



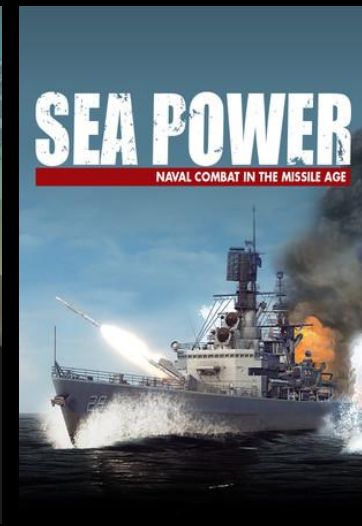
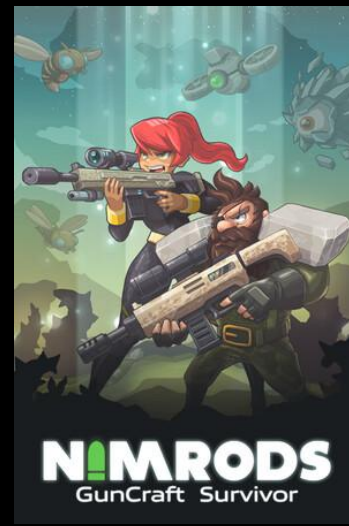
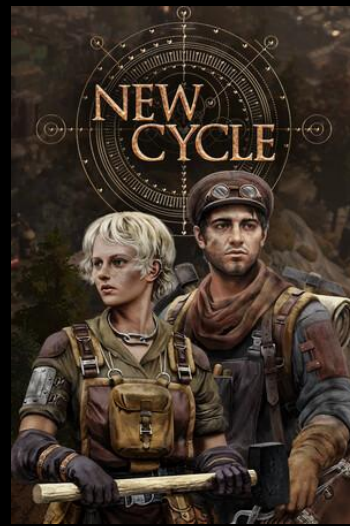
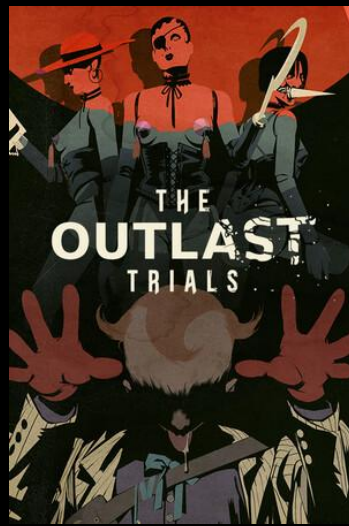
Early Access

2025

This talk:

Is Early Access still relevant?

Is Early Access different now than in the past?



Let's learn from some of this year's top Early Access releases.



This talk:

*Is Early Access still relevant? **YES***

*Is Early Access different now than in the past? **YES***

This talk: Early Access

- *What is it?*
- *Why/When to use it?*
- *How to prepare?*
- *How to manage it?*
- *When and how to 1.0?*

Early Access

What is it?

Early Access is:

**A framework of messaging
to support development
in cooperation with players**

Early Access is not:

Not a marketing tool.

You still need to market your game.

Impact on presentation:

**Excluded from homepage
“New & Trending”**

**This nifty widget appears
on your store page →**

Early Access Game

Get instant access and start playing; get involved with this game as it develops.

Note: Games in Early Access are not complete and may or may not change further. If you are excited to play this game in its current state, then you should wait to see if the game is in development. [Learn more](#)

WHAT THE DEVELOPERS HAVE TO SAY:

Why Early Access?

