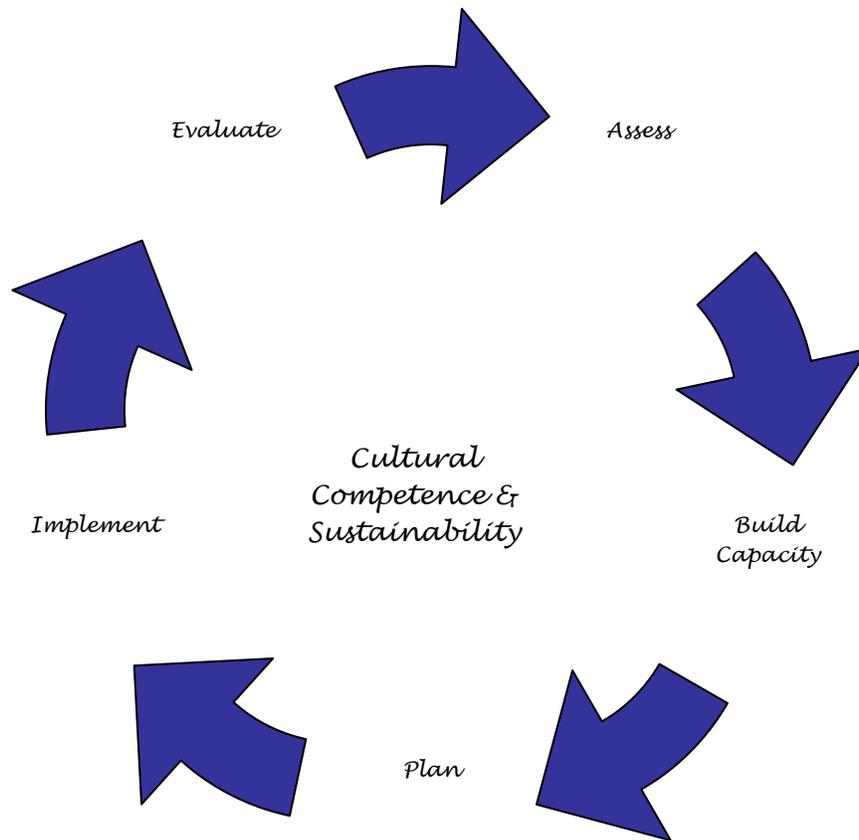


Maine's Prevention Infrastructure: The Local Perspective



March 2007

Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc.



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In September 2006, Maine funded its first set of communities to begin the implementation of the Strategic Prevention Framework at the local level. This initial funding is known as the Community Strategic Planning and Environmental Programming (SPEP) grants. The initial set of grantees and the counties they represent are shown in the table below.

Organization Name	County
Healthy Androscoggin/CMCHC	Androscoggin*
People's Regional Opportunity Program	Cumberland*
Healthy Community Coalition	Franklin
Hancock County Planning Commission	Hancock*
Maine General Medical Center	Kennebec
Penobscot Bay YMCA	Knox
United Way of Midcoast	Lincoln
Community Concepts	Oxford*
Mid Coast Hospital	Sagadahoc
Somerset County Assoc. of Resource Providers	Somerset*
Regional Medical Center at Lubec, Inc.	Washington
Day One	York

The grantees are funded for ten months to conduct a needs and capacity assessment and to develop a strategic plan. These activities are referred to as “Phase I.” Five grantees also received funding to implement environmental strategies, Phase II (*).

In addition, the Prevention Centers of Excellence (PCOEs) worked within the remaining four counties (Aroostook, Waldo, Penobscot and Piscataquis) to identify an organization or a group of organizations capable of undertaking the Phase I assessment and planning activities. The PCOEs helped these organizations to mobilize the necessary stakeholders. The grantees listed below were funded in January 2007. This second round of Phase I funding means that all counties are now participating in the implementation of the Strategic Prevention Framework.

