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*Green County Leaders & Braver Angels*  
**Skills for Bridging the Divide**  
Evaluation Analysis

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For the May Green County Leaders (GCL) session, GCL partnered with Braver Angels to hold a “Skills for Bridging the Divide” workshop. This workshop is a way to learn and practice skills for having more respectful and productive political conversations with people on the “other side.” This is not about changing perspectives on any policy, it is about having effective, civil conversations. Braver Angels is a national organization that uses family therapy-based research to depolarize America and build civil conversations.

There were 52 participants in the May session, and participants responded to pre and post session survey questions. Participants self-identified as either “lean red” or “lean blue.” No participant had previously participated in a Braver Angels workshop.



Participant responses indicated that there is division in communities.

- **People have concerns about their community's ability to have difficult conversations about community issues.**
  - Prior to the session, when asked how they feel about their community's ability to have difficult conversations about community issues, the majority of respondents graded the ability at a C+ or lower.
- **People are not regularly in conversations about political issues with people who hold political perspectives opposite of their own.**
  - Prior to the session, when asked how frequently they have conversations about political issues with people who hold political perspectives opposite of their own, the majority of respondents (47%) said "sometimes". The minority of respondents (16%) said "often", while the rest of the respondents (37%) said "rarely."

Participant responses also indicated that this program helps build the skills necessary to overcome divisions -- regardless of a person's self-identified political leaning.

- Participants shared increases in...
  - personal comfort levels with having conversations with people who hold different political perspectives than their own;
  - Confidence in their ability to set a constructive tone when starting conversations with someone who holds political perspectives opposite of their own;
  - Personal capability to listen to people who hold political perspectives opposite of their own in a way that they feel heard; and
  - Personal ability to express their own political views in a way that helps people who hold political perspectives opposite of their own hear them.

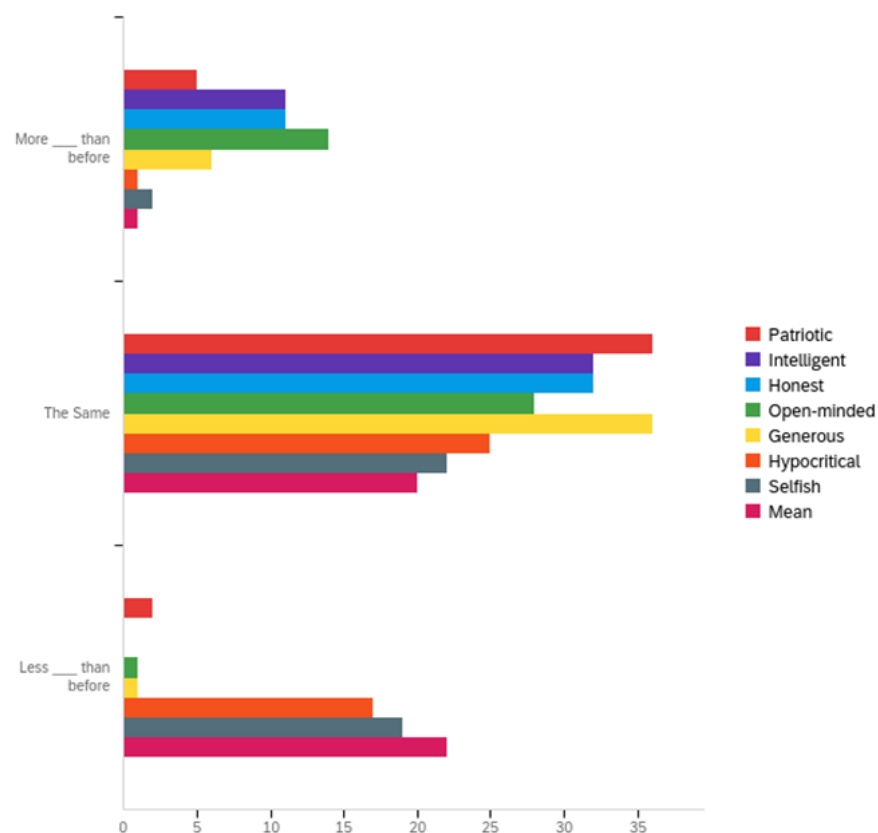
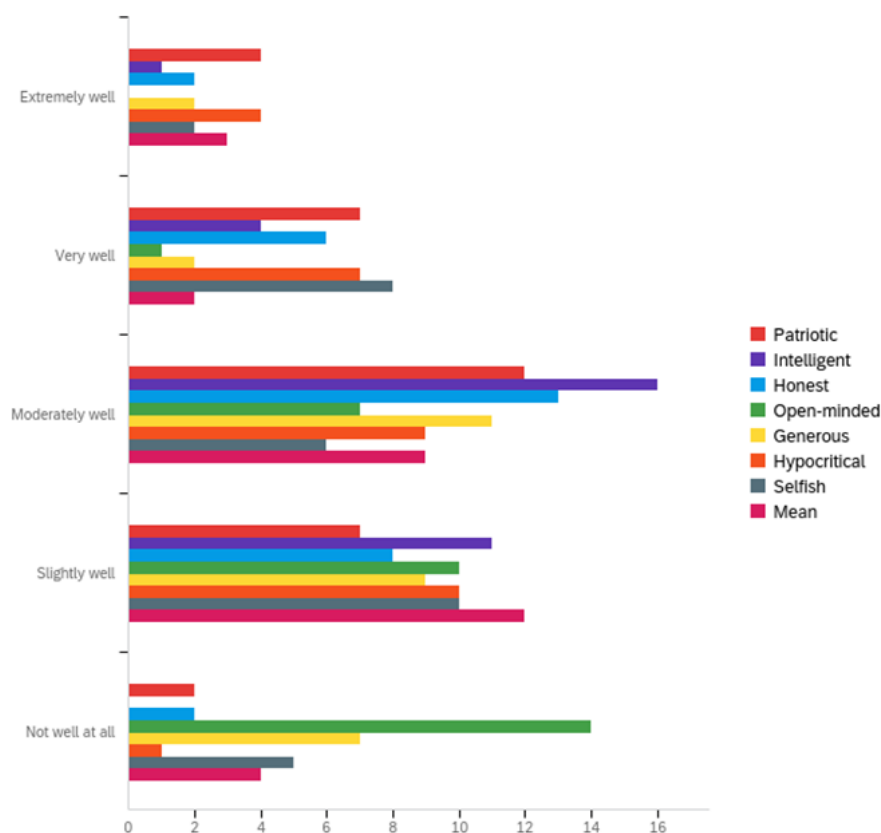
Participants also shared that this program decreases negative stereotypes of people with different political perspectives.