“The game in its current state has most of the systems and functionality to introduce, but we still have lots of ideas on how to expand them in terms of amount of content and its depth. Since Drill Core is a roguelike game, we add to the formula, the harder it is to properly balance it without h

Early Access :

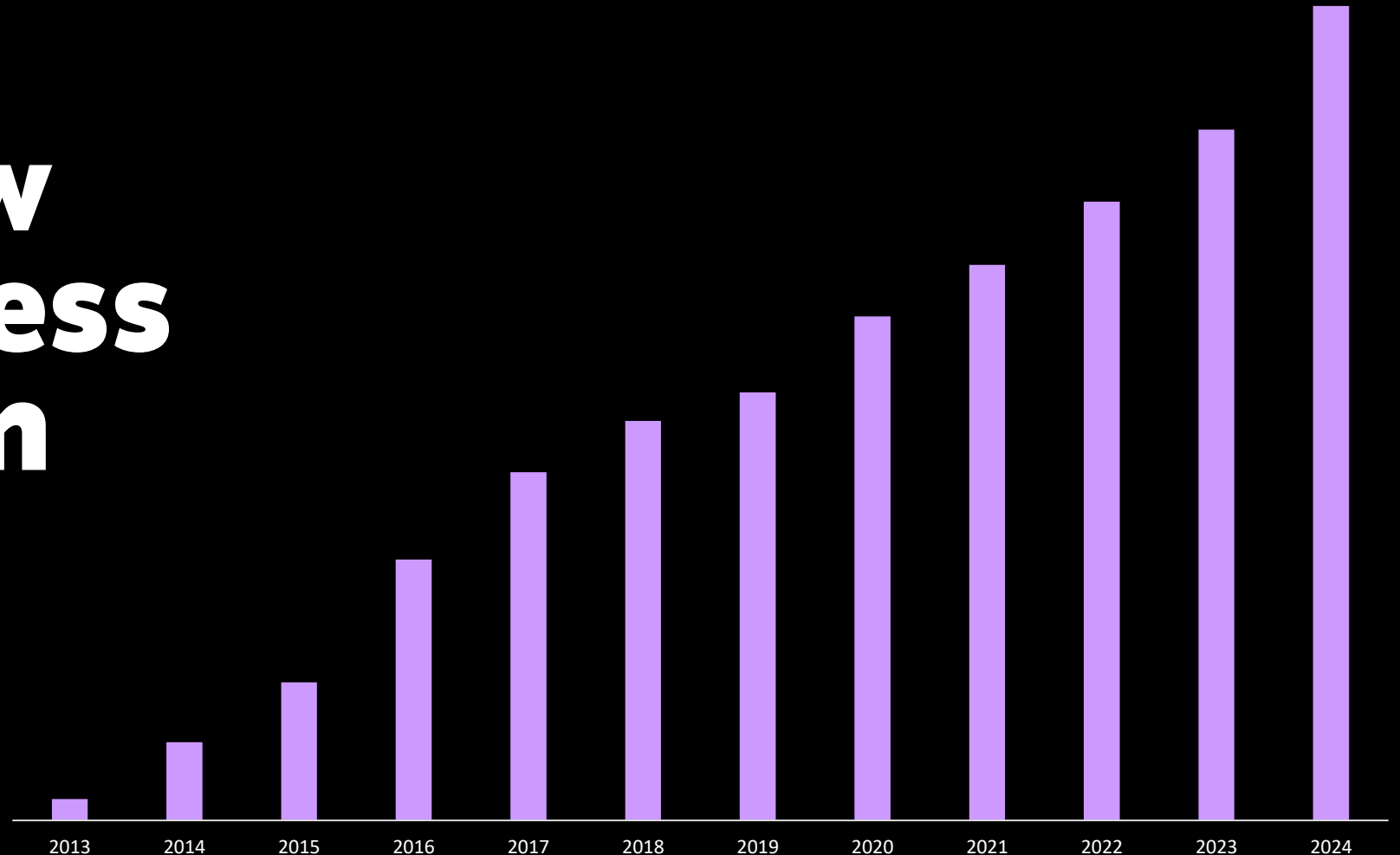
Is it still relevant?