Organization Name	County
Cary Medical Center	Aroostook
Waldo County Preschool and Family Services	Waldo
City of Bangor Health and Welfare	Penobscot/Piscataquis

Purpose of Report

This report summarizes information collected during evaluator site visits with each grantee in which an instrument called the Community Infrastructure Assessment was administered. The purpose is to establish a baseline as part of the process evaluation and to share baseline infrastructure results with the Office of Substance Abuse and the grantees.

The following section of the report, *Prevention Infrastructure* explains the aggregate results of a baseline infrastructure assessment conducted with all 15 grantees.

Observations and Recommendations outlines some of the key areas where OSA may want to focus infrastructure development activities and some strategies that may be considered to enhance the prevention system at the state and local levels.

One of the key components of Maine’s Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG) is to strengthen state and local prevention infrastructure. One of the ways in which the evaluation team is measuring the progress made to enhance the infrastructure is to interview local grantees that receive SPF SIG funding and ask about various aspects of infrastructure. The structured interview is adapted from an instrument developed by the Pacific Institute of Research and Evaluation (PIRE). It is comprised of eight domains:

- Organizational Structure;
- Planning;
- Data and Data Systems;
- Workforce Development;
- Evidence-based Programs, Policies and Practices;
- Cultural Competence;
- Evaluation and Monitoring; and
- Sustainability.

The assessment is intended to gauge the state and local substance abuse prevention infrastructure at a given point in time from the perspective of the funded communities. The results are not about the grantees themselves, but rather are about the prevention system. The initial results will act as a baseline for the evaluation. The assessment will be administered two more times during SPF SIG.

In most cases two evaluators were present when the infrastructure assessment was conducted. Each ranks various items independently. At the conclusion of the assessment the evaluators discuss and reach consensus on the ranking of each item along a continuum from low to moderate or high.

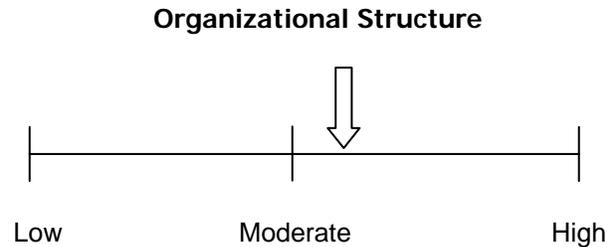
The low ranking is given a score of 1, moderate is 2 and high is 3.¹ These rankings are then averaged within each domain² resulting in the rankings discussed in this chapter. Following are the aggregate results of the infrastructure assessment by domain and highlights the findings in each area.

¹ There are a few items in the instrument that have yes/no responses. “Yes” is coded as 3 and “No” as a 1.

² While ordinal variables are not meant to be calculated in this way, the averages are calculated for illustrative purposes.

Organizational Structure

Among the various infrastructure domains, it is organizational structure where together the grantees ranked highest. The components of organizational structure include: the presence of a county-level group of ATOD decision makers who convene to share information and engage in prevention planning activities; written guidelines for decision making in the group; and incorporation of input from community and state stakeholders in prevention decisions.



Thirteen grantees reported that there is a group of county-level decision makers who convene to integrate alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) prevention efforts. Half of these groups have written guidelines for decision making and meet every month or every two months.

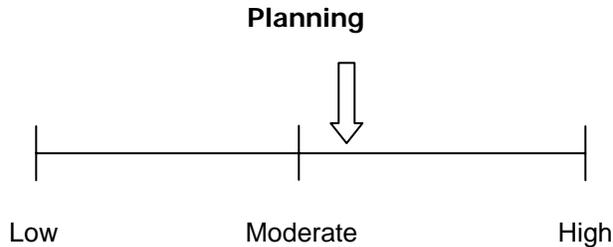
For the two without such a county-level group currently, SPEP Phase I is providing the opportunity to form this type of group. The others are strengthening their groups by virtue of conducting an assessment and developing a county-level strategic plan. In this way, SPEP is a community mobilization and capacity building effort (SPF Step 2).

The majority of the county-level groups regularly share information and half are already engaged in broad-based strategic planning. In general, most are not yet at the point where they are routinely planning for specific prevention activities, combining existing funding sources for these activities or seeking prevention resources jointly.

