Using document review and data abstraction to inform management of a federal research program: Lessons, benefits, and challenges found by CDC’s Prevention Research Centers Program

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Outline of Presentation

- National evaluation overview
- Methods for document review & data abstraction
- Lessons Learned
- Summary
National evaluation overview
PRC Program Overview

- A network of academic researchers, public health agencies, and community members that conducts applied research in disease prevention and control.

- PRCs
  - Conduct research in a variety of health topics, with a variety of communities
  - Use community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods
Evaluation Approach

NATIONAL EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Quantitative Indicators
- 33 PRCs

Qualitative Studies
- Document Review – 33 PRCs
- Interviews – Sample of PRCs

- First priority on national accountability
- Second priority on program improvement
- Participatory approach
Methods for document review and data abstraction
Method Selection

- Chose document review to:
  - Reduce burden on PRCs
  - Take advantage of written documents and public data
  - Understand data (not) provided from required reports

- Uses
  - Systematically describe baseline variables
    - Assess breadth and commonalities
    - Use with indicator data in the future
  - Clarify future reporting & grant requirements

- Users
  - PRC Program office, PRCs, decision-makers
Topical Areas

- PRC Characteristics Study (Macro)
  - Characteristics of organization & infrastructure
  - Characteristics of PRC partner communities

- PRC Researcher and Community Interaction Study (Macro)
  - Types and structure of PRC community committees

- PRC Core Research Study (CDC)
  - Research project selection, design and methods
  - Current stage of implementation
  - Adoption and sustainability
Documents and Data Sources

- Documents submitted by PRCs
  - Examples: Application; annual workplans, budgets, and progress reports; organizational model(s); community committee guidelines

- Documents from PRC Project Officers
  - Examples: Conference call notes; site visit summary letters and presentations

- National Data Sets
  - Examples: U.S. Census 2000; National Center for Education Statistics

- Web searches
  - Examples: PRC websites; CDC PRC Program website; University/school websites
Procedures

- **Data collection**
  - Collect and inventory documents
  - Store and code documents and data sources
    - ATLAS.ti software, hard copy, or internet bookmarks
  - Determine each PRC’s communities
  - Use documents to answer evaluation questions
    - MS Access or Word

- **Data validation**
  - Develop PRC-specific draft reports
  - Report review by project officers
  - Report review by PRCs

- **Data aggregation across PRCs**
Lessons Learned
What Worked

- Potentially most straightforward for data interpretation
  - University-related characteristics
  - Community descriptions
  - Research methods & design

- Most informative documents
  - Those capturing most recent glimpse of moving target
    - E.g. recent workplans/progress reports, site visit documents, PRC Information System data
  - Standardized data sources
    - Census, BLS, NCES
  - Documents rich in detail
    - Applications (sometimes)
What Didn’t Work as Well

- Potentially most difficult to interpret on its own
  - Organizational structure
  - Staffing
  - Community committee structure
  - Current implementation of research

- Least informative documents: Those easily outdated or not well conceptualized
  - Applications
  - Organizational charts
  - Logic models & narrative
Important Steps in the Method

- Organization and documentation of data sources

- Validation with POs and PRCs
  - Critical to have:
    - Involvement and support from them
    - Conversations that supplement documents

- Advisory group input
Summary
Challenges

- Inconsistency within & across data sources
- Defining each grantee’s “community”
  - No standardized data for some definitions of community
- Characterizing data as point in time
  - When constant change is reality
- Characterizing aspects of CBPR through written materials
Benefits

- Developed systematic description of program characteristics
- Was a lower burden on grantees
- Provided lessons learned on what methods to repeat and not repeat
- Will provide useful data to PRC Program office, PRCs, and decision-makers
  - For program improvement and accountability
  - Enhanced with interview and indicator data
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