

LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

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Description of Productivity Improvement

In a short period of time, the Chatham Health Alliance has led to cost and time savings for the Community Health Assessment (CHA), reduced duplication in services and aligned resources to improve health.

The Alliance, formed in March 2015, is a coalition of engaged partners committed to addressing Chatham County's leading health challenges. Its purpose is to bring both traditional and nontraditional partners together to work on issues affecting health and members of the Alliance

share resources and work together to enhance existing efforts and achieve a greater collective impact than they would individually.

To understand how the Alliance enhances productivity, it is important to understand the innovative process from which it emerged. The CHA, completed in March 2015, was the first health assessment in the county's history to be co-led by the Chatham County Public Health Department and Chatham Hospital. Since both organizations are now required to complete health assessments, this collaborative process strengthened the final product by synergizing efforts while reducing time and cost commitments. This approach also allowed for new and more effective processes to be utilized. For example, the CHA was among the first health assessments to employ an innovative data collection method developed by the NC Institute for Public Health called CollectSMART. As an efficient means of data collection, this method made it possible for the community-based survey to include a statistically representative sample of the county's residents, which is critical to aligning the health priorities with the community's needs.

Most importantly, this process laid the groundwork for the Alliance, which grew out of the CHA steering committee. Prior to the formation of the Alliance, the effectiveness of the many organizations, agencies and individuals leading efforts to address complex health issues was limited because they primarily worked in silos. Oftentimes, organizations with similar missions were not communicating, which ultimately meant Chatham's residents were not linked to necessary care and assistance across organizations. On a population level, this hindered our collective productivity and ability to gain ground on these issues, resulting in duplication of efforts and increasing rates of obesity and chronic disease. The Alliance has made addressing this problem part of its mission by bringing members together to share knowledge, strategies and resources. This innovative approach to pooling knowledge and resources is reshaping how Chatham as a community addresses health and its underlying issues. In the time since its inception, the Alliance has begun to implement the collaborative strategies devised through its action plans to address each health priority and can cite a number of notable achievements.

One such achievement is the incorporation of health strategies and outcomes in planning efforts. Including health considerations in planning efforts is important, evidence-based work and is a recommended strategy for Healthy North Carolina 2020, North Carolina's guiding document for improving the health of all North Carolinians. In 2015, Alliance members collaborated on two local plans: the Town of Siler City's Parks Master Plan and the Town of Goldston's Comprehensive Plan. Because of the Alliance's partnership, these plans explicitly address structural barriers to active living and healthy eating. In addition, capitalizing on funding received by the Health Department, partners within the Alliance were able to incorporate focus groups with key health-related stakeholders into the county's comprehensive plan development process, including input from the Alliance itself. The benefits of this were two-fold: health was entrenched within the comprehensive plan and the diverse members of the Alliance were able to bring their perspectives to the planning process. This would not have been possible if the existing connections had not already been made through the Alliance network and is a prime example of the role that the Alliance plays in achieving high-level programming and coordination to improve health and services for all Chatham residents.

Another achievement that demonstrates the Alliance's collective capacity is its work to enroll individuals in insurance through the health insurance marketplace. The Alliance has brought together many partners working to help residents enroll in health insurance, as well as safety net providers to cover those who fall through the cracks. The Alliance is working to ensure these services are

marketed and coordinated across agencies and organizations. Coordination of health insurance enrollment efforts has helped many residents get insured, which is instrumental in addressing poor access to healthcare. Enrollment has risen steadily since the Alliance formed as shown by a 10% increase from the 2014-15 to 2015-16, above the state average.

Alliance members also recognize that in order to truly address the major health issues in Chatham County, the underlying factors influencing those issues -- including poverty, unemployment and lack of education -- need to be addressed. The Alliance offers a unique platform from which to address these issues. Alliance membership reflects many sectors of the community (health, government, education, nonprofit, human resources, sports and recreation, youth, law enforcement, agriculture, business and economic development). Alliance membership also includes geographically and demographically diverse groups. The Alliance's diverse make-up allows it to work effectively on a variety of issues across the county. For example, the Alliance has begun to work to tackle issues around transportation in Chatham County. It has engaged partners from the local transportation agency, a federally qualified health center, local university, governmental agencies, nonprofits and local residents to analyze the gaps in transportation. Having the diverse perspectives of the many members of the Alliance provides greater opportunities to make strides in addressing these underlying factors.