- The session also builds hope for increasing community capacity to have difficult conversations.

As a result of the session, people's negative stereotypes of people with different political perspectives from their own changed. Participants viewed people with opposite political perspectives as **less hypocritical, selfish, and mean**, and **more open-minded, honest, and intelligent** than before the session.

*PRE-SESSION: Please indicate how well you think each of the following words apply to individuals who hold political perspectives opposite of your own.*

*POST-SESSION: After participating in the workshop, I see individuals who hold political perspectives opposite of my own as...*



**After participating in the workshop, how comfortable are you having conversations with people who hold political perspectives opposite of your own?**

		Still not comfortable	Slightly more comfortable	Somewhat more comfortable	More comfortable	Total
For the purposes of the workshop, did you participate as a Red or a Blue?	Red	1	4	4	4	13
	Blue	0	9	16	7	32
Total		1	13	20	11	45

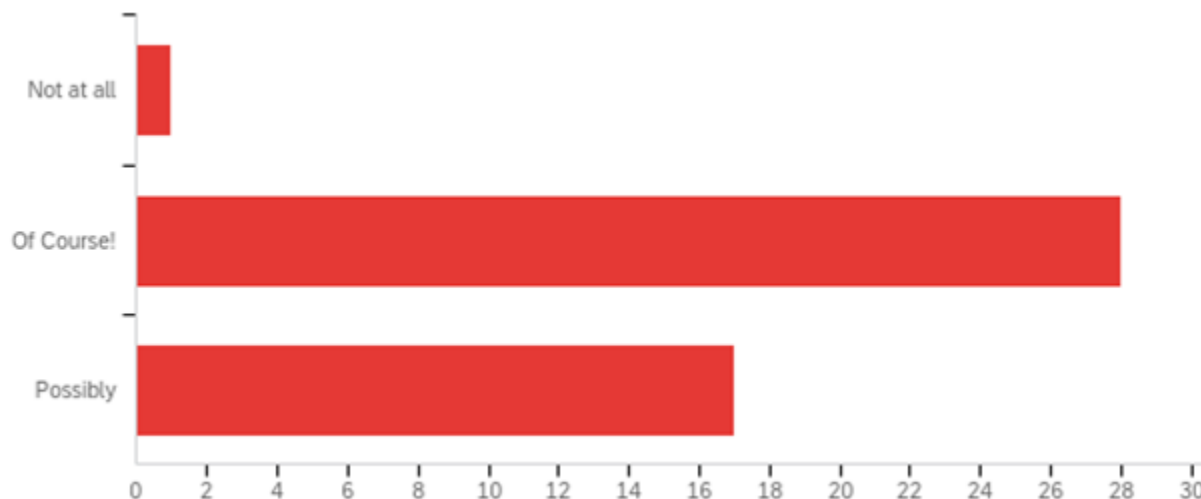
**After participating in the workshop, how, if at all, have your feelings changed in regards to your community's ability to have difficult conversations about community issues?**

		More hopeful	Not sure	No change	Somewhat more hopeful	Total
For the purposes of the workshop, did you participate as a Red or a Blue?	Red	7	2	2	2	13
	Blue	7	6	3	16	32
Total		14	8	5	18	45

### What are the most important things you learned as a result of the Skills for Bridging the Divide workshop?

- “How to actively listen to someone with another political stance.”
- “Some ideas for how to approach these discussions. For example, leading with ‘this is really personal for me’ helps to humanize us and make me feel more comfortable sharing or hearing someone.”
- “Listening and speaking skills that help facilitate talking to people with different viewpoints. I have a better understanding of the overall process in discussing difficult topics.”
- “I learned that having these conversations are hard, but worthwhile. I also learned that there are a number of people in the county who feel these difficult conversations are meaningful and worthwhile and that we need to have more of them to grow our communities.”
- “It is more important to listen than talk. If your conversation partner feels heard, it will more than likely lead to them listening to you. This is where the divide begins to be bridged.”
- “Confidence in sharing my views with someone else that holds a differing view as well as having an open and curious mind to learning more about their perspective.”
- “Common ground can be found in relationships regardless of point of view.”
- “Always have respect for others’ point of view and their beliefs.”
- “Good reminders about not being provocative, staying curious.”

### Would you recommend Braver Angels “Skills for Bridging the Divide” workshop to others?



*Green County Leaders provides equal opportunity in education and programming.*