SPF SIG grantee satisfaction with management team support

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Summary

Introduction

In 2009, Wilder Research was hired by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) to provide evaluation training and technical assistance for the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG). In 2012, eight communities were funded with the goal of enhancing their local prevention efforts by building their capacity to move through the Strategic Prevention Framework steps of assessment, capacity building, and planning. Seven of these communities went on to the remaining steps of implementation and evaluation.

Two primary activities are conducted to build grantee capacity: a series of training activities and provision of individualized and ongoing technical assistance. Each grantee was assigned one consultant from ADAD to provide overall grant oversight and support for planning and implementation; an epidemiological consultant to provide assistance with assessment and accessing existing data; one consultant from Wilder Research who offers assistance pertaining to primary data collection for assessment and evaluation; and at least one Master Trainer to provide capacity building support.

At the time of the survey, the grantees were in the process of implementing and evaluating the strategies they selected in a strategic plan they created in 2013 based on the SPF steps of assessment, capacity building, and planning.

Satisfaction survey

In February 2014, Wilder Research launched a web-based survey to collect information from the SPF SIG grantees. The survey was designed to assess their level of satisfaction with the training and technical assistance offered by the SPF SIG staff and contractors listed above to-date. The survey was sent to the current coordinator in all communities and it was also sent to a former coordinator in one of the communities due to very recent turnover in the grantee coordinator position in that community. Seven of eight grantees who were sent the survey completed it and the results were compiled by a Wilder Research staff member not directly involved with the SPF SIG project.

Technical assistance satisfaction

Grantees were generally satisfied with their technical assistance. All grantees "strongly agreed" or "agreed" they were satisfied with the technical assistance provided by EpiMachine staff, ADAD staff, and Wilder Research staff. One respondent "disagreed" that they were satisfied with technical assistance from their Master Trainer (Figure 1).

1.   Overall satisfaction with technical assistance (N=7)

Overall, I am satisfied with the technical assistance provided by…	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
EpiMachine staff	5	2	0	0
ADAD staff	3	4	0	0
Wilder Research staff	1	6	0	0
My Master Trainer(s)	2	4	1	0

Note: *Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.*

When asked about specific aspects of the management team's technical assistance skills, all of the respondents said that "most of the time" the management team listens and understands their needs, is willing to accommodate issues specific to their community, and provides useful suggestions and recommendations (Figure 2). Four of the seven respondents said that the management team responds quickly to requests or questions "most of the time".

2.   Grantee satisfaction with the management team (N=7)

The management team, including staff from ADAD, Wilder Research, and EpiMachine…	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely
Listens and understands my needs.	7	0	0
Provides useful suggestions and recommendations.	7	0	0
Have developed useful tools for assessment (e.g., one-on-one interview, key informant interview, facilitated discussion, and coalition survey tools and summaries).	7	0	0
Communicates information clearly.	6	1	0
Is willing to accommodate issues specific to my community	6	1	0
Has provided clear instructions for fulfilling SPF SIG deliverables.	6	1	0
Keeps me informed about project activities and status.	5	2	0
Responds quickly to my requests or questions.	4	3	0

Note: *Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.*

Most of the grantees have the "right amount of communication" with their consultants. All of the grantees said they have the right amount of contact with ADAD staff. Two respondents would like to have more communication with Wilder Research staff and with their Master Trainers. One respondent would like to have more communication with EpiMachine staff (Figure 3).

3. Desired Frequency of communication (N=7)

How would you rate the frequency of communication you have with the SPF SIG training and technical assistance team?	I would like to have more communication	I have the right amount of communication	I would like to have less communication
ADAD staff	0	7	0
EpiMachine staff	1	6	0
Wilder Research staff	2	5	0
Master Trainers	2	5	0

Note: *Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.*

Overall perceptions of activities

When asked about their overall perceptions of specific activities in the SPF SIG project, all respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" on all items (Figure 4). Four out of seven respondents "strongly agreed" that they are comfortable developing the strategic plan using provided materials.

4. Overall perceptions of activities (N=7)

Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I have been comfortable developing the strategic plan using the materials provided.	4	3	0	0
The strategic planning materials have been useful for my coalition.	3	4	0	0
I feel the time and effort I invested in capacity building efforts are worthwhile.	3	4	0	0
I have been successful in building my coalition's capacity to implement the SPF.	2	5	0	0
I feel the time and effort I invested in the assessment components are worthwhile.	2	5	0	0
The assessment materials helped me collect useful information.	2	5	0	0
I have a clear understanding of the current and upcoming project tasks/priorities/deliverables.	2	5	0	0

Note: *Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.*

Grantees were asked what has been most helpful and what could be improved in the technical assistance provided by the SPF SIG management team (Figures 5-6). Respondents mentioned the quality feedback from the technical assistance team, receiving regular communication from ADAD, and recognizing community differences as being helpful. Suggestions for improvement included more one-on-one meeting time, more check-ins on tracking and evaluation, more contact between the grantees and the management team, and advance notice of Wilder projects in order to be more prepared.

