Assessing Coalition Success Factors in Alignment with the National SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework

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The USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed) funds nutrition education with policy, systems, and environment approaches (PSEs) in SNAP-eligible communities to reduce obesity and health disparities. The national SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework elucidates multi-sector coalition capacity-building as a foundation for community-level PSE success. In alignment with the Framework, Arizona SNAP-Ed assessed community coalitions to identify their strongest success factors and areas for growth.

Ten SNAP-Ed coalitions from six counties were assessed using the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (WCFI). The WCFI uses a 40-question Likert scale (1.0-5.0) questionnaire to evaluate collaborations on 20 success factors. Areas of collaboration strength (4.0-5.0) and weakness (1.0-3.9) were identified. Coalition members completed the WCFI online or in-person. Of 222 surveys distributed, 106 were completed. Results were aggregated to understand mean factor scores across all coalitions.

The three strongest success factors reported by each coalitions’ members were: Members see collaboration in their self-interest (4.3), Favorable political and social climate (4.1), and Unique purpose (4.1).

The lowest success factors included: Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time (2.8), Appropriate cross section of members (3.3) and Development of clear roles and policy guidelines (3.4). Based on each coalition’s scores, the SNAP-Ed evaluation team generated user-friendly recommendations in order to encourage capacity-building.

Multi-sector work through coalitions is crucial to achieving community-level PSE goals, yet the likelihood of success depends in part on the strengths and weaknesses of the collaborative venture. These include the environment, membership characteristics, and resources of the coalition. Coalitions that report stronger characteristics may have an increased likelihood of achieving the community-level goals that they set forth.