

West Virginia Partnership to Promote Community Well-Being

External Evaluation Research Team Progress Report

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During the past quarter we engaged primarily in analysis, interpretation, and writing based on our data from the entire six-year SPF SIG project. The goal of this work, in addition to providing end-of-project feedback to participants here in West Virginia, is to contribute to knowledge about collaborative community change more broadly by disseminating findings from the research. In other words, based on our research with the West Virginia Partnership, we are working on additional journal articles—and perhaps eventually a book-length manuscript—sharing what we have learned in our data-based study of collaborative community change. In addition to the analysis and writing work, during this quarter we generated a small amount of new state and community-level data in order to more deeply and holistically understand the project.

Data Collection

During this quarter we finished focus group interviews with a sample of SPF SIG-funded local community coalition members. In addition to the local coalition focus groups, we conducted several observations and interviews to fill perceived gaps in our data.

Analysis of Data

A major task for this quarter involved systematic review of our longitudinal findings (primarily using prior Notes from the Field) in relation to our data-based model, “Getting (it) Together: Collaborative Community Change.” In addition to prior Notes from the Field, we examined the model in light of data (e.g., recent coalition focus groups) that had not been included in prior reports. Based on that review, we made modifications in the model as needed in order to be sure it was a good fit with (a valid representation of) what we know about the project.

Dissemination of Findings

- Our article, “The Power of Process: A Story of Collaboration and Community Change,” is in press with the *Journal of Community Development*. During this quarter, we responded to journal copyediting questions and signed copyright forms. Currently the journal issue is being laid out and readied for printing and distribution. We have arranged to receive 50 free copies of the article. If you would like a copy of the article for yourself and/or your organization, we will be happy to assist with that.
- Following the meta-analysis of data and model revision described above, we engaged in a search and review of previously-published research (see attached bibliography) on community collaboration and coalitions, community change—especially research that features model/s of collaborative community change and research that addresses components identified in our data-based model:
 - getting the right people to the table at the right time
 - getting—and keeping—they engaged with each other and the project,
 - developing shared visions,
 - obtaining resources to support the project, and
 - individual and collective change/learning.

Our goal in this stage of the research is to interpret our findings (especially our model of collaborative community change) in light of prior research and theory, in order to locate our work within existing bodies of knowledge. This literature reviewing is still in progress, but we have learned that while collaborative community work, especially in the form of coalitions, has been popular for awhile, especially in prevention efforts, there is little published empirical research about the nature (the kinds of processes involved) and the effectiveness of this approach (e.g. Guillory, Everson, & Ivester 2006). In addition to a lack of empirical work on effective community coalition *processes*, there is also an identified lack of research on the relationship between effective coalition processes and intermediate or ultimate community outcomes/change. We believe our longitudinal, empirical study of the WV SPF SIG and the WV Partnership will continue to make strong contributions to this research base by linking together what we have learned about effective collaborative processes—at the state and local levels—with what has been accomplished in terms of individual and collective learning and change.

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