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5. Open-ended question: Please describe how the technical assistance provided by the SPF SIG training and technical assistance team, including staff from Wilder Research, ADAD, EpiMachine, and the Master Trainers, has been the most helpful.

Melissa Adolfson from EpiMachine has been extremely responsive and flexible in working with me. The technical assistance she provided with the Minnesota Student Survey was extremely valuable. Receiving regular communication from ADAD is also very helpful.

Everyone is very responsive and helpful. I feel very supported by all. I also appreciate that everyone recognizes that each community is unique with different needs and resources.

The technical assistance team has been good at providing quality feedback.

I feel comfortable asking questions when needed and the feedback is always helpful.

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6. Open-ended question: Please describe how the SPF SIG training and technical assistance team could improve the assistance they provide.

I think meeting 1:1 more often would be helpful.

I feel like we need some periodic check in on tracking and evaluation because this is not necessarily my strength. I think it could be done in such a way that it doesn't feel like we as coordinators are being evaluated yet avoids scrambling at the end of the grant period. What is Wilder going to ask for in the end? I guess I am unclear how the data we are collecting will be used. This might be a good topic for a grantee meeting, webinar, or conference call. Coordinators could share how they've adopted Wilder's tracking tools to work for them, how they are storing it all, etc. Also, I haven't heard from my Master Trainers in quite some time. I don't necessarily need help with anything, but all they know about our coalition's work at this point comes from meeting agendas, minutes, and e-newsletters. That might be just fine! I guess I'm also unclear on what to expect from this at this point.

Having calls that regularly connect the different grantee areas and the management team.

Wilder could provide a little more explanation of specific projects they will be working on in the coming year so I can be a little more prepared.

Knowledge

Grantees were asked about their current level of knowledge in the five SPF areas of: assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Figures 7-11). Most respondents felt they had "a lot" or "some" knowledge in the all of the areas of assessment, capacity building, and implementation. One respondent felt they had "little or no knowledge" in the areas of assessment and evaluation. Results for each knowledge area are presented below.

Assessment knowledge

Most of the grantees said they had "a lot of knowledge" or "some knowledge" about each of the assessment areas. The greatest number of respondents said they had "a lot of knowledge" in locating existing assessment data, collecting new assessment data using existing tools, using assessment data to identify local conditions, and using assessment data to prioritize local conditions (Figure 7). Fewer respondents had "a lot of knowledge" in identifying high-risk sub populations and critiquing the quality and relevance of assessment data (2 of 7 respondents). One respondent had "little or no knowledge" in each category.

7.   Assessment knowledge (N=7)

Please rate your current level of knowledge in each of the following Assessment areas:	A lot of knowledge	Some knowledge	Little or no knowledge
Locating existing assessment data	5	1	1
Collecting new assessment data using existing tools	5	1	1
Using assessment data to identify local conditions	4	2	1
Using assessment data to prioritize local conditions	4	2	1
Interpreting community-level data (e.g. the Minnesota Student Survey)	2	4	1
Conducting an analysis to identify community needs/issues	2	4	1
Identifying community readiness to address needs/issues	2	4	1
Critiquing the quality and relevance of assessment data	1	5	1
Identifying high-risk sub populations	1	5	1

Note: *Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.*

Capacity building knowledge

All of the grantees said they had "a lot of knowledge" or "some knowledge" about each of the capacity building survey items. The greatest number of respondents said they had "a lot" of knowledge in helping to identify stakeholders and resources that will contribute to the success of an initiative (Figure 8). Most respondents report having "some knowledge" in engaging parents, other community members, and professionals, as well as in coalition ethics and evidence-based practices.

8. Capacity building knowledge (N=7)

Please rate your current level of knowledge in each of the following Capacity Building areas:	A lot of knowledge	Some knowledge	Little or no knowledge
Helping to identify stakeholders that contribute to the success of an initiative	6	1	0
Helping to identify resources that will contribute to the success of an initiative	6	1	0
Acting as a liaison between a coalition and outside stakeholders	5	2	0
Increasing understanding of environmental strategies	4	3	0
Increasing understanding of the SPF principles	4	3	0
Engaging youth in meaningful ways	4	3	0
Engaging parents and other community members in meaningful ways	3	4	0
Increasing understanding of coalition ethics and responsibilities	3	4	0
Increasing understanding of evidence-based practices	3	4	0
Engaging community leaders	3	4	0
Engaging professionals in meaningful ways	3	4	0

Note: Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.

