

2020 LGBTQ COMMUNITY CENTER SURVEY REPORT: DAVID BOHNETT CYBERCENTER PROGRAM

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CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers

CenterLink strengthens, supports, and connects LGBTQ community centers. Founded in 1994, CenterLink plays an important role in addressing the challenges centers face by helping them to improve their organizational and service delivery capacity, access public resources and engage their regional communities in the grassroots social justice movement. For more information, visit www.lgbtcenters.org.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a companion report to the *2020 LGBTQ Community Center Survey Report*, a report on the seventh biennial survey of LGBTQ community centers across the United States and coauthored by the Movement Advancement Project and CenterLink.^a The report is based on the responses from 186 participating LGBTQ community centers across the country, though not all centers responded to all questions. When relevant, the report separately examines centers with budgets equal to or less than \$150,000 per year (“small” centers) and centers with budgets greater than \$150,000 per year (“large” or “big” centers).

The David Bohnett Foundation’s CyberCenter program currently provides funding for computer equipment at 57 LGBTQ community centers and college campuses nationwide. This report evaluates the CyberCenter Program’s impact on LGBTQ community centers and the people (or “clients”) they serve.

RESPONDING CENTERS

In the 2020 survey, a total of 150 LGBTQ community centers answered questions about computer resources, including whether they have computer services or resources available to their clients. *Figure 1* shows that the **majority (56%) of all responding centers provide computer resources for their clients**, including 21% of centers that offer computer resources through the Bohnett CyberCenter Program (referred to hereafter as “CyberCenters”).

Figure 1 further shows that **nearly three-quarters (73%) of large centers offer computer services**, and roughly half of those (36% of large centers) do so as Bohnett CyberCenters (*Figure 1c*). **In contrast, just under one-third (31%) of small centers offer computer services**, and none reported doing so as part of the Bohnett CyberCenter program (*Figure 1b*).

The next two sections examine centers’ computer resources and compare CyberCenters to centers that provide computer resources but are not part of the Bohnett CyberCenter program (referred to as “other centers”).

^a Because the centers that participate in the survey vary from year to year, readers should not draw comparisons between the findings of this report and past years’ reports.

Figure 1: Majority of Centers Offer Computer Services, Though Small vs. Big Centers Differ
% of centers

Figure 1a: All Responding Centers
(n=150)

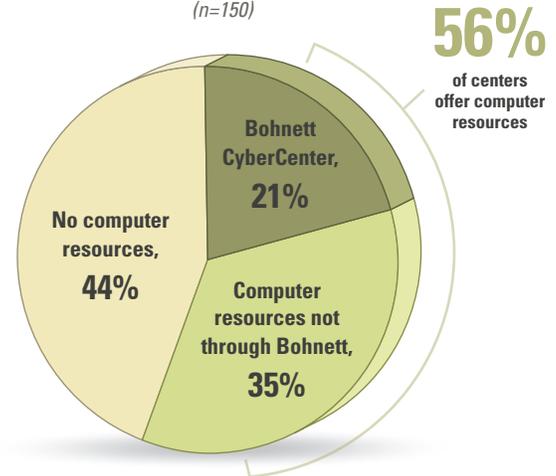


Figure 1b: Small Centers
(n=61)

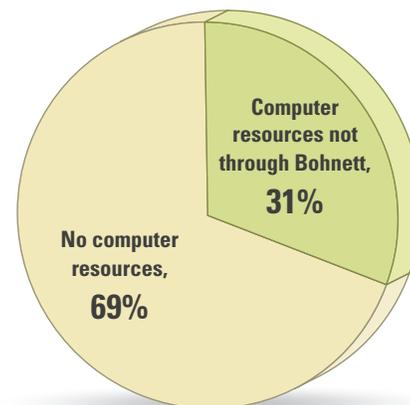
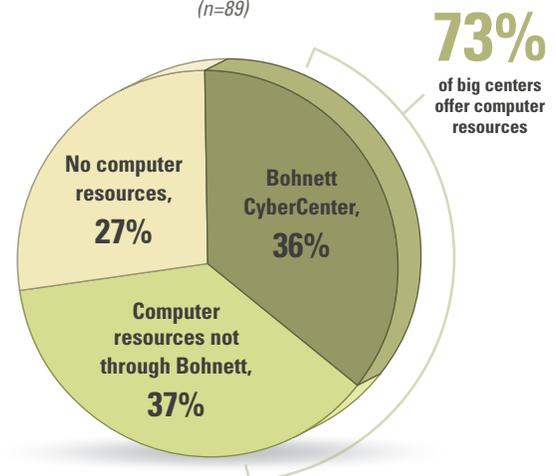


Figure 1c: Big Centers
(n=89)

