To examine the extent to which community-based health and health care improvement programs have the capacity and will to produce rigorous evidence of their effectiveness.

**BACKGROUND**

- The Local Funding Partnerships (LFP) program, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, provides funding for innovative program models to improve the health and health care of vulnerable populations.
- More information is needed on community-based programs’ capacity to evaluate models of service delivery and produce evidence of effectiveness.
- The federal Social Innovation Fund (created by the current administration) is seeking evidence of effective programs for improving health outcomes.
- Models that are shown to be effective may receive funding from the Social Innovation Fund for replication across the country.

**STUDY DESIGN**

- We conducted a survey with the project directors of 86 LFP grantees funded from 2003 to 2008.
- The 45-minute telephone survey contained questions on the project intervention, whether the project completed an evaluation, the type of evaluation, and how the evaluation results were used and disseminated.
- The survey was administered from November 2009 to January 2010 and achieved a 98% response rate.
- This research study was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

**OBJECTIVE**

- To examine the extent to which community-based health and health care improvement programs have the capacity and will to produce rigorous evidence of their effectiveness.

**FINDINGS**

**Principal Finding**

- The majority of community grantees are conducting evaluations to demonstrate evidence of effectiveness, and these evaluation efforts are being used by grantees to support the future sustainability of their projects.

**Figure 1:** Types of Evaluation Activities Reported by Projects

- Measurement of program outcomes: 56%
- Process or implementation studies: 40%
- Development of a program logic model: 29%
- Program cost, cost benefit, or return on investment studies: 16%
- Any other evaluations of project’s effectiveness: 4%
- None of the above: 1%

**Figure 2:** Organizations Conducting Evaluations

- Internal: 59%
- External: 52%
- Both Internal & External: 19%
- Internal & External: 56%

**Figure 3:** Reported Use of Evaluations By Projects

- Identify specific ways to improve implementation
- Identify new development areas (field based)
- Change the type of project activities
- Improve efficiency or policy initiatives
- Promote replication of project
- Increase funding or resources
- Have not used the evaluation results
- None of the above

**CLOSING REMARKS**

- Many projects have organizational capacity for evaluation: 69% had evaluation funding in their operating budgets and 84% report one or more staff are trained in evaluation or measurement (most often in graduate school).
- All projects reported conducting ongoing data collection to assess type of services (84%), client characteristics (66%), program outcomes based on survey and administrative data, (50%), cost data (37%), and medical outcomes (33%).
- Among completed grants, the factor most commonly credited (38%) for sustaining operations was evidence of effectiveness.
- The most common uses of the evaluation were to improve the project's implementation (81%), market to current funders (76%), and market to future funders (75%) (Figure 3).

**Conclusions**

- Grantees in the LFP program recognize the importance of producing evidence of effectiveness and have varying levels of capacity for conducting rigorous evaluations.
- More than half of the LFP projects have commissioned independent evaluators to examine their effectiveness (however, this study does not report on the quality of the evaluations).
- Some projects in this program may be producing evidence of effectiveness that could help gain access to federal funding for replicating their models.

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