Popular among devs and players:

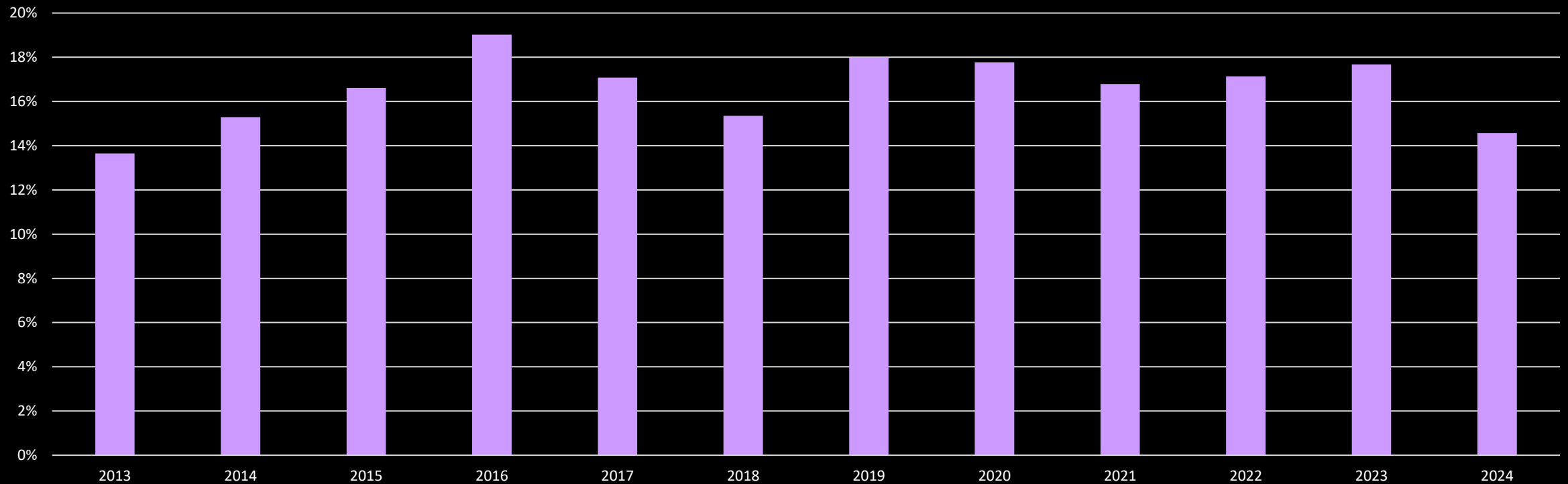
14,000+ available right now

Still a popular model:

**2,897 New
Early Access
releases in
2024**



Fairly steady percentage of all releases



STEAM EARLY ACCESS

Popular among devs and players:

28% of 2024's top releases



Early Access

Why/When to use it?

Why Early Access?

***“...a longer development cycle,
enabling us to create a much deeper
and content-rich version of Drill Core
by the 1.0 release than would
otherwise be possible.”***

-Drill Core

Why Early Access?

***“...lots of feedback from
actual players
to make the most out of
Thronefall’s potential...”***



An aerial, high-angle shot of a desolate, post-apocalyptic landscape. A railway track runs diagonally across the frame. In the center, there's a small, dilapidated building with a red roof. The ground is covered in dry grass and some bare trees. The overall tone is dark and gritty.

Why Early Access?

“Are [the dev team] interested in engaging with the community?”

-Daedalic Entertainment

Top reasons:

- *More time for the game to cook*
- *Want player feedback*
- *Want to be engaged with players*
- *Have a system-based game*

Early Access

How to prepare?

Your team:

Excited to engage with players

Organized around this process

Plan your process:

Communicate a lot

Update regularly

Expect to adapt



Concerns going in?

***“Our main concern was
meeting player expectations.”***

-Sea Power : Naval Combat in the Missile Age

Build confidence in your game:

Playtest prior to Early Access

(Keys, Steam Playtest, Demo, etc.)

