

# Hanover Township 2025-2026 Cohort

The Nonprofit Leaders Forum brought leaders from ten Hanover Township Mental Health Board-funded partner agencies together across eight sessions. Every partner answered the same survey twice, in November 2025 before the forum began and again in September 2026 after it ended, with the questions word for word identical.

The ratings below set the two surveys against each other, pre-forum and post-forum. The scale runs 1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree, every statement tops out at 5, and gap closed is the share of the room left in November that the cohort actually covered by September. Both rounds were anonymous, so these are figures for the group rather than for any one person. All ten answered and every statement moved up, by very different amounts.

## Post-Forum Ratings

| Statement                                                                                                  | 1<br>Strongly<br>Disagree | 2<br>Disagree | 3<br>Neutral | 4<br>Agree | 5<br>Strongly<br>Agree | AVERAGE | NOV 2025 | CHANGE | GAP<br>closed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|------------|------------------------|---------|----------|--------|---------------|
| <b>PEER SUPPORT</b>                                                                                        |                           |               |              |            |                        |         |          |        |               |
| <b>Internal:</b> I have sufficient opportunities for peer support and open dialogue within my agency.      | 1                         | 0             | 1            | 6          | 2                      | 3.80    | 3.30     | +0.50  | 29%           |
| <b>External:</b> I feel meaningfully connected to peers in my field who serve in other agencies.           | 0                         | 1             | 0            | 6          | 3                      | 4.10    | 3.20     | +0.90  | 50%           |
| <b>PEER SUPPORT CATEGORY AVERAGE</b>                                                                       |                           |               |              |            |                        | 3.95    | 3.25     | +0.70  | 40%           |
| <b>SOLUTION FINDING</b>                                                                                    |                           |               |              |            |                        |         |          |        |               |
| <b>Resource Sharing:</b> I see information and knowledge effectively being shared among service providers. | 0                         | 0             | 2            | 4          | 4                      | 4.20    | 3.20     | +1.00  | 56%           |
| <b>Peer Learning:</b> I regularly hear and learn from the experiences of peers from other agencies.        | 0                         | 0             | 1            | 5          | 4                      | 4.30    | 3.30     | +1.00  | 59%           |
| <b>Networking:</b> I frequently engage in collaborations and/or inter-agency referrals.                    | 1                         | 0             | 2            | 5          | 2                      | 3.70    | 3.60     | +0.10  | 7%            |
| <b>SOLUTION FINDING CATEGORY AVERAGE</b>                                                                   |                           |               |              |            |                        | 4.07    | 3.37     | +0.70  | 43%           |
| <b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>                                                                            |                           |               |              |            |                        |         |          |        |               |
| <b>Confidence:</b> I feel assured in my current leadership capabilities.                                   | 0                         | 0             | 2            | 6          | 2                      | 4.00    | 3.50     | +0.50  | 33%           |
| <b>Tools:</b> I have the necessary tools and resources to achieve my professional goals and agency goals.  | 0                         | 1             | 2            | 4          | 3                      | 3.90    | 3.50     | +0.40  | 27%           |
| <b>Taking Action:</b> I regularly define and achieve professional and agency goals.                        | 1                         | 0             | 2            | 6          | 1                      | 3.60    | 3.50     | +0.10  | 7%            |
| <b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CATEGORY AVERAGE</b>                                                           |                           |               |              |            |                        | 3.83    | 3.50     | +0.33  | 22%           |
| <b>OVERALL AVERAGE: ALL STATEMENTS</b>                                                                     |                           |               |              |            |                        | 3.95    | 3.39     | +0.56  | 35%           |

# Post-Forum Answers to Matching Pre-Forum Questions

These six questions were on the November 2025 pre-forum survey word for word, and the cohort answered them again at the close. What follows is what partners wrote in September, read in two passes: the shaded lines are the themes every answer was sorted into, and beneath each set of themes is a selection of the responses, chosen to carry the range of what was said rather than to show every answer. The survey was anonymous, so nothing is attributed. Square brackets mark the only changes made to a quote: a named colleague becomes [a partner], and a named agency becomes [another agency], numbered in order where a quote names more than one.

## PEER SUPPORT

### What contributes to your sense of connection with peers who serve at other agencies?

#### THEMES

Knowing others carry the same weight. Shared goals, shared barriers, shared reasons for staying in the field.

Willingness to collaborate, and being welcomed when you reach out.

A dedicated space to ask questions and speak plainly.

For one partner, the forum was the first outside connection they had.

#### QUOTES

The knowledge that we are all working toward similar goals and struggling with similar barriers

having the open space to ask questions and share experiences/resources during group cohort meetings.

I haven't had connection with peers who serve at other agencies prior to the nonprofit leadership forum.

Being able to seek peer support from those that understand the work. This could be to talk through challenges, or learning from one another. Also, celebrating the wins together but being present with one another during the not so good times as well.

Knowing that my peers want to stay in this field despite it's constant struggles, sharing the same views/outlook/experiences within the field, validation, and creativity/curiosity with a problem & its solutions.

willingness to collab and welcome.