To a large extent, the grantees incorporate input from stakeholders in the community when making major substance abuse prevention decisions. The involvement of state-level input was mixed. One-fourth solicit state-level input consistently, another third involve state staff at times but not regularly and the remainder incorporate state-level input rarely if ever when making major prevention-related decisions.

Planning

Infrastructure in terms of planning was rated on the following: the existence of a mission and vision for substance abuse prevention; the extent of input from



stakeholders in the mission and vision; the perceived level of support for a countywide strategic plan; staff time allocated to planning; the availability of technical assistance around planning; and mechanisms for linking state and county planning efforts.

Two of the 15 grantees have a mission and vision for prevention that they consider to be countywide. As part of SPEP Phase I, each will develop a vision statement for their county.

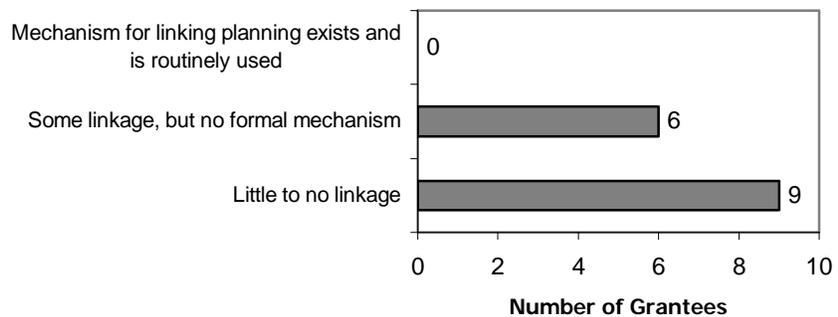
Since the grantees are contracted to develop strategic plans during Phase I, all currently report that they have staff time specifically allocated to prevention planning. Implementation of the Strategic Prevention Framework should result in planning being an ongoing activity; therefore, the goal is for no change on this particular item in subsequent administrations of the infrastructure assessment.

At the present time, half of the grantees (8 of 15) believe that there is a moderate level of support for a countywide strategic plan. As they engage community partners in planning, this measure is expected to increase.

As Maine strengthens its prevention infrastructure, it will be necessary to coordinate state-level and local

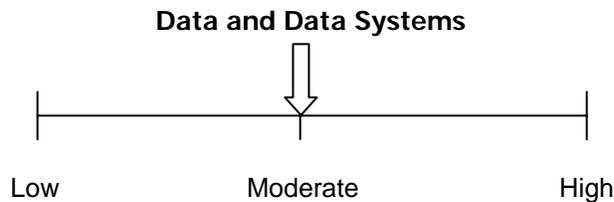
level planning efforts through formal means. Grantees do not see that a formal mechanism for linking planning efforts exists at present.

Extent of Linkage between State and County Planning Efforts



Data and Data Systems

Discussions with the 15 grantees resulted in a rating of “moderate” in the domain of Data and Data Systems. The majority (14 of 15) believe their capacity to maintain data systems, such as KIT Solutions, COMET or other databases, is fair to good. Four grantees have at least one staff person with data system expertise; ten others report that their staffing is adequate to meet their data system needs. About three quarters of the grantees (10 of 14) see a need for greater funding for data systems maintenance.

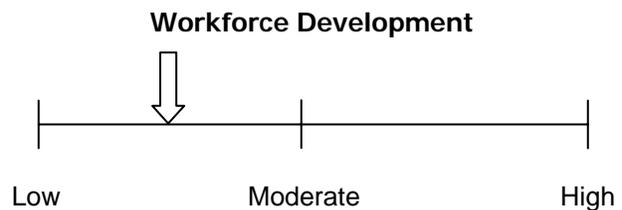


SPF SIG is heavily focused on epidemiological data. For many, this focus is relatively new. All but one of the communities describes the extent of sharing of epidemiological data between the state and local grantees as