Build a polished vertical slice

Harness your core players:

**Identify players good at
feedback**

**Form a small, dedicated group
to test ideas**

Establish flexible roadmap:

Internally: a clear vision for 1.0

Externally: a vague set of intentions

Flexibility to adjust priority

The background of the slide is a dark, atmospheric screenshot from the game StarCraft II. It shows a battle scene with Zerg units, including a large Brood Mother on the left and various Zerglings and Hydralisks on the right. The terrain is dark and rocky, with some glowing blue energy sources. The text is overlaid on this background.

Early Access roadmap:

“We make it as easy for us to update as possible...”

-Deep Rock Galactic: Survivor

Early Access

How to manage it?



Advice for other devs?

“Be honest about your limitations”

- SULFUR

Best practices:

- 1. Listen to feedback*
- 2. Communicate regularly*
- 3. Test with core fans*
- 4. Update*

Interpreting feedback

“...when you have a clear vision of what you’re trying to achieve, it makes it easier to filter all the feedback”

-Outlast Trials



Listen: Interpreting feedback

Read between the lines

Use for prioritizing

Keep scope in mind

Communicate: Where players are

**Make regular posts along the way;
don't build up too long**

Be present in chat

Localize

Test: Harness your core fans

**Deploy experimental features
or initial implementations to
get feedback**

Update:

Fix bugs quickly

**Take longer to roll together
meaningful updates**

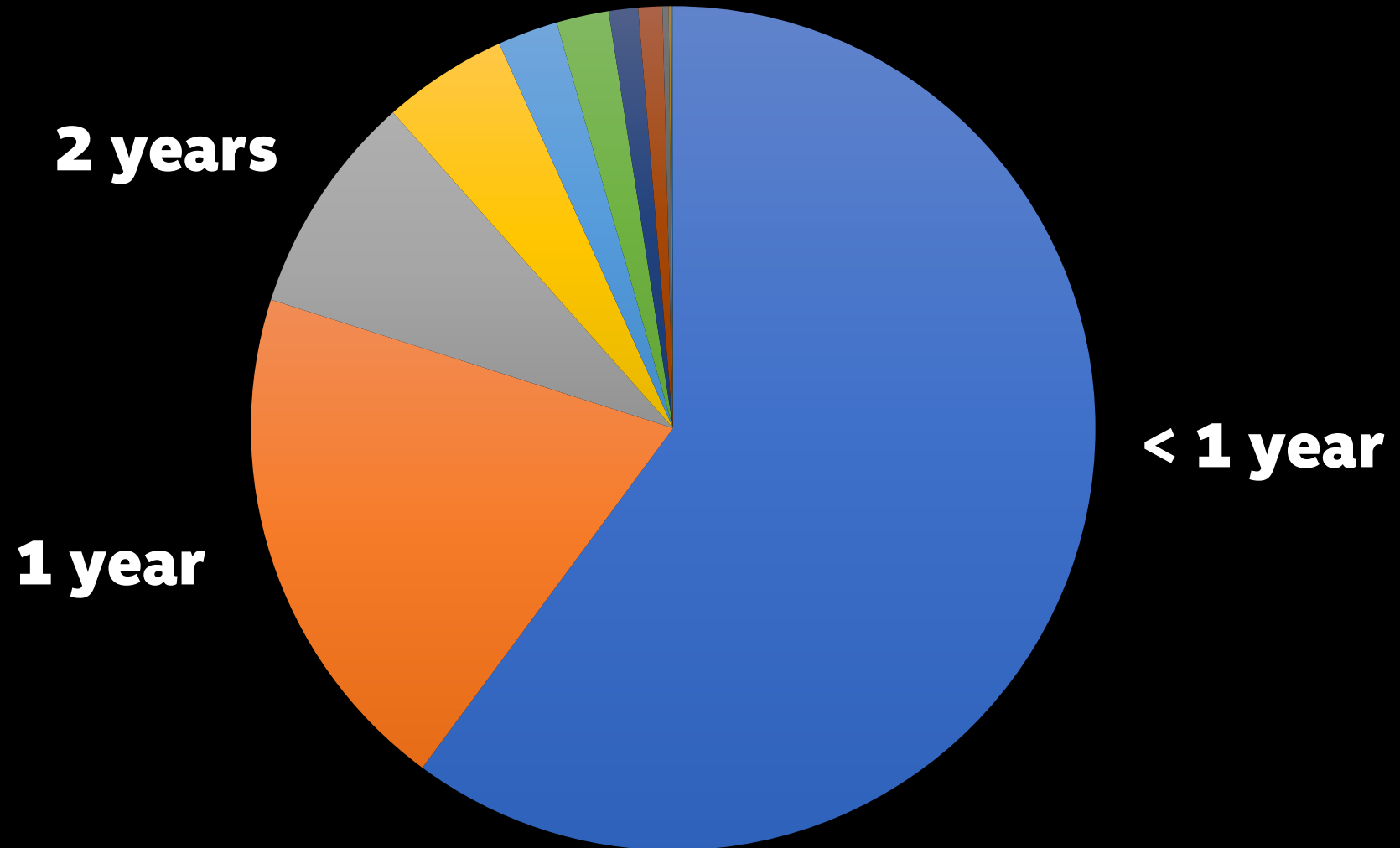
Don't get derailed

**Expanding scope only when
supported by the game and
audience**

Early Access

When and how to 1.0?

Time in Early Access





***“If we take too long, we’ll disappoint
either ourselves or our players”***

-SULFUR



“...we pushed ourselves to deliver less than a year after the launch of the Early Access.”

-Outlast Trials



***“When your game feels like it could be
printed on a disc”***
-Deep Rock Galactic: Survivor

1.0 Best practices:

- 1. Make a splash*
- 2. Align with other platforms*
- 3. Plan ahead for price/discounts*

Make a splash

**Consider more than just a big
update**

<Capstone update>

Align with other platforms

**Consider timing your 1.0 with
launch on consoles**

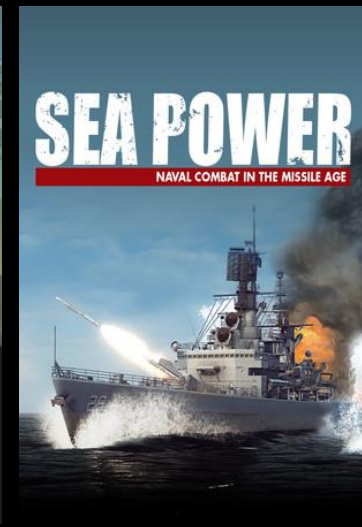
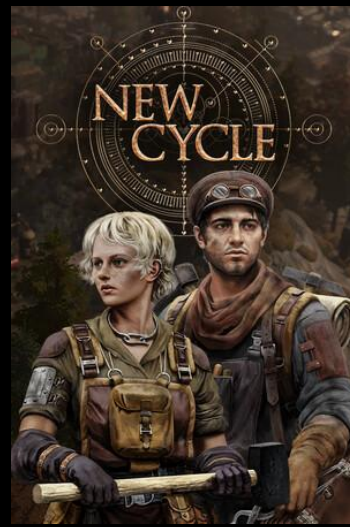
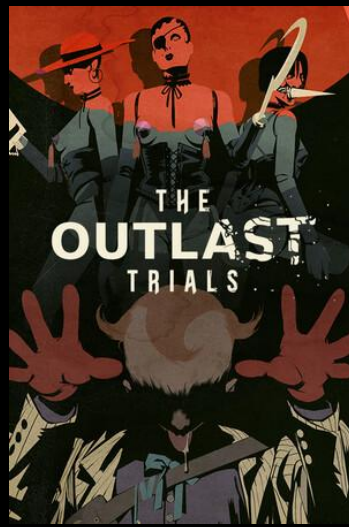
Plan ahead for price/discounts

- **Price of your game at launch**
- **Launch discount**
- **Upcoming event opportunities**

This talk:

*Is Early Access still relevant? **YES, as popular as ever***

*Is Early Access different now than in the past? **YES, higher expectations***



Thank you to these fine folks!





Thank you

**Copy of these slides,
and resources**