## SOLUTION FINDING

### What are the current barriers you perceive in exchanging knowledge and resources in your field?

Still not knowing who to contact, or what to ask for. Named by three, and one puts it as not knowing what I do not know.

Time. Finding room for a real conversation before any exchange is useful.

Agencies unwilling to share, and competition for the same funding.

Practical friction: data sharing, technology, and the resources themselves.

not knowing what I dont know

One that comes to mind is that we are all competing for funding. With funding getting more competitive, I perceive this as being a barrier to how agencies communicate.

Sharing data effectively, sometimes technology limitations and potential communication gaps with new agencies in the community.

The time to actually sit down and have a meaningful conversation with someone before exchanging information. I think it's beneficial to build a good relationship with someone to help with that exchanging. Right now, being part of the forum since it is dedicated time we have for that.

Just not knowing who to contact to have these discussions

Agency/organization resistance to welcome other providers

## What factors influence how supported you feel when discussing challenges or solving problems?

Safety first. Trust, confidentiality, and knowing you will not be judged for needing help.

Validation, and hearing more than one perspective at a time.

How open the other person is to changing anything.

Structure. Having the conversation laid out rather than left open.

Paraverbal communication, psychological safety, and a sense of shared accountability.

hearing others who have similar experiences, and the way the discussion is laid out for structured support from the group.

Challenges or problems are not always met with a listening ear - new ideas are not always accepted.

How supported I feel depends on how comfortable I am sharing that I need help and whether I feel confident that the person I'm talking to will be supportive and understanding. Feeling safe to be honest about challenges makes it much easier for me to ask for support and work together to find solutions.

(amount of, type of) Validation, re-framing the situation from different angles, having an outline to reference to feel professional (not just complaining), access to multiple point-of-views at once.

How collaborative others are willing to be

openness to change of processes/policies, flexibility being offered.

Trust, open communication, shared experiences, leadership support and access to resources

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## What additional resources or support would help you feel more confident in your role?

Ongoing training and continued access to a group like this one.

Mentorship, in the sector or outside it.

Help with the conversations they have with the staff they supervise.

Being genuinely heard by their own leadership.

Navigating conversations with staff I directly oversee. I know we touched on it a bit but would be great to go into more of that.

This is difficult, because I feel like I do a good job at what I do. But there is this lingering sense of "Am I next on the chopping block?" I am not sure how to answer this.

To feel heard, to be given more opportunities to provide feedback (surveys, direct questionnaires or individual meetings with higher up) without feeling like they are complaints.

Continued access to a system like the Forum, mentor/mentee partnerships in the sector or out-of-sector, more information on how agencies/orgs run their business/the nitty-gritty on their programs (success and losses).

Having more clinical supervision and more staff in my department

Having access to ongoing training, opportunities to learn from others, and clear guidance when challenges come up would help me feel more confident in my role. I also value having supportive colleagues and supervisors who I feel comfortable going to when I need help or have questions.

Continued networking, especially with more providers directly in my service area

Effective mentorship & guidance, regular feedback, peer support

## What factors impact your perception of your potential for advancement?

There is no next rung. Five describe positions that open only when someone leaves, or no upward path at all.

Clear expectations, recognition, and a transparent route to more responsibility.

Being trusted to own a program and make the decisions in it.

Age and where you sit in the hierarchy.

At my center, there isn't a lot of upward mobility in terms of positions though I feel I can continue to expand my knowledge

Flexibility and willingness for agency to let you "own your program/dept", to encourage leadership meaning to encourage decisions to be made by you.

My age for being younger at a management position and also the opportunity within current organization of hierarchy.

Knowing what opportunities are available for advancement and having a clear understanding of what is needed to move into the next level would impact how I view my potential for growth. I feel supported by leadership, but advancement opportunities within my current role are limited because they typically only become available when someone leaves their position. I have been told that my options are to wait for an opening or look for an advancement opportunity elsewhere. Because of this, it can be difficult to see a clear path for growth within the organization, even though I feel supported in my current role.

Not having a clear path to follow, closed loop of opportunity, ill-defined roles, poor/unsteady internal leadership

At my agency potential advancement is more grant writing than direct service with clients and with staff/peers.

looking at how my staff/team is doing and considering all of the forms of support i have tried/offered

## Post-Forum Feedback Questions

These were on the end-of-cycle survey only. They ask what the year produced, so there is no pre-forum answer to set them against.

### NETWORK AND REFERRALS

#### About how many referrals or resource connections have you made or received because of this forum this year?

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1 to 2       | 1 |
| 3 to 5       | 5 |
| 6 to 10      | 2 |
| More than 10 | 2 |

Every one of the ten reported at least one. Four reported more than five.

Taking the low end of each band, the cohort reported at least 50 connections across the year. Two partners on either side of the same connection each count it, so read that as reported instances rather than distinct connections.

