

NOTES FROM THE FIELD
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External Qualitative Research Team

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Fieldwork

Our data collection this past quarter has been focused on understanding the perceptions and experiences of PRC employees who are staffing the SPF SIG. This includes both those who are field-based, working as Community Development Specialists (CDSs) throughout the state, and those whose work is based in Dunbar. We designed a mixed method (both quantitative and qualitative items) survey and distributed it to all PRC staff who have worked with the SPF SIG. In addition, we conducted interviews with eleven staff members—five CDSs and six at Dunbar.

We have begun to tabulate the quantitative responses, but a few surveys are still coming in. Our analysis of the qualitative data—from the open-ended survey items as well as the interviews—is underway. We will give a full report of findings at the next quarterly meeting.

Other Projects

Year One Regional Learning Opportunities (RLOs)

Our most exciting news is that Paula (AKA Dr. Flaherty!) completed her study of the Year One RLOs and successfully defended her dissertation study—“Regional Learning Opportunities: A Story of Place-Based Learning Among Adults in West Virginia”—on September 24. She will make the same presentation of her study at the West Virginia Partnership Quarterly Meeting on October 19. She will also present the study at the annual meeting of the American Educational Studies Association to be held in Cleveland later in October. A brief abstract of the study is attached.

Research on the Research

Karen is taking the lead on a study of the SPF SIG research itself. Based on an initial review of literature, she developed a proposal to present a paper entitled “Research: Locating Identity in Cultural Borders” at the annual meeting of the Appalachian Studies Association.” The proposal is under review at this time.

Old Business

Anne continues to make progress on a manuscript about what it takes to staff this kind of statewide, community-based project. Linda continues to seek a publication outlet for the manuscript about the planning year – “Eyes on the Process.”

Focus for Next Quarter

Our fieldwork focus for the upcoming quarter will be on understanding the experiences and perceptions of county-level project directors. We will design and distribute a mixed method survey to all current and former project directors. We plan to interview a sample of 15 directors, including some counties that were only funded for the initial planning year, some that were awarded initial implementation grants, some that received planning money, and some that were recently awarded new implementation grants. While the survey will include the entire population of project directors, for the interviews we plan to purposefully select directors in counties that are thought to be especially successful. Looking at data across the group of successful counties will allow us to identify factors that enabled their success.