

RAPID-CYCLE RESEARCH

Findings from Kent State University

CONTEXT

Using survey and interview data from professionals who engage with more than 20 cross-sector networks across the United States serving at-risk populations, this rapid-cycle research examines networks' progress in aligning funding for sustainability and for financial incentivization and accountability arrangements designed to help ensure their effectiveness.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do coordinators of cross-sector networks perceive that financial alignment is a challenge compared to other aspects of their efforts to align services for at-risk clients?
- What barriers inhibit financial alignment for cross-sector networks serving at-risk clients?
- What milestones describe financial alignment progress for networks serving at-risk clients?
- How can progress in financial alignment be measured?

KEY FINDINGS

Financial alignment is amongst the most challenging core areas of aligning.

Across varied network approaches for alignment, financial sustainability and data and measurement are perceived to be the most challenging of the core areas. In addition, while the portion of the survey sample that was certified Pathways Community HUBs (PCHs) was small (five of 21), a higher proportion of coordinators from certified PCHs reported high or very high levels of financial alignment for incentivization/accountability (100%) and sustainability (40%) versus 43% and 19%, respectively, for the entire sample.

Several barriers inhibit financial alignment.

Barriers include limitations on available funding and competition for that funding; need for state policies that focus on supporting integrated services effectively; cultural, attitudinal, and practice divides across sectors and funders; and a need for further evidence on the extent to which integrated services improve health outcomes and reduce costs.

Measures for financial sustainability are clearer than those for measuring progress on incentivization and accountability.

Commonly cited measures that characterize sustainability include developing a shared purpose, demonstrating results, receiving funding from multiple sources, and obtaining reimbursement funding. By contrast, there was relatively little consensus among respondents on measures for assessing progress toward incentivization and accountability in delivering cross-sector services.

Financial alignment for sustainability of cross-sector services may develop along a continuum.

A proposed five-stage framework can increase understanding and measurement of progress on financial alignment for sustainability.

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