

Placer County MHSa Innovation Project – Final Report
Innovative Community Grants Program
Final December 31, 2014

1. Brief Description of the Program.

The goal of the Placer County Innovative Community Grants Program was to enhance collaboration throughout the community. Through our community planning process, led by the Campaign for Community Wellness (CCW) Steering Committee, and through a number of community capacity building activities, we developed a model to improve mental health outcomes via a community-based strategy of recognizing the power of communities in keeping people well. The Campaign held extensive discussions over a period of several months. The final decision was to create an innovative and highly flexible “community collaboration grants program,” structured within a community capacity, peer-based/resiliency model, to yield the biggest contributions to learning and changing the Placer County mental health landscape.

2. Purpose and Expected Outcomes.

The purpose of the Innovative Community Grants Program was to promote interagency collaboration within the community. The Innovation Program tested a model of collaboration and supports outside of the traditional framework of agencies, using non-traditional partners throughout the county. Through a series of grants, community providers demonstrated how they were able to build:

- Collaboration between community, counties, and other partners,
- Community capacity to meet the mental health needs of the community, and
- Promote individual empowerment, resiliency and self-determination for underserved individuals throughout the county.

Community foundations in Placer County have a unique place in the county system and are able to reach parts of the community that the County Behavioral Health Services department had been unable to reach. These foundations were also able to tap into their capacity to fund small community providers that were previously delivering non-traditional mental health and behavioral health services which had a direct effect on the individual’s mental health wellness. These foundations opened doors into the community to promote mental health and wellness. These included churches, non-profit organizations, Native American community, Latino Community, and Parks and Recreation.

Two foundations were funded:

- 1) Placer Community Foundation
- 2) Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation

In addition, five larger grants were awarded across the county to create and expand Peer to Peer resources. These included:

- 1) Tahoe Truckee Unified School District
- 2) Sierra Native Alliance

- 3) Advocates for Mentally Ill Housing
- 4) Latino Leadership Council
- 5) North Tahoe Family Resource Center

3. Effectiveness of Using Community Organizations to Enhance Interagency Collaboration

All funded programs demonstrated their ability to:

- Build collaboration between community, county, and others;
- Build community capacity;
- Build individual empowerments, resiliency, and self-determination for underserved residents of Placer County;
- Utilize a client-driven model;
- Contribute to learning; and
- Promote cultural competence.

These innovative programs developed and strengthened community relationships, partnerships, interagency and intra-agency collaboration, and demonstrated the strength of communities. We learned about community organizations that were offering prevention, wellness, and mental health support outside of the traditional mental health system.

4. Changes to the Community Collaboration Model

Within the first two years, we were able to identify programs that were effective, and those that were struggling. By utilizing this community foundation model, we were able to continue supporting those programs that were effective and which offered mental health related services. Many of the programs made changes to their original program ideas, to make them relevant and effective. Programs were supported to make these programmatic changes so they could continuously improve services.

All of the larger grants continued to be funded in the next cycle of grants. Some of the smaller foundation grants aligned and developed partnerships with the larger grants. Overall, community collaboration was greatly enhanced; new partnerships were developed; additional needs in the community were identified; and positive outcomes were achieved.

5. Lessons Learned

It is important to be flexible, honor the grassroots efforts of small organizations, and let programs meet the needs of the local community. Community interagency collaboration has been greatly strengthened through this project and we obtained additional stakeholders to CCW. Communities recognized the mental health needs of the community and developed programs to meet these needs. These mental health needs are often tied to other life events and do not meet the criteria used by public mental health systems.

In addition, the mini-grants that were funded through foundations were successful. These foundations were able to reach out to organizations that do not traditionally contract with the county. The foundations know their communities and know how to reach out and support them to be successful. We also found that these programs were very cost-effective, and met or exceeded expectations.

6. Replication for Other Counties

Other medium and large counties could easily replicate this model with their local foundations and small non-profit organizations. We were able to build community capacity and improve the mental health of our community by funding small community collaboration grants, and mini-grants through community foundations. This approach helped to greatly expand services to unserved communities, and to better meet the needs of culturally-diverse individuals.

These innovative, flexible community collaboration grants developed strong, peer-based programs that met the needs of the communities served.

7. Sustainability through Other Funding

We will continue to sustain the majority of these programs through other MHSA funding, primarily Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) funding. However, some of the programs will be sustained with Community Supports and Services (CSS) System Development/Transformation funding, and a few through Full Service Partnership funding.