

RAPID-CYCLE RESEARCH

Findings from the Camden Coalition

CONTEXT

Cross-sector collaboration is recognized as an important step in improving health equity and addressing collective challenges facing health care, social sector, governmental, and public health organizations at the community level, but little is understood about how participants value these collaborations. Specifically, this evaluation examined perceptions of value of cross-sector collaboration toward serving populations with complex health and social needs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do different organizations and community members define the value of cross-sector collaboration?
- Which measures demonstrate the “value” of collaborations?

KEY FINDINGS

Value is not solely dependent on financial return on investment.

Value is perceived as multidimensional, with each dimension holding varying levels of influence on organizations and individuals, depending on the internal and external contexts.

Value is dependent on perspective.

This rapid-cycle research uncovered four underlying dimensions contributing to cross-sector collaborative participants’ sense of value. Cross-sector collaborations are seen as valuable when they:

- Provide intrinsic benefits by aligning with shared personal and organizational purpose;
- Engage communities to ground collaboratives in community members’ priorities and insights;
- Demonstrate outcomes that matter to organizations and communities; and
- Lead to sustained system-level change.

Value is measured through multiple levels of interrelated outcomes.

No single outcome can account for a collaboration’s impact in a community. Rather, a broad set of individual, organizational, and collaborative outcomes should be considered when trying to quantify the impact of collaborative efforts across sectors. Defining and identifying these diverse outcomes is often an important activity of emergent cross-sector collaborations and should be tailored to the context and priorities of the stakeholders and communities involved.

Value is created through meaningful community participation.

Communities benefit when collaborations address community members’ needs and priorities, and action is demonstrated clearly, as well as when community members have opportunities to give back to their community by contributing to initiatives.

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