Planning knowledge

When compared to assessment and capacity building, fewer respondents said they had "a lot of knowledge" in the area of planning. The majority said they had "a lot of knowledge" identifying goals and objectives. Six out of seven respondents said they had "some knowledge" in ensuring that planning activities are culturally relevant for all stakeholders (Figure 9).

9.   Planning knowledge (N=7)

Please rate your current level of knowledge in each of the following Planning areas:	A lot of knowledge	Some knowledge	Little or no knowledge
Identifying goals and objectives	5	2	0
Developing a strategic plan	3	4	0
Identifying appropriate evidence-based methods and strategies	3	4	0
Identifying populations requiring culturally specific services	3	4	0
Ensuring that planning activities are culturally relevant for all stakeholders	1	6	0

Note: *Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.*

Implementation knowledge

Respondents reported having "a lot" or "some knowledge" of the components of implementation (Figure 10). Most respondents said they had "a lot of knowledge" in working with stakeholders to implement strategies. The majority of respondents said they had "some knowledge" in maintaining ethical standards (4 out of 7), ensuring the sustainability of implementation activities, that programs match "best practices" or "model programs," and ensuring that implementation activities are culturally relevant for all stakeholders (5 out of 7 respondents each).

10.   Implementation knowledge (N=7)

Please rate your current level of knowledge in each of the following Implementation areas:	A lot of knowledge	Some knowledge	Little or no knowledge
Working with stakeholders to implement strategies	4	3	0
Maintaining ethical standards in program implementation	3	4	0
Ensuring the sustainability of implementation activities	2	5	0
Ensuring programs match "best practices" or "model programs" (program fidelity)	2	5	0
Ensuring that implementation activities are culturally relevant for all stakeholders	2	5	0

Note: *Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.*

Evaluation knowledge

In the area of evaluation, four out of seven respondents felt they had "a lot" of knowledge around creating a logic model (Figure 11). Less than half of respondents felt they had "a lot" of knowledge around assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of different data collection methods, assessing participant satisfaction with surveys, protecting the rights of evaluation participants and using evaluation findings to improve programming. The majority of respondents said they had "some knowledge" about measuring outcomes associated with your program, using evaluation findings for broader community-level planning, and ensuring that evaluation procedures and instruments are culturally competent (5 out of 7 respondents each). One respondent had little or no knowledge of each evaluation components.

11. Evaluation knowledge (N=7)

Please rate your current level of knowledge in each of the following evaluation areas:	A lot of knowledge	Some knowledge	Little or no knowledge
Creating an evaluation logic model	4	2	1
Assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of different data collection methods (such as records, surveys, focus groups, etc.)	3	3	1
Assessing participant satisfaction with services	3	3	1
Protecting the rights of evaluation participants	3	3	1
Writing reports using data	3	3	1
Using evaluation findings to improve programming	3	3	1
Tracking services provided and information about service participants	2	4	1
Measuring outcomes associated with your program	1	5	1
Using evaluation findings for broader community-level planning	1	5	1
Ensuring that evaluation procedures and instruments are culturally competent	1	5	1

Note: *Results are reported in counts rather than percentages because N<10.*

When asked what other specific topics they would like to have addressed through upcoming trainings or technical assistance, two respondents provided a response. One respondent had other questions or concerns. See below for their answers.

12. Open-ended question: Besides the items listed above, what other specific topics would you like to have addressed through upcoming trainings or technical assistance?

Training on working on ATOD prevention with culturally specific populations.

Tracking and expectations for ongoing evaluation, a mid-course check-in, if you will. Also, I don't feel like we've talked much at all about ethics. The last I've heard about ethical considerations was when I attended SAPST two years ago.

13. Do you have any other questions or concerns at this time?

I feel like MDH and DHS could learn a lot from one another. Having worked with both, I see that SPF SIG staff and TA providers are doing awesome and innovative things. So is MDH, but in other areas (e.g. sharing success stories). I think staff from the two state departments should have a pow-wow or mini conference. The whole state of Minnesota would benefit! Keep up the great work!

Recommendations

Overall, the grantees indicated they are satisfied with the services offered by the SPF SIG management team. To maintain a positive and productive relationship with the grantees, there are a few suggestions for staff to consider:

■ Provide more updates about evaluation and assessment expectations to adequately prepare grantees for this work.

■ Continue to provide helpful feedback to grantees, and ensure the feedback is given in a timely manner.

■ Consider holding check-in meetings between trainings so grantees have the opportunity to connect with the management team and each other.

■ Provide additional support in assessing and working with diverse cultural groups, including high-risk sub-populations and populations requiring culturally-specific services.

■ Revisit capacity building trainings to enhance grantee skills now that they are implementing their strategies.