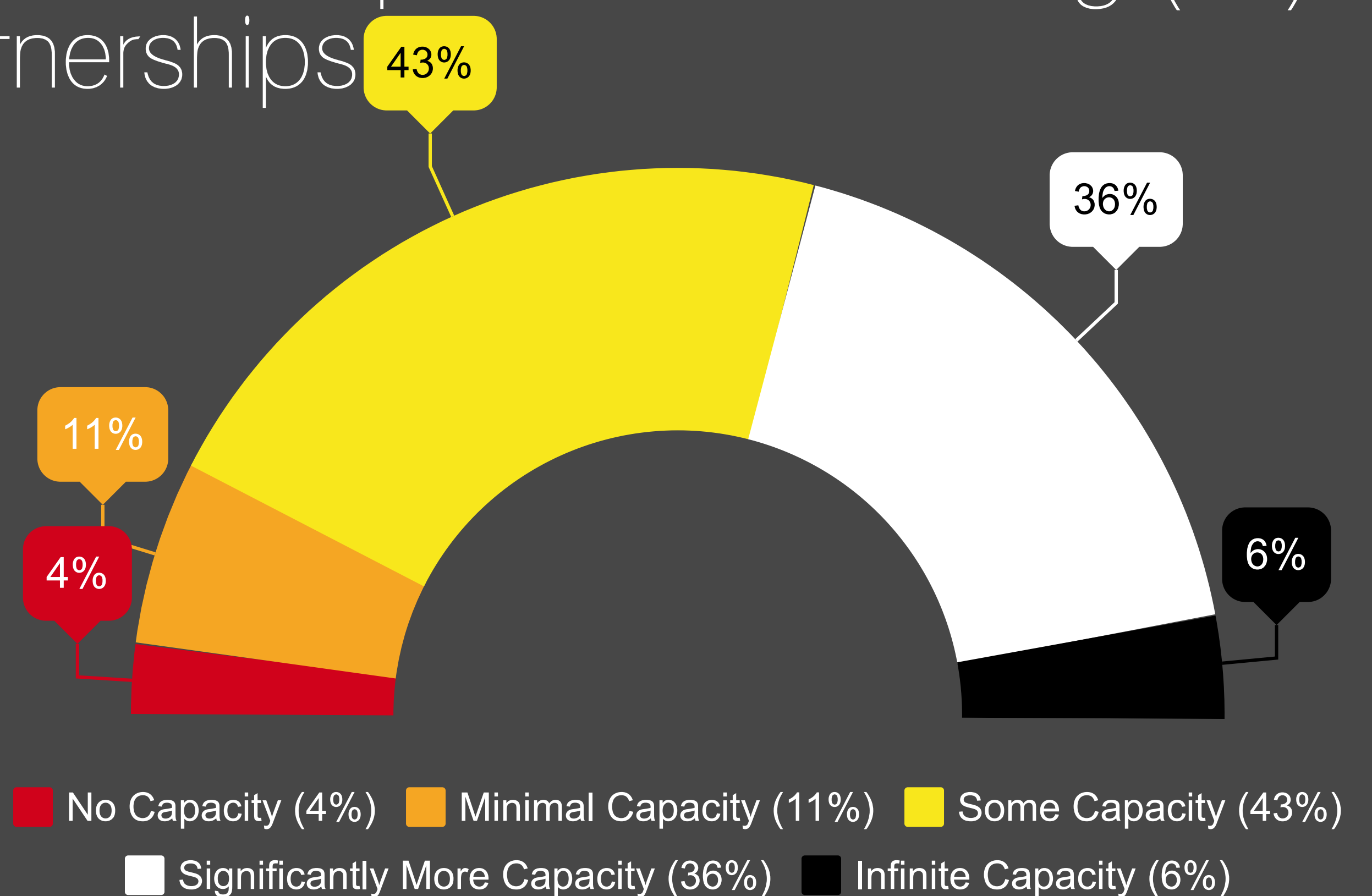
Top 6 student contributions needed by community organizations

- 1 Marketing and promotion
- 2 Primary research
- 3 Communications
- 4 General support
- 5 Event planning
- 6 Program Evaluation

Capacity of Current and Potential Experiential Learning (EL) Partnerships

85%

of current, past, and potential partners state that they have "some", "significantly more", or "infinite" capacity for EL growth in their organization



Benefits of Experiential Learning (EL) Partnerships

"Students bring fresh perspectives, youthful energy and knowledge of current best practices"

- Organizations said they gained knowledge and new perspectives through the experiential learning partnerships
- Benefits were derived from students' energy, knowledge, enthusiasm, and positive attitudes.
- Opportunities to mentor, teach, and help students grow was also viewed as a positive

94% of organizations agreed that involving students is positive

Current Challenges in Experiential Learning (EL) Partnerships



Making the Right Connections

Community partners expressed challenges around knowing who to contact at the university and/or who or what department is best to connect with across various types of partnerships and projects. Respondents identified a need for: support in facilitating connections and better matching of student skills with organizational needs; assistance with scoping appropriate and feasible partnership activities; and creating longer-term connections across multiple semesters.