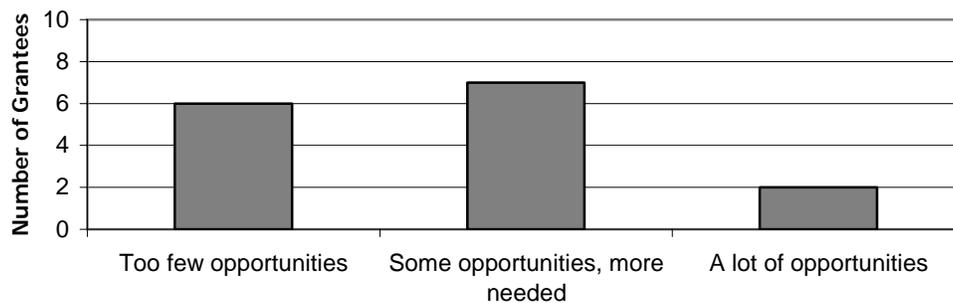
not routine or non-existent. They do report, however, that state staff has provided guidance on how to interpret the epidemiological data that were provided for their use at the start of their assessments.

Workforce Development

Strengthening the substance abuse and prevention workforce is one of Maine’s SPF SIG infrastructure goals. As part of establishing a baseline to measure development in this area, SPEP grantees were asked about the existence of formal written professional development plans or policies; workforce development opportunities provided by the state; and accessibility of the opportunities. One grantee reports that it has a written development plan or policy in place; the others do not have a plan for workforce development.



**Extent of State-sponsored
Workforce Development Opportunities**



In general, grantees see a need for more workforce development opportunities. They would like to see opportunities in the following topical areas:

- Evaluation skills
- Cultural competency
- How to utilize standardized data (e.g., county level) in the community
- Logic model development
- Coalition and capacity building
- Grant writing
- Opiate addiction, methamphetamine and supply sources
- Evidence-based practices and strategies (including strategies for different populations)

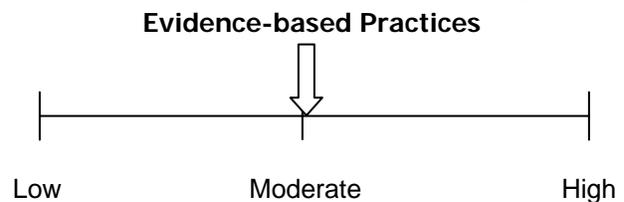
Four communities discussed professionalizing prevention through credentialing. Some suggested the establishment of core competencies and a Master’s level Public Health program through the University System.

There were a few suggestions as to how to deliver workforce development opportunities, including having an in-state Community Anti-drug Coalitions of American (CADCA) Coalition Institute; hosting regular conference calls so that grantees can share information; one-on-one training and technical assistance from OSA; providing resources that synthesize best practices; and making use of ITV systems. Some of these suggestions would be useful in overcoming certain barriers to attending workforce development opportunities hosted by the state. Almost three-quarters of the grantees (11 of 15) noted that some of the existing opportunities are inaccessible.

There was also a request that the Office of Substance Abuse provide an overview of the history of prevention and the landscape of prevention in Maine. This would be one way to strengthen the links between state and local planning discussed earlier.

Evidence-based Programs, Policies and Practices

The infrastructure assessment assesses the consistency across state and local prevention entities in terms of defining “evidence-based” and looks at the current availability of resources to assist in the selection, implementation and adaptation of evidence-based practices. Half of the grantees feel that the definition of evidence-based practices (EBP) is consistent across state and sub-state entities. This is based largely on the use

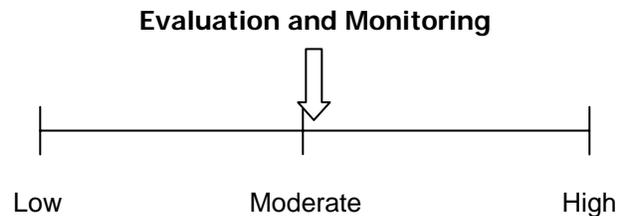


written, formal policies on how to ensure cultural competence in its prevention efforts and has a process in place to monitor cultural competence.

