

RAPID-CYCLE RESEARCH

Findings from Communities Joined in Action

CONTEXT

Communities Joined in Action is committed to supporting community partnerships and sharing learnings. This study included 24 key informant interviews with representatives of six high-functioning, cross-sector partnerships, including a representative of each partner health care organization, a social sector organization, a community-based organization or local resident leader, and the lead for the organization managing the partnership. Data were supplemented with two focus groups that included social service, health care, public health, and community residents to provide insights into cross-sector partnership dynamics.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What internal factors (organizational structures and functions) and external factors (public policies, power dynamics, and approaches to stakeholder engagement) impact cross-sector partnership design, functionality, and sustainability?
- In what ways are partnership dynamics (why stakeholders came together and how they have evolved) influenced by these factors?

KEY FINDINGS

Competitive Dynamics Die Hard



Building a spirit of collaboration among competing health care providers and payers is among the more significant obstacles to building an evidence base through data sharing and leveraging of assets.

Funding Stability is Integral



Stable funding for a backbone organization is critical to sustainability of cross-sector efforts beyond short grant periods, as addressing historically based and geographically concentrated inequities will take time.

There Is Ample Justification for Making the Effort to Engage Community Residents



Genuine community engagement pays a range of dividends, from building political support and avoiding turnover with local elected officials (and producing returns on those investments) to active mobilization and support of interventions that are consistent with local priorities.

Embed Policy Early On



Focusing on short-term projects and achievement of measurable goals leads most partnerships to concentrate on on-the-ground efforts, with less attention given to how any gains made can be sustained through institutional change and policy development. Additionally, many partnerships lack the connections, resources, expertise, and leverage to engage government agencies in a planning process that links innovation to policy development if it is not embedded at the beginning.

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