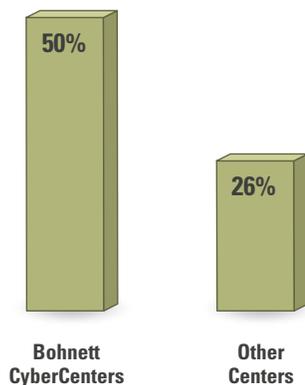


COMPUTER RESOURCES & USES

As *Table 1* shows, **Bohnett CyberCenters have, on average, three more computers than other centers, and the computers at CyberCenters are, on average, one year newer.** CyberCenters also report an average of 147 monthly users, compared to an average of 43 monthly users at centers with non-Bohnett computer resources.^b **Even accounting for center size, CyberCenters have nearly three times the average number of monthly users as non-Bohnett centers;** that is, big centers with Bohnett Cyber Centers report 147 monthly users, compared to 54 monthly users at big centers with non-Bohnett computer resources (*Table 1*).

Computer resources at CyberCenters are used more frequently than computer resources at other centers. As shown in *Figure 2*, half (50%) of Bohnett

Figure 2: Bohnett Centers Report Higher Usage of Their Computer Resources
% of Centers Reporting High Levels of Computer Use



Note: "High levels" means computer resources are in use for more than 60% of regular operating hours.

CyberCenters reported their computers are in use more than 60% of regular operating hours, compared to just over one-quarter (26%) of other centers with computer resources.

Figure 3: Half of Bohnett CyberCenters and Over One in Five Other Centers Offer Computer Training Classes
% of Responding Centers Offering...

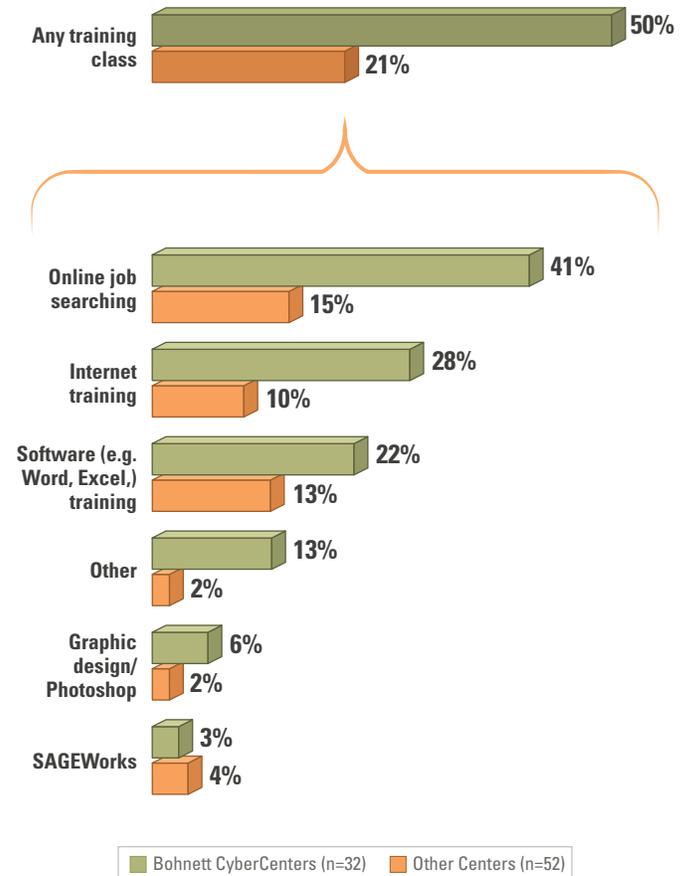


Table 1: Bohnett CyberCenters Report More and Newer Computer Resources, More Monthly Users			
Averages among centers with any computer resources		Bohnett CyberCenters (n=32)	Other Centers (n=52)
No. of computers		9	6
Age of computers		3 years	4 years
No. of printers		2	1
Age of printers		3 years	3 years
No. of monthly users at...	...All centers	147	43
	...Big centers	147	54
	...Small centers	<i>No Bohnett programs at participating small centers</i>	20

^b Centers were asked to report the number of people who use their computer resources in a typical month (prior to the COVID-related shutdowns).

Despite higher usage at CyberCenters, client wait time to use these resources remains low at all responding centers: 70% of CyberCenters reported there is rarely a wait to use these resources, compared to 72% of other centers with computers.