Discussions with grantees revealed very different opinions and views of cultural competence; some see it very narrowly, restricted to race and ethnicity (e.g., “Does it apply to our county? We are 99 percent white.”). Others had a more broad view that included LGBTQI, socio-economic status, occupation (e.g., mill workers, fishing), urban versus rural settings and literacy.

Evaluation and Monitoring

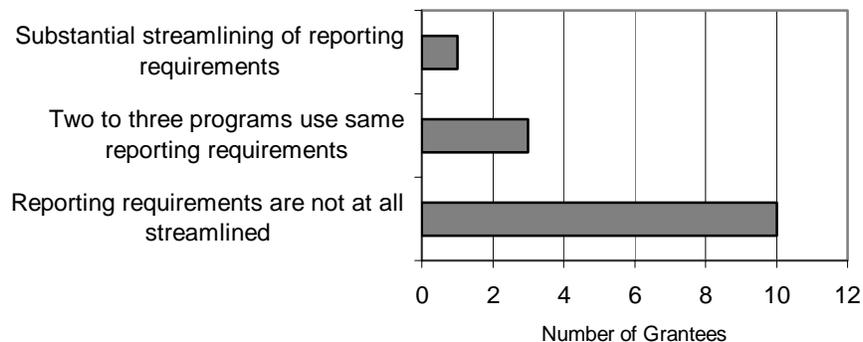
In general, most (14 of 15) grantees have at least some access to evaluation expertise and nine have an evaluator on staff or available through a contractual agreement. Nearly all use evaluation data as part of their prevention work (8 use it occasionally and 4 use it routinely).



Again, almost all grantees say their activities are monitored by the state. There was positive feedback about the SPEP Quarterly Report format in that it is more straightforward than many reporting requirements and asks for “relevant” information.

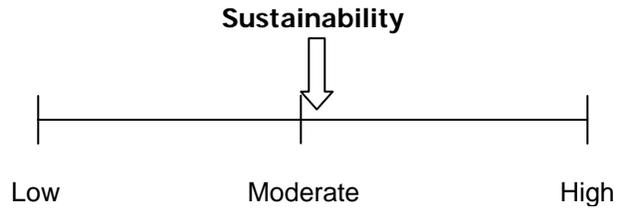
The development and use of common tools, including reporting requirements, are one of the state’s SPF SIG goals. At this time, only one grantee believes these requirements are substantially streamlined.

Extent of Streamlining of Reporting Requirements



Sustainability

The sustainability domain is measured in terms of diversification of prevention funding, the extent of community involvement in county prevention efforts, plans to address sustainability issues and solicitation of input from the state on prevention sustainability at the state level.



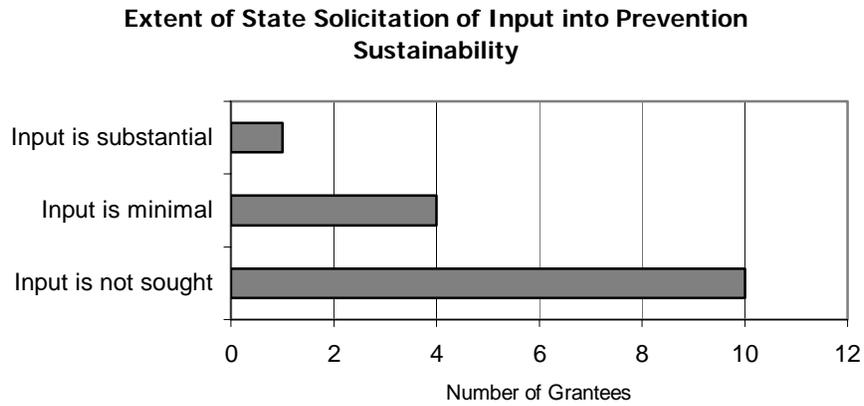
There are only two counties that report prevention efforts being supported by a single source. Eleven of the grantees have multiple funding sources, and seven of those sites coordinate the funding sources for prevention.