From its inception to its current and future work, the Alliance's strength lies in its ability to harness the knowledge and resources of its diverse partners to address the health issues and underlying factors that influence health in Chatham County. The Alliance's collaboration reduces duplication, aligns efforts and maximizes the use of funding and resources to best address the serious challenges we face in our small yet growing community.

Description of why this project was initiated

The precursor to the Alliance, the Steering Committee for the 2014 CHA, was formed in December 2013 to (1) identify the health priorities most pressing in Chatham County and (2) to link the efforts of the Health Department and Chatham Hospital through a collaborative process. When this group became the Chatham Health Alliance in March 2015, the goal was clear: The coalition would devise collective action plans to address the identified health priorities (obesity, access to mental health services and access to healthcare) and work collaboratively to implement and evaluate the strategies in those plans. Above all, the county lacked a central entity that could bring people together to hone in on the health needs of the community. The Alliance and its members have worked diligently to fill this void and ensure residents have what they need to live healthy and productive lives. Furthermore, the formation of the Alliance has opened the door to external funding opportunities, including grants from the Duke Endowment and BCBSNC, that provide the Alliance with technical and financial support to sustain its efforts in the years to come.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

A community health assessment requires major resources and is a time intensive process and the Chatham Health Alliance will continue to lead the Community Health Assessment. Through this partnership, Chatham Hospital and the health department will not only produce a stronger

assessment, but the agencies will save an estimated combined 0.75 FTE, which translates to approximately \$56,250 in savings or resources that can be diverted to other needs in years the assessment is conducted. Furthermore, much of the time associated with the CHA process goes towards forming the Steering Committee. Since the Alliance will act as the Steering Committee, time spent recruiting and orienting members will be substantially reduced. The Alliance is also the ideal Steering Committee given its diverse membership and existing partnerships, which will streamline the process and improve the final product.

The partnerships that have grown through the Alliance have also opened the door for coordination of services. For example, the Health Department and Piedmont Health Services are exploring collaborative strategies to improve care for clients while addressing gaps in services. While it is too soon to know the precise outcomes of these efforts, the promise in terms of sustainability, quality and cost savings is evident.

The Alliance has also made the county eligible for funding opportunities that require the existence of a health-focused coalition. In its formative days, the Alliance received a \$15,000 grant from BCBSNC that included technical assistance and allowed it to hire a local health expert who was instrumental in developing the structure and mission of the Alliance. Toward the end of 2015, the Alliance was awarded a three-year, \$450,000 grant from the Duke Endowment to help it implement evidence-based strategies and sustain its efforts. This included hiring a 1.0 FTE Strategy and Evaluation Coordinator at the Health Department. This has greatly enhanced the capacity of the Alliance to devote time and resources to its efforts.

In terms of sustainability, the partnerships formed through the Alliance are critical. Discussions on how to maintain and improve services provided by different agencies occur regularly at Alliance meetings. Prior to the Alliance, struggling organizations would be forced to fend for themselves. We now have a backbone of support to assist these organizations strategically and even financially to ensure that necessary services remain accessible to Chatham residents. The Alliance has also invested time in creating a referral network across agencies and promoting outside services to their clients. Having this structure in the county is critical to sustaining important work that often dissipates over time. The Alliance will continue to evaluate the fruits of its labor in terms of cost savings, quality of care and ultimately health outcomes.

Other descriptive information

While the Alliance has already proven itself to improve productivity in Chatham County, its potential is exponential. The passion, knowledge and diversity of members represented on the Alliance position it for continued innovation. As the Alliance continues to work to address the identified health priorities and other pressing health issues as they arise, the Alliance's structure and composition will allow the most relevant team of partners from across the county to be quickly assembled, evaluate the situation and determine the most effective strategies to address future health challenges in Chatham County. The LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Awards Program embodies many of the reasons the Chatham Health Alliance was formed and what it strives to achieve. Thank you for considering the Alliance for this prestigious recognition.