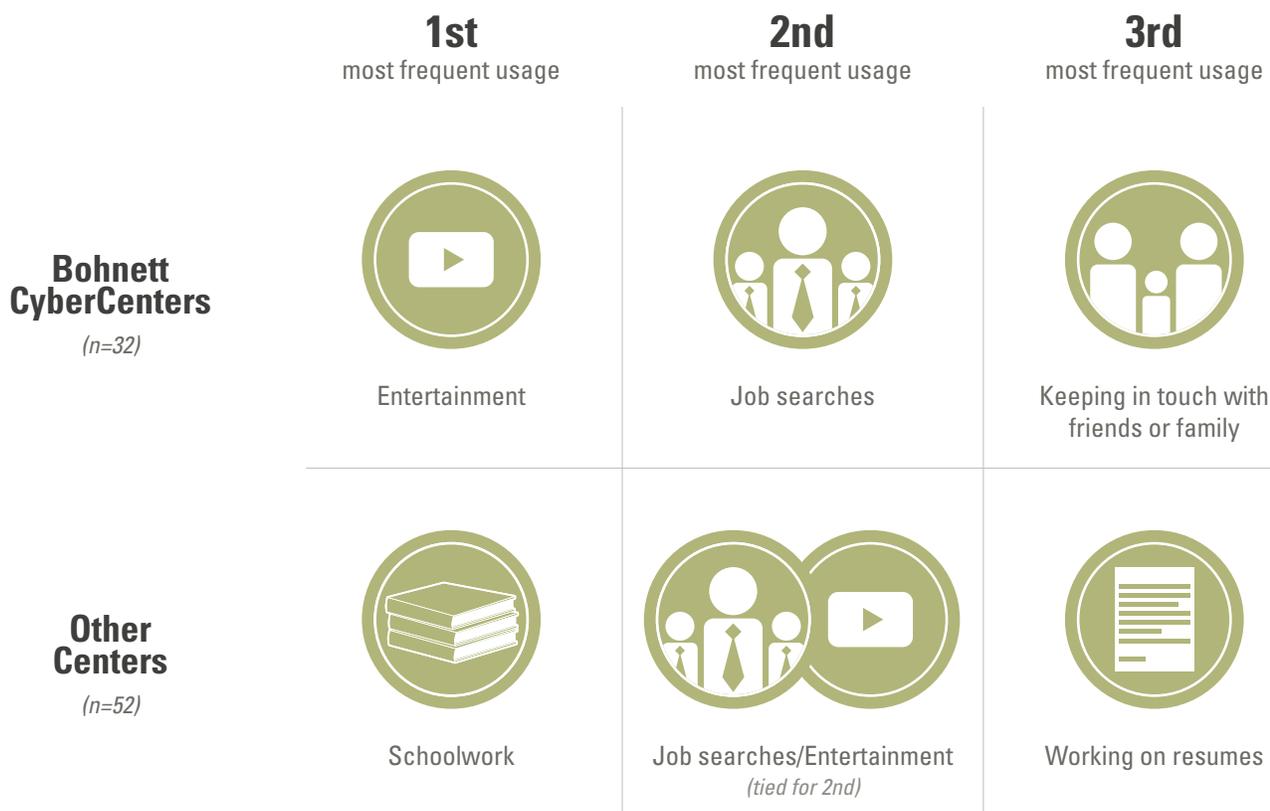
In open-ended responses, **extremely few responding centers report charging any fees to use computer resources**, with charges typically limited to special classes or the cost of printing more than a few pages.

As *Figure 3* shows on the previous page, **Bohnett CyberCenters are more likely than other centers to offer various computer training programs**, such as online job search training, general Internet training, or specific software training. Few centers of either type offer graphic design or SAGEWorks training. In open-ended responses, centers reported that “other” training programs include coding, iPad training for older adults, and LinkedIn and resume building classes.

As noted in Table 1, the average Bohnett CyberCenter serves 147 clients each month, compared to 43 clients each month at an average non-Bohnett center with computer resources. Unfortunately, only six centers reported that they track demographics of the people who use these computer resources. However, five of these six were Bohnett CyberCenters.

Centers with computer resources report that **people use these resources for a variety of reasons, and, as shown in *Figure 4*, these reasons differ across clients at CyberCenters and other centers**. At CyberCenters, the most frequently cited reason that clients use the resources are for entertainment, followed by job searches and then keeping in touch with friends and family. At other centers, the top uses are schoolwork, followed by a tie between job searches and entertainment.

Figure 4: Key Uses of Computer Resources Differ at CyberCenters vs. Other Centers



COMPUTER-RELATED CHALLENGES

As shown in *Figure 5*, both **CyberCenters and other centers indicated that demand for computer services had increased over the past two years** (prior to COVID). Demand has particularly increased at non-Bohnett centers, nearly half (48%) of whom report that demand has increased greatly or somewhat.