Grantees identified a number of challenges to sustaining prevention work. When sustainability obstacles are identified, six of the grantees develop detailed plans to overcome them. Not surprisingly, all grantees identified the availability of funding as the largest barrier. These discussions focused not just on the lack of funding (and uncertainty around it) but on grants being targeted for start-up, not for continued prevention work and the balance between staying true to their mission and allowing the funding to drive the work. Other challenges mentioned are:

- Staff to do the work;
- Community interest and buy-in;
- Time; and
- Leadership.

When asked about the extent of community involvement in prevention efforts, most answered in terms of the proportion of towns involved and/or committed to the work of the grantees. For a few, their answers referred to school district involvement. Four grantees report a high level of involvement, ten a moderate level and one a low level of community involvement.

Ideally, Maine’s prevention system would be marked by shared responsibility for sustainability. At this time, those at the local level do not feel that their input is sought to a large extent.



Networking

All the grantees noted that the opportunity to hear about what other grantees are doing would be helpful. They all recognize this as a capacity building opportunity. The Prevention Centers of Excellence are hosting online chats to facilitate this process. In addition to these efforts, periodic updates or highlights on the listserv could provide this opportunity on a routine basis. The evaluation team plans to discuss with the SPF SIG Executive Management Team the possibility of Hornby Zeller Associates hosting periodic, topical conference calls as an added networking and sharing opportunity.

Cultural Competency

Right now, sites are “doing what we do and the state doesn’t seem to mind...” The grantee sites would benefit from having both a uniform definition of cultural competence as well as guidance on how to actually practice it in their prevention activities. A statewide definition issued by OSA would help sites gauge their own level of cultural competency more effectively; some type of cultural competency assessment checklist based on this definition might also be useful. Taking these steps will enable all sites to develop comprehensive plans to address and monitor cultural competency. Finally, providing a training session to address culturally competent prevention practices may be helpful and relevant during the Strategic Prevention Framework implementation phase.

Workforce Development

The grantees mentioned several needs in terms of workforce development. In the next SPF SIG phase, some of the areas the state may want to offer additional training opportunities to grantees include the following:

- Cultural competency;
- The implementation and adaptation of evidence-based practices and strategies;
- Evaluation planning and methods; and
- Grant writing.

Accessibility is a barrier to attendance at workforce development opportunities for some grantees. This includes both distance and the costs and time associated with travel. Utilizing existing ITV capabilities and developing webcasting capabilities might mitigate this problem in the short term. In the medium term, the state could consider setting aside funds dedicated to case by case “mini-grants” to help defray the costs of

attending trainings and for which grantees could apply on an as-needed basis. Finally, establishing some sort of formal prevention core competencies and curricula would enhance the prevention workforce in the long term.

Evidence Based Practices

Recent guidance provided by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention about the evidence base for strategies and programs has helped answer some of the questions about evidence based practices, but also raises others. Most importantly, what constitutes “documentation of effectiveness”? OSA needs to determine what this will mean in Maine and establish a process by which it will determine that a program or strategy is evidence based.

Moreover, the state should consider ways in which it intends to provide additional guidance on how to implement evidence based programs, highlight best practices throughout the state to overcome common difficulties, as well as how to adapt strategies yet remain within the boundaries of a proven evidence-based practice.

Sustainability

Grantees largely do not feel that they are being included in the state-level discussion about what direction the state is headed and what sub-state prevention efforts need in order to sustain their work. One of the ways to formalize this may be adding local representatives to the SPF SIG workgroups.

Many commented that almost all funding, from federal and state governments and foundations, is for start-up rather than for continuation of efforts. This makes it difficult to sustain prevention work. One exception to this was OSA’s use of SPF SIG funding to continue the environmental approaches in five Maine counties prior to official SPF SIG local implementation.

The development of evaluation skills at the local level is instrumental in securing continuation funds. The more communities can demonstrate the effectiveness of their work the more competitive they can be in securing funding to continue their work. The development of local evaluation capacity is one of the areas of expertise of the Prevention Centers of Excellence and the goal of Maine’s SPF SIG evaluation team. Hornby Zeller Associates will work with each funded community during implementation on an evaluation and monitoring plan and the implementation of those plans.