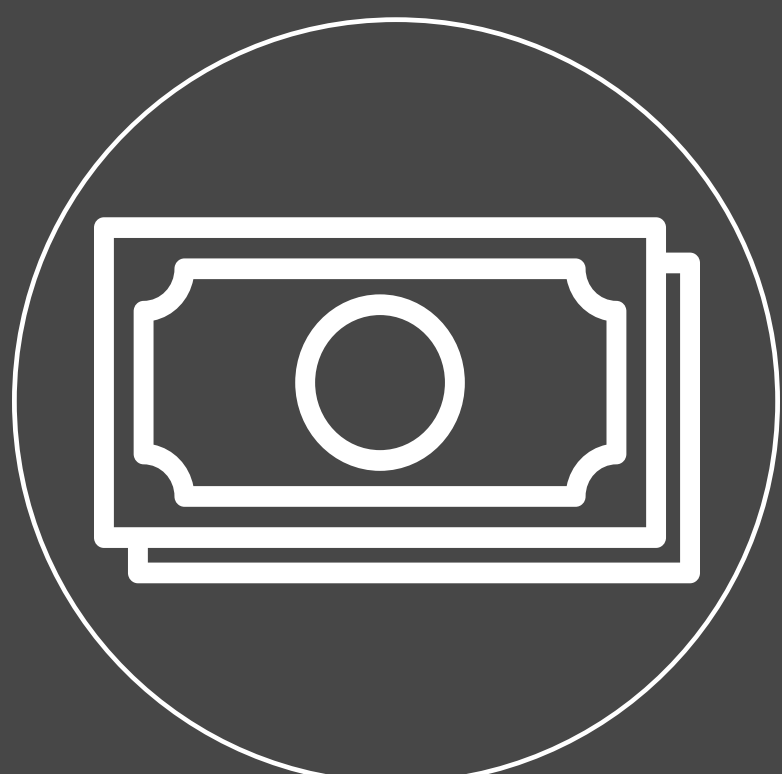
Student Preparedness

Community partners expressed that their experiences with students varied depending on students' level of motivation, skill, and professionalism. Sometimes students require more supervision and assistance than is practical, or struggle to work independently. Overall, major challenges included lack of staff, time, funds, and space to train/supervise students to the degree they often need.



Poor Quality Outputs/Results

Inconsistency of results was named as a main challenge, particularly when work produced was of poor quality and required significant supervisory time and energy. Respondents articulated a need for clear expectations between students and organizations, and student ownership and accountability for the quality of final products.



Resource Challenges

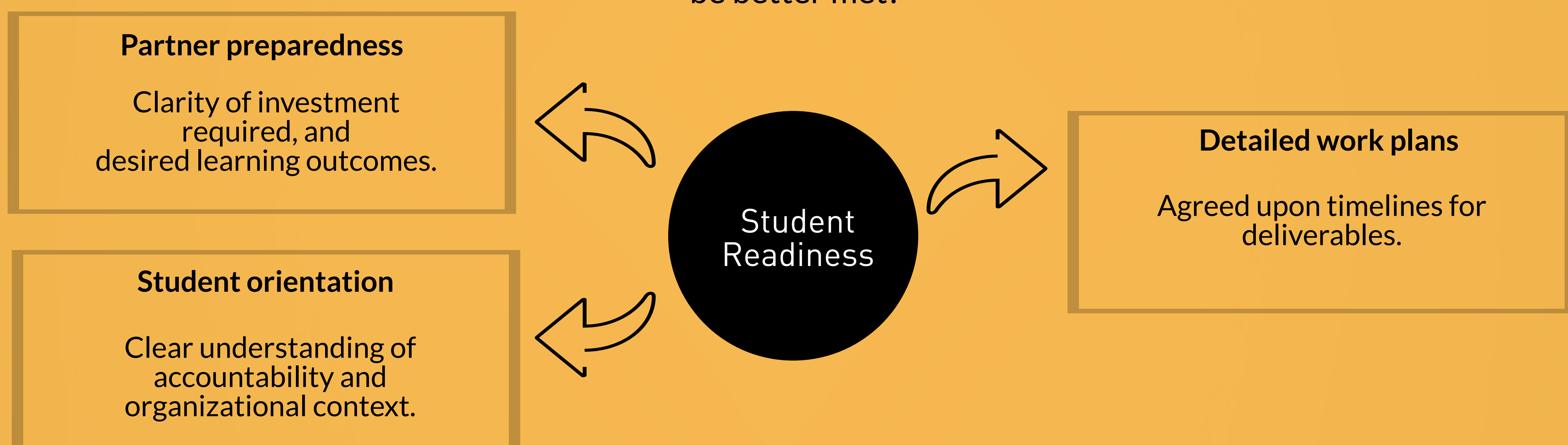
Respondents cited minimal/sporadic funding, limited physical space, limited staff as common resource issues related to capacity for experiential learning.

Phase Two: Community Roundtable

How can we ensure that partnerships connect the right people at the right time so that everyone gets what/who they need?



What level(s) of preparedness and/or supervision are reasonable to expect, and how can those expectations be better met?



How can we ensure that the resources required for effective campus-community partnerships are sufficient, and the investments of resources are aligned with the value of the results to all parties involved?



How can we maximize the likelihood that the intended outcomes for the student, the university and the community partner are consistently achieved?