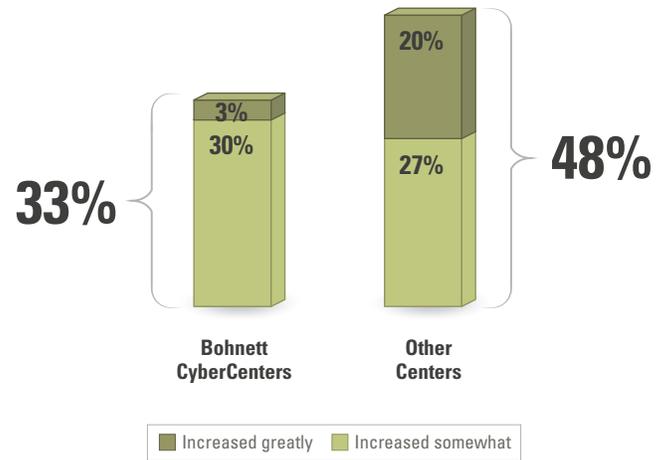
Since the COVID pandemic, centers have also experienced—and responded to—a dramatic increase in demand for computer resources, especially in the form of virtual services and programs. In early 2020, roughly one in five (21%) participating centers had some kind of program or service available online. **By July 2020, 94% of participating centers offered online programs.** And, 74% of centers that now offer online services plan to keep at least some of those online programs or services after the pandemic eventually ends. For more on how LGBTQ community centers are adapting to COVID, see the main [2020 LGBTQ Community Center Survey report](#).

As shown in *Figure 6*, while nearly all centers now offer virtual programming, Bohnett Centers were more likely than other centers to offer virtual programming prior to the COVID pandemic.

In general—and especially as demand for computer resources increases—LGBTQ community centers report challenges in providing adequate services. However, **CyberCenters differ from other centers in the challenges they report**, as shown in *Figure 7* on the following page. When asked to identify their top barrier to providing computer resources, as well as their top barrier to making the best use of existing computer resources, Bohnett CyberCenters consistently ranked a lack of staff or staff time as their main obstacle in both cases. Other centers, however, ranked financial cost as far and away their top barrier to providing computer resources, and they ranked the need for hardware upgrades (e.g., replacing old equipment) as the top barrier for making best use of what resources they currently have.

Overall, **one-third or more of both CyberCenters (37%) and other centers (34%) say they do not have someone on staff who is able to provide competent training and technical assistance to patrons using computer resources.** Note that all participating CyberCenters are large centers with budgets over \$150,000, and they are more likely overall to have paid

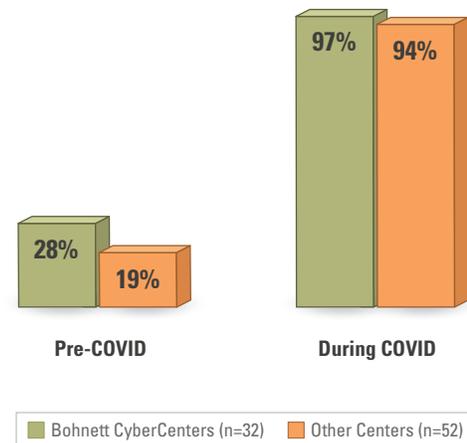
Figure 5: Many Centers—Especially Non-Bohnett Centers—Report Increased Demand for Computer Resources
% of Centers Reporting Increased Demand in Past Two Years



Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

Figure 6: Pre-COVID, Bohnett Centers Were More Likely to Offer Virtual Programs

% of Centers Offering Online Services Before and During COVID



staff. If more than one-third of CyberCenters still point to a lack of staff or staff time as a barrier to computer resources, then non-Bohnett centers—especially small budget centers, the majority of whom are entirely volunteer-run—are likely facing even larger obstacles to providing computer resources and making best use of them. What's more, the fact that other centers nonetheless rank financial cost as the top barrier, above lack of staff, illustrates just how significant the financial barriers are for non-Bohnett centers.

Figure 7: Key Barriers Differ at CyberCenters vs. Other Centers



CONCLUSION

The majority (56%) of LGBTQ community centers offer computer resources to the public, helping to provide a vital service to the local communities and people they serve. Clients use these resources to meet deep needs in their own lives, including connection, education, and economic security through job searching or training. These community computer services are especially important to those who do not have access to these tools elsewhere, include people with low income and people experiencing homelessness. Unfortunately, centers are already stretched thin with few resources and few trained staff, and many centers lack the funds to update aging technology.

The David Bohnett CyberCenter Program helps LGBTQ centers bridge these gaps and serve their clients by providing hardware and technical assistance to centers—and, by extension, to LGBTQ community center visitors around the country. As shown here, Bohnett-member centers have, on average, more and newer

computer resources, more computer users, and more technological training programs, compared to other centers with computer resources.

While the Bohnett CyberCenter Program helps to ease financial and technological burdens on LGBTQ centers, only a fraction of community centers are currently part of the program. Participating centers continue to report challenges such as lack of staff or time to manage the resources. This illustrates the broader need, beyond any single program, for significant and sustained financial investment—from other foundations, government entities, community organizations, individuals, and more—in LGBTQ community centers so they can expand these vital services. The positive impacts of the Bohnett CyberCenter program point to the clear difference that such investment could make.



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