

Kansas Health Foundation

Final Report: Nutrition and Physical Activity 2 Initiative

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Executive Summary

The Kansas Health Foundation is focused on improving the health of all Kansans by supporting strategies that focus on making Kansas a healthier place. In September 2006 the Foundation launched its Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative (NPA 1); the first of two multisite initiatives aimed at improving the knowledge and behavior of Kansans regarding nutrition and physical activity. This Initiative was followed in May 2008 by the Nutrition and Physical Activity 2 Initiative (NPA 2). This report provides a detailed synthesis of the findings from the evaluation of NPA 2 with a few comparisons to findings from NPA 1, as relevant.

The goals of NPA 2 were:

- To build the capacity of selected community foundations in Kansas to facilitate strategic, sustainable change; and
- To improve the health of various communities in Kansas by creating environments that promote and support physical activity and healthy eating.

To implement this Initiative, the Kansas Health Foundation selected four community foundations in the state of Kansas and partnered with them to develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) process designed to fund local grantee organizations, projects, and coalitions, working towards improving nutrition and physical activity. The four community foundations that were selected to implement NPA 2 were:

- Wichita Community Foundation (WCF)
- Douglas County Community Foundation (DCCF)
- Greater Salina Community Foundation (GSCF)
- Hutchinson Community Foundation¹

In 2007, the Kansas Health Foundation contracted with Innovation Network to be its evaluation partner on both NPA 1 and NPA 2. Innovation Network is a nonprofit consulting firm that specializes in helping foundations and nonprofits measure results to support ongoing learning to inform decisions about programming.

Innovation Network worked with the Kansas Health Foundation and the selected community foundations to:

- Develop community- and Initiative-level logic models;
- Articulate the Initiative-level evaluation plan; and
- Collect data to measure progress against the key Initiative goals and outcomes.

This report examines the progress toward the goals of the NPA 2 Initiative and, when applicable, compares learnings across NPA 1 and NPA 2 Initiatives.

¹ Hutchinson Community Foundation and their grantees are not included in this evaluation report due to the timing of their grantmaking schedule and other planning and implementation issues.

Goal 1: To strengthen the capacity of selected community foundations in Kansas to facilitate strategic, sustainable change

1.1 Engaging and Learning from the Community

NPA 2 community foundations were positioned strategically within their communities to capitalize on and leverage existing relationships and pave the way for developing new partnerships. The level of community buy-in to the coalition was correlated to their ability to identify and recruit those individuals who were truly passionate about nutrition and physical activity issues and who willingly came to the table without pre-existing agendas of their own. These efforts were further bolstered by the community foundations' success in thinking creatively about how best to draw from the harder to reach segments of the population. Interestingly, the progress made by the NPA 2 community foundations in developing strong coalitions actually detracted from their own visibility as being seen as the key convening agent within their communities.

The NPA 2 community foundations were all unique in their standing within their communities and in the process they utilized to develop the coalitions. For example, the Health & Wellness Coalition of Wichita was already in existence at the start of the Initiative and therefore served as a model of what the other coalitions may someday evolve into. In Wichita, the actual leadership of the coalition did not reside with the community foundation. This enabled the coalition to create a space for open dialogue and to attract true champions of nutrition and physical activity. The Kansas Health Foundation encouraged the other NPA 2 community foundations to transfer leadership once they established their coalition and developed a community plan. Our findings indicate that successfully transferring the leadership of the coalition may not always be possible within the timeframe of the grant.

While each of the three NPA 2 foundations included in this report are vastly different in how they engaged their communities, a few promising practices have emerged:

- Successful community foundations are skilled at identifying and partnering with influential stakeholders of the community.
- Communities that were able to gain input from harder to reach populations were more likely to establish a community plan that more accurately reflected the needs of their community.
- The convening process yielded better results in communities where the foundations were able to successfully disaggregate discussion regarding nutrition and physical activity community needs from the promise of funding. Many of the NPA 1 community foundations had a difficult time with this separation which resulted in a number of people coming to the table with their own agendas in mind.
- Transfer of coalition leadership (encouraged to increase the likelihood of sustainability), was not always a natural and seamless process. Successful leadership transfer was dependent on community readiness, the identification of a suitable champion, and the willingness of the community foundation to relinquish its role as key convener.

Looking to the future, additional questions remain about the continued success of the three coalitions in light of their unique characteristics. Some questions for further inquiry include:

- To what degree have the types of partnerships that coalitions have formed contribute to the overall sustainability of the coalition, beyond the life of the grant?
- Five years from now, what is the status of the coalitions? How did transferring the leadership of the coalition, if applicable, contribute to the sustainability of health and physical activity efforts within the communities?
- If any of the NPA 1 or 2 communities are selected for the new Healthy Community Design/Access to Healthy Foods RFP Initiatives, how will the learnings and experiences from NPA 1 and 2 contribute to the development of a new community plan?

1.2 Building Grantee Capacity

NPA 1 community foundations were rated more favorably by their grantees in their ability to recognize the needs of grantees than their counterparts in NPA 2. As a whole, only 44 percent of the NPA 2 grantee survey respondents *strongly agreed* that their community foundation was aware of their needs (compared to 73 percent of NPA 1 grantees). One of the main differences between NPA 1 and 2 was the experience and ability of the community foundations to build coalitions. NPA 2 community foundations were able to make more progress in building their coalitions.

Evaluation findings reveal that the more advanced a community coalition is, the less the community perceives the community foundation's involvement and role around issues of health and physical activity. Community foundations that continue to play a central role in the convening process and/or the coalition are perceived by grantees as being more aware of grantee needs. This theory helps to explain why NPA 1 foundations were rated higher by their grantees in this regard—NPA 1 foundations were more visible and active as there were no strong, semi-independent coalitions like LiveWell Lawrence and the Health & Wellness Coalition of Wichita.

1.3 Sustaining Strategic Grantmaking and NPA Programs

Strategic grantmaking as defined within this evaluation includes the following components:

- Capacity of the foundations to integrate strategic grantmaking approaches into their own grantmaking;
- Ability to leverage additional funding; and
- Program sustainability.

Community foundations appear to be at different stages of buying into and integrating the strategic grantmaking approach. Interviews with community foundation staff and board members reveal that while most of the community foundations see value in the concept and practice of strategic grantmaking, not all of them have incorporated the principles into their grantmaking process. There appears to be a connection with how far along into the convening and NPA grantmaking process community foundations were, and their overall buy-in and integration of this approach into foundation practices. Generally speaking, community foundations that were further along tended to be more bought-in to the approach.

Interviews with community foundation staff and board members reveal that community foundations were not able to leverage additional funding. However, community foundations did convey that through NPA 2 they've been able to form partnerships to further the goals of the Initiative. Approximately 32 percent of the NPA 2 community foundation grantees leveraged additional funding, including different forms of in-kind support.

Survey data indicate that NPA 2 grantees were fairly optimistic about the sustainability of their programs. When asked to rate the potential for sustaining their programs after the life of the grant, just under 90 percent of NPA 2 grantee survey respondents reported that their program was *very sustainable* or *somewhat sustainable*. Also, a higher percentage of NPA 2 grantees (37 percent) felt that their program was *very sustainable*, compared to only 21 percent of NPA 1 grantees.

Goal 2: To Improve the health of various communities in Kansas by creating environments that promote and support physical activity and healthy eating

2.1 Enhancing Awareness and Knowledge of NPA Best Practices

Nearly half of grantees indicated seeing an increase in awareness and knowledge among the vast majority of their program participants (75 percent to all of them). Just under 20 percent of grantees reported the questions were not applicable. This likely reflects that it was too soon to meaningfully report on these outcomes (large grantee pools in Wichita and Douglas County had just gotten underway).

2.1 Promoting Healthier Food Choices and Physical Activities

Approximately one-third of grantees reported that the vast majority of participants (75 percent or more) increased healthy eating behaviors. Twenty-three percent of grantees reported that the vast majority had increased their weekly physical activity. Again, there was a large percentage of grantees who responded *not applicable*, likely because it was too soon to see results.

The complete evaluation report provides a detailed examination of the goals of the Initiative and the progress made by each community. The tables and figures displayed throughout the report provide additional context and support for the main findings described in this section.