#### What connections with other agencies in this cohort led to something as a result of this forum?

Housing. Two separate answers describe people who now have somewhere to live.

Referral pathways that are now standing practice, including crisis numbers added to intake forms.

A relationship repaired once eligibility rules were cleared up.

Training, resources, and material goods moving between agencies.

connecting with [another agency] for housing resources that were ultimately used to house two individuals who were potentially facing homelessness!

## CONTINUED

### What connections with other agencies in this cohort led to something as a result of this forum?

Using [another agency] and [a second agency] as our referral base for our clients in Elgin has helped our Elgin location provide more robust resources for behavioral/mental health, Crisis response numbers have been added to our intake forms (most #'s are from the forum)

There was mending a of relationship that happened. Once eligibility requirements were shared and cleared up, this make it easier to sent clients/patients their way.

My coworker and I did a Kane Matters training on DV & Teenagers. I connected with [a partner] who schedules the trainings for Kane Matters. Housing resource from [another agency] about landlords willing to work with undocumented individuals in Elgin.

- Provided landlord contact and two clients were housed,
- youth and family resource gap filled and introduction made to youth services for outside youth case management,
- referred for screening for neurodivergent concerns,
- referred to CST level of case management due to community-based need,
- landlord connections that are background friendly shared.

- Shared resources with [another agency]
- Shared resources with [a second agency]
- Shared resources with [a third agency]
- [a partner] at [a fourth agency] provided us with games/toys for our youth

#### LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

### How valuable have your individual coaching sessions been?

**4.80 out of 5**

n=10. 8 very valuable, 2 valuable.

### Where do you still most want to grow as a leader?

Knowing what kind of leader I am and leading in a way that fits me

7

Speaking up with confidence, including when I disagree

7

Delegating and trusting others with work I used to do myself

3

Leveling up in my capacity

1

### What is one thing you do differently now because of this program?

Reaching outside the agency, on purpose.

Carrying more than an internal perspective into a problem.

Supervision practice: following up on one-on-ones, giving feedback more often, pausing before bulldozing.

Trusting themselves more.

I follow-up on my 1-on-1 check-ins, provide feedback more regularly, dump vs. built exercise, and I have learned to take a pause instead of just bulldozing forward.

I trust myself a bit more

Initiate partnerships outside of my agency.

I try to re-frame problems and solutions as how they are experienced by others not just by myself. I attempt to carry more perspectives that just an internal one since I know how valuable other insights (the forum) give me when I seek out other input or even just consider it.

I am more intentional about communication, collaboration, and approaching leadership challenges with a broader perspective.

I am more open to sharing my experiences, and connecting with other agencies.

## PROGRAM VALUE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### What has been the value of this program to you?

Not being alone in it, and the validation that comes with that.

A safe and confidential space, named directly by more than one.

A changed view of what being a middle manager is.

Dedicated time to think, which the working day does not provide.

Power in community, and a reminder of why they do the work.

Knowing that I am not alone in my struggle and the validation that I am doing just fine.

This forum has shown me that there is power in community. It was amazing to see peers from different agencies come together to help one another - through shared resources and helpful advice.

This program has allowed me dedicated time to be present, since sometimes when I am working, I am doing so many things at once. It has provided me with an opportunity to really reflect on my leadership abilities and look at what can be better.

It has shown me to be direct with kindness, comfort with constructive feedback, and overall enhanced the image I had of being a middle-manager to become more positive. That was my personal journey. It was also able to provide a safe space to engage in curiosity with fellow peers from several other agencies, allowing for meaning connection to happen.

I value the confidentiality within this group and knowing that I can speak freely without worrying that my personal thoughts or feelings will be shared outside of the group. I also appreciate the vulnerability that others bring by sharing their own experiences and perspectives. It helps create a space where I feel heard, seen, and supported by my peers.

### Looking back across the full year, what do you recommend be done differently for the next cohort?

For the next cohort, I think it would be beneficial for the Agency Profile to have more of a presentation-style format, with slides integrated throughout and more pictures included. I feel like this could help better showcase and encapsulate what an organization does, while making the profile more engaging.

Just an idea---Having 'guest' cohort members join from other townships/funded organizations for perspectives or to share resources/conduct one of the coaching modules?

It was a great experience, additional opportunities for practical application, further peer discussion and continued connection would be helpful to further support leadership growth.

Some sort of team building activity that each agency representative leads in our cohort.

I don't think I would change anything

### Is there anything else you would like to share or give feedback to?

These meetings motivated me and made my role feel impactful when shared with others and hearing the experiences of others in similar roles. I feel confident stating I know someone from each agency and feel comfortable enough now to reach out and think they would be more receptive now that a rapport/relationship has been made.

Thanks for giving us a space, figuratively and literally, to share our thoughts, ideas, woes, and wins! I wish everyone had an opportunity to access this resource.

This has been a wonderful experiences and really opened my eyes to the benefit of having conversation with peers from other agencies.

Not at this time. Thank you for providing the space to be intentionally self-reflective.

N = 10 responses, one from every partner in the cohort