

# Using Culture as a Resource to Respond to Human Trafficking in Native Communities: Building Culturally Responsive and Trauma-Informed Supportive Service Projects

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# Agenda

VHT-NC Program and Formative Evaluation  
Overviews

VHT-NC Lessons Learned

VHT-NC Strengths and Successes

Cultural and Tribal-Based Strategies



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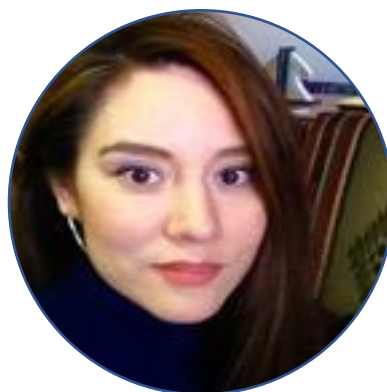
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# The Evaluation Team

# VHT-NC Program: Required Components

**Outreach** to increase identification of Native American\* people who have experienced sex and labor trafficking

Comprehensive, culturally responsive, and linguistically appropriate **case management and victim assistance services**

**Training** to service providers and community partners on effective identification, referral, assessment, and trauma-informed service delivery strategies

\*American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander

Near Puyallup, WA

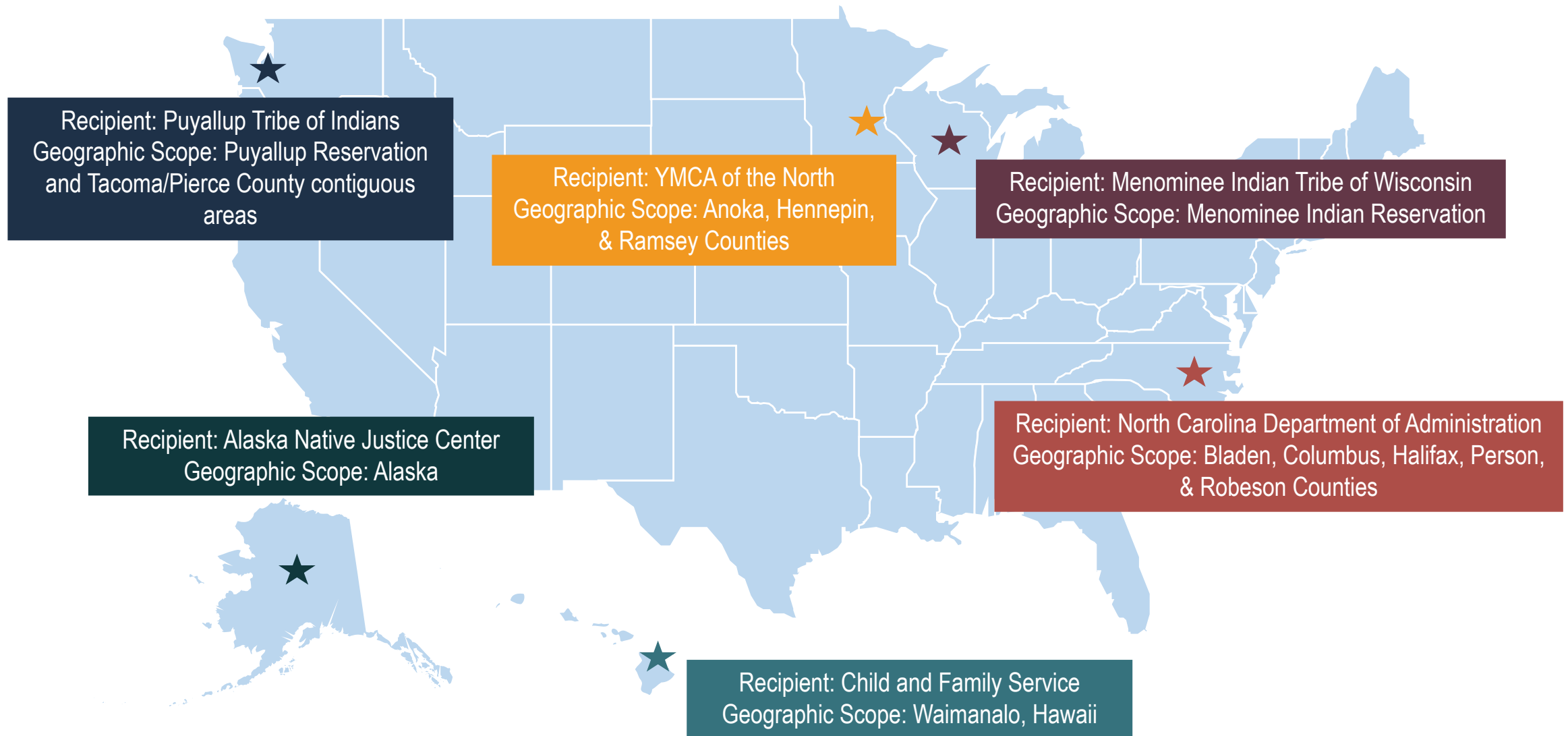
# VHT-NC Program: Expected and Encouraged Components

- Trauma-informed, person-centered service models
- Culturally appropriate and traditional healing practices
- Whole family approach
- Survivor engagement in project design & implementation
- Native staff
- Focus on issues relevant to the community, e.g., MMIP/MMIR

Minneapolis,  
MN



# VHT-NC Grant Recipients



# VHT-NC Project Context

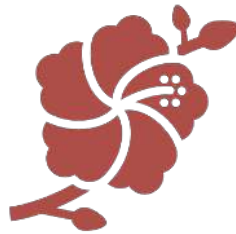
- New projects
- Diversity of project structure:
  - Two Tribal governments
  - Two mainstream non-profits
  - One Native-focused non-profit with Native partners
  - One state government agency serving four state-recognized Tribes
- Community-specific experiences with and needs relating to human trafficking
- Community-specific norms, traditions, and customs that should be respected and valued



# VHT-NC Formative Evaluation

## Formative Evaluation

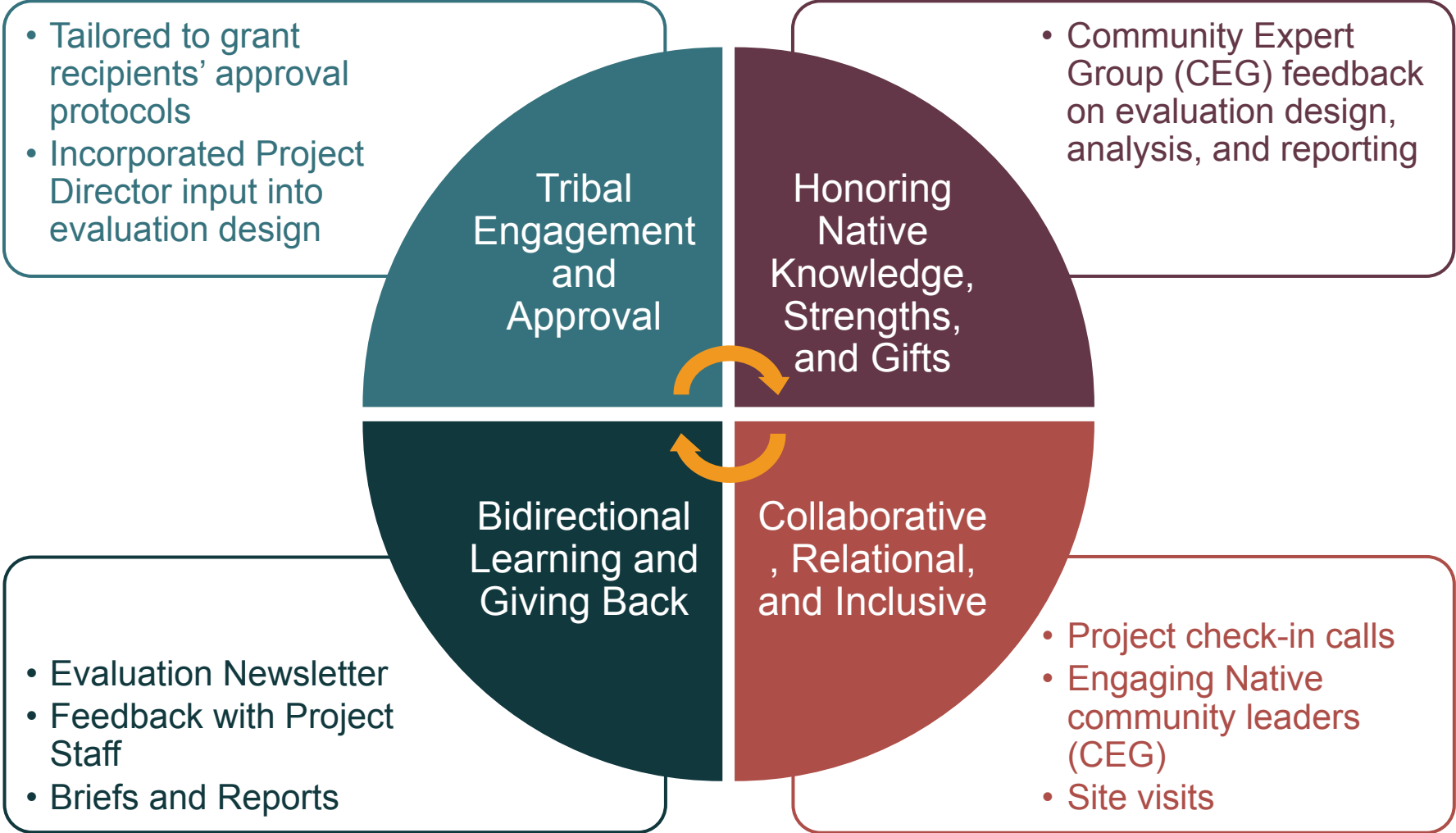
- Good for new programs
- Prioritizes learning and reflecting
- Helps identify strengths and challenges
- Begins to understand a program's essential elements



## Evaluation Domains

- Project context
- Project goals and design
- Partnerships
- Outreach, case management, & service strategies
- Training approaches
- Cultural programming

# Cultural and Tribal-Based Evaluation Approach



# VHT-NC Lessons Learned, Strengths, and Successes



Menominee, WI

# Lessons Learned

- COVID-19 impacts
- Human trafficking awareness and understanding
- Timelines and patience
- Relationship- and trust-building
- Partnerships
- Indigenous values and cultural resources
- Service array and availability

Bolton,  
NC



# Strengths and Successes

- Responsive to community needs
- Increased human trafficking awareness
- Developed essential partnerships
- Expanded service / resource networks
- Standardized processes and protocols
- Improved participant identification
- Provided needed services and supports
- Used trauma-informed practices
- Incorporated cultural and tribal-based strategies

# Cultural and Tribal-Based Strategies



- Culture as an essential resource
- Commitment to build culturally robust projects
- Native staff who reflect service populations
- Partnerships to strengthen cultural responsiveness
- Culturally specific materials and protocols
- Services that reflect local cultural values, beliefs, and traditions
- Culturally specific training
- Documenting cultural methods and approaches



Near Waimanalo,  
HI



# Documenting Culture as a Resource

## Sample Cultural Measures

|                     | Immersion  | Healing  | Services   |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Cultural Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Native language</li><li>• Dance and music</li><li>• Food sharing</li><li>• Arts and crafts (e.g., beading)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Traditional healing (e.g., smudging)</li><li>• Native art therapy</li><li>• Traditional counseling</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talking Circle</li><li>• Peacemaking</li><li>• Tribal-specific</li></ul> |

# Additional Resources



## VHT-NC Program: An Overview of Participant & Service Characteristics (FY2021–FY2022)

The Administration for Children and Families' Office on Trafficking in Persons established the Demonstration Grants to Strengthen the Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Native Communities (VHT-NC) Program to build, expand, and sustain organizational and community capacity to deliver services to Native American (i.e., American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and/or Pacific Islander) people who have experienced human trafficking. In September 2020, six VHT-NC projects were awarded 3-year grants to provide culturally responsive and trauma-informed participant outreach and identification, comprehensive case management and service provision, and training to respond to human trafficking in their communities. RTI International and American Indian Development Associates are conducting a formative evaluation of these VHT-NC projects.

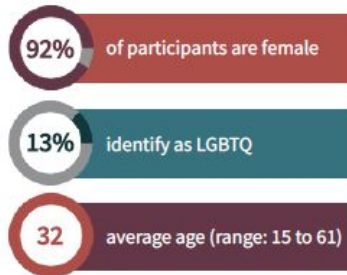
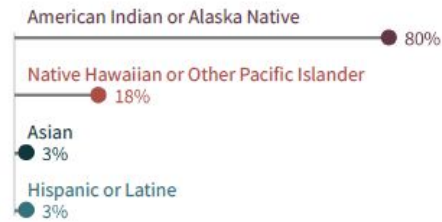
Prepared by Elizabeth Tibaduiza

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In the VHT-NC Program's first 2 years, **39 participants** have been enrolled across **4 projects**. This profile describes participant characteristics at intake and service provision through FY2022. Two projects have not yet enrolled participants and all have faced enrollment challenges including, for example, COVID-19 restrictions, low staffing capacity, and the need for improved understanding and awareness of human trafficking.

### Demographics



### Top 5 Referral Sources

**Self-referral** is the most common referral pathway to the VHT-NC Program. Project staff also conduct direct outreach in various settings (e.g., street, motels, encampments, partner locations).



*"We have seen a huge increase in self and peer referrals. I think one strength that that highlights, is that community connection and care amongst individuals. Resource sharing amongst the [participants] we're serving, we are seeing a lot, which I think is a huge strength and I always thank [participants] for passing our information along or getting a friend connected."*  
—Project director



## Demonstration Grants to Strengthen the Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Native Communities (VHT-NC) Program: Interim Report

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