

Recognition Grants: Annual Evaluation of 2012 Spring Cycle RG Awards

Report submitted to the Kansas Health Foundation

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the evaluation activities is to capture information about the status and outcomes of Recognition Grant (RG) projects nearly a year after funding was dispersed. Information from award recipients is used to help the Kansas Health Foundation better understand the successes and challenges experienced by award recipients as well as enhance the ways in which the Foundation supports and partners with community-based organizations.

In the spring of 2013, 50 RG recipients from the Foundation's 2012 Spring Cycle were offered the opportunity to participate in either an online survey¹ or a 20-minute confidential phone interview with the external evaluator. The process was voluntary, and communications with grantees emphasized that their participation in the evaluation (or lack thereof) was in no way tied to future funding.

Of the 50 award recipients invited to participate in this voluntary evaluation process, 22 participated in the online survey, resulting in a 44% response rate.

The full report presents findings from the data analysis of the 22 survey responses. This includes information about the structure and focus of the RG projects as well as recipients' assessments of the degree to which their intended goals were met and the factors (positive and negative) that contributed to their successes and challenges.

Findings

Award recipients have worked and continue to work diligently to reach their intended positive health outcomes for communities across Kansas. Grantees believe that their RG funded projects have led to increased organizational efficiency, expanded services for community members, more healthy food and fitness choices within communities, and have decreased the vulnerability of many portions of the population (e.g., young, developmentally-delayed, seniors, teens, obese, etc.). Below are some of the primary findings from the survey.

- RG projects are diverse in terms of structure, focus, implementation and participant targets.
- Award recipients view their projects' health objectives as multi-faceted.
- Award recipients report collectively serving over 89,000 individuals.
- Eighty-two percent of respondents report that they have made significant or complete progress towards reaching their intended project objectives.
- Asked to share their greatest successes with their projects, award recipients largely shared excitement about connecting individuals to resources and services, reaching more individuals, and contributing to increased knowledge about health and wellness, as well as witnessing increased healthy choices and activities among program participants.
- The largest proportion of award recipients, though still a relatively small percentage of 36% of grantees, reports continuing challenges in supporting their projects financially.
- Many award recipients struggle with limited staff capacity, whether full-time or volunteer.

¹ A copy of the online survey is placed in the appendix to this report.

REFLECTIONS

The evaluator offers the following as ongoing considerations for the Kansas Health Foundation as it continues to use Recognition Grants to support its relationships with community based organizations across the state.

- Does the Foundation remain comfortable with the varied foci of RG projects (overall) as well as the distinct (and varied) ways in which RG projects support the Foundation's mission?
- A number of award recipients continue to share their challenges in terms of their staffing capacity to implement projects, whether in terms of full-time staff or volunteers. Beyond award dollars, how might the Foundation play a role in supporting community-based organization's needs in terms of staffing (e.g., sessions focused on this at the Annual Conference, providing release time for KHF staff to volunteer, virtually connecting RG award recipients to volunteer organizations, etc.)?
- Besides the Annual Conference, how else are RG award recipients connected to the Foundation and its work? Are there ways in which the Kansas Health Foundation might use grantees to bolster its larger, strategic efforts?

Overview of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation activities is to capture information about the status and outcomes of Recognition Grant (RG) projects nearly a year after funding was dispersed. Information from award recipients is used to help the Kansas Health Foundation better understand the successes and challenges experienced by award recipients as well as enhance the ways in which the Foundation supports and partners with community-based organizations.

In the spring of 2013, 50 RG recipients from the Foundation's 2012 Spring Cycle were offered the opportunity to participate in either an online surveyⁱ or a 20-minute confidential phone interview with the external evaluator. The process was voluntary, and communications with grantees emphasized that their participation in the evaluation (or lack thereof) was in no way tied to future funding. The timing of the evaluation communications and activities was as follows:

- April 3, 2013: Program Officer Chan Brown emails the 50 RG award recipients from the 2012 Spring Cycle informing them that an external evaluator will be in contact with them in mid-May to offer a voluntary evaluation opportunity. Through this communication appropriate award recipient evaluation contacts are identified.²
- May 15, 2013: The external evaluator invites the 50 RG award recipients from the 2012 Spring Cycle to participate in a voluntary evaluation. The survey link is provided as well as the option of a phone interview should recipients prefer speaking with the evaluator personally. The deadline of June 14, 2013 is given to those award recipients choosing to participate.
- June 10, 2013: A reminder email is sent to the RG award recipients informing them of their voluntary opportunity to participate in either the online survey or phone interview.
- June 18, 2013: Providing some additional time for award recipients choosing to respond slightly past the deadline, the survey is closed on the Tuesday after the Friday deadline.

Of the 50 award recipients invited to participate in this voluntary evaluation process:

- 22 participated in the online survey;
- 1 provided initial interest in an interview though no interview was completed upon follow-up communications;
- 1 responded that due to turnover in her organization, she was unable to respond sufficiently to the survey items and thus declined; and
- 1 completed less than a third of the survey and thus the response was removed from the data set.

The response rate for the online survey was 44%. No award recipients completed phone interviews with the evaluator.

The report that follows presents findings from the evaluator's data analysis of the 22 survey responses. This includes information about the structure and focus of the RG projects as well as recipients' assessments of the degree to which their intended goals

² Through this communication, KHF staff is able to ascertain turnover within organizations, confirm correct contacts for evaluation activities, and capture some initial award recipient interest in evaluation activities. The first communication also allows recipients to schedule time for participation, should